



INSPIRE

IO2: Model for the Social Entrepreneurship Network

Innovation for Social Entrepreneurship (2021-1-FR01-KA220-VET-000034853)

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The aims:

A principal aim of INSPIRE is to create a focal point for international comparison, shared learning and collaboration between actors in the social enterprise ecosystems of each partner's country (France, Ireland, Italy, Portugal & Turkey), to be subsequently expanded across Europe and beyond.

Social entrepreneurship has been around for a long time (long before the term was invented), but its rapid expansion in recent years calls for a better, common understanding of 'what works', not just for social entrepreneurs themselves but for those who stimulate, develop and sustain them – especially support agencies, funders and policymakers.

The aim is not to create a 'one best way' blueprint – this is a logical impossibility in a field of activity characterised as social *innovation*. Rather, the intention is to celebrate the diversity of social entrepreneurs' experiences internationally, and to harness their power as generative resources to stimulate and inform fresh innovation and new knowledge creation, both at enterprise level and in the wider eco-system.

Above all, our task is not just to create a 'network', an overused term that often means little more than a loose set of contacts. We have been working to instigate a process of social capital building that is dynamic, dialogical, and multi-voiced. To borrow a term from an Irish support agency, we're aiming for an 'Engaged Community', an international social movement which combines shared learning channels, ideation, collaborative action, and advocacy.

Proposition

Our first task has been to understand the nature of social entrepreneurship itself, drawing on insights from each of INSPIRE's partner countries. From this analysis we have forged three principal propositions on which our Engaged Community will be constructed.

PROPOSITION 1: Social entrepreneurship addresses the limitations of public policy

Public policy is excessively focused on:

- short-term funding, often reflecting electoral cycles and the perceived need to demonstrate immediate impact;
- quantifiable outcomes which are relatively easy to measure in demonstrating impact;
- *political fashion,* distinguishing each administration from its predecessor rather than focusing on evidence-based practice;
- media reaction, leading to risk aversion.

The result is:

- *limited impact on 'landscape change'*, when disadvantaged communities and groups are the recipients of successive short-term initiatives with little cumulative effect;
- weak core capacity in NGOs and community organisations because quantifiable deliverables neglect the need to strengthen competencies, governance structures and renewal mechanisms required for sustainability;

- the suppression of enterprising behaviour by public sector staff, often linked to a blame culture and both tacit and explicit incentives to maintain established practices;
- transactional rather than transformational relationships between public agencies
 and other key actors because the funding relationship leads to unequal distribution
 of power and the dominance of contract compliance as the focus for interaction;
- *few spaces for innovation* because competitive procurement processes encourage bidders to pursue established approaches, resulting in *conservative interventions*.

Social entrepreneurs identify innovative ways of addressing persistent societal problems lying beyond the reach of traditional policy measures. Whilst their actions may be constrained by current policy frameworks (especially in terms of public funding), social entrepreneurs can bring longer term perspectives and more consistent engagement with beneficiary groups; they may also deploy market-based solutions not wholly dependent on public funds.

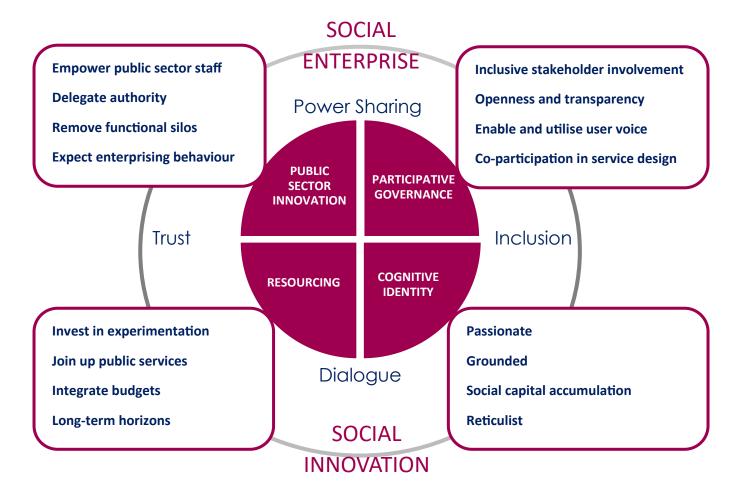
PROPOSITION 2: Social entrepreneurship is shaped by its institutional milieu

