



European Social Innovation Alliance (ESIA)

ESIA is building up national competence centres for social innovation in Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Poland and UK. It develops national social innovation ecosystems by sharing approaches and methodologies, including on social entrepreneurships, social investment and enabling policies.

Building national competence centres for social innovation in the EU Member States

National Competence Centres for Social Innovation is one of the six projects supported by the European Commission in order to establish national competence centres for social innovation across the EU. During two years (May 2021-May 2023) social innovation organisations, research centres, ESF managing authorities and other partners design and develop competence centres, which can help their countries to promote social innovation, including with funding from ESF+ and other EU programmes.

The national competence centres will focus on several functions:

Capacity-building:

- Building capacity among a range of stakeholders: ESF+ managing authorities, local and regional authorities, practitioners, support organisations, donors, etc.
- Raising awareness of the social innovation concept.
- Developing tools and methods to achieve and scale-up impact.

Networking, synergies and resources:

- Collaboration between public, private and third sector organisations, academia, etc.
- Synergies between different EU funding schemes.

Transnational exchange

- Sharing knowledge: what does/does not work?
- Beyond sharing: cooperating in joint endeavours, active mentoring and partnerships.

Expected results for each country



Competence centre for social innovation



Blueprint for a strategy and action plan



Analysis of strengths, weakness and sources of inspiration

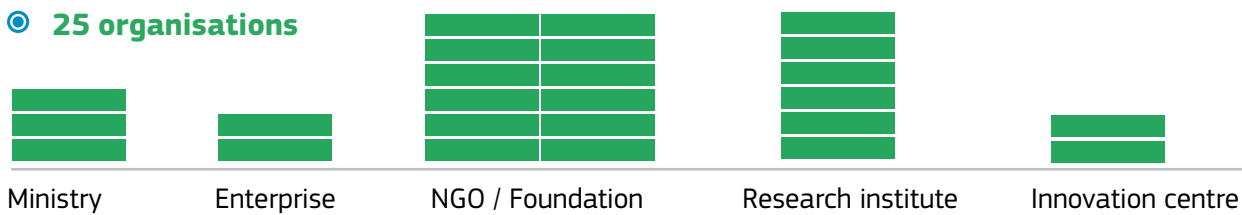


Collection of initiatives started or replicated

Each project will test the replication or scaling-up of one or two social innovations.

Overview of European Social Innovation Alliance (ESIA)

25 organisations



Denmark	Estonia	Germany	Poland	United Kingdom
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Social Innovation Academy, Danish Design Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National Foundation of Civil Society, Development Centre of Võru County, Tallinn University, Social Enterprise Estonia ■ Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Interior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Social Impact ■ Diakonisches Werk Schleswig-Holstein, Foundation FASE (including Ashoka), PHINEO, SEND, Technical University Dortmund ■ University Heidelberg (CSI), Westphalian University Gelsenkirchen, Institute for Work and Technology (IAT), Ministry for Economics, Labour and Energy of the Federal State of Brandenburg 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Shipyard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Glasgow Caledonian University, Social Innovation Exchange ■ Glasgow City Council – Centre for Civic Innovation, Challenges Catalyst, Community Enterprise in Scotland, Firstport, The Melting Pot

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Background

- Organisations involved in the project contribute a variety of complementary social innovation expertise, experience, tools and methodologies that can be shared in an inspiring learning environment.
- The transnational learning element is particularly important. The UK and Germany have long traditions of innovation, while social innovation is relatively new – and growing – in Denmark, Poland and Estonia.

Activities planned at national level

◎ Denmark

- Social Innovation Academy and Danish Design Centre will map, mobilise and bring together relevant actors from all sectors of society to develop a competence centre and network.
- A significant task will be to understand the ecosystem and the concept of social innovation and its need in a society with a strong welfare state. This entails awareness-raising with decision-makers and with the broader public.
- The Danish partners will undertake research and engage in discussions on social innovation strategies in other European countries and with individuals and organisations from the national social innovation ecosystem. Relevant actors and decision-makers will develop a blueprint social innovation strategy and action plan.
- All efforts and events will be shared on the competence centre's website and social media platforms to inspire stakeholders to improve their social innovation practices.

