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Collection of Best Practices of Social Entrepreneurship as an Inclusion Enabler

SESI PROJECT



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Introduction

The **Sesi Project** is a programme focused on promoting a model of inclusion of disadvantaged young people by tapping into the **potential of social entrepreneurship for revitalization and the solution of local challenges**.

Financed by the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 program, YouthProAktiv, AIDE, Fundacja reGeneracja, Espacio Geranios and Imagine Apps have teamed together to implement this 31-month project.



Social entrepreneurship can be a leverage for inclusion at both the local and international levels

The **Sesi Project** focuses on the following specific objectives:

- Establish a strategic and sustainable alliance to understand and promote social entrepreneurship as a facilitator for the inclusion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds through the collection and exchange of best practices.
- Develop a combined and replicable training program that can provide knowledge and resources to youth workers on how to teach social entrepreneurship to young people.
- Build capacities for rural and disadvantaged youth to initiate social projects through interaction and collaboration with youth workers and experts, promoting active citizenship, the initiative of young people, and youth entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship.
- Disseminate and promote a training model that defines "social entrepreneurship as a driver of social inclusion" and benefits both youth workers and young people, with the capacity to influence at the level of public policies.



Achieving economic benefit and having a positive social impact are not exclusive.

Focus group insights

Social entrepreneurship is in continuous development. It is about impact and innovative business models, in line with today's challenges within our local communities.

In order to develop this guide, our project partners used a participatory methodology, inviting dialogue and the generation of proposals through local and international focus group conversations, leading up to an international forum.

Through this experience, we have learned that **achieving economic benefit and having a positive social and environmental impact are not mutually exclusive**, and we have been inspired by the many best practices that exist in our communities.

We worked together to gather insights in four main areas:

- how to make social entrepreneurship inclusive with a special focus on inclusivity among rural youngsters.
- how to develop educational programs on social entrepreneurship that are effective and inclusive.
- how to ensure effective partnerships among cross-sectorial stakeholders to nurture the ecosystem.
- how to engage new technologies into the innovation of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem.

To learn more about the methodology used and to adapt it to your community, [you can download the template here.](#)

How to make social entrepreneurship more inclusive?

In the pursuit of inclusive social entrepreneurship, a fundamental paradigm shift towards **empowerment** needs to take place.

Successful social business initiatives in vulnerable communities have often emerged from **collective processes and business models**, harnessing the power of community collaboration for greater inclusivity.

Even if you are a “solopreneur”, understanding that **community is the key to success** will improve the viability of your business.

We need to move beyond an individualistic approach to entrepreneurship, viewing others as “competitors”, in order to unlock the true potential of collaboration.

At the same time, we have witnessed that initiatives that emerge from and with local communities, integrating a **collective, participatory, and network-based approach**, tend to be more successful and resilient.

A key strength of inclusive social entrepreneurship lies in its **empathetic nature**, where motivations, purpose and generosity transcend economic gain.

This understanding permeates the inclusive ecosystem of social entrepreneurship, enhancing its capacity for positive impact.

Regarding the context, in rural communities it is crucial to build a deep understanding of inclusivity and local authorities must be aware of the benefits young social entrepreneurs bring to the societies they live in.



How can we develop social entrepreneurship education programs that are more inclusive and impactful?

To encourage inclusive social entrepreneurship training, particularly in vulnerable areas, **accompaniment and training focused on leadership, soft skills and emotional intelligence** alongside building entrepreneurial skills are necessary. This should be the foundational support structure for sustained success.

For youth, the **right mentorship and role models** are very important to help enlighten the path, gain knowledge and resources to help them progress in their career and future, bringing benefits to themselves and to others.

Contrary to traditional business school methodologies, entrepreneurship educational programs for youth require a **mindset centered on empowerment** rather than a top-down approach. Accessing support mechanisms like incubators and accelerators continues to prove challenging for these populations, emphasizing the importance of grassroots strategies oriented specifically toward these groups.

When social businesses mature, they may have a tendency to concentrate more on profit. The programs should help the participants **not to forget about the mission** of their enterprise.

How can we ensure effective partnerships among cross-sectorial stakeholders to nurture the ecosystem?

Partnerships and synergies are as important as mentorship. The youth centers and workers that participated in our focus groups agree that **youth have the will and the capacity to create positive change, but they often lack the "how"**.