Social entrepreneurship cannot be understood solely in terms of the individual psychological attributes of the entrepreneur. The public policy, institutional, educational, cultural and relational contexts within which actual and potential social entrepreneurs operate shape their cognitive identity as well as objective possibilities for creating and sustaining social enterprises.

In seeking to increase social entrepreneurship and the growth potential of social enterprises, it will be important to examine the characteristics, functions and interactions of each actor within a given national, regional or local ecosystem.

Our analysis of literature and primary data leads us to define the characteristics of a successful social entrepreneurship ecosystem in terms of four 'Enablers', grounded in values of Trust, Inclusion, Power Sharing and Dialogue common to all actors. This framework can be used to test the effectiveness of current ecosystems and stimulate stakeholder dialogue about the need for improvement:

Figure 1: The Enablers of a Social Entrepreneurship Eco-System



- Public Sector Workplace Innovation. Innovative public sector organisations, with empowered and enterprising staff who use their knowledge and experience to engage stakeholders in critical thinking and the identification of creative solutions.
- 2. Participative Governance. Enabling disempowered communities and groups to find a voice and to share their knowledge and experience in service (re)design.
- Cognitive Identity. Positive reinforcement of social entrepreneurship and social enterprises
 in public discourse and education, reinforced by readily accessible opportunities for
 learning and development, coaching, mentoring, and peer-to-peer interaction.
- 4. Resourcing Social Innovation. Ensuring that the process of public resource allocation is fully aligned with the other three Enablers, focused on supporting 'the force of the better argument' as it emerges from stakeholder dialogue, including budget integration, long-term funding horizons and double loop learning.

PROPOSITION 3: An 'engaged community' can add significant value to eco-systems

Social entrepreneurship can be lonely and isolating. We know from our interviews with social entrepreneurs in each of the partner countries that opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing of knowledge, experience and problems are highly valued. Such opportunities can reinforce entrepreneurial identities, build social capital, create common resources, stimulate collaborative ventures and open channels for public advocacy.

'Engaged Communities' take traditional concepts of 'networking' to the next level, requiring a degree of psychological investment and 'ownership' by participants. Once mature, the members of a community will largely shape its activities. Our analysis of experiences from other communities suggests that the following actions might emerge:

- Create peer-to-peer learning channels
- Create and share knowledge banks
- Create bridges between academic knowledge and practice
- Create collective solutions to common problems
- Create new market opportunities together
- Create spaces for ideation
- Create pressure for change
- Create social impact
- Create social capital
- Create fun

The recent pandemic has led to widespread familiarity with the use of video channels, and in many instances has enabled more regular contact between remote groups than would previously have occurred. On the other hand, it is increasingly well understood that video communication alone places limits on the scope and depth of relationships, especially when first established. It also inhibits innovation when compared with in-person interaction.

INSPIRE has limited resources for enabling in-person interaction, especially at international level. We also recognise the challenges involved in creating vibrant, sustainable online networks, and have learned from both positive and negative experiences including those documented elsewhere. Our approach is informed by an emerging body of thinking and practice that goes beyond traditional network formulations.

INSPIRE will create a facilitated, multi-channel online platform with a range of user-driven, interactive functionality, designed to stimulate knowledge sharing, knowledge creation,

ideation and collaboration, bringing together social entrepreneurs and other stakeholders in national, regional and local eco-systems across several countries.

Our vision is further described in the following section.

Towards an Engaged Community

The analysis of literature and primary data summarised in preceding sections has enabled project partners to understand how INSPIRE can add value to local, regional and national ecosystems across Europe and beyond, leading to an ambitious vision that seeks to transcend the limitations of traditional networking.

