Best Practice
Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia (SEAL)

A summary of your support

The NGO "Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia" (SEAL) was founded in the autumn of 2015 and now unites more than 130 members. The NGO promotes the development of social entrepreneurship in Latvia, bringing together like-minded organizations, companies and people who believe that social entrepreneurship in Latvia has a huge potential and who are ready to participate in the development and strengthening of the sector.

SEAL operates in three main directions: (1) Advocacy of interests; (2) Improvement of the capacity of members; (3) Informing society.

Need of the support provided

Those who are already engaged in social entrepreneurship or plan to start it lack knowledge, skills, and necessary contacts. There is also a need of building a sense of community. The support of like-minded people is essential. The NGO offers about 5-10 individual consultations and 5 public workshops per month. On average 5 companies monthly apply for the Social Entrepreneurship Registration.

Who benefits from your support?

Association members, NGOs, social enterprises, entrepreneurs, public sector, pupils and students.

Describe a concrete example of the support you provide

SEAL participates in a project on the cooperation of social enterprises with local governments "LOCAL-Y-MPACT" ("Enhancing youth capacity in municipalities and encouraging mutual cooperation using social entrepreneurship as a tool", funded by the European Commission's ERASMUS+ programme). Social enterprises, non-governmental and youth organisations work together to promote a sense of belonging and to seek effective solutions to societal challenges at the local level. As creators of the social impact ecosystem, they have found it very important to involve municipalities as partners, motivating and encouraging them to set up support systems for community organisations in their regions, also for youth organisations and social enterprises. In the first phase, the project partners work with pilot municipalities in their country to map existing organisations, methods of cooperation, needs and challenges. SEAL has signed a cooperation agreement and will test the projection approach in Talsi municipality.

For the first time in Latvia, SEAL in cooperation with Luminor bank is implementing a free social entrepreneurship development program – "Academy of Change". This is intended for companies, associations and authors of business ideas who are already working in social entrepreneurship and want to go a step further in the development of their organization or idea. This involves a planned 6-month training. The development program is divided into three thematic blocks: (1) social impact management; (2) business development; (3) e-commerce and marketing.

SEAL takes part in various events to inform the wider community about opportunities offered by social entrepreneurship. There is a network of social entrepreneurship ambassadors in the five regions of Latvia.

Every year the industry's largest and most ambitious event – the Social Entrepreneurship Forum is organised. SEAL maintain the largest source of information about social entrepreneurship in the Latvian language: www.socialauznemejdarbiba.lv.

The support involves the following

- **Knowledge and competence development on social innovation**

SEAL provides regional workshops for schoolchildren or the public sector and guest lectures for students at universities. They organise education activities on specific topics, for example, on accounting.

SEAL ensures the development of the experience and knowledge-sharing platform, including joint activities, fast and effective information exchange, up-to-date information on financing and cooperation opportunities, counselling support etc.

- **Methods and tools for promoting social innovation**

Social innovations are promoted through educational material and a collection of tools for the measurement of social impact etc.

- **Cross sectoral opportunities for cooperation**

SEAL is a significant player in community measures. They provide SEAL members and other interested parties with the opportunity to get acquainted, exchange information, knowledge, and experience – the opportunity to encourage each other and cooperate in many other ways.

- **Arranging/providing cross-sectoral meeting arenas and networks**

Various networking events are organized, both for members and municipalities. SEAL's members aren't just social enterprises. The membership is diverse – about half are social enterprises, while the other half are NGOs, individuals, and educational institutions.

- **Advisory services to support social innovators**

SEAL provides mentoring. Within the framework of a special Development Programme, they connect less experienced participants with experienced partners in the field of social entrepreneurship and find consultants/experts for different entrepreneurs. SEAL organises workshops and individual consultations.

- **Business development and solution" packaging" for social - entrepreneurs/ innovators**

To some extent, this type of support can be considered to be offered, more as advisory support or support to find necessary experts.

