

Guidance note for applicants

Priority 1 – social innovation topic

Inclusion is a major challenge for the NWE territory, and our programme is convinced that social innovation can strongly contribute to the growth and development of NWE.

Through this guidance note, the NWE Programme would like to clarify some of the recurring issues for applications focusing on social innovation and once again encourage project ideas addressing this topic.

1. What is social innovation for NWE?

Within our Cooperation Programme, social innovation is part of priority 1 (SO1), whose main objective is “to enhance the innovation performance of enterprises throughout NWE regions” (including social enterprises). Social innovation is not a specific objective and does not have a specific budget – it is only a type of action (ToA3) and what is most important is ‘innovation’.

As any priority 1 project, social innovation projects must therefore demonstrate how they will go beyond already established practices. They should contain a disruptive aspect i.e. something that can contribute in improving framework conditions and / or introducing systemic changes. Actions must “*aim at supporting development, testing, and implementation of innovative solutions*”. They should neither focus on research nor on the roll out of an already existing solution.

Within this framework, and as described in our Cooperation Programme, social innovation projects should then more specifically aim at:

Delivering societal benefits through innovation. *Actions aim at all territories of NWE and specifically target excluded population or population at risk for exclusion and communities under pressure. Actions aim at supporting development, testing and implementation of innovative solutions for social needs and problems (‘social innovation’).*

Based on this definition, the programme accepts the variety of sub-themes which can derive from it, as well as the diversity of potential stakeholders.

Nevertheless, to have a clearer understanding of what “*excluded populations or populations at risk of exclusion*” covers, the four following areas of exclusion can be used as reference:

- **exclusion linked to health problems** (disability, illness...)
- **exclusion linked to economic circumstances** (youth or long-term unemployment, poverty...)
- **geographical exclusion** (populations in isolated rural areas, suburban peripheral areas, urban areas far from transport hubs...)
- **exclusion linked to prejudice** (based on gender, sexual orientation, race, age...)

Within these areas, projects dealing with migration issues focusing on the integration of recognised refugees on the mid and long term will be considered, particularly in the domain of entrepreneurship, employment and access to the labour market.

2. What to pay attention to when developing a social innovation project?

Social innovation projects often have difficulties to apply the NWE Programme's intervention logic.

To successfully initiate a project, the following aspects should be considered:

- **The need:** is there a specific demand identified for this project? What need does it answer? Clearly identifying this need at the outset, will help in determining the scope of the project. It will also allow for a focused approach in defining the project objective. Trying to address too many issues simultaneously should be avoided, as it leads to the set-up of unclear and unfocused projects.
- **The target group:** within the sphere of "*excluded populations or populations at risk of exclusion*", projects need to be as precise and detailed as possible. Defining the 'elderly' or 'young' as a target group is not considered precise enough. The project should also consider 'end-users' and clearly define which groups will benefit from the project results, during and at the end of the project.
- **The transnational dimension:** a strong territorial analysis to identify common needs across countries and across communities is needed. The project should prove that it tackles a transnational challenge, brings

together the relevant partners to do so, and that their intense cooperation is needed to achieve the project results.

The NWE Programme will also be looking very specifically at some more general aspects of social innovation projects:

- Their viability and long-term effects
- Their sustainability both with regards to the environment and the durability
- Their systemic potential (i.e. the capacity of local, community-based approaches to be replicated throughout the NWE region, with leading and follower regions in a specific field collaborating to deliver results)
- Their scalability

3. Quantifying and measuring baselines and results

The lack of measurable and quantifiable baselines and results appears as one of the recurring reasons for rejection of applications, and one of the major difficulties for social innovation projects. As any other projects, they must clearly show the societal change they will produce on the NWE territory.

In priority 1, all projects must address one of the two following output indicators:


- Number of new or enhanced transnational clusters or innovation networks
- Number of enterprises receiving support


The programme recognises that these output indicators might be difficult to contribute to for some social innovation projects. Therefore, a weak performance on the mandatory output indicators of priority 1 will not automatically lead to a rejection of the project as a whole, if the project manages to otherwise prove that it will reach tangible and measurable results, in line with a solid intervention logic.

To do so, projects can in addition to the mandatory indicators choose from nine other indicators - some of which specifically relate to the social innovation theme - to clarify their intervention logic. It is also possible for them to develop their own indicators.

What should prevail for social innovation projects is the attention brought to the coherence and the strength of their intervention logic.

4. Examples of approved social innovation projects



Interreg 
North-West Europe
SHICC
European Regional Development Fund

Sustainable Housing for Inclusive and Cohesive Cities ([SHICC](#))

Challenge and need

- Lack of affordable housing across cities in the NWE, particularly for those on low and median incomes.
- Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are not equally developed on the NWE territory.

Objective

- To support the establishment of more and successful CLTs in cities across the NWE region.

Results

- 66 urban CLTs (vs 33 today), managing 250 homes, housing 750 people of low and moderate-income households.



Interreg 
North-West Europe
UNEET
European Regional Development Fund

Professional integration of NW European young adults into the hotel, restaurant and catering sector ([UNEET](#))

Challenge and need

- High number of young adults not in Employment, Education and Training (NEETs) across the NWE region.
- Unemployment rates of NEETs have been increasing over the past years in the NWE region (average of 18.8% in the project regions in 2016).

Objective

- To support the professional integration of NEETs (between 15 and 29 years old) by matching the recruitment needs of the hotel, restaurant and catering sector (HORECA) with the existing labour supply, in seven NWE regions.

Results

- 1200 NEETs in seven NWE regions, will have their employability reinforced. 720 NEETs (60%) will be employed in the HORECA sector (internship, traineeship, apprenticeships, temporary and fixed contracts).
- Results will imply a reduction of the unemployment rate and of the unfilled jobs in the HORECA sector (60% success rate).

For further information

The Joint Secretariat and Contact Points in the eight NWE countries remain available for any questions you may have on social innovation and to support you in the development of your project idea.