When starting a social enterprise, it is key to identify the community and network structures that exist. These structures can help drive the sustainability, viability and inclusiveness of social enterprises. For example, in this guide, we highlight networks such as **Sannas, Youth Business Spain** and the **PEM Network from Nantik Lum**, that provide resources and ongoing training and support to help sustain emerging, young entrepreneurs.

All stakeholders need to specify the incentives they expect and their needs must be taken into account continuously. Identifying motivations of different stakeholder groups is key to ensuring effective partnerships.

How can we engage new technologies into the innovation of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem?

From the experience of the participants in our focus groups, they all agree that new technologies are a driving mechanism for social entrepreneurship and have facilitated the automatization of many processes to be able to focus on the task at hand.

The potential of technology such as blockchain or AI to have a positive impact is evident. However, we also have to be aware of their limitations, ensuring that the "digital transformation" complements services and experiences that provide real, personal, and human encounter.



International Forum

In October 2023, we gathered youth workers and experts from our partner countries in a forum in Madrid to share best practices, participate in study visits and learn first hand about the Spanish social entrepreneurship ecosystem. The following document gathers inspiration from the presentations and conversations that took place during this forum as well as the focus groups leading up to the event.

Forum goals

- To encourage knowledge and practice exchange.
- To create a collection of best practices.
- To promote a youth social entrepreneurs' ecosystem.
- To create a strategic and sustainable partnership that can last and prosper beyond the project duration.
- There continues to be a lack of understanding about the concept as well as the need to break down barriers and stigma. Social entrepreneurship education should start in childhood and be integrated into school curricula to help change mindsets and show that social entrepreneurship actually works.

Key insights

- While social business is becoming "trendy", we need to be aware of the use of "greenwashing" or "impact-washing".
- There continue to be many other barriers: lack of access to capital, legal frameworks, access to resources, and tools in different languages, among others.
- There is also reason to hope, as we will show with the many youth-led initiatives in the following pages.



Best Practices

We hope that the following collection of best practices offers some helpful insights that can support youth workers, NGOs, and other stakeholders in designing trainings and services to support young entrepreneurs who are motivated to create a positive impact in their communities. The focus of the case studies is on initiatives in Spain that we had the opportunity to learn from during our international forum. Moreover, at the end of the guide, we include references to resources and tools from each partner country.



Objectives & Target

The program 'Social Gastronomy' of the NGO CESAL is directed to young people between 16 and 30 years old belonging to vulnerable groups or at risk of social exclusion.

Activities & Approach

A six month training in waiting tables or cooking, that also includes enriching activities such as masterclasses with renowned chefs, exchanges with other hospitality schools, cooking workshops, etc.

The training model is **learning-by-doing**. They count with a **mentor**, which in many cases include young people who have been part of the program in the past.

The training includes **social and work skills** for the comprehensive growth and social inclusion of the students, through psychologists and social workers, and leisure activities to get to know them in other environments.

Achievements & Impact

Hiring of students in restaurants; promotion of the tourism and hospitality sector; **prevention of violence** through gastronomy as an educational instrument; change in the **perception** that society has about vulnerable young people; improvement of self-esteem and **confidence** of the students.

Conditions to replicate

- **Public-private alliances:** to achieve work practices and youth employment insertion as well as strategies with the public sector for the rehabilitation and recovery of abandoned urban spaces.
- **Training of professionals** who accompany our students to develop soft skills, not just technical ones.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

The biggest challenge is the impact of personal adversities that students may go through during the training. Therefore, **comprehensive support and a flexible program** are required, so that it can be adapted to the individual needs of each student. It is also necessary to carry out continuous **evaluation** and **keeping in contact** with the youngsters.



Objectives & Target

Conciencia Afro is an **artistic, cultural and political proposal** focused on claiming, celebrating and disseminating Afro communities' realities and knowledge. **The "Conciencia Afro" Cultural Centre** aims to be a space for the construction of citizenship, A hub for individuals and organizations that foster and create culture, that understand that community creation has a high potential for social impact by strengthening and creating community ties.

Activities & Approach

At Espacio Afro there are conferences, dance and music classes, book presentations, exhibitions, film projections, resident artists... **The Afro Consciousness Festival** brings together politics, culture, social entrepreneurship, pedagogy, etc. **The library** connects cultural production and anti-racist knowledge from other latitudes with what is taking place in Spain. **'Negrxs' digital magazine** holds a conversation about narratives around the heterogeneous identity of the Afro community. **The coworking space** aims to get together diverse people to share an office, talk and illuminate realities. **The Urban Camp** is a space for all children, where they can feel safe, enjoy their leisure time while learning and discovering other cultures, traditions, about afro hair care, the importance of anti-racist language and to love themselves for who they are.