- **Methods on how to replicate and upscale social innovations?**

For example, the project "LOCAL-Y-MPACT" concerns working with pilot municipalities, to replicate/upscale this approach and experience to other municipalities.

- **Methods to evaluate and show results and effects of social innovations**

In Latvia, the field of impact measurement/ assessment is still developing, however, some things are already available and in process. Research by students is being carried out, for example, on measuring the impact of social entrepreneurship. The Ministry of Welfare based on the MIA methodology has developed guidelines for measuring the social impact of social enterprises. Furthermore, Latvia has, for the first year, been participating in the European Social Entrepreneurship Survey (ESEM).

- **Funding**

Such support is offered, but to a very small extent, as mini funding for promotion.

- **Guidance to funding**

SEAL offers advice and consultations.

- **Other ways of facilitating and catalyzing social innovations**

SEAL organizes various events, for example, the Hackathon of Social Innovations, and the Pitch Competition. The Social Innovation Hackathon is a 48-hour marathon of ideas where new, viable social business projects based on modern technologies can be created under the guidance of professional mentors.

SEAL also organizes, in cooperation with the British Council in Latvia, a Social Entrepreneurship Pitch "Tam labam būt augt" (That Good should Grow) with the aim to promote the development of existing social enterprises and new social entrepreneurship ideas, as well as to show and talk about these ideas to everybody.

What would you say are the most innovative aspects of your support?

SEAL believes that the most innovative aspects of their support could be the Hackathons of Social Innovations and the Development Program "Academy of Change".

Is your work supported by national/ regional/local policies?

SEAL participate, as far as possible, for example, in the decision-making process and its opinion is heard as the opinion of NGOs in the relevant field. They do advocacy for their interests at local, regional, and national levels. The cooperation network includes municipalities, regional and national stakeholders. For example, SEAL participated in the development of the Law on Social Entrepreneurship and continues to work with regional and national decision-makers and policymakers to create a supportive environment for social entrepreneurship.

However, the organization does not receive direct support from the state or local governments for its activities and initiatives.

Is it strengthened by funding, research or other supportive measures?

Basically, no. SEAL may participate in state or local government procurements in accordance with general procedures and become a service provider. SEAL cooperates with universities for taking part in the research.

Outcomes of your actions

SEAL carry out evaluations, questionnaires, and public opinion polls, and develop reviews on different topics of their work. Usually, they prepare an overview of the consultations implemented.

Considering the results of evaluations of activities implemented by SEAL, the content and quality of activities could be constantly improved.

Upscaling your support

The activities and projects implemented by SEAL have upscaling potential, which is purposefully provided. For example, the project is tested in one municipality and has been replicated in other municipalities. A very important aspect of upscaling is that knowledge is accumulated and recorded to transfer it for further use.

What are the main success factors for your work?

Engagement, the community's desire to create change, and working together.

What would help you provide an even better support for social innovations?

To improve and expand the operation of SEAL, available human resources, stable funding and the involvement and support of cooperation partners at all levels are important. This would enable SEAL to have long-term planning, which is important for a development-oriented organisation.

Best Practice
Social Innovation Center

A summary of your support

Since 2013, Social Innovation Centre (SIC) aims to strengthen and disseminate knowledge, promote international and national experience exchange, and establish a network for social innovation - thus enhancing the sustainable development of society.

SIC provides non-formal learning on social innovation, social entrepreneurship, and political processes promoting the formation of policy concerning disadvantaged groups, integration, and community participation in social and political processes.

Their leading experts specialize in the following areas: innovation, civic engagement, society challenges, youth, disadvantaged groups, and social entrepreneurship.

All SICs implemented projects are directly or indirectly related to social innovation, improvement of quality of life and development of new skills.

Need of the support provided

On a broader scale, there is a tendency to know very little about social innovation and its potential benefits as a tool for activation of society and capacity to improve problem-solving, in the private and the governmental sector. To describe the need for SICs support, in general, would be to describe the need for solving societal problems (or need for social innovation) in general.