We started with an advantage. The <u>Fresh Thinking Labs</u> platform was initially developed by INSPIRE partner Workplace Innovation Europe (WIE) in 2016. The recently updated platform includes both closed and open Labs for different communities, facilitated forum discussions, integral video conferencing, and interactive courses. WIE has subsequently gained significant experience of building online communities, highlighting the importance of multiple channels for engagement to reflect the diverse preferences and interests of different participants. Experience also points to the importance of active facilitation, drawing participants into platform activities based on knowledge of their individual circumstances and aspirations.

INSPIRE's Engaged Community is hosted in an open Lab, targeted at social entrepreneurs and other eco-system actors. Development of the Lab involved six overlapping strands:

- 1. Set Up (June October 2022). The Lab was created on the Fresh Thinking Labs platform, populated with a core body of material (including INSPIRE country reports, case studies and practical resources for social entrepreneurship) and forum topics. Project partners tested the functioning of the Lab during this period.
- 2. Initial Recruitment (October 2022 onwards). Each social entrepreneur, support agency representative and policymaker interviewed by INSPIRE partners was invited to join the Lab, and to create their own profiles.
- **3.** Community Building (November 2022 onwards). Partners instigated a programme of community building involving bespoke introductions based on mutual interests, facilitated forum discussions on key topics (including the ecosystem-building challenges identified in Proposition 2), and entrepreneur-led webinars on case histories and specific challenges.
- **4. Expansion (early 2023 onwards).** Having established a core portfolio of activities, further recruitment was targeted at other social entrepreneurs and stakeholders in partner countries, gradually extending to other geographical areas.
- **5. Co-ownership (mid-2023 onwards).** Once the value of the Community to social entrepreneurs and other stakeholders was established, 'Champions' are being recruited from the membership who will gradually assume ownership and responsibility for instigating and facilitating platform activities. Project partners will remain active in the Lab whilst eventually ceding leadership to the Community itself.

6. Resource Building (throughout). A knowledge bank is being established as an integral resource within the Lab, including curated case studies, articles, practical tools and course materials contributed both by INSPIRE partners and members.

In summary, INSPIRE embodies the innovative attributes associated with social entrepreneurship itself. Nowhere is this more the case than in our aspirations for a highly interactive and self-sustaining Community designed to build social capital, competence and collaboration across the international social enterprise movement.

The INSPIRE Social Entrepreneurs Community in practice

The methodology for creating the INSPIRE Community of Social Entrepreneurs outlined in the IO2 report of June 2022 (and described above) provided the subsequent focus of our work related to this Intellectual Output. In summary, the INSPIRE partnership has created a facilitated, multi-channel online platform with a range of user-driven, interactive functionality, designed to stimulate knowledge sharing, knowledge creation, ideation and collaboration, bringing together social entrepreneurs and other stakeholders in national, regional and local eco-systems across several countries.

Hosted on the <u>Fresh Thinking Labs</u> platform, the Community currently includes 169 members plus INSPIRE partners. Community members can be found from each INSPIRE partner country as well as elsewhere in Europe and beyond (Exhibit 1A).

The Community includes a social enterpreneurship knowledge bank, interactive discussion forums and a 'search and connect function', enabling members to identify and share experiences with other social enterpreneurs. We are aware that several connections have already been made, and we will continue to promote such interaction in the Community beyond the life of the project.

Community members can also access other Labs on the platform, addressing topics such as emotional intelligence at work, mental health in the workplace, and workplace innovation.

The Pilot Course for Social Entrepreneurs (IO5) is also accessed directly from the platform. Course participants have a unique opportunity to connect with each other within their own cohorts, between cohorts, and with members of the wider Social Entrepreneurs Community.

In addition to the Course, the platform has also hosted three webinars to date. These provided an opportunity to share and compare innovative practices in each country – at both social enterprise level and ecosystem levels (Exhibit 1B).