Achievements & Impact

Espacio Afro has been working for **more than six years** in the field of artistic creation, the design of cultural projects and the promotion of community processes. They have created a plural space open to multiple ways of constructing the world **from their own blackness**.

Conditions to replicate

This project possesses unique attributes, as well as elements shared with other efforts aimed at eradicating racism. To effectively achieve this goal, it is essential that the projects are led by individuals from communities directly affected by racism. They should focus on promoting empowerment and highlighting the valuable contributions of racialized communities. Furthermore, it is crucial to work in collaboration with other local organizations, creating a strong and unified network that strengthens the impact and reach of these initiatives.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

The organization faces significant challenges, among which the repercussions of institutional racism stand out. This impacts the lives of the black, African, and Afro-descendant individuals they work and collaborate with. Another notable challenge is the limitation of financial resources that hinders the maintenance and expansion of social and cultural projects. It is essential to learn from the experience and efforts of those who have tirelessly fought against racism in Spain. There is a commitment to actively recognize and celebrate the significant contributions of the Afro community in Spain. This approach not only honors the past but also inspires and strengthens our current and future initiatives.

Objectives & Target

Ecooo is a non-profit cooperative with 18 years of expertise in fostering citizen **empowerment in the energy and economic sectors**. They aim to establish a sustainable, novel, and democratic energy model, alongside the creation of an equitable, democratic, and sustainable economic, business, and consumption framework. They encourage **self-consumption** within households, organizations, companies and local energy communities. Ecooo collaborate with **insertion companies** offering professional training and facilitating their integration into the job market. They also **invest in photovoltaic plants** and their headquarters, the sole 100% sustainable space powered by renewable sources in Madrid, are available for event rentals. Ecooo develop consultancies and projects towards an **economic model that respects the limits of life**.

Activities & Approach

Ecooo have engaged more than 4,000 people in renewable energy investment, communalizing 170 photovoltaic plants and managing 35 million euros. They facilitated 100 households in adopting individual self-consumption systems when Spain had around 150 such installations. Assisted Getafe City Council in establishing an energy community by installing photovoltaic panels in municipal buildings and sharing energy with vulnerable families. The School of Economic Activism has hosted more than 300 participants, and they've recently launched 'Up me up,' the first job search portal in the social economy.

Achievements & Impact

Ecooo's **School of Economic Activism stands out for its innovative and sustainable approach** in involving citizens, specially young people, in reshaping the economy. The school has been replicated territorially in various editions, and works as a strategic element to bring the social economy closer to the citizens.



Challenges & Lessons Learned

Establishing **robust networks** with diverse stakeholders has expanded their initiatives impact. **Adaptability and flexibility** in strategy have been crucial, allowing adjustment to evolving economic and social conditions, ensuring program relevance and effectiveness. **Continuous education and public awareness campaigns** on economic activism principles and sustainability are pivotal in driving substantial and lasting change.

Objectives & Target

EMES is an international research network (ASBL under Belgian law) composed of **14 university research centres and over 280 individual researchers** (including over 100 PhDs) whose aim is to gradually build an international corpus of theoretical and empirical knowledge, pluralistic in disciplines and methodologies, around **“SE” concepts**: social enterprise, social entrepreneurship, social economy, solidarity economy. The dialogue among various disciplines, among different SE approaches, and between research and action constitutes the DNA of the EMES network.

Activities & Approach

EMES conducts **multidisciplinary studies** to understand the diversity of experiences at national levels, and the way social enterprises and third sector organizations contribute and relate to social innovation across societies with an emphasis on how the **participation** of communities enhances such processes. They have covered issues as varied as health and personal services, work integration, migration, the ecosocial transition, culture and the arts, etc.

Five values guide EMES: scientific community building through collaboration, trust, engagement, openness and professionalism.

Achievements & Impact

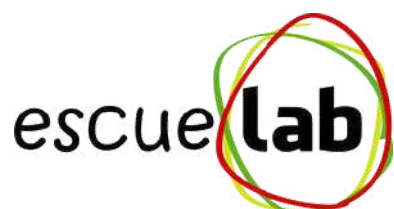
EMES collaborates with international organizations and governments to advance the understanding of social enterprise and support evidence-based policy-making. EMES is an Observer Member of the UN Task Force for the Social and Solidarity Economy and a member of the European Commission’s Experts’ Group on Social Entrepreneurship, (GECES). EMES has published over thirty books and organizes bi-annual international conferences and international PhD Summer Schools that have become references in the research community.