SIC considers that the key contribution that stands out among other stakeholders and brings novel support to the field is the knowledge and competencies regarding ideating and implementing social innovation in collaboration with other sectors and stakeholders, as well as matching the right collaboration partners for the greater good. SIC's support is especially needed for the less experienced or knowledgeable stakeholders as they embark on the path of working with the topic of social innovation or implementing novel concepts themselves.

Who benefits from your support?

Beneficiaries using developed new tools, approaches and via raising capacity of entities across the sectors. These are:

- Social enterprises
- NGOs in Latvia and the EU (working in various fields)
- Governmental institutions
- Educational institutions
- Occasionally - youth and adult learners
- Occasionally - disadvantaged groups of society
- Social innovators

Describe a concrete example of the support you provide

IIn cooperation with several other Baltic Sea region countries, SIC at present is implementing the project www.socialenterprisebsr.net. In the project, the first integrated platform started, aiming to educate and support social entrepreneurs and other sector-related organizations and individuals. It provides a database of social entrepreneurs and support organizations, news on social innovation, an events calendar, as well as several resources for education and promotion of social innovations.

A project about Participatory Budgeting (The "Empowering Participatory Budgeting in the Baltic Sea Region"), aims to reduce barriers for less involved society members by improving their civic engagement in participatory budgeting. Additionally, it encourages collaboration between civic society and the municipalities. SIC was responsible for proper communication and engagement activities.

'Tomorrow's Land' and 'Unravel Tomorrow' were two projects specifically dedicated to evaluating social innovation and supporting social innovators through various activities. The online learning platform and a MOOC to support the development of the future social innovators were of the specific focus as well

as Tomorrow´s Land strategic foresight report highlighting the key future drivers of social innovation in Europe.

The partnership in the CO-ART project is aimed to develop entrepreneurship, innovation, and digital skills for young unemployed people, creators, or self-employed workers in the cultural and creative industries (CCI) sector by using gamification methods through the construction of online escape games (escape rooms). Thus, SIC is contributing to reducing the negative effects of Covid-19 on the creative industries and self-employed workers.

In 2021 SIC organised an International Digital Innovation Camp for young people from Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, and Norway to design and validate youth-created social entrepreneurship ideas for solving specific selected challenges – loneliness and social isolation of people.

Currently, SIC is carrying out research on the understanding of social innovation in the Latvian society. In the following months, it will serve as the base for creating a SIC's communication strategy aimed to inform more people and stakeholders about social innovation thus improving SIC as an entity itself.

The support involves the following

- **Knowledge and competence development on social innovation**

Projects and project proposals that include social innovation as a theme in the fields of education or training or civic engagement. The implementation of these projects offers training opportunities on this topic to the target group of the respective project, such as NGOs, social enterprises, and young people.

- **Methods and tools for promoting social innovation**

New educational methods and tools for improvements in social innovations have and are under constant development. For instance, lately within the currently implemented project (which is financed by SIF through the NGO Fund), SIC is considering the topic "how to promote social innovations" as a part of the communication strategy. It could in the future serve as a good example for other stakeholders to replicate – for example by adjusting organisations' communication to talk MORE about social innovations.

Here are three more tools:

1. A methodology handbook on organizing innovation camps for promoting youngsters' social entrepreneurship 'Social Entrepreneurship Innovation Camp Methodology'. This is prepared in the project INDIGISE.
2. A massive online open course (MOOC) for social innovators and a facilitator's guide in several languages.
3. The Unravel Tomorrow Learning Journey - A framework and learning resources to support educators in empowering new social entrepreneurs in a collaborative economic environment.

- **Cross sectoral opportunities for cooperation**

Cross-sectoral opportunities for cooperation are built into each project's design. SIC, for example, bring together stakeholders from different sectors to form new connections and improve work on social innovation topics. Another tool that supports this is the platform socialenterprisebsr.net.

- **Arranging/providing cross-sectoral meeting arenas and networks**

SIC intends to build a "platform of platforms" that aims at bridging European networks that work with social innovation and entrepreneurship.