The *Community Launch* webinar took place on 9th May 2023. As well as launching the Community, participants shared insights on successful social entrepreneurship from across Europe and started productive conversations (Exhibits 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D).

Webinar 2, *Being a Social Entrepreneur: Success Stories from the Frontline*, shared a wealth of experience and practical lessons of real value from two experienced social entrepreneurs:

Daniel Iannaci, responsible for management control, impact assessment and social reporting at <u>Arcobaleno Cooperativa Sociale</u> in Torino, and **Ercan Tutal**, the highly entrepreneurial founder of Turkish social enterprise <u>Alternatif Yaşam Derneği</u>, now in its 25th year (Exhibits 3A, 3B, 3C).

The third webinar, *How to Measure – and Enhance – Social Impact* on 11th July 2023 was led by INSPIRE partner **Davide Calendra (University of Turin Business School)**. Davide offered a practical understanding of social impact, how to measure it, and how to improve it. (Exhibits 4A, 4B, 4C).

Although participant numbers in the webinars have been variable, recordings of each were accessible from the Social Entrepreneurs Community platform and are freely available at https://workplaceinnovation.eu/erasmus-inspire/. In addition to their immediate value to webinar participants, the recordings provide a permanent learning resource for prospective and established social entrepreneurs alike.

Conclusion: a sustainable community

Given its success to date, project partners are fully committed to growing and sustaining the INSPIRE Community of Social Entrepreneurs beyond the life of the project as outlined in strand 6 above, as well as making the course material available to new cohorts of learners.

EXHIBITS

EXHIBIT 1A – Social Entrepreneurs Community Members as at 22nd September 2023

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EXHIBIT 1B – The Social Entrepreneurs Community on Fresh Thinking Labs

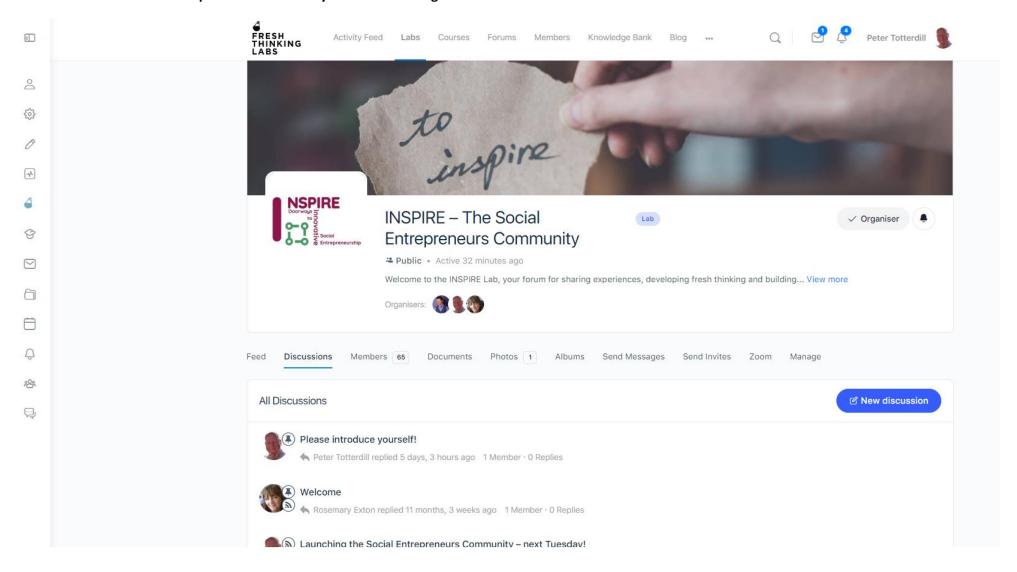


EXHIBIT 2A: Mail Merge invitation to the Social Entrepreneurs Community launch webinar



Dear Nuno,

Don't forget - your free membership of The INSPIRE Community of Social Entrepreneurs!

