

Social Innovation Development Ecosystem in Latvia

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Authors:

Evija Kleina, Society Integration Foundation / SIF (Latvia)

Inga Kalniņa, Society Integration Foundation / SIF (Latvia)



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Abbreviations used

| | |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ALTUM | Development Finance Institution ALTUM, JSC |
| BuiCaSuS | Project “Competences centres for social innovation - Building Capacity for Sustainable Society” co-funded by the European Commission |
| CBSS | Community-based social services |
| CCSI | Competence Centre for Social Innovation |
| CM | Cabinet of Ministers |
| CS | Association “Cerību spārni” (“Wings of Hopes”) |
| CS initiative | SI initiative implemented by CS: VISI VAR (“Everyone Can”) |
| Culture State | “Culture State” - Cultural Policy Guidelines 2022–2027 |
| DI | Deinstitutionalisation <i>A process of setting up a system of services that provides a person with limited capacity to care for themselves with the support they need to live at home or in a family environment.</i> |
| EaSI | Employment and Social Innovation programme |
| EC | European Commission |
| EEA | European Economic Area |
| ESF | European Social Fund |
| ESF+ | European Social Fund Plus |
| ESF+ Regulation | Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013 |
| EU | European Union |
| FD | Functional disorders <i>Functional disorders include visual, hearing, mobility, mental, behavioural and/or other types of disorders. They can be congenital or acquired because of skeletal, muscular, connective tissue or surgical diseases, or various injuries. FD makes it difficult for a person, including a child, to care for themselves or perform everyday activities.</i> |
| LALRG | Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments |
| Latvia 2030 | Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 |
| LSA | Association “Latvijas Samariešu apvienība” (“Samaritans Association of Latvia”) |
| LSA initiative | LSA implemented SI initiative “Samaritan Mobile Care Complex” |

| | |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| LSSSA | Law on Social Services and Social Assistance |
| LV | Latvia |
| MEPRD | Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development |
| MI | Mental impairment <i>A mental illness or mental disorder [107] restricting the ability of a person to work and to take care of himself or herself, and also makes it difficult for him or her to integrate into society and that is, determined in conformity with the current version of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, (ICD)</i> |
| MoC | Ministry of Culture |
| MoES | Ministry of Education and Science |
| MoF | Ministry of Finance |
| MoH | Ministry of Health |
| Moj | Ministry of Justice |
| MoW | Ministry of Welfare |
| NDP 2027 | National Development Plan 2021–2027 |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| RB | Association “Rīgas pilsētas “Rūpju bērns”” (“Riga City “Child of Care” “) |
| RB initiative | SI initiative implemented by RB: individual social rehabilitation service for persons with mental impairments |
| SCC | Social Care Centre/s - long-term social care and social rehabilitation institution |
| SEA | State Employment Agency |
| SEAL | Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia |
| SI | Social innovation |
| SIF | Society Integration Foundation |
| SISA | Social Integration State Agency |
| SO | Specific objective |
| SOC LLC | Social enterprise (social limited liability company) |
| SPSDM | Support Person’s Service in Decision-Making |
| SRS | State Revenue Service |

| | |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| State Commission | State Medical Commission for the Assessment of Health Condition and Working Ability |
| UN | United Nations |
| UN Convention | UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) |
| WP | Work package within BuiCaSuS |
| ZELDA | Association "Resursu centrs cilvēkiem ar garīgiem traucējumiem "Zelda"" ("Resource Centre for People with Mental Disabilities ZELDA") |
| ZELDA initiative | SI initiative implemented by ZELDA - support person's service in decision-making |

1. Introduction

In a rapidly changing world, social innovation is becoming increasingly important in addressing the diverse challenges faced by Europe's citizens. The transition to a green (low-carbon) economy, demographic changes, the shift to an information technology-driven economy, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, as well as migration-related issues have already started to transform the world of work, education, and social services.

The concept of social innovation allows public authorities, academic experts, private and non-governmental organisations to establish new relationships or cooperations to foster the development of innovations based on the needs and opportunities of each sector, including by promoting the transfer of good practices among member states. A practice that is already established and used in one country or region may be seen as an innovation elsewhere.

The Society Integration Foundation (SIF) in cooperation with Spain, France and Sweden, is implementing the European Union-funded¹ [project BuiCaSuS](#) (Competences centres for social innovation - Building Capacity for Sustainable Society) in 2021–2023.

This project aims to promote transnational cooperation and mutual learning to establish or strengthen institutions and organisations that operate or could operate as National Competence Centres for Social Innovations (CCSI) in the four countries, and to develop the social innovation² ecosystem there.

BuiCaSuS is one of six consortia and implementers of specific projects funded by the EC. The Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Economy (as the project lead partner), the Spanish State Secretary of Social Rights, the Forum for Social Innovation Sweden, Swedish non-profit organisations "Reach for Change" and "Inkludera", the French social economy and social innovation agency "Avisé" and SIF from Latvia are collaborating in this consortium and implementing the project. One of the project objectives is to map the current SI ecosystems (DP2) in the project partner countries. In addition, the project foresees other activities: to support competences of SI

¹ The BuiCaSuS project is implemented under the Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) administered by the EC. EaSI is a financial instrument designed to assist in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy by providing financial support for reaching the strategical objectives thus promoting quality and sustainable employment, guaranteeing adequate and appropriate social protection, reducing social exclusion and poverty, and improving working conditions.

² Social innovation (SI) meets a social need, foresees developing and putting into practice solutions to current social problems, and better use of funds and resources. Social innovations can be new products, services, models, processes, methods, etc. At the same time, SI involves in cooperation solving social problems as many different stakeholders as possible (for example NGOs, representatives of national or local government, private individuals, entrepreneurs).

impact increasing or upscaling (DP3), to facilitate transnational learning on SI support tools (DP4) and to develop policy proposals for the development or improvement of national CCSI (DP5) [7, 97].

This document — the Mapping Report on Social Innovation Development Ecosystem in Latvia — has been prepared within the framework of the BuiCaSuS project.

Why do we study the SI ecosystem in LV?

In the call for project proposals, the EC has stated that, as part of these cooperation projects, the members of consortia [26] should perform the task of mapping SI ecosystems, which, together with mutual learning, most likely will contribute to the establishment and strengthening of national CCSIs in the member states. The invitation states that the mapping should highlight “...a *comprehensive overview of the social innovation ecosystem, synthesising the visions, needs, opportunities, and priorities of the relevant SI stakeholders and SI promoters in order to create a common strategy and action plan to promote the development of SI in the member state, including within the ESF+ framework*” [25].

At the same time, the reports prepared by the BuiCaSus partner countries will provide a good basis for comparing the identified drivers and barriers to SI development when they meet at the conference ³ in October 2022.

The next chapter describes what we mean by the SI ecosystem and how we studied it in LV.

³ The conference is planned as a meeting of representatives of the participating countries in Madrid, Spain, in October 2022, where the results achieved so far will be discussed in the middle stage of the project and the experiences of other countries will be heard, including concerning the establishment of CCSIs and their involvement in the development of SI.

2. Methodology

This chapter includes indications of what justifies the study of the SIs' development ecosystem from a theoretical aspect, including paying attention to relevant concepts and their explanations. At the same time, the chapter also includes information on how exactly the research was carried out in practice.

2.1. Theoretical aspects and concepts used

SI initiatives often develop where are observed complex societal problems that require relatively quick and urgent, and therefore unusual, but effective and cost-efficient solutions.

The EC explains that "SI are new ideas that meet social needs, create social relationships and form new cooperations. SI can be products, services or models addressing unmet needs more effectively. The EC's objective is to encourage market uptake of innovative solutions and stimulate employment" [29].