- **Methods to evaluate and show results and effects of social innovations**

The website Socialenterprisebsr.net can be considered a methodology for displaying results and effects of social innovation (especially social entrepreneurship) because many articles feature success stories. There is also a site section 'Impact Measurement Methodology' dedicated to methodologies for impact for educating people on the evaluation of social innovation.

- **Other ways of facilitating and catalyzing social innovations most recently**

SIC considers developing strategy and planning better communication about social innovation as well as since 2021 SIC initiated social innovation flagship initiative development in the Baltic Sea region which currently is in progress.

What would you say are the most innovative aspects of your support?

In general, SIC aims to support innovations through the project design and offered methods.

Firstly, SIC is one of the rare organizations in Latvia that focuses on social innovation as a topic, and the only one pointing out this aspect so clearly.

Secondly, Socialenterprisebsr.net is the first (and the longest standing) platform/resource of this type, that spans over the whole Baltic Sea Region, thus an innovation itself. It is continuously updated with new aspects (for example, with the recent project INDIGISE aimed at youth social entrepreneurship).

SIC has, with its consortium, applied for a project that will tackle specifically "green", or environmentally conscious social entrepreneurship topics.

Also, the research going through the various, previous project, resulting in reports, suggestions and guidelines and the recent survey about social innovation in society is unique and somewhat innovative in the Latvian ecosystem of social innovation stakeholders. Hopefully, this work and experience gained within this project will reduce barriers for other entities in communication about social innovation.

Is your work supported by national/regional/local policies?

SIC is not receiving targeted support as a stakeholder supporting the spread of social innovation in society, but they do benefit from all grant schemes and policies aimed to support NGOs.

Is it strengthened by funding, research or other supportive measures?

Generally, SIC is supported through the financing of projects they implement (e.g., the most recent one - improving their own capacity of communicating about social innovation, and thus informing society about this topic in general). Currently sporadic, academic research is done (e.g., Lukjanska, Kuznecova & Cirule, 2017) on the specific topic of social innovation and social entrepreneurship and non-academic through the EU funding, but SIC benefits from overlapping results of social entrepreneurship

ecosystem development in Latvia.

Outcomes of your actions

Unfortunately, SIC doesn't have the relevant human capacity to evaluate provided support, partly based on the lack of government to track the success of social innovation on a broader scale. The only evaluation they do and can undertake is the one that takes place within individual projects, namely - whether the set-out project goals and indicators have been reached. A more thorough and broad perspective is needed.

Upscaling your support

The initiative Socialenterprisebsr.net is a sustainable and long-lasting resource – considered one of the most successful examples of sustainability of project results. The concept is transferable to other regions, and with a high potential of expanding the concept over the whole EU (still considering the technical side of the platform). Additionally, building on this positive example SIC has created a project idea that would create a "platform of platforms" bringing together similar initiatives of this kind, and thus growing the potential impact through EU-wide networking and exchange of positive results.

What are the main success factors for your work?

- SIC's core value is to strive for innovation as an organization and in their work and what contributes to this innovation is to implement cross-sectoral as well as cross-topic concepts.
- Having the most extensive experience on the topic, as well as in the field of complex multinational projects.
- Lasting networks and collaborations with stakeholders across all sectors and countries.
- Long-lasting and quality work in the field - the image of a trustworthy project partner in the broad arena of the stakeholders.

What would help you provide even better support for social innovations?

- Broader recognition of the importance of this topic, namely new policies and awareness from the national and regional government entities that subsequently leads

to broader awareness in the society and private sector, too.

- For the social innovation ecosystem in general: an entity that dedicates work solely to researching, promoting, and developing social innovation and its positive effects (e.g., a national competence centre or other)
- Finances for SIC to focus work solely on the above-mentioned activities – stable financing instead of short-term project financing.
- Focus on the evaluation of the impact SIC has with their activities on a broader scale and research on the existing gaps in the field.