Conditions to replicate

EMES was born as a European network but as interest in the SE field developed, other regions began to be interested in the principles of collaboration and mutual support that inspired EMES. Opening up the membership to the rest of the world, turned EMES into a global network with all the related complexities that this entails. And yet, EMES seeks to support regional, national and local groups of researchers and has collaborated with some of them in various forms.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

The **long-term sustainability** of the Coordination Unit, including the financial viability but also a transparent governance and increasing systematization that improves processes and takes stock of the organizational knowledge. Also, the irregular **level of engagement** of members in the associative life of EMES. This is connected to the precariousness of researchers life until they reach a stability, we thrive on finding ways to make it easier for members to contribute and participate.



Objectives & Target

Escuelab's mission is to extend access to practical and interactive scientific education, promoting vocations among children, especially among those with fewer resources.

Their goal is to **make science accessible to children at risk of exclusion**, whether for socio-economic reasons or because they have special educational needs or disabilities.

Activities & Approach

- **Lab clubs:** extracurricular activities offered throughout the school year.
- **Lab camps:** urban camps open to all interested groups (children of employees of companies, local communities, etc.).
- **Lab days:** specific workshops carried out in schools or other contexts (science fairs, birthday parties, etc.).
- **Development of educational content:** design of materials to be implemented by publishers in textbooks and other pedagogical resources in the field of science.

Achievements & Impact

Escuelab has **reached more than 20,700 children in Spain and Latin America**, with more than 3,000 receiving scholarships. This is equivalent to more than 1,230 new scientific vocations, with excellent satisfaction and learning results.

They have achieved recognitions such as the **UNICEF Emprende Award** or the **Spanish National Youth Award**.

Conditions to replicate

- Build a committed team
- If financing is not available, find another complementary source of income until sustainability is achieved
- Highly recommend allying with other entities that know the target audience

Challenges & Lessons Learned

The most critical tension Escuelab has faced is the dichotomy between the **bureaucratic slowness** that is inherent in working with public administration and the realization that without this collaboration it is impossible to achieve maximum impact. To combine the need for immediacy and the aspiration for systemic change, **they work both from the top down and bottom up**, striving for both approaches to succeed.



Objectives & Target

La Imprenta generates **popular culture open to the local context** for the construction of another possible world. Their motto is "*cultural strategies and artifacts to change the world*", and its main objective is to **generate and gather culture** - in the full breadth of the term - **around the task of building another possible world**. The project aspires to grow enough to give access to culture to vulnerable groups and make art a tool for social transformation in line with the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda.

Activities & Approach

This cultural association is at the same time a neighborhood **cultural center**, an **exhibition space**, an **associative bookstore** and an **independent publishing house**. They host meetings, workshops, exhibitions, recitals, concerts, gatherings, reading clubs and other activities that **connect the neighborhood with culture**. All the titles published provide feedback, through recitals, performances, meetings and workshops achieving circularity between the four fundamental pillars. They facilitate the **meeting between artists, citizens and activists** around a community of playful-affective creation.

Achievements & Impact

Since its **opening in April 2021**, La Imprenta has been programming three **cultural events** per week on their stage; has organized seven **exhibitions** of visual art; has coordinated the edition of the **Voix Vives** Toledo International Poetry Festival; has published **23 titles**, including 'Poetic Nature', the largest anthology of eco-poetry in Spanish and 'Matria poética', the first anthology to be published with migrant and racialized voices residing in Spain. However, the biggest achievement is the creation of **networks** and participation of existent ones to contribute to their objectives.

Conditions to replicate

- To count with a strong group of people, who are committed and aligned to the purpose of the project.
- To count with a minimum economical base to start the activity
- To generate as soon as possible a community around the project that can also feel part of it

Challenges & Lessons Learned

The main challenge has been to achieve a financial sustainability that is translated into balanced working hours. Specifically, to have two people hired without external grants. Also, to be a reference for the neighbors and last, to be relevant socially setting the agenda in the issues considered critical. The most crucial lesson learnt is the relevance of working in networks and have been doing so since the very beginning.





Objectives & Target

The PEM platform is a initiative designed to **address economic and social challenges by fostering entrepreneurship**. It aspires to empower individuals, particularly women, young people, and those facing economic challenges, to become successful entrepreneurs. It represents a **multifaceted approach** that combines online education, mentorship, and financial support to create a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurship, contributing to both individual and societal well-being.