To ensure more coherent and clearer understanding of SI by all EU member states, the EC defines SI in the ESF+ Regulation as follows:

"social innovation" means an activity, that is social both as to its ends and its means and in particular an activity which relates to the development and implementation of new ideas concerning products, services, practices and models, that simultaneously meets social needs and creates new social relationships or cooperation between public, civil society or private organisations, thereby benefiting society and boosting its capacity to act [84].

The development of SI initiatives is shown as a spiral [71, p. 7]. It shows more clearly how new ideas, which do respond to new social needs, are created, identified, developed, tested, improved or upscaled, and, if successful, transformed into a social policy.

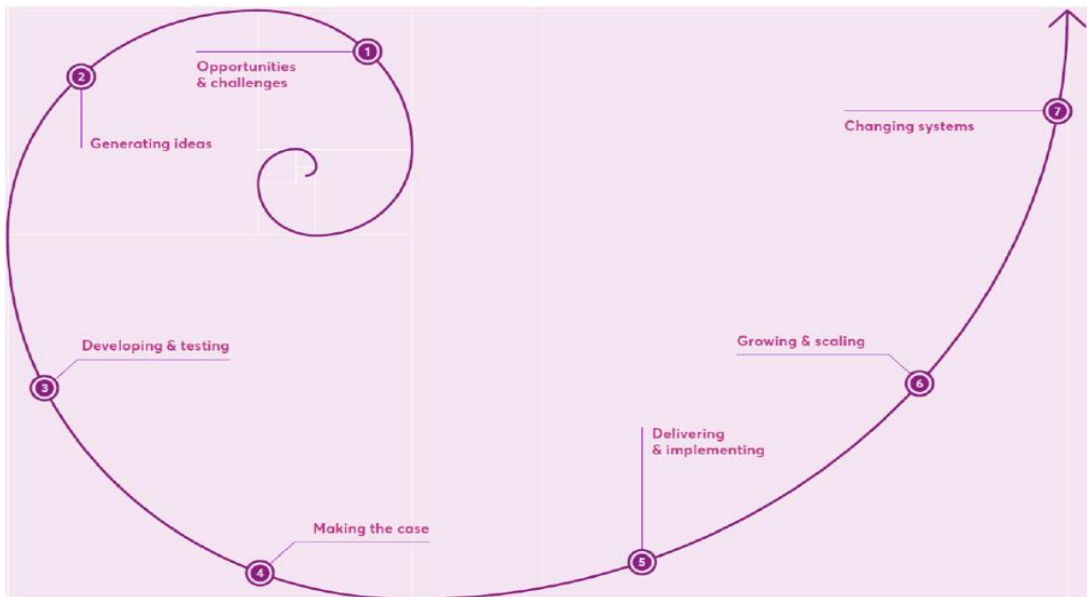


Figure 2-1-1, SI spiral

The SI spiral helps to understand the successful development path of an SI initiative from the idea's birth to the time when it becomes part of the national social policy or system. Unfortunately, this happens very rarely. For such a transformation to take place, at some point the political decision FOR or AGAINST changing the system is essential and decisive. It must be admitted that politically, more often a decision is made AGAINST changes. Therefore, many very good SI initiatives which have achieved and demonstrated very good results during piloting in the local community, eventually “wither”, especially if, because of an unfavourable political decision, there is a lack of permanent funding for the wider implementation of the SI initiative on a national scale.

It should be noted here that SI initiatives are often directly associated with social entrepreneurship⁴. It must be said that in many cases social enterprises (hereinafter -SOC LLC) really develop and implement SI initiatives. In addition, through the business model, successful SOC LLC could become independent from external financiers and ensure the sustainability and stability of their SI initiative. Thus, social entrepreneurship can and does become a part of the SI development process and ecosystem.

The European Commission defines **the SI ecosystem** as:

⁴ Social entrepreneurship is understood as entrepreneurship in which individuals and organisations—social enterprises manage their own business and at the same time measure the social results (impact) of their activities and invest back in their business most of the financial surplus (profit) they create.

- (i) **actors**, *that are providing human intellectual, material, or financial resources to social innovators and SI initiatives including citizens (as volunteers, supporters), civil society or non-governmental organisations, social and private enterprises, customers, financial institutions, governments and local authorities, education and research institutions;*
- (ii) **framework conditions**, *that influence the development of SI initiatives such as institutions, procedures, legislation, policy programmes, funding schemes, training programmes, and civic participation culture.*

According to the 2014 report by Bureau of European Policy Advisors (BEPA) [2], “supportive policies, adequate governance, innovative finance, a variety of capacity building and recognition tools such as incubators, hubs, forums, prizes, and research in methodologies, benchmarking and impact measurement are the main components which, together, create the “natural environment” for social innovation to flourish.”

2.2. Practical aspects and research process

When preparing for the SI ecosystem mapping exercise performing, members of BuiCaSuS consortium agreed that for all countries significant question is:

What factors promote and what hinder "mature" SI initiatives transformation into a national policy in the social field?

“Mature SI initiative” is understood here as one that is one step before becoming a national policy. It has evolved from an idea to a well-thought-out, tried, adapted, tested, and evaluated process, product, service, or method. Such an SI initiative has grown in its scope (geographically) or depth (in terms of quality of performance).

Since SI initiatives can be very different in terms of their nature, development process, and content, as well as especially considering the EU progress towards deinstitutionalisation (hereinafter - DI), it was agreed between the countries participating in BuiCaSuS that within the mapping exercise more attention should be paid to those SI that:

1. are mature;
2. are related to alternative or community-based social services;
3. provide greater diversity and/or geographical coverage;
4. have the potential to become a national social policy.

The report is based on the methodology developed within the BuiCaSuS project [71], the definition of the document framework, and the tasks to be performed, which ensures that all partners have a common understanding and opportunity to use a common approach when studying national SI ecosystem.

According to the mentioned methodology, the SI ecosystem research or mapping report should “capture the middle ground” between individual SI initiatives or projects (micro level) and regulatory framework and state policy in the field of SI on a national scale (macro level). In addition, it should answer the question: what factors foster circumstances or create barriers for mature SI initiatives to increase their impact and grow in scope or depth, or would be scaled up and/or adopted/implemented/included into a national social service policy of the member state? As a result of the task should be gained an understanding of the actors involved in the SI ecosystem (including state, municipality and private stakeholders as well as existing cooperation networks) and their roles in the development of SI initiatives, including describing practice which is based on specific 3–4 case studies.

To do this, within the BuiCaSuS project, a survey was held at the beginning of 2022, which was the first stage of a wider process of research and analysis of the national ecosystem concerning SI initiatives in the field of social services.

The chapter on the SI ecosystem in LV is prepared based on publicly available information in the context of SI, including studies, planning documents, regulatory acts, practical examples, etc.

In order to get an initial idea about the support to SI and involvement of municipalities in SI development publicly available information on SI inclusion in municipal development planning documents and about municipal actions to promote SI development was analysed. Several municipalities in different regions of Latvia were randomly selected for the study⁵.

When studying information on the SI issues provided at the regional and municipal level of Latvia, it was found that the information is not available in one place or according to a similar principle. Therefore, the analysis of SI development and support issues was difficult and required additional resources, including the use of additional information acquisition and analysis methods. This might be because of absence of a clear regulatory framework on SI issues. There is also a risk that important information has left unnoticed.

⁵ Riga, Liepaja, Jekabpils, Daugavpils, Valmiera, Dienvidkurzeme, and other municipalities.

Concerning the case studies within this report, it was necessary to involve organisations that are related to the development of social services that are alternatives to services in long-term social care institutions, have sufficient previous experience in implementing SI and cooperate with several stakeholders, including at national or municipal level.