The Erasmus+ Inspire project has been building a great network of more than 100 social entrepreneurs across several European countries, and we're proud to announce the launch of our online Community!

You are invited to be part of this amazing Community free of charge due to financial support from the Erasmus+ programme.

In the Community, you will be able to:

- · access a growing knowledge bank of stories about successful social entrepreneurs;
- · connect with other social entrepreneurs and specialist advisors;
- start or join discussions on key topics
- · take part in webinars with leading experts and social entrepreneurs;
- benefit from a new e-learning course on social entrepreneurship.

Our Community is hosted on Fresh Thinking Labs, an online platform where you will also be able to join other groups focused on topics such as emotional intelligence, health and wellbeing at work, and workplace innovation

SAVE THE DATE!

Our first webinar will take place from 14.00 – 15.30 (Dublin, London, Lisbon) / 15.00 – 16.30 (CET) on **Tuesday 9th May!** As well as launching the Community, we'll be sharing insights on successful social entrepreneurship from across Europe and starting some great conversations. Details to follow!

How to join the Community

Go to: https://freshthinkinglabs.com/the-social-entrepreneurs-community/

Use the password socialgood to access it.

Fill in the form and access the platform.

You will automatically be added to the INSPIRE – The Social Entrepreneurs Community Lab. You will find it under Labs once you are on the platform.

If you have any questions or issues, please contact eduard.iacob@workplaceinnovation.eu who will be delighted to help!

With very best wishes,

Peter

Dr Peter Totterdill

Director, Workplace Innovation Europe CLG



EXHIBIT 2B: Social media advertising for the Social Entrepreneurs Community launch webinar