Activities & Approach

Providing **targeted training** for entrepreneurs; support for business initiatives through modules focused on developing a business plan and venturing into an entrepreneurial activity; **consolidation tailored itinerary** for entrepreneurs with businesses less than three years old; **mentorship** and **individualized consultations**; training itinerary for individuals **aspiring to become mentors**.

Central to the **methodology** is the enhancement, adaptation, and digitalization of self-employment training for the post-COVID-19 era.

Achievements & Impact

PEM has garnered registrations from over **2,400 individuals** from Spain and also South and Central America. The offering of **50 online courses** signifies a diverse curriculum. The **creation of more than 70 businesses** in Spain showcases the tangible success of empowering participants. A key driver of the program's success is its **unwavering commitment to accessibility**, providing open and free access to its resources.

Conditions to replicate

- **Establishing strong partnerships** with organizations, public and private, involved in entrepreneurship and education
- **Continuous adaptation** to align with the ever-changing entrepreneurial landscape.
- **Ensuring accessibility** to meet the diverse needs of their target audience.
- **Customization** to support the specific context of the target region or population
- **Capacity building** to develop a network of mentors and trainers
- **Leveraging technology** for user engagement

Challenges & Lessons Learned

The need for **constant updates** to align with the evolving entrepreneurial ecosystem. **Fostering engagement and participation** in the online learning space. **Overcoming barriers** such as digital literacy and ensuring the platform's accessibility to all individuals. The necessity to **swiftly incorporate feedback**, evaluate the effectiveness of courses and make real-time adjustments.





Objectives & Target

Rural Hackers was born as a response to the need to **fight against depopulation** and **create a sustainable bridge** that unites rural communities with the contemporary world. It revolves around the intersection of **art, technology and rural life**.

Activities & Approach

Residencies to welcome artists, digital nomads and people who want to carry out their ideas with Rural Hackers. They provide a co-living space where they can explore, experiment and interact with the local community.

International projects aimed at direct action on previously identified topics. These projects are often carried out in collaboration with international partners thanks to the support of the European Commission or private sponsors. The projects are a natural extension of the work in the residences and reflect their commitment to creating a positive impact in the communities they serve.

Rural Hackers is a movement, **a gentle revolution** that seeks to merge seemingly opposite worlds to make an inclusive and equitable future a reality.

Achievements & Impact

They have developed **residencies in topics as diverse as**: exploring the symbiosis between art and artificial intelligence; revitalization of a community house reinforcing the sense of belonging of the inhabitants; rescuing, honoring and preserving the cultural heritage and exploring and documenting the biodiversity of their local community, Anceu. **They have been the hosts of** women entrepreneurs from Europe as part of the Next Generation EU 'The Break' program; managers of the European Creative Hubs Network (ECHN) and young web designers from 'The digital future of EU' program. Also, they have woven a **network of artistic and cultural collaborations** in Larache (Morocco).

Conditions to replicate

- Everything they do is **open-source**.
- As result of ECHN Rural Hacking Workshop, funded by the European Creative Hubs Network , they created the **Rural Hacking toolkit for rural activists**

Challenges & Lessons Learned

Coordinating international projects demands seamless communication and collaboration, overcoming language barriers and aligning diverse perspectives. Understanding the unique challenges of rural communities, including cultural intricacies, economic conditions, and limited access to technology, is crucial. Bridging the digital divide in rural areas and integrating art, technology, and rural life require ongoing efforts for success.

SANNAS⁺

Asociación de Empresas
por el Triple Balance

Objectives & Target

The Association of Companies for the Triple Bottom Line, SANNAS, was created to unite all companies that share the vision of the Triple Bottom Line (economic, ecological and social) and transform the traditional business model, contributing to building a more sustainable, fairer and more equitable society.

Activities & Approach

SANNAS offers support to promote the triple bottom line initiatives of its member companies, organizing events for the dissemination of good practices, providing training in measuring the triple bottom line, creating an ecosystem, networking activities, and offering visibility to the innovative projects of its partners.

The approach used is the **Triple Bottom Line methodology**.

Achievements & Impact

To have created a lively and collaborative community.

The triple balance measurement tool has been a milestone and an achievement of collaboration and participation.

Communication campaigns such as #Marcasannas, La Flor de Sannas, etc.