SIF evaluated information about those NGOs more visible in the social field which in SIF's opinion meet the mentioned criteria and invited four⁶ of them to participate in the SI ecosystem research process – second stage questionnaire and interviews. In-depth case study was carried out to understand what conditions contributed to the development of SI in the LV situation and, at the same time, to identify the main obstacles that hinder it.

Detailed information about the analysed cases included in the further text of the report - Chapter 4.

⁶ Associations "Wings of Hopes", "Samaritans Association of Latvia", "Resource Center for People with Mental Disabilities ZELDA", "Riga City "Child of Care".

3. SI ecosystem in Latvia

This chapter provides information on actors in the LV's SI ecosystem and the basic conditions that affect SI development. The chapter starts with information on the policy planning documents essential in the context of SI, the regulatory framework, connection with social entrepreneurship, and the role of regions and municipalities. Then SI financing options are described. Finally, there is offered a brief overview of the existing SI ecosystem's actors that provide different types of resources for SI initiatives and their roles, involvement, and support to SI in their development process.

3.1. Policy planning documents and regulatory framework

At the global level, the Sustainable Development Agenda until 2030 approved by the UN in 2015 (Agenda 2030), is the framework that affects the development of SI and SOC LLC in many countries around the world, including LV. The Agenda 2030 is a global UN initiative calling for the world to transform into an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable and green society [1]. The ninth of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals explicitly calls for promoting innovation⁷ [1, 83] in this transformation process.

At EU level in turn, the EC is directly interested in the development of SI, including SOC LLC, in the member states, recognising that SI is an important driving force for social inclusion improvements and at the DI implementation process. The EC's interest has contributed to the fact that in several member states investments in SI development and improvement of upscaling processes have already been made or will be made with support of ESF+ in the upcoming years.

The concept and idea of social innovation (SI) in various aspects has been included in EU documents and materials, including those related to the planning and use of structural funds, for more than ten years [21, 24, 28, 85].

For example, to promote SI is one of the goals at the EU Social Economy Action Plan [27]. In it, the EC recognises the importance of not only promoting SI, but also of widely disseminating knowledge about new approaches and models for upscaling and replicating SI. Mutual learning and capacity building among the institutions involved, as well as the establishment of support structures (e.g., CCSI), can help to SI in development process, especially at the upscaling stage, and result in systemic impact.

⁷ '9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive, and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.'

However, the term and concept of SI is still underdeveloped in Latvia. In some cases, SI is mentioned in national level or sectoral policy planning documents. Sometimes SI can be inferred from the context of a document, but in these cases, SI cannot be found as a specific term.

Thus, when examining policy planning documents at the national level and in several sectors, we have to conclude that innovations are mostly mentioned in the context of economic and scientific development and growth, or in relation with digitisation and the introduction of new technologies and information systems or electronic solutions in various fields⁸.

For example, in the National Development Plan 2021–2027 [82] the field of innovation is widely applied to the economic and financial sector and mentioned in the context of the development of education at all levels, with particular emphasis on higher education and science. NDP 2027 stresses that **creating innovation ecosystem is important** when funding the cooperation of private, public, and academic sectors. As a result, research and innovation capacity should be aligned with business needs. Targeted, balanced, and successive investments are also important, including everything from knowledge creation to the based on its development and sale of products and services. The public sector must play an active role as a promoter and customer of innovation (including through innovative procurement).

According to the information provided by MoC, the Cultural Policy Guidelines 2022–2027 [76] “Culture State” consider the approach at the statement “A New European Agenda for Culture” [22, 23] prepared by the EC in 2018. This approach emphasises the use of the full culture potential when forming a cohesive society, supporting creativity, sustainable employment and growth.

Analysing the research data used in development of the “Culture State” several groups⁹ of population are highlighted, including groups with a high risk of social exclusion, for whom specific solutions are needed to increase their cultural consumption. These guidelines state that “NGOs often act as generators of new ideas and laboratories of innovation, testing new approaches and new forms of events as well as raising socially relevant topics”.

⁸ For example, Latvia Sustainable Development Strategy “Latvia 2030” is the hierarchically highest long-term development planning document. The task of the strategy is to outline the country’s development guidelines and spatial perspective for the period until 2030. This document emphasizes the need for innovative and effective solutions in the areas of energy security, fiscal policy and finances. The document points out that the search for innovative solutions in many areas is related to intensive formation of strategic thinking and exchange of ideas at national level [81].

⁹ These groups include people with FD, ethnic minorities and immigrants, those living in the diaspora, as well as children and young people.

Although “Culture State” defines challenges for ensuring access to culture for vulnerable groups, where SI could also play a role, among other things, the term SI is not institutionally anchored in the cultural sector. There are no specific SI support structures, and the approach is mainly based on the implementation of the Digital Agenda for Europe and recommendations of EC.

The Guidelines for Science, Technology Development, and Innovation for 2021–2027 [75] define **innovation** as the implementation of new scientific, technical, social, cultural or other ideas, developments and technologies in a product, service or process. The document includes the course of action “Knowledge and technology transfer for development of innovation”, which could be important for the development of SI. The authors of these guidelines point out - an effectively coordinated and integrated system of knowledge and technology transfer, and intersectoral cooperation:

- 1) fosters the exchange of knowledge, ideas, skills, competences, experience and data, mutual learning and the development of innovation capacity;
- 2) promotes the invention of new knowledge-intensive technologies and the creation of innovative products and services with higher added value that are competitive on international markets;
- 3) stimulates development of targeted technological and non-technological, social, digital and eco-innovation and implementation in industrial, societal and public governance processes.

According to the current regulatory framework [73], the leading public administration authority in fields of policy on industry and services, entrepreneurship and policy of tourism is the Ministry of Economy. Although its functions and competences include the development, organisation and coordination of **innovation development policy**¹⁰, its activities in these areas are not directly related to the development of SI and social services.

However, both Latvia 2030 and other documents and initiatives show that activities in the field of innovative management are planned and implemented in Latvia. For example, Latvia 2030 states that “... innovative management and active society participation in policy and key decision-making is both a priority and a major challenge for public administration, social partners, organised civil society, and every individual.”

¹⁰ More information about current events in the field of innovation, opportunities of support to innovation, technology development and cooperation projects, examples of good practice, etc. can be found at the portal Magnetic Latvia | Labs of Latvia [69].

It should be noted that NDP 2027 also includes issues more directly applicable to SI and social services, which might be related to planning and attracting the structural funds and the priorities included in EU planning documents. For example, the NDP 2027 priority “Strong families, healthy and active people” determines that in order to strengthen an inclusive society, it is necessary to review how successfully the preventive support system works in the country to prevent crisis situations and support people in crisis situations.

In the review process, resources should be focused on reducing premature work disability and premature mortality. Promotion of people’s psychological and emotional well-being should be made as a new policy. When implementing this policy structural reforms to bring evidence-based SI to life should be performed.

NDP 2027 also emphasizes the importance of evidence-based effective and innovative solutions in various other issues¹¹, **ensuring development and availability of** high-quality existing and new, **innovative social services** in the regions. The same NDP 2027 states that essential is access to social services focused on individual needs and provision of innovative services for priority groups, especially persons with disabilities, patients of palliative care and seniors, thus promoting independent living possibilities and maintaining or improving the quality of life.