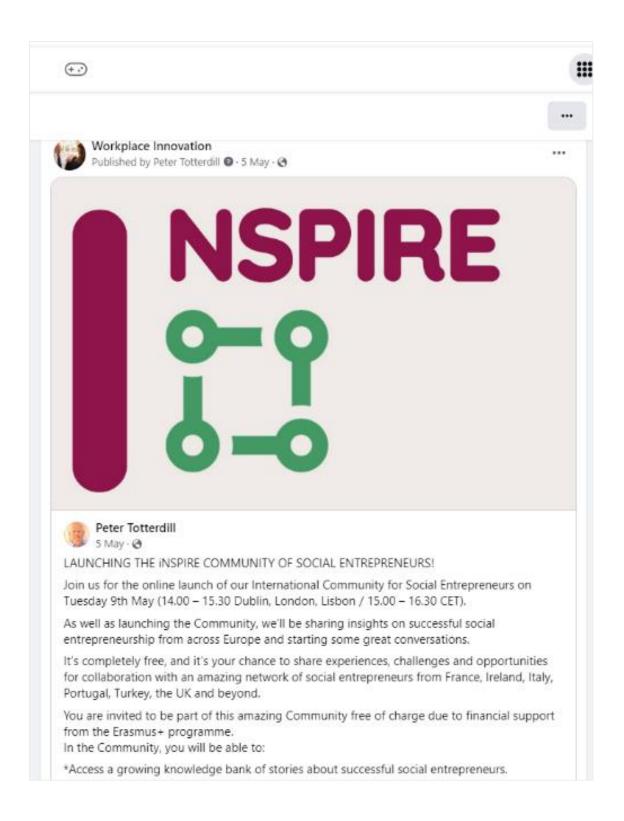


EXHIBIT 2C: Social Entrepreneurs Community launch webinar - screenshot

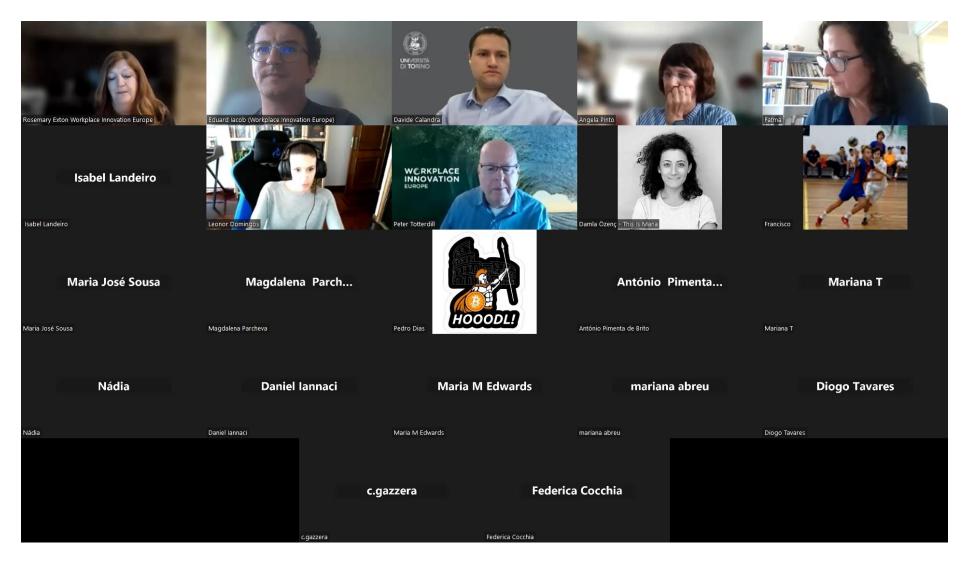


EXHIBIT 2D: Social Entrepreneurs Community launch webinar – participants

LAUNCHING THE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS COMMUNITY! 09/05/2023

Duration: 91 minutes. Participants: 27 (all required to register on the Community)

Eduard Iacob

Davide Calandra

Peter Totterdill

Angela Pinto

Maria JosC) Sousa

JoC#o Artur

Pedro Dias

Leonor Domingos

Magdalena Parcheva

Fatma

Damla CzenC' - This Is Mana

Federica Cocchia

Nicole Santos

diogo tavares

AntC3nio Pimenta de Brito

Mariana T

Francisco

Gertrudes Dandolini

NC!dia

Daniel Iannaci

Isabel Landeiro

Maria M Edwards

fabriziacalda

mariana abreu (nana)

Diogo Tavares

c.gazzera

mariana abreu

EXHIBIT 3A: Mail Merge invitation to the Social Entrepreneurs Community second webinar