Conditions to replicate

- Take care of people within the organization. They are our treasure.
- Recognize the efforts of the people who collaborate, involve them in decision-making, and give visibility to good practices.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

A **New Organizational Model** that involves all the members of the Association.

Sannas today is a network-archical (not hierarchical), horizontal organization, where what matters is the collaboration between everyone.



Objectives & Target

turba! provides third sector and social economy organizations with the communication and strategy tools to maximize their positive impact. **NGOs** such as Oxfam-Intermón or Ayuda en Acción and **social economy entities** such as EnRaíz or Garúa are their most common audience, but they have also worked with a variety of entities such as patient associations, universities or the European Parliament.

Activities & Approach

From graphic and web design, to event production or the development of political strategies and complex narratives, they carry out **different tasks from an intersectional point of view** both in their values (ecofeminist and anti-racist) and in their areas of experience (law, economics, international relations...).

They recognize their ideas are the product of invaluable collective learning, as a result of their **participation in social movements** and, so they believe in sharing and creative commons. Also, they do this to be happy and that is why they do not want to compete.

Achievements & Impact

The greatest achievements often require that their work remains invisible, so that the focus is on the theme of the project in question. From the positioning of key pieces and topics of social importance in the press to the creation of narratives, they help clients chart a solid path in the third sector and the social economy, **becoming an engine of change and progress**. They have given visibility to transformative projects in areas as varied as agroecology, the fight against fossil infrastructures or promoting anti-racism narratives.

Conditions to replicate

- **turba!** emerged from a very specific group of people, with very different skills and areas of experience. The one piece of advice would be to start from the perspective of the added **value of diverse and different experiences** mixed in new and innovative ways.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

The need to **adapt** to a constantly changing environment, where communication and strategies evolve rapidly. The **balance** between our ethical beliefs and market demands, although this has taught us the importance of staying true to our values while pursuing positive impact. Last, we often encounter **distrust** from the organizations towards tools that are not commonly associated with their values such as marketing and complex network advertising strategies.



Objectives & Target

U4IMPACT connect **university students** from all over Spain with foundations, institutions, companies and entrepreneurs to develop **final degree or master's projects**. These projects are **linked to the SDGs**, responding to real needs for innovation, sustainability and social impact. They have more than **350 active contact points in 52 universities** to attract young talent and committed students, with direct contact with vice-chancellors, deans and professors to achieve agile collaborations.

Activities & Approach

The platform facilitates in an agile and simple way the **effective match** of company projects with suitable students based on:

- **Student competencies** (test with the 4 most valued competencies in young talent)
- **Technical profile**, qualifications and knowledge
- **Motivation**, interest in the project and alignment in values with the company

The methodology of work and support of students and companies allows projects to **achieve the greatest impact for companies and for students**. They provide support and monitoring to students and company coordinators with valuable resources for the former and a methodology of work by objectives and support for the latter.

Achievements & Impact

They have received more than **20 awards**, such as the TEDx Barcelona Awards (Education category), the Business & Society Understander Awards (HR category) in 2022 and the InnovaRH Awards in 2023. U4IMPACT has created an **ecosystem of organizations and numerous profile students** throughout the national territory. They provide **innovation**, allowing employees to rely on senior university students; **attract highly in-demand young talent**, who can be hired upon completion of the projects, and **bring an impact** by making projects come true that do not have time to promote on a day-to-day basis but are important for the organization.

Conditions to replicate

The conditions to replicate a project like this involve **generating this work and commitment environment** in which U4IMPACT coexists. It is important to work with people aligned with the vision of U4IMPACT, who ask why we do things. In this world of immediacy, with many changes and very fast, at U4IMPACT believe that a large part of success is not what they do, but why they do it.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

Challenges have been found when it comes to acquiring commitment from entities or students. It is important to involve all the people who participate in the process to ensure that the projects will go well, regardless of whether there is a signed contract.

Objectives & Target

To contribute to solving the problem of youth unemployment in Spain, **offering self-employment and micro-entrepreneurship as a viable employment alternative.**

Young entrepreneurs usually:

- Do not have knowledge of business management.
- Do not have the financial resources to start their own business.

Within this target audience, they understand the specific needs of groups such as women, migrants, people from rural areas, people with disabilities, etc.

Activities & Approach

- **Digital transformation.** The [YBS Social Tech Labt](#) is an initiative to promote digital competencies.
- **Sustainability Toolkit** to support the incorporation of sustainable practices in business models.
- Program '**Improving entrepreneurial success**', to improve the knowledge in financial culture and business management of small businesses.
- **Social microcredits** for those who have difficult access to traditional banking.
- **Mentoring:** personalized support from professionals with entrepreneurial experience.