The Social Protection and Labour Market Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027 [74], developed by MoW in cooperation with co-responsible institutions, also foresees to develop a social service system using SI. Document has course of action Nr.2 “Modern and accessible system of social services which, among other things, improves possibilities of citizens to live independently and in the society, to fit in education and the labour market”. Task 4.5. foresees to increase the accessibility, efficiency and compliance of CBSS to the needs of the target group by **developing social innovations**, including digital and technological solutions in the provision of social services, as well as improving the digital skills of social service providers and usage of ICT solutions.

Since social services for vulnerable groups are often seen integrated with health promotion or healthcare services, the Public Health Guidelines 2021–2027 [77] were also considered in the process of preparing this report. The guidelines have broad indications about innovations in science and research, medical technology, drug development, health system management, etc. areas. These guidelines state that

¹¹ For example, for limiting the spread of addictive substances and processes, reducing excessive and harmful consumption, creating equal opportunities for children and young people with special needs, strengthening inclusive education, including by developing the availability of assistants in educational institutions, as well as involving social and health service providers and coordinating their cooperation.

research and innovation help to provide services, policies, guidelines, and solutions that are more accessible, equitable, and effective in preventing disease and promoting health. The task is set in them - to promote the use of research results and innovations in the provision of health services, including issues related to integrated and person-centred health care services in Latvia's research and innovation programmes. The guidelines envisage to develop health care services and improve their efficiency by introducing in health care an innovation fund.

In addition to the policy planning documents, the existing regulatory framework in LV was assessed in the context of the SI and it can be concluded that currently:

1. SI as a term is not defined in regulatory framework of Latvia;
2. there is no regulatory framework directly related to SI development and/or prototyping, systematisation, upscaling, financing, evaluation or other SI development processes.

At the same time, it should be noted that the Social Enterprise Law [104] was adopted in October 2017 and entered into force in April 2018. This law defines the principles and legal bases for the creation of SOC LLC, the principles for determining target groups, the conditions for the activities of the social enterprises, the competences of the MoW, etc. The law determines that SOC LLC performs the economic activities that creates a positive and important social impact by employing persons of the target group or improving the quality of life of groups in society whose lives are affected by significant societal challenges (for example, the provision of social, health care or education services, and also production of specialised goods), or performing any other socially important activities that create a lasting positive social impact (for example, formation of an inclusive civil society, supporting science, protecting and preserving the environment, protecting animals or ensuring cultural diversity). Considering the definition of SOC LLC within this law, it can be concluded that social entrepreneurship is an essential part of the SI ecosystem in LV.

Both national level strategic planning documents and the regulatory frameworks of Latvian and the EU envisage possibilities of sustainable strategic procurement [32]. Evaluating the situation, two types out of three — socially responsible¹² and innovation procurement — could be important in the context of SI. For example, socially responsible procurement means that public authorities can buy ethically produced products and services simultaneously creating jobs, decent working conditions, promoting social and professional inclusion, and better working conditions for disadvantaged or disabled people [31]. In this case, public funds are

¹² Socially responsible public procurement is one type of procurements that deliberately, systematically, and strategically promotes the integration of considerations that have a positive impact on solving problems important to society into the procurement process.

used not only to buy goods or services, but at the same time are solving an essential societal social problem.

Considering the EU's rapid progress in the implementation of the DI process in recent years, and the agreement of the BuiCaSuS consortium members¹³ on the focus of this mapping report, it is essential to analyse and evaluate SI related to social services, and primarily to the development of CBSS in LV. Therefore, when assessing and analysing the regulatory acts determining the social sphere, it can be concluded that currently neither the most important regulatory act — the LSSSA — nor the valid regulations of CM include a definition of SI or conditions for promoting the development of SI. At the same time, during the preparation of this mapping report, it was established that MoW had consulted with stakeholders and had initiated actions to develop regulatory acts related to support of EU funds to SI in social services for the period 2021–2027.

3.2. Social entrepreneurship

Keeping in mind the definition of SI proposed by the EC and used in the report, it should be noted that, like in many other countries, in LV also SI is largely associated with SOC LLCs and at least some NGOs (both those that have become SOC LLCs because of specific requirements and regulatory framework for receiving support, and those that continue to operate as NGO). Unlike SI, social entrepreneurship in LV is more clearly defined in regulatory acts (see previous subsection).

In practice, SOC LLC is also at a further stage of development than SI. So, for example, to promote the development of a legal regulation for social entrepreneurship and the integration of persons in disadvantaged situation into the labour market, MoW started a work on a new policy initiative¹⁴ in 2013, [41]. A year later (2014), the concept “On the possibilities of implementing social entrepreneurship in Latvia” [72] was prepared, but the development of the legal framework was started in 2015. As a result, the Social Enterprise Law came into force in 2018.

According to data of MoW, the register of SOC LLC on 31.12.2021 had 219 registered companies, of which 193 were active.

¹³ The BuiCaSuS consortium members agreed that within the project and development of this SI development ecosystem mapping report attention will primarily focus on social innovations related to the development of CBSS and the DI process, including the promotion of independent living, well-being, and employment of individuals, or social services in the context of DI.

¹⁴ MoW set up a working group, which included representatives of line ministries, NGO experts, SOC LLC, and researchers.

At the end of 2021, SOC LLC were operating in the entire territory of LV. Out of the 193, the largest number were in Riga (99 SOC LLCs, or 51%) and another 39 companies or 20% were running the business around Riga. A similar number of SOC LLC (20 and 18) were in Kurzeme (11%) and Zemgale (9%), but it was much smaller in Vidzeme (10 SOC LLCs = 5%), and Latgale (7 companies = 4%). It should be noted that lack of adequate infrastructure, demographic development trends, and, consequently, the lack of labour force and/or non-compliance of the labour force with requirements of labour market hinder the wider development of SOC LLCs in the regions. According to entrepreneurs' opinion, the location of the Riga region, its proximity to the capital, number of inhabitants and its large market capacity are still the main factors that directly determine the attractiveness of the region [45].

Most SOC LLCs are relatively new, established within the last 2–5 years and employ up to five employees. SOC LLCs employed 1080 people based on an employment contract at the end of 2021, including 192 persons from the target group¹⁵. It should be noted that the number of employees in SOC LLCs has been constantly increasing in LV until now.

The most popular area of activity of SOC LLC is the provision of various, including social, services to target groups or those social groups defined by the entrepreneur whose lives are affected by problems essential to society. It should be noted that even NGOs that have not yet obtained the status of SOC LLC are currently mainly engaged in the provision of services financed by the public sector, including social services in institutions and CBSS. Most likely, it is directly related to the opportunities of NGOs to receive any financial support, including for SI development processes.

By May 1 of each year, SOC LLCs must submit to MoW annual activity report, including evidence confirming reaching the company's performance indicators and previously set tasks. The reports must provide information on the progress of companies towards achieving their social goals, the implemented and planned activities, created social impact and its verification mechanisms, factors hindering and promoting the activity, financial indicators, and tasks set for the current year. The specified set of data and information is also important for SOC LLC self-assessment preparing and performance results' evaluation process.

The informative report on SOC LLC [45] states that in recent years has increased the share of companies operating in the field of education - educational and pre-school educational institutions implementing an inclusive education approach using alternative and innovative methods. Also has grown the number of SOC LLCs which

¹⁵ Since the Law on SOC LLC came into force, 192 target groups' employees (109 women and 83 men) have started working at SOC LLCs, including 143 persons with disabilities or MI, 34 persons are formerly unemployed, seven persons are former prisoners and from other target groups - one to two employees.

organise informative and educational events and programmes. In addition, it was established that 20 SOC LLCs create a significant social impact directly in the field of health care and health promotion, for example:

- ensuring the treatment for children and adults with rare diseases, the provision of medical and social services to oncology patients,
- promoting the recovery and reintegration into society of stroke survivors by using latest technologies,
- providing modern, evidence-based psychosocial rehabilitation for children and adolescents,
- promoting following the healthy eating habits and providing services related to physical activity.