Best Practice
Society Integration Foundation (SIF)

A summary of your support

SIF is a public foundation established in 2001.

SIF ensures more effective implementation of social cohesion policy and strengthens citizenship and democracy by supporting a civilly educated, active, responsible, inclusive, and cohesive society.

For many years SIF has financially supported NGOs, municipalities, and companies both strengthening their capacity and improving existing or creating new social services.

Innovation in solving the social problems of vulnerable groups has been one of the most important measures. SIF has provided supervision and support to everybody in need before the application submission as well as during the project implementation. Many of Latvia's organizations have built their capacity to develop ideas, prepare applications or other documents and implement activities.

Need of the support provided

NGOs and other organizations usually lack support opportunities in various areas, such as administrative skills, human and financial resource management, planning, operations, and impact assessment. The support provided by the SIF is important not only for individual organizations but for society as a whole. It contributes to the sustainable development of civil society by enabling NGOs to improve democratic processes and cooperation at all levels of the public sector. The support allows providing services with the goal to improve the quality of life of the society and organizing events that inform and educate the population etc.

Who benefits from your support?

• Directly supported: NGOs, local authorities, and the media
• Indirectly supported: groups at risk of social exclusion and discrimination, families, diaspora etc.

Describe a concrete example of the support you provide

NGO Fund - The goal of the programme is to strengthen the sustainable development of civil society. SIF organizes a call for proposals for NGOs every year. Within the call of proposal SIF financially supports those NGO projects that promote public activity and involvement in solving problems relevant to society. The main aims of this support are:

• to strengthen democratic values and respect for human rights
• to promote social responsibility, cooperation, and solidarity in society
• to raise public awareness of inclusive civic participation
• to promote cooperation between NGOs at regional, state, EU, and global levels
• to promote citizens' involvement in NGOs and volunteering
• to ensure the development of data- and evidence-based proposals and policy initiatives
• to contribute to the capacity and performance of NGOs

The number of projects supported depends on the available funding for the programme and the interest of NGOs. In recent years, around 90 projects yearly have been supported.

Lately, SIF is involved in social innovation implementation directly. For example, within the ESF-funded project 'Diversity promotion', new ways of providing social services were piloted. Services provided by social workers and social mentors for asylum seekers, refugees and persons with alternative status were developed in Latvia. Because of the risk of social exclusion and discrimination, it is important to promote the employment and socioeconomic inclusion of mentioned target group. A social mentor provides support in the process of socio-economic integration

of the client by developing an understanding of life in Latvia's society, helping to acquire the skills necessary for everyday life in a real environment, encouraging the development of new skills, as well as providing support solving everyday situations etc. It is important that a model of cooperation between the social worker and the social mentor to achieve the best result for the client within the service is piloted at the same time. It is planned to continue the provision of this service after the end of the project and to expand it to other target groups, if necessary.

In addition, SIF has, in cooperation with local governments, just started work on the development and approbation of a new social service model for homeless people.

Since December 2021, by a decision of the Cabinet of Ministers SIF has been nominated as a National Coordinating Authority in the field of socio-economic inclusion of persons seeking international protection. In fact, different stakeholders are involved in the process of socio-economic inclusion, thus requiring a responsible national authority to ensure appropriate coordination in planning, implementing, and evaluating activities included in the action plan for socio-economic inclusion.

In addition to that, SIF has developed and implemented several training programmes for different target groups in the field of multicultural communication, diversity management, project management etc.

The support provided

- **Methods and tools for promoting social innovation**

NGO Fund is a tool used to promote social innovations financially. Also, consultations and advice during the SI project implementation are provided. After the development and approbation of new social services, the tool can be used more widely and adjusted if needed.

- **Cross sectoral opportunities for cooperation**

Interested parties and people can meet in working groups, seminars, and workshops, organized by SIF. In most cases, daily communication with cooperation partners and/or consultations are provided. The type

of activity of the SIF requires cooperation between the parties involved – public authorities, municipalities, NGOs, and companies, as well as the society. Thus, SIF using personal experience can better support social innovations and their development, to provide opportunities for cooperation.