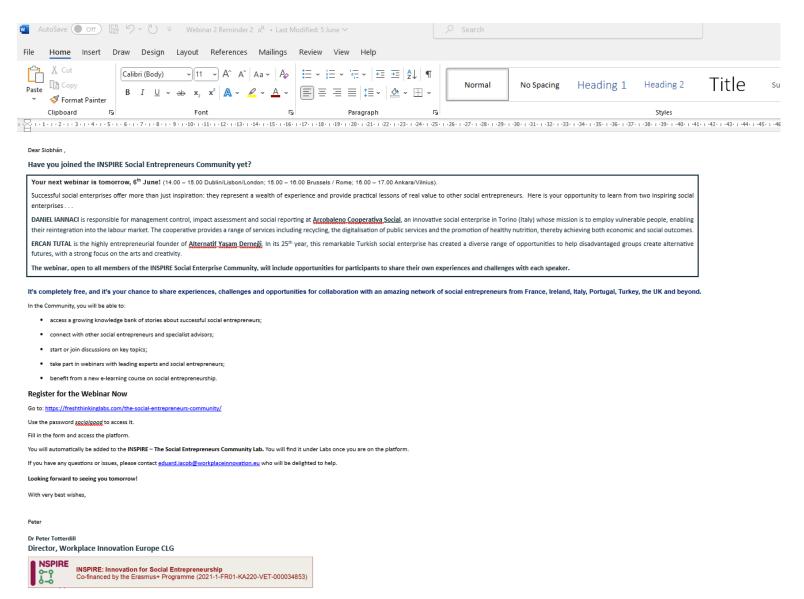


EXHIBIT 3B: Social Entrepreneurs Community second webinar - screenshot

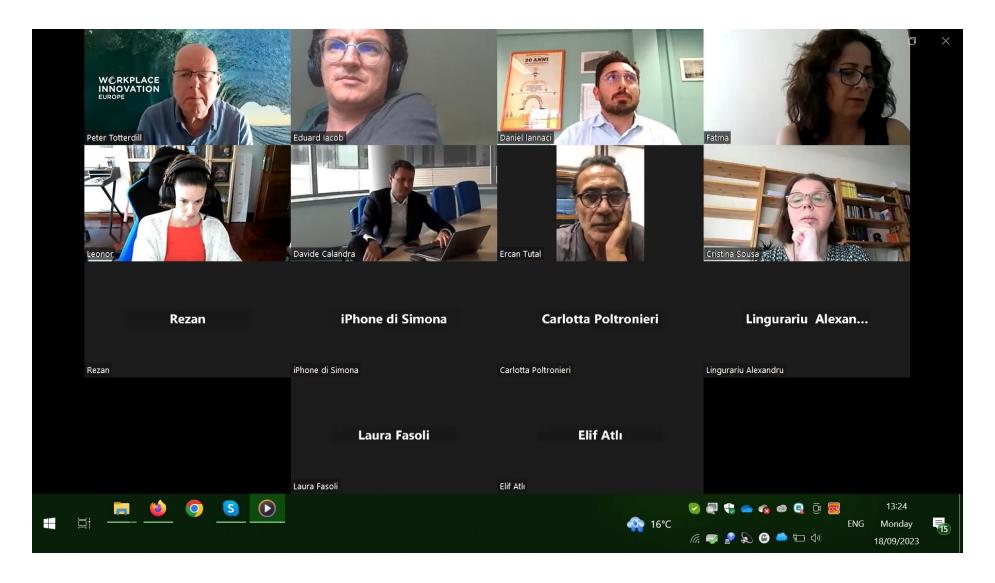


EXHIBIT 3C: Social Entrepreneurs Community second webinar - participants

BEING A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR: SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE FRONTLINE

Duration: 101 minutes. Participants: 17 (all required to register on the Community)

Eduard Iacob

Peter Totterdill

Davide Calandra

Daniel Iannaci

Leonor

Elif AtID1

Fatma

iPhone di Simona

iPhone di Federico

ercantutal

Lingurariu Alexandru

Carlotta Poltronieri

Cristina Sousa

Laura Fasoli

Ercan Tutal

fabriziacalda

Rezan (Rezan Saleh)

EXHIBIT 4A - Mail Merge invitation to the third webinar

Dear Siobhán,

HOW DO YOU MEASURE - AND ENHANCE - SOCIAL IMPACT?

The next INSPIRE webinar for Social Entrepreneurs is on 11th July (14.00 - 15.30 Dublin/Lisbon; 15.00 - 16.30 Paris/Rome; 16.00 - 17.30 Ankara/Vilnius)

Social enterprise is all about making a difference. But how do you know if you're doing the right thing? And what can you do to make an even bigger impact on society and the people you serve?



Join Davide Calendra (University of Turin Business School) and gain a practical understanding of social impact, how to measure it, and how to improve it.

Davide is an expert in social impact who has worked with social entrepreneurs at all stages of the business cycle. He is a key partner in the Erasmus+ INSPIRE project and will share new resources for learning and business improvement that you can access when you register for the webinar.

Reserve your place at our free webinar now!

To take part in the webinar, you just need to join our online community of social entrepreneurs where you will find full details of how to access the event.

- . Go to: https://freshthinkinglabs.com/the-social-entrepreneurs-community/
- Use the password socialgood to access it.
- . Fill in the form and access the platform.
- . You will automatically be added to the INSPIRE The Social Entrepreneurs Community Lab which you'll find under Labs once you are on the platform.
- Then look under 'Discussions' for details of the webinar.
- If you have any questions or issues, please contact eduard.iacob@workplaceinnovation.eu who will be delighted to help.