Relatively high is the proportion of those SOC LLCs that operates in forming the civil society and ensuring cultural diversity, including creating art and documentary films, broadcasts, reports, and other materials that include socially significant issues and events. Another part of SOC LLCs develops public electronic participation tools for initiating essential changes and unifying public opinions, as well as promotes the revival and development of various musical genres and traditions of musical theatre. Thanks to SOC LLCs, more attention is also paid to environmental issues, which are currently a very pressing problem worldwide. It is important that, when solving social exclusion problems, a part of SOC LLCs (13%) prioritises the provision of services with the aim of ensuring their availability to persons or families in a financially less favourable situation or families having children with special needs, or directly to persons with special needs.

One of the best-known SOC LLCs in LV society is “Sociālais uzņēmums Ulubele” (Social enterprise Ulubele)¹⁶ [5], which primarily works in the field of animal, nature, and environmental protection.

In its turn SOC LLC “Mammām un tētiem” (For moms and dads) [70] is a Latvian parents’ organisation, which writes on the company’s website: *“First the family portal www.mammamuntetiem.lv was created, but being in active communication with its readers and identifying the problems of Latvian parents, team of the portal started to implement smaller and larger social activities, public opinion campaigns and events.”*

Another better-known SOC LLC in LV is BlindArt [6], whose aim is to provide support to the blind and people with special needs by inspiring them to create valuable works of art. The idea was born in Latvia in 2007, when the first creative workshops and exhibitions were held. This LLC now has a fashion line and its own online shop.

¹⁶ The company especially focuses on animal protection and provision of welfare (capturing, housing, rehabilitation, training, preparing for adoption). A complex of services available to animal owners has been created: animal rehabilitation, hotel, grooming, veterinary medical service and adoption.

In 2020, MoW prepared a summary of 12 good practice examples of social entrepreneurship [38], which is published on its website.

3.3. SI in regions and municipalities

Several documents reviewed during the preparation of this report emphasise the regional aspect and the role of municipalities in the development of SI. Researchers of the topic point out that within the SI development, maturing and upscaling process an important stage is related to transition of SI initiative from one – lower or local level (community, municipality or regional) to a much wider (national or even more global, for example European) level [47]. This is also confirmed by study of SI development experience. At the same time, local SI initiatives are essential as they allow solving the problems of concrete target group directly and effectively by using local resources such as financial support from the municipality, as well as the professionalism and capacity of the involved human resources.

Both SI theoreticians and representatives of the analysed LV SI initiatives recognise that municipalities play an important role also in financing SI, as they propose projects that are better suited to local needs. Therefore, municipalities are recognised as crucial initiators and drivers of potentially sustainable SI [10].

Municipalities within the limits of possibilities usually promote business development, including various innovation. In this way, SIs are also supported indirectly - through the support to local social entrepreneurship and/or NGO initiatives. However, in general, the available information testifies and currently there is impression that each municipality addresses SI issues within the limits of its possibilities, available information and capacity of the personnel.

Below are some examples of supporting SI initiatives in several LV municipalities.

In the development programme 2022–2027 of one of the largest municipalities of the Kurzeme planning region - the State City Liepaja - and the Dienvidkurzeme county (Southern Kurzeme) [68], is stated that, thanks to the fact that the municipality regularly participates in the development of various methodologies on a national scale, new, innovative, and more effective methods of social work with different target groups have been introduced in Liepaja. It is emphasized in the specific planning document:

- open management and strengthening links between the municipality, entrepreneurs, NGOs, and citizens, including active involvement of citizens in the management of municipality;
- effective communication oriented to different target groups;
- inter-institutional cooperation of various sectors;

- support for citizens' initiatives and co-financing for ideas of associations, NGOs, the cultural sector, youth and environmental development;
- digitisation, development and implementation of smart and innovative services in the municipality.

The programme also states that considering the demographic situation, long term solutions like “smart shrinkage” should be looked at.

In its turn the Valmiera county Municipality of Vidzeme planning region implements the innovation support programme “Zile”, which aims to promote realization of new products and innovations, to strengthen existing enterprises, and to promote the formation of new technological enterprises. In addition, within the programme implementation, all participating territorial associations could become a test bed for innovations and new products, that is a favourable place where companies could form, develop, and get mature. Within the framework of the support program, companies could receive financing to introduce various innovations in the development of their business. At the same time, it is not immediately clear from the available information to what extent this would apply to SI in the field of social services.

When researching the public resources related to SI in other municipalities, it was found that, for example, in Cesis County Development Programme 2022–2028 [13], regarding the social environment of the municipality is written that the search for innovative solutions is becoming urgent to solve social problems in society. Social entrepreneurship is one of the most effective and innovative ways to tackle social problems. The development of social entrepreneurship is an essential tool for solving social problems in an innovative and sustainable society.

According to publicly available information, several innovation-oriented activities are being implemented in Cesis county. For example, as part of the project “Establishing an Innovation Centre in Cesis” co-financed by the EEA and Norway Financial Mechanism’s Programme “Research and Education” [11], content is being developed and implemented in the future Cesis Space Discovery Centre. Likewise, the municipality of Cesis, when preparing to apply for the status of European Capital of Culture 2027, formed a working group [12] for the submission of the application in 2020. One of the set tasks were – “Ensure public involvement activities in the preparation of the application, implementing various activities and social innovations”. In both cases, these activities are not directly related to SI initiatives in the development of social services in the context of the DI process.

Cesis Municipality has also organised social project calls for NGO [14], with aim to involve the non-governmental sector in the provision of new innovative social and rehabilitation services, as well as to increase the participation of socially vulnerable residents in public activities, thus reducing their social exclusion. When evaluating

project applications within this call, justification of the idea, a creative approach to solving problems of the target groups, were considered, as well as number of newly involved participants, justification of planned costs, etc. According to the descriptions of supported projects in 2022, seniors, persons with disabilities as well as families with children of Cesis County have/will have the opportunity to participate in cohesive and educational events, attend painting classes, theatre performances and other activities. Provision of support programme for physical and emotional health promoting and a summer camp is planned for children living in Cesis county. Through the supported projects it is planned to provide visits and deliveries of hot meals to seniors living alone.

It should be noted that the projects supported by the Cesis municipality are actually about the involvement of participants in social activities, but less about the provision of innovative social services.

In the priority “Effective territorial management and cooperation” of the Jekabpils county (located at Zemgale planning region) Development Programme 2021–2027 [33], it is planned that in order to ensure effective functioning of the municipality, its institutions and enterprises, and the quality of services provided to citizens, in the upcoming years particular importance in the organisation of work and provision of services is to introduction of e-governing principles, innovative solutions and digitisation tools. Although the programme states that, following global trends in the field of social care and with the involvement of the NGO sector, there is an opportunity to develop alternative social service provision in Jekabpils county, and indicates that cooperation in the field of social service provision within different territories of Jekabpils county should be improved, there is nothing on the support to SI in the social field in the rest of the programme.

In its turn the Development Programme of the Daugavpils (the State City) and Augsdaugava county (both located in Latgale planning region) for 2022–2027 [16, 17] envisages promoting an educational offer that meets the demand of the labour market, improving cooperation of educational institutions with entrepreneurs and higher educational institutions. This would result with implementation of training projects adapted to social enterprises, and promotion of the social innovations’ and ideas’ development, as well as community service providers would be trained. The programme also foresees that provision of CBSS and social assistance will be improved, adapting it to the needs of person and the effectivity of outcome. In addition, the promotion of social entrepreneurship is planned – cooperation with businessmen in the development and provision of social services will be implemented. To reduce social exclusion, it is planned to provide support to NGOs involved in social problem solving.