- **Arranging/providing cross-sectoral meeting arenas and networks**

SIF as National Coordinating Authority provides a meeting arena for stakeholders involved in solving problems of socio-economic inclusion of persons in need of international protection.

The decision-making body of the SIF is the Council, which also reflects in a certain way a cross-sectoral approach to decision-making. The SIF Council consist of the Minister for Education and Science, the Minister for Culture, the Minister for Welfare, the Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development, as well as the Minister for Justice, a representative of the Prime Minister and four representatives of NGOs. NGOs are designated to work in SIF Council for a period of three years. Information obtained in the work of the Council can be forwarded to other stakeholders, which allows various issues, including those requiring social solutions, to be highlighted and put on the agenda of policymakers.

- **Methods on how to replicate and upscale social innovations**

Materials developed within the different projects are, as much as possible, made publicly available. For example, descriptions of programs, services, and guidelines. SIF can offer assistance when anybody wishes to implement or replicate piloted service.

- **Funding**

Within the NGO Fund program, SIF financially supports NGO activities and projects, including those with social innovation aspects.

- **Guidance to funding**

SIF usually announces seminars and workshops on the development of applications for SIF administrated programmes and grant schemes.

- **Other ways of facilitating and catalyzing social innovations**

SIF makes maximum publicity for news and

current affairs, including social innovation. Development and approbation of new innovative social services.

What would you say are the most innovative aspects of your support?

SIF develops new services for socially excluded and discriminated groups. In addition to the before-mentioned social mentoring service, there is also a motivational programme that provides a very wide and complex range of support for returning people to employment. Results of the programme testify to its effectiveness. SIF, using its resources and capacity, can respond quickly to the current societal challenges. For example, within one month, a new service of a social worker was created for Ukrainian citizens, using the experience and model of already established services. This could be considered an example of upscaling. The new service of support also uses previously established models of cooperation with municipal social services.

Is your work supported by national/regional/local policies?

Despite the fact that the work of the SIF is supported by the Latvian government and that SIF is a public foundation established by specific law under the institutional supervision of the Prime Minister, SIF mainly implements activities that are included in the national planning and strategic documents, or implementation of them is determined by national regulations, understanding of the term "social innovations" is insufficient and support to social innovations is not clearly defined in political level and legislation for now.

Is it strengthened by funding, research or other supportive measures?

SIF is financed from the state budget. SIF staff may take part in training provided to the national administration and civil servants. SIF is often involved in the processes of development and monitoring of the national planning documents relevant to SIF activities. Although mentioned funding is aimed to support NGOs or other SIF activities, it is not directly intended to support for social innovations.

Outcomes of your actions

The SIF regularly evaluates the results of programmes, for example, the NGO Fund.

Evaluations are not specifically dedicated to social innovation but are about the programme. The aim of the evaluation is to improve the quality of the programme for next years to achieve the best possible results. The conclusions are basically about the sufficiency of funding available, the structure of the programme, interest and involvement of project applicants, applications' evaluation aspects, etc.

From September to December 2020, for the first time, in-depth research 'Evaluation (Results and Contribution) of Programme "NGO Fund"' was carried out. The research concluded that the NGO fund is unique on a Latvian scale in the context of its objectives and investments.

The SIF still plays an increasing role in the development of the Latvian NGO sector, it can be described as targeted support for strengthening the capacity of NGOs. The projects implemented under the programme every year become more focused on the direct impact on civic participation. It is important that projects become more inclusive and practical. The NGO fund has a direct impact on the promotion of civil society. This research did not however look for aspects concerning support or promotion of social innovations.

Upscaling your support

The innovative services developed by the SIF have the potential to be scaled up. Documents and the SIF staff's support are available so that the service can be implemented more widely apart from the project.

What are the main success factors for your work?

The special status of SIF as a public foundation gives certain advantages in creating different models of inter-institutional/sectoral cooperation.