Achievements & Impact

YBS **has served more than 20,000 people** (+2,500 in 2022); helped in the creation of more than 4,500 businesses (+400 in 2022); mentored more than 3,500 young people in their itineraries of accompaniment to entrepreneurship and offered more than 800,000 euros in social aid and microcredits.

Conditions to replicate

The entities that are part of the network **know first-hand both the territorial reality** of the place in which they operate **and the target audience** to which they are directed:

- Working with public and private actors such as Fundación Ronsel and Xunta de Galicia allows to understand the needs of entrepreneurs in Galician towns.
- Working with the Secretariado Gitano has promoted the Mercaemprende program, allowing professionalization in the field of street vending.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

Only 15% of self-employed people are young people under 35 years old, meaning that it is needed to **continue working to offer self-employment as a viable employment option.**

Mentoring or periodic support is as important as starting it. The survival rate of businesses supported by our mentoring program is 87%.

Conclusions and recommendations

There are many invaluable lessons learned from our conversations with the social entrepreneurship ecosystems in each of our local communities. While social impact businesses are becoming key players in the entrepreneurial landscape, more work needs to be done to demonstrate that social enterprise is in fact a viable path forward, particularly for youth.

How can we create a supportive and inclusive ecosystem for young entrepreneurs?

The answer lies in adopting a multifaceted, personalized approach. Crafting any social entrepreneurship itinerary should involve **tailoring training, mentorship and financial support** to individual needs. At the same time, recognizing the significance of integrating **well-being and access to mutual support networks** is crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainability of social businesses. Here, all stakeholders emphasize the need for the development of soft skills (growth mindset, self-esteem, leadership) alongside technical ones.



This brings us to the concept of **collaboration**. Many of the social entrepreneurs we spoke with show a commitment to **open source principles, creative commons, and collaboration**.

This mindset, characterized by openness and generosity, is fundamentally different from the traditional entrepreneurial focus on understanding and outperforming our “competitors”. These entrepreneurs show time and time again that a shift from a “go at it alone” mentality to a “what can we achieve together” mindset leads to greater innovation and social impact.



Initiatives like **Rural Hackers**, operating entirely on an open-source basis, provide hope for the realization of the "gentle revolution" they aspire to — bringing together “seemingly opposite worlds to build an inclusive and equitable future”.

Several case studies also highlight the importance of **bringing diverse perspectives together in new and creative ways**, creating space for groups traditionally lacking access. Building community and collaboration occur at various levels, both within social businesses (embracing network and horizontal approaches) and in forming alliances and partnerships (both public and private). All participants stressed the need to create networks and participate in already existing ones.

The social entrepreneurship landscape is constantly changing, and in order to make it responsive to the needs of vulnerable groups, we must also be willing to **evolve rapidly and to adapt** to the environment and the needs of those we work with.

In this digitized world, there is added value in creating spaces for real human encounters.

In this sense, working with entities on the ground that know and understand first-hand the territorial reality and the needs of the target audience is crucial.

Finally, we cannot disregard the power of technology to enhance user engagement and achieve even greater social impact; however, those working in this sector also recognize the limits of online learning spaces and the digital world. We all agree that there is true added value in creating spaces for real human encounters that cannot be replaced by technology alone.

We hope that this guide, filled with initiatives and resources that have inspired our work, will offer motivation for all who accompany and support the journey of young entrepreneurs. Ultimately, these best practice case studies show the potential of social entrepreneurship as an inclusive model to empower young people to create innovative solutions to the local challenges they face. As mentioned, youth have the capacity to be drivers of positive change, but they often lack the “how”. May this guide serve as a roadmap for all those who believe that another way of doing business is possible.

List of Resources

Belgium

Joumens thé lavenir and Changemaker exchange, Ashoka.

<https://www.ashoka.org/en-be/country/belgium>

CIFAL: Publications and workshops for sustainable entrepreneurship and social innovation.

<https://cifal-flanders.org/what-we-do/publications/>

Duo for a Job: Intergenerational mentoring at Flemish Universities.

<https://www.duoforajob.be/>

Buildabridge: Puts students in contact with a mentor.

<https://www.buildabridgebelgium.com>

YMCA Youth Led Solutions Initiative: Network to support youngsters who want to change the world.