Daugavpils Innovation Centre established in Daugavpils also as part of the “Research and Education” programme of EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014–2021. Currently it is focusing on development of entrepreneurship and career in the field of STEM¹⁷.

Moving to the regional administrative level, established that development strategies of planning regions also have some references to SI or innovation in various fields. For example, Kurzeme Planning Region Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 [34] determines that the creativity of society and individuals expressing itself in the ability to create new solutions and innovations in a wide range of fields is formed and supported. Because of demographic situation in the regions, there is talk of “smart shrinking”: to preserve the population structure, constructure of the territory and infrastructure, which is important for entrepreneurship and high quality of life, by using transport, environment, communication and SI. Vidzeme Planning Region Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 [114], on the other hand, has long term priority “Sustainable business and innovation environment” where “Social entrepreneurship and social innovation” is defined as one of the most important direction of actions. At the same time, it is not possible to conclude clearly in what way exactly SI initiatives would be supported in their development process and whether they would be directly related to the DI processes - the development of social services as alternative to services in SCC.

Analysing information about the largest municipality in LV - Riga State City - with the largest population and the greatest need to provide various social services in accordance with the individual needs, it can be established that up to now SIs in the social field have been developed within the framework of the activities of Riga municipality and after the SI “maturing” and growth, they were scaled up to the national level, too.

The Development Programme of Riga 2021–2027 [93] has pointed out that the municipality plans to “support SI, social entrepreneurship, and socially responsible entrepreneurship in order to help solve current societal problems, promoting the integration of people at risk of social exclusion into the labour market (more than half of social enterprises of Latvia are registered in Riga).”

At the same time, Riga is the municipality that works with SI as an independent concept. For example, in March 2021, the municipality organised a seminar-discussion directly dedicated to SI “Riga - the Capital of Social Innovations” [91], in which, among other things, a brief explanation of what is SI was given and innovative

¹⁷ STEM - science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

solutions of the Riga municipality in the field of social services that have already been scaled up or could be scaled up throughout Latvia were presented.

It was noted at the event that in Riga and Latvia, unfortunately, there was not, and in the opinion of the authors of this report, there is still no unified vision and opinion that SIs are truly necessary.

During the seminar-discussion, Riga municipality suggested that its work started in the field of social services should be expanded to the national level and invited the responsible institutions and officials at national level for a discussion and better further cooperation when implementing SI initiatives in the social field. One of the main proposals was to cooperate, learn when comparing, and share existing experience. Within the framework of the event, representatives of the respective cooperation partners (MoW, MoH, MEPRD, and LALRG) spoke about the need for better cooperation and opportunities in the development of new social services. The fact and the need was also emphasised to multiply Riga's experience in the development of SI initiatives and provision of social services in other municipalities throughout Latvia in the future. The figure below shows some examples indicated by the municipality as better-known SIs that were scaled up to national level over a shorter or longer period of time:

Rīgas sociālo inovāciju vēsture/ zināmākie piemēri

- **SOPA** - sociālās palīdzības informatīvā sistēma (kopš 2003.gada Rīgā, kopš 2017.gada visā LV).
- **Ģimenes atbalsta nodaļa** Sociālajā dienestā (Rīgā pirmā izveidota 1998.gadā, šobrīd ir gandrīz visos Sociālajos dienestos Latvijā)
- **Ģimenes asistents** (uzsākts Rīgā 2010.gadā, nacionālais pilotprojekts tiek īstenots no 2020.gada novembra)
- **Ģimenes modelis ilgstošajā aprūpē bērniem** (uzsākts 2011.gadā Rīgā, pilnībā ieviests 2018.gadā; VSAC Rīga pilotprojekts 2019.gadā, DI projektā pirmie šādi pakalpojumi vēl tikai top)
- **Atelpas brīdis** ģimenēm, kurās ir bērns vai jauniešs ar garīga rakstura traucējumiem (Rīgā kopš 2006.gada, DI projektā Rīgas plānošanas reģionā no kopš 2018.gada novembra)
- **APSiS** jeb aprūpes vajadzību izvērtēšanas sistēma. Rīgā kopš 2017.gada
- **Audzūgimeņu atbalsta programma** - Rīgā no 2012.gada, 2018.gada vidū valstī sāk veidot Ārpusģimenes aprūpes atbalsta centrus

Figure 3-3-1, Examples of SIs scaled-up by Riga municipality

The existing separation of the sectors was mentioned as a shortage and an obstacle in making long-term strategic decisions in the context of SI. In the opinion of the participants, to move forward more successfully and quickly, including in the development and implementation of SI initiatives, also at the national level, the existing cooperation, based on a common understanding, is insufficient or even missing.

Efficiency and faster achievement of social aims were pointed as some of the main and most significant benefits of SI implementation and stakeholders' cooperation. At the same time, cross-sectoral cooperation (for example, between health and welfare sectors) was highlighted as essential not only during Covid pandemic or for ensuring the well-being of the elderly and palliative patients. Cooperation, as the speakers mentioned, is an important necessity ensuring integrated and high-quality services and well-being of residents, as well as in a person-centred approach. It is commendable that during the discussion, all parties expressed their commitment to continue what was started and cooperate more intensively to address those daily social needs that exist but have not yet been resolved or arise again.

One participant drew attention to the fact that due to the current bureaucratic and time-consuming procedures to be carried out, often because of the financial and other kind of connection with and at the same time dependence on funds, plans or programs, sometimes the much-needed funding for SI or social services is not available "today, when is the real need", it is received too late (for example, after 3 years).

In the opinion of the seminar-discussion host, representatives of sector and other stakeholders lack the courage to speak up and act, including to make decisions, as well as lack of foresight in planning and provision of social services.

In addition, sometimes disproportionate requirements in the provision of CBSS were pointed out. Historically, the requirements for social services were linked to the place where the service was provided - the institution and/or structure that provides the service. One must agree that when approach changes - from social services in institutions to services in the person's living place (home), some requirements in the social field do not keep up with the time or are out of date. This creates obstacles for the faster implementation of SI initiatives in the social field in practice. The desire, courage, and flexibility to review and adapt requirements and regulations, which in turn is linked to a common and good understanding of the social field, including term SI, are unfortunately not often observed in practice.

In the opinion of the participants of the event, the development of SI initiatives directly in social care is also negatively affected by the current principles of forming social service price. For example, there has been a long-standing trend in the social

sector - to set a minimum wage for employees involved in care. If the minimum wage raises in the country, the price of social services automatically rises. At municipal level, spending on social care services then increase rapidly, but the scope of services or the number of providers and users does not. Available resources are invested in existing forms of social care (including in institutions) and services, not in SI.

In the context of social services and DI, one of the success factors for the development of the SI initiative is the principle of “money follows the client” rather than the service. Although the legal acts of the social field intend to bring this principle to life, for example, in relation to persons who stop receiving services in an SCC as part of the DI process it still does not work fully. However, MoW points out that successful SIs (those with a positive result) usually become the norm in the system, and sees that in the future, the principle “money follows the client after the completion/termination of institutional care” could be the norm in LV as well.

Participants of the seminar-discussion noted - SI shows that it is possible to use existing financial resources more efficiently, without necessity to look for new or additional funding.

Considering that discussions were on SI existence, development and upscaling possibilities and necessity, shortages and obstacles mentioned during the event on March 2021 directly resonate with and point to existing weaknesses in the SI ecosystem. Similar is the case with factors of success - mutual trust, meaningful rather than formal cooperation, long-term financial support (3+ years term rather than annual budget programmes), evidence-based information and experience sharing, etc.