SIF furthermore has considerable experience both in project management and programme administration, as well as accumulated expertise in the field of civil society, equal opportunities, the inclusion of marginalised groups, etc.

What would help you provide an even better support for social innovations?

At the organisational level, it would be necessary to strengthen the capacity of SIF, particularly in the field of social innovations, upscaling, and social impact measurement, by training employees, raising awareness, and participating in various projects and activities on social innovations.

A more sufficient understanding of the term "social innovations", awareness and legislation in support of it would promote the development and upscale of social innovations in Latvia.

At the national level - clearly defined public policy in the field of social innovations, including the identification of the institutions involved, their role, objectives and tasks would be helpful.

Best Practice
Reach for Change Latvia

A summary of your support

Reach for Change Latvia is part of the global Reach for Change non-profit organisation, founded, and headquartered in Sweden. Its vision is a world where all children and youth reach their full potential. They are working towards this vision by finding local social entrepreneurs with the most promising solutions to pressing issues for children and youth within their focus areas (poverty, inequality, climate change) and supporting them via a range of programs (based on the organization's development stage) and empowering them to develop and scale innovative solutions that help children towards better lives. They also work to advance social entrepreneurship ecosystems across various markets to increase entrepreneurs' chances of success and support strong pipelines of social innovation.

Need of the support provided

In Latvia, social entrepreneurs often do not have the knowledge and experience in business planning and/or measuring their social impact. It is therefore necessary to initially provide a basic understanding of why it is important to measure social impact. Many lack previous direct experience in running a business. In many cases, these social entrepreneurs have simply encountered a societal problem themselves or within close circles, and then come to address it with a solution. Some social entrepreneurs have a background in the social sector or run an NGO, there is therefore sometimes a need to support their transformation into a social enterprise.

Who benefits from your support?

Social entrepreneurs and their organisations (both NGOs and companies).

Even if the initiative is created or maintained as an NGO, Reach for Change helps the organisation to understand how to generate income and be sustainable.

Describe a concrete example of the support you provide

Reach for Change Latvia has for example supported the development of the multifunctional centre 'Step Up', where rehabilitation for children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders is provided.

The core program is the incubator, a multi-year offering which offers free, tailored capacity development support to early-stage social entrepreneurs. The recruitment for the incubator is organized through a public campaign, where anyone can apply. Young people and children should be involved as beneficiaries of the entrepreneurs' initiative, which must also have proof of concept, be sustainable and the social impact must be potentially up scalable. The centre 'Step Up' met these criteria, went through several stages of selection, including interviews and was then accepted into the incubator, where they received in-depth capacity development support. A financial grant was also awarded. By the time social entrepreneurs complete the incubator program, they have generally received support in developing:

- An effective solution – studying and formulation of the problem, development of a solution
- Financial sustainability – creating a sustainable business model, determining the price of a product or service, and creating a long-term plan
- Management and team – defining the mission and strategy. Reach for Change offers a wide network of contacts necessary for the entrepreneur to learn about relevant opportunities and learn from peers.
- Social impact and goals – social impact research, finding the right method, evaluation, and documentation of the result.
- Changing the system – vision of upscaling, research, and strategy to do it.

The support involves the following:

- **Knowledge and competence development on social innovation**

Training is offered within the framework of the incubator program. Consultations for alumni are also available, as well as the exchange of information, e.g., about opportunities of raising funds.

- **Methods and tools for promoting social innovation**

Tools are developed by Reach for Change within the incubator programme. For example, social entrepreneurs can measure their progress using lists of objectives and milestones. The list can also be supplemented with entrepreneurs' own objectives. Continuous monitoring of their progress is carried out.

- **Cross sectoral opportunities for cooperation**

Reach for Change partners are directly engaged with social entrepreneurs and collaboration among them is promoted through joint activities and events. The incubator helps to establish cooperation with the partnering organisations. Through this cooperation, social entrepreneurs can gain advisory, practical tools, recognition, etc.