About the INSPIRE Social Entrepreneurs Community

It's completely free, and it's your chance to share experiences, challenges and opportunities for collaboration with an amazing network of social entrepreneurs from France, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Turkey, the UK and beyond.

The Erasmus+ Inspire project has been building a great network of more than 100 social entrepreneurs across several European countries, and we're proud to announce the launch of our online Community!

You are invited to be part of this amazing Community free of charge due to financial support from the Erasmus+ programme.

In the Community, you will be able to:

- access a growing knowledge bank of stories about successful social entrepreneurs;
- · connect with other social entrepreneurs and specialist advisors;
- · start or join discussions on key topics;
- · take part in webinars with leading experts and social entrepreneurs;
- · benefit from a new e-learning course on social entrepreneurship.

Our Community is hosted on Fresh Thinking Labs, an online platform where you will also be able to join other groups focused on topics such as emotional intelligence, health and wellbeing at work, and workplace innovation.

Looking forward to seeing you on 11th July!

With very best wishes.

Peter

Dr Peter Totterdill

Director, Workplace Innovation Europe CLG



INSPIRE: Innovation for Social Entrepreneurship

Co-financed by the Erasmus+ Programme (2021-1-FR01-KA220-VET-000034853)

EXHIBIT 4B: Social Entrepreneurs Community third webinar - screenshot

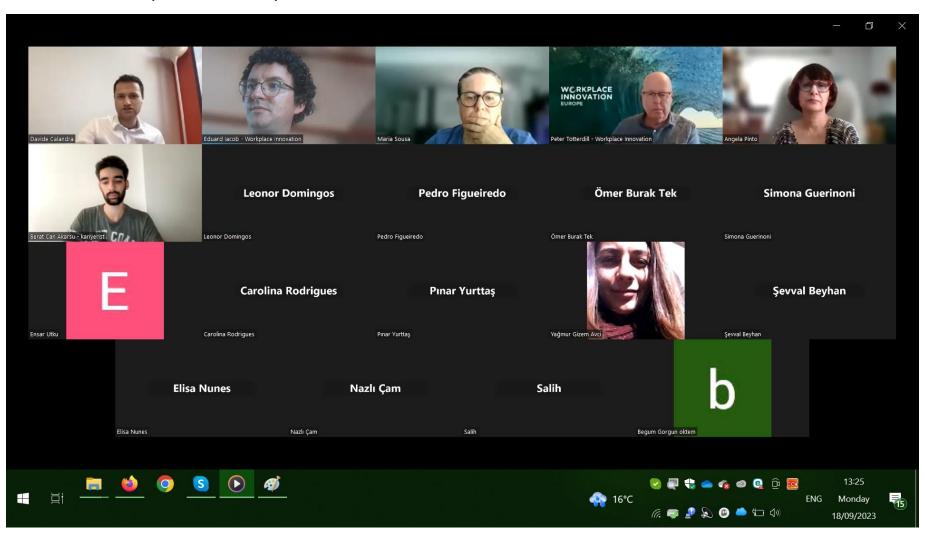


EXHIBIT 4C: Social Entrepreneurs Community third webinar - participants

HOW DO YOU MEASURE – AND ENHANCE – SOCIAL IMPACT?

Duration: 93 minutes. Participants: 26 (all required to register on the Community)

Peter Totterdill

Davide Calandra

Maria Sousa

Salih

Angela Pinto

PD1nar YurttaE

Berat Can Akarsu - kariyerist

Carolina Rodrigues

YaDmur Gizem Avci

E-evval Beyhan

Cmer Burak Tek

Leonor Domingos

Simona Guerinoni

Ensar Utku

Pedro Figueiredo

Leoni Pentiado Godoy

Elisa Nunes

NazlD1 Cam

Begum Gorgun oktem

Halil D0brahim Czer

Deniz Bilir

Merve Akman

858 0007 5698

NC!dia LeitC#o

Ahmet SABANCI

Maria Moreira-Edwards

Muttalip Kekilli