It must be concluded that SI issues are generally on horizon of municipalities and planning regions, however, more specific information is not easy to find and it is not clearly understandable whether and in what way SI initiatives would be supported in the development of CBSSs or the creation of social services in context of the DI process.

3.4. Stakeholders and their cooperation

Social innovation [20] aims to advance European life through improving working conditions, education, community development or health, or through tackling critical problems such as poverty or discrimination. By involving public authorities, civic society, academia and enterprises, Europe can find new solutions to entrenched issues facing our shared society.

According to the definition of SI used in this report, stakeholders, their cooperation, and creation of new cooperation models play an important role in the implementation and development of SI.

Anyone who wants to promote the development of SI must take into account the complexity of SI and the interdependencies of the actors involved [108]. At the same time, all actors play an important role in the SI ecosystem, and cooperation among parties is seen as essential for creating long-term processes and solutions [19].

The information analysed within the mapping report preparing process confirms that the circle of actors and stakeholders involved and interested in SI development processes is relatively wide and can change from case to case.

At least the following actors (stakeholders and their representatives) have been involved in the SI development process and thus in the SI ecosystem in LV:

- a person having a specific problem;
- a person having an idea for solving a specific problem;
- representatives of the SI target group and/or their relatives;
- NGO;
- SOC LLC;
- companies;
- entrepreneurs;
- education, healthcare, social service and other institutions, according to the field of the SI;
- representatives of creative industries;
- municipalities and their institutions;
- planning regions;
- regional level institutions and organisations;
- state institutions (ministries, SEA, CSDD, the State Audit Office, etc.);
- the SAEIMA (the Parliament);
- representatives of other EU countries.

In 2019 in Latvia, the study “Financial, informational, organisational, and overall involvement of society in social innovation processes in Latvia”¹⁸ was carried out. As

¹⁸In 2019, the monograph has interdisciplinary researched SI, its essence, impact on sustainable development of society, its promoting and hindering factors, as well as obstacles and the ways of overcoming them. It analysed the actions of stakeholders and the dimensions of their participation, considered the SI development scenarios and best practices in Latvia and other European countries. In the monograph developed the concept of indices of society's financial, informational, and organisational involvement in SI processes and the methodology for calculating these indices. It also analyses sources of financing not previously used for the implementation of SI in LV. The monograph is intended for SI researchers, practitioners, social entrepreneurs, policy makers, heads of municipality, educators and heads of educational institutions, students, and all others, who are interested in SI and its promotion issues [80, p. 55].

part of that, among other things, its five authors assessed the involvement of stakeholders in SI processes. The authors found that ten main stakeholders are involved in SI processes with different levels of activity, responsibility, and enthusiasm: social innovators, their families and friends, project target groups, state institutions, NGOs, municipalities, companies, EU institutions, educational institutions, and other individuals.

There is no significant difference between the findings within this report and those in the study on the actors of the SI ecosystem.

The study also concludes that the LV society is passive in relation to SI issues and the level of stakeholders' involvement is not high. This can most likely be explained by the fact that SI is a relatively new concept in Latvian society, thus there is insufficient understanding of the term SI, and its regulatory framework has not yet fully established.

Most often, NGOs are the most active creators and developers of SI initiatives, as they are able more promptly than different level management institutions to refer to social problems and social needs identified in the society, including in the local community or even in the closest circle - among relatives. NGOs offer solutions that are real, economically effective (because there is such need¹⁹), work and prove themselves in the form of positive results achieved.

Mostly, the authors of SI initiatives - innovators within the process of SI development try to solve their own problems, organisational and content, as well as financial issues.

At the same time, it should be noted that municipalities are the ones that in LV provide the greatest support to the authors of SI initiatives for the implementation of their ideas. That includes sufficiently active participation in the implementation of SI - informatively, organisationally and financially, because municipalities are directly interested in solving current problems and creating positive changes in their environment and local community. It was concluded that educational institutions mostly play a passive role in SI development processes - they are limited to informational support.

The study document points out that in 2019 for SI implementers the support of state institutions was low and concludes that *"in Latvia the main player in SI implementation is the social innovator himself, who tries to activate and consolidate other stakeholders (with bottom-up approach) in solving current societal problems, in conditions of insignificant support from state institutions and an incomplete legal base."*

¹⁹ In LV the solvency of households is low and the number of households at risk of poverty is high [79].

It should be noted that so important for SI – the cooperation aspect is indicated in the state development planning documents. Considering that “Latvia 2030” [51] applies to every citizen of Latvia, the institutions responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this strategy, for example, maintain and encourage a public discussion, where information on the best, most creative and innovative ideas for sustainable development is exchanged between different groups of society. The strategy foresees that new forms of public participation (citizen panels, citizen juries, cross-sectoral and public innovation coordination and cooperation platforms, innovation portals, etc.) should be created in LV, involving the widest possible range of people, and creating the best possible environment for the generation of new and creative ideas²⁰. The strategy points out the need to create a cross-sectoral mass creativity coordination institution that would ensure cooperation between different sectors and institutions in the implementation of innovative ideas.

It should be emphasized that the successful cooperation process requires the interest of all parties. Publicly available information confirms that in some places interest results in appropriate measures, especially if the parties involved understand the effectiveness and importance of cooperation. For example, employees of municipalities have participated in the seminar “Sociālā inovācija kā dzīvesveids (Social Innovation as a Way of Life)”²¹, where looked at issues related to the role of municipality and state in promoting SI, and SI as a tool for community development.

As an example of the different roles of involved actors, it can be pointed that “The Social Protection and Labour market Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027” [74] foresee to develop the social services system using SI. In the performance of this task, SIF has a specific role - one of the co-responsible institutions. On the other hand, when implementing the ESF co-financed project “Promoting Diversity”, SIF has the role of SI innovator as creates and pilots new innovative services, for example service of social mentor for asylum seekers [95] and currently work has started in cooperation with municipalities on a new social service for the homeless people [97].

Studies, planning documents, and project examples all point that NGOs are most important partners in the SI development process. In turn SOC LLCs is probably the second most important group of participants in the SI ecosystem in LV. The Social

²⁰ Latvia 2030 points as possible solutions for the development of a sustainable society, for example, the creation of a mass creativity portal where citizens can submit their ideas and evaluate, comment on, and complement the ideas submitted by others. To motivate people to exchange ideas, a fund should be created to test and implement the most successful ideas, and it should be determined that the 10 most popular ideas every year are implemented financed by the fund, etc.

²¹ The seminar was organised already in 2013 as part of a project supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia (SEAL) was founded in Autumn 2015²², that currently has more than 120 members. The activity of SEAL [65] focuses on three directions:

- protection of interests;
- strengthening the capacity of members;
- informing the public.

Among other activities, SEAL helps its members to ensure a quick exchange of information and updates on financial attracting and cooperation opportunities.

When thinking about the actors of the SI ecosystem in the near future, it should be noted that according to the Partnership Agreement for 2021–2027, it is the MoW that is designated as the coordinating institution for the ESF+ Employment and Social Innovation section in Latvia [50].

3.5. Funding

In the study “Financial, informational, organisational, and overall involvement of society in social innovation processes in Latvia” [80, p. 55] in 2019, it was found that SIs financially were most supported by:

- municipalities;
- EU institutions;
- various companies.

On the other hand, in the section “Financing options of social innovation: a summary of foreign experiences” that is included in the monograph [80, p. 71], also written in 2019, it’s author points out that until then in both LV and EU member states the most familiar SI financing instruments were support funding (grants) provided by government, subsidies and donations, tax rebates in some places, as well as involvement of private sector’s entrepreneurs in charity and special procurements of state or municipality. It is indicated in the summary that LV lacks experience of SI solutions which provide an opportunity to invest money with the aim of earning, and with additional ways of SI financing that attract private capital.