- **Arranging/providing cross-sectoral meeting arenas and networks**

'Barrier breaking sessions' is an example of the activities organised. These events allow for social entrepreneurs to raise specific challenges they are facing and meet mentors and/or experts that can help to solve the problem, provide contacts, or support with ideas.

Reach for Change also organizes international peer experience exchange, joint learning sessions as well as events where social entrepreneurs from different countries meet, e.g., forums and workshops to get to know each other or enable potential partnerships. An example of such partnership was established during 'Baltic Change Leader Days' which lead to the cooperation between social entrepreneurs from Latvia and Lithuania – as a result of the joint international project, one of the social entrepreneurs expanded their products to new markets.

- **Advisory services to support social innovators**

Advice and support are provided regularly, both within and in addition to the incubator, based on the needs of the entrepreneur. Initially, general support is provided, later it becomes more specific and individual.

- **Business development and solution "packaging" for social entrepreneurs/ innovators**

Reach for Change provides/is an incubator for social entrepreneurs which includes a complex set of different types of support (examples provided above).

- **Methods on how to replicate and upscale social innovations**

Support is offered to those who are preparing for replication or upscaling, and it is provided through incubator support, specifically in accordance with their needs and stage of development.

- **Methods to evaluate and show results and effects of social innovations**

Impact measurement and management training are offered within the incubator, as well as individual follow-up support for those who are ready to measure their impact.

- **Funding**

Since the funding of Reach for Change programs is restricted, the funding opportunities are limited, however to the extent where and when it is possible, funding in the form of unrestricted grants is provided to the most promising social entrepreneurs in collaboration with partners. Depending on the type of cooperation in-kind support, e.g., consultations can be provided by partnering organizations.

- **Guidance to funding**

Reach for Change provides information to social entrepreneurs on new opportunities for funding (e.g., calls for proposals), based on the relevance and needs.

What would you say are the most innovative aspects of your support?

The organization works in two directions both as a training and support institution for strengthening the capacity of social innovators and acts also within developing the Latvian social entrepreneurship ecosystem.

It builds an understanding of the situation and problems in Latvia, allows to provide better support, and creates the most suitable conditions for social innovation development.

Is your work supported by national/regional/local policies?

The work is not supported directly, however, there are policies in place that regulate the sector and provide clear conditions for social entrepreneurs to operate in – since 2018, the Social Enterprise Law is implemented. Reach for Change is one of the local ecosystem stakeholders and is in active communication and information exchange with other actors, e.g., the Ministry of Welfare.

Is it strengthened by funding, research or other supportive measures?

National research on the social entrepreneurship sector was carried out in 2020. More specific research is done locally in collaboration with partnering organizations, e.g. the project 'Community power for Families' (project No. NGSLV-623) with the aim to improve cooperation between the public sector and civil society organizations that provide social services.

Outcomes of your actions

The organization measures how it has affected social entrepreneurs and also asks them to regularly evaluate how they support their target groups. Surveys are conducted, asking if Reach for Change's support has helped in their development, in what areas, how much, and how they would have developed without this support. They are also periodically asked to submit documentation of their impact on their target groups, which is quality controlled by Reach for Change.

Upscaling your support

The incubation program can be upscaled. So far, the geographical coverage has expanded, by using online tools and helping those who otherwise could not have come to Riga (the capital of Latvia) or participated in the offered events. For example, in the online pre-incubator training among participants, there were young mothers with toddlers and a blind person who could actively participate in the training process.

What are the main success factors for your work?

The central success point of Reach for Change Latvia is in the approach "local + global", i.e., there is a person available on-site in Latvia and there is also access to transnational resources from other countries, consultations with international organizations, exchange of experience, and networks of contacts.

What would help you provide even better support for social innovation?

Sustainable funding is crucial for the further development of the organization and for possibilities to further support social entrepreneurs. Furthermore, experience exchanges and learnings from other organizations that are also working towards upscaling social innovations would be valuable.