<https://www.ymca.int/what-we-do/programmes/youth-led-solutions-initiatives/>

Poland

Platforma Ekonomii Społecznej/Social Economy Platform: Materials for those who want to start a social enterprise and for those already running social enterprises

<https://platformaes.pl/>

Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu/Responsible Business Forum: An association disseminating knowledge in the field of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development.

<https://odpowiedzialnybiznes.pl>

Pomorski Klub Edukatorów Przedsiębiorczości Młodzieżowej/Pomeranian Club of Youth Entrepreneurship Educators: A platform containing useful materials for educators teaching young people about social economy.

<https://ekonomiaplus.pomorze.pl/>

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Spółdzielnia Socjalna Integracja/Social cooperative Integration: Example of successful social enterprise.

<https://integracja.zabrodzie.pl>

Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Wspierania Aktywności Seniorów/Association for Supporting the Activities of Seniors: Example of successful social enterprise.

<https://aktywnysenior.org.pl/>

ekonomiaspoleczna.pl: Information and educational portal, combining economics with social activities.

<https://ekonomiaspoleczna.pl/>

Simpact Venture Capital: Impact investment fund vc supporting start-ups that generate a positive, measurable social or environmental impact.

<https://www.simpact.vc>

Stowarzyszenie na rzecz Spółdzielni Socjalnych / Association for Social Cooperatives: Legal, networking and inspirational content for social coops.

<http://spoldzielnie.org>

Konkurs [ES] Przedsiębiorstwo Społeczne Roku im. Jacka Kuronia / Jacek Kuroń's Competition for the best Social Enterprise: The competition chooses the best enterprises under the following categories - the best enterprise, idea for development, discovery of the year, special prize. There have been 11 annual editions, each containing a list of carefully chosen social enterprises.

<https://konkurs-es.pl>

Spółdzielnia Socjalna "Centrum Usług Środowiskowych" / Social Cooperative "Centre for Environmental Services": The cooperative was started as an answer to the lack of services such as catering, maintenance of public areas, non-formal education and tourism, but most importantly, it helps people with disabilities find employment, rehabilitation and integration.

<https://cus-drobin.pl>

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Romania

Eco-Rom Ambalaje: Eco-Rom Ambalaje focuses on waste management and recycling solutions to promote environmental sustainability.

<https://www.eco-rom.ro/en/>

Reciclad'OR: Reciclad'OR is a social enterprise that encourages recycling by offering rewards for collected recyclables.

<https://reciclador.ro/>

Mater: Mater is a sustainable furniture company that emphasizes eco-friendly materials and ethical production.

<https://mater.ro/>

Sano Touring: Sano Touring is a travel agency that supports responsible tourism and community development.

<https://sanotouring.ro/>

Turbine: Turbine is a social enterprise that focuses on providing AI-driven solutions for social good, including educational and healthcare applications.

<https://turbine.ai/>

Fundatia Orange: Fundatia Orange is the Orange Foundation in Romania, working on projects related to education, health, and social inclusion.

<https://www.fundatiaorange.ro/en/>

Funky Citizens: Funky Citizens focuses on civic education, transparency, and using technology for social impact.

<https://funkycitizens.org/en/>



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The Sesi Project consortium is made up of the following partners:

Youth ProAktiv in Belgium: An organisation that aims to create a generation of proactive individuals ready to invest their talents for the betterment of society by starting their own businesses and creating jobs for themselves and others. They are a coalition of young people promoting a culture of pro-activity and entrepreneurship in education and policy.

AIDE in Romania: Founded in 2016, the aim of the organization is to support vulnerable groups and integrate them into the community. To achieve this goal, AIDE has proposed the following activities: personal development workshops, entrepreneurial and environmental protection activities, international mobilities in order to exchange good practices, civic development activities, activities of multiculturalism and tolerance promotion.

Fundacja ReGeneracja in Poland: Founded in 2014, Fundacja ReGeneracja was created to support the comprehensive development of children, adolescents and seniors, in particular by stimulating their social, cultural, economic and physical activity.

Imagine Apps in Spain: With more than ten years of building web and mobile apps for more than 80 million people, they have worked with organizations like the University of Columbia and Mount Sinai in New York City, and the University of Navarra in Spain. All their technological projects and services are oriented to educational innovation and inclusion.

Espacio Geranios in Spain: dedicated to promoting social entrepreneurship and innovation projects in Madrid. The association is made up of SMEs, social impact startups, NGOs, and freelance professionals, working and collaborating from a coworking space located in the Ventilla-Almenara neighborhood of Madrid.

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