◎ Estonia

- Project partners will establish a competence centre for social innovation that will coordinate a network of local partners – policy-makers, experts and social innovation practitioners.
- Project partners will support managing authorities in developing social innovation by establishing strategic partnerships with decision-makers to promote social innovation, holding workshops and webinars, and creating thematic networks to exchange best practices with national actors from all sectors.
- The Estonian partners will review and analyse national and international best practices to identify social innovation success factors. They will also collect data and analyse recently published reports on the national social innovation ecosystem.
- The Estonian partners will host on-site visit between competence centres to assess the

feasibility of replicating one or two social innovation projects.

◎ Germany

- The German partners will advocate for social innovation among political decision-makers, intermediaries and in public debate. Through bi-weekly exchanges and public events, they will develop recommendations for a social innovation policy framework.
- The partners will assess the social innovation ecosystem in Germany by reviewing literature and analysing international cases to identify good social innovation practices. They will also engage with national experts on funding and managing entrepreneurship and social innovation practices, organise an international expert workshop to exchange knowledge on different social innovation ecosystems, and share and collect data on best practices.
- The partners will seek continuous improvement in competence centres by building capacity among national social innovation stakeholders, organising best practice conferences for welfare associations, and monitoring public support. Finally, they will draft recommendations to improve the effectiveness of social innovation public policy.
- The German partners will prepare and test the scaling-up of one or two social innovation projects. They will provide support by raising hybrid growth capital from European impact investors, and consulting on the planning, preparation and execution of the financial transaction process.

◎ Poland

- Shipyard Foundation will analyse Poland's social innovation ecosystem, develop a conceptual framework to improve tools and practices, and conduct a comparative analysis of synergies and benefits from social innovation initiatives.

- The partner will facilitate continuous improvement of the competence centre by establishing ways to measure the results and impact of social innovation projects, including the competence centre itself. These results will be shared at a national workshop.
 - Shipyard Foundation will draft case studies of successful social innovation scale-ups.
 - The project will seek to influence decision-makers to prioritise social innovation. It will assess the capacity of local policy-makers and donors by trialling the development of local demand for social innovation and upskilling private companies on funding strategies for social innovation.
- ◎ **United Kingdom**
 - Project partners will launch a blueprint to bring together national stakeholders to define the objectives of the competence centre. They will hold public events and workshops with stakeholders to build capacity for better social innovation.
 - The partners will undertake an inventory of public finance instruments in the UK, advocate in a policy paper for the design of a social innovation financial mechanism, hold a project-wide roundtable to share social innovation strategies, and draft the transnational strategy for social innovation.
 - The partners will develop a system to pursue ongoing improvements in the competence centre's tools, methodologies, and practices in the long-term. They will develop a contingency plan reflecting risks and monitoring the quality of the competence centre's activities.
 - The partners will share best practice social innovation and innovators and will seek out a social innovation initiative from another country to scale up.

Local social innovation incubators in Poland

The Polish competence centre's tasks will be complemented by an ESF-funded network of local social innovation incubators. The competence centre will work with local authorities to develop a demand-driven social innovation process, targeting three 'pop-up' social incubators as permanent local social innovation support structures.

Activities planned at transnational level

- All project partners will exchange knowledge, mentoring, support, and capacity-building insights into social innovation through an initial workshop to share and compare national social innovation ecosystem analysis.
- They will organise site visits between competence centres and establish online thematic action learning groups to exchange knowledge. Partners will establish learning pair relationships to exchange experiences.
- The project will organise transnational policy workshops for European and national members of parliament.
- Beyond the project, the partners will create a network with other competence centres for social innovation projects through online exchanges, regular talks and in-person events to inspire and encourage transnational exchange on social innovation. Similarly, it will create a Social Innovation Podcast involving members of other projects and relevant social innovation stakeholders across Europe.

Want to know more about other competence centres for social innovation?

More factsheets available on the [ESF+ website](#)



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