Stakeholders often point out that there is an attitude that “SI (=NGO) should be able to support itself in the long term so that SI/NGO should not always wait for support from the state or municipality”. Such opinion in fact (especially in the last four years) forces SI initiators to become SOC LLC, even if their business plans are not

²² The founding organisations of SEAL are the Open Society Foundation DOTS, the Centre for Public Research “PROVIDUS”, the Latvian Samaritans Association, the charity shop network ‘Otra elpa’ and the social entrepreneurship accelerator “New Door”. Before the establishment of the Association, these organisations contributed to the research and promotion of social entrepreneurship in Latvia.

sufficiently clear and justified or do not consider the low solvency of potential users of social services (products' buyers), that already mentioned above. It is observed that final user (including the buyer-municipality) has an interest about the SI initiative, for example, about social service offered within the SI, but economic circumstances (inability to pay) force to give up the offered opportunities of using the service/products.

Considering that according to the Social Enterprise Law, the profit of a SOC LLC is directed for the achievement of the objectives defined in the statutes of association, that is for further development of SOC LLC and SI's activities, it is important to understand what the financial situation of SOC LLCs is.

SOC LLCs' annual reports submitted to MoW provide an opportunity to analyse their financial data. It is indicated in the relevant informative report [45] that, according to SOC LLCs' operational reports for the year 2020, 57% of SOC LLCs closed this year with a profit ranging from 106 to 158 452 EUR. At the same time, 43% of companies ended 2020 with losses measuring from one to 182 274 EUR. On the other hand, the annual net turnover of SOC LLC exceeded 100 000 EUR in 25% of cases, was between 40 000 and 100 000 EUR in 16%, and below 40 000 EUR in 59% of cases.

Currently, the most significant support for the development of social entrepreneurship is the support measure of MoW and ALTUM [59], under which it is possible to obtain a financial grant for the development of meaningful social entrepreneurship. The funding available within the measure varies from 5 000 to 200 000 EUR and depends on the company's experience and turnover so far.

Analysing possible and real sources for SI funding it can be established that more often used or generally available are:

- project funding from various financiers, including EU and foreign donors,
- grants,
- budget funding of municipalities.

Relatively less frequently public charity funding in the form of various types of donations and funding coming from commercial activities is mentioned.

Several municipalities have created special funds for financial support of innovation projects. For example, Valmiera county municipality has the innovation support programme "Zile" [111], Cesis county municipality has the support programme for NGO [14], while Riga Innovation Fund²³ created in Riga.

²³ The objectives of the Fund are to promote the development of Riga as a smart city, to provide support for municipal institutions in implementing innovative projects and improving the services provided. Financing of the Riga Innovation Fund will be formed by sources of the municipality's main budget [92].

According to the opinion of the authors of this mapping report, it is most likely that SI initiatives also receive national budget funding for implementing innovative projects and ideas in the social field, however, up to date there have been no specific, targeted, and continues programmes designed to foster SI development processes.

Some organisations point out and have to agree that lack of the permanent, long-term funding leads in many cases to SI initiatives stopping in their development stage, and never reaching the step when it is possible to take over/implement at the national level as part of a social policy. The lack of continuous funding is one of the most important obstacles to upscaling of SI and expanding its social impact.

3.6. EU structural funds

Since in each country planned activities of CCSI could be related to the use of EU financial support, this report contains this subsection, including on planned in relation with support for SI from EU Structural Funds and especially ESF+.

Up to now - since they are available in Latvia EU funds and programmes are one of the main financial instruments for supporting SI. For example, ESF has a long history of supporting SI by funding projects at local, national, and international level. The ESF usually supports SI initiatives that promote inclusion in labour market and social integration, improve availability of skills, and reduce poverty and social exclusion.

Article 14 of the ESF+ Regulation [84], “Social innovative actions”, foresees that EU member states support SI, and dedicate at least one priority for this. At the same time, the Article states that “The Commission shall facilitate capacity building for social innovation, in particular through supporting mutual learning, establishing networks, and disseminating and promoting good practices and methodologies”.

The national “EU Cohesion Policy Programme 2021–2027” [48, p. 31, pp. 96-97] includes a special priority dedicated to SI, 4.4. “Social innovations”, and the corresponding measure - SO 4.4.1. (ESO 4.12) “Promoting the social integration of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion through social innovation”.

According to the programme, including consideration of the fact that accessibility, diversity, and quality of social services in Latvia is still insufficient, it is planned to strengthen the social services’ sector in LV by investing in social services’ innovations, increasing the coverage, diversity and quality of services, including by increasing access to social services for people suffering from social exclusion. For this purpose, support is planned in the form of grants, as the investments are directed to activities that contribute to the development of public services and do not generate a profit.

There are several actions planned to be supported under SO (SAM) 4.4.1:

- development and piloting of innovative methods and solutions within the provision of social services²⁴ (including adaptation of infrastructure and purchase of equipment or technical solutions);
- evaluation of results;
- training and advisory support for social service specialists;
- multiplication of innovative approaches.

In general, evidence-based effective/innovative solutions are planned, expecting SI in the provision of social rehabilitation services in institutions and at place of residence. Promoting the provision of support to unmotivated people with MI, the development of a new and innovative service is planned by creating model of support provided by interdisciplinary team and testing it in a pilot project. It should be noted that integrated health's, education and internal affairs' specialists' cooperation is foreseen in the provision of social services. Support for SI is planned to search for new solutions to long-standing problems and develop more effective models of social service provision, with a particular focus on person-centered approach and provision of support adjusted to individual needs.

In addition, to address the identified problems and expand the use of cultural potential, MoC also plans to support investments in the creation of a new, social inclusion-oriented cultural offer as part of EU fund 2021–2027 SO (SAM) 4.3.2. "Increasing the role of culture and tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovations". At the same time, it is planned to develop new approaches, for example to promote cooperation of operators in cultural, health, and social fields. To promote social inclusion of society, especially disadvantaged groups, and reduce social inequality through cultural experiences and services, the accessibility of services provided by local community organizations will be supported, including accessibility for people with special needs and other socially disadvantaged groups with low rates of cultural participation.

Promotion of the social economy is also, among other things, foreseen in SO (SAM) 4.3.3 (ESO 4.1), especially by providing support for the creation and sustainable development of SOC LLCs. Within this support training and consultations, financial support, assistance to SOC LLCs and social entrepreneurship start-ups is planned, among others promoting opportunities for work integration in companies, including provision of wage subsidies. Thus, it is planned to increase the employment opportunities for representatives of target groups being in disadvantaged situation. It is also planned to have evaluations and researches on functioning of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem.

²⁴ Social services which will provide support to target group's persons at risk of social exclusion

Significant financial support is also planned in Latvia under the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism [49]. The plan foresees support in six areas, including “Reduction of inequality” and “Healthcare”, which could also be very important in the context of SI revitalization and development. It should be noted that significant support is earmarked for digital skills’ training for Latvian population at all levels, which could also be significant, including in the process of SI development in the social field. It is also planned to increase support for social and employment services, with more funding for DI measures. However, it should be noted that promotion of innovations within the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism is mainly planned in research and industry.

Planning documents of EU funds foresee that in the field of service availability and the development of innovative solutions, ESF+ investments can be complementary to European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes and other foreign financial instruments. Also, following the practice of previous planning periods, it is planned to have complementarity of ESF+ investments with EaSI directly administered by the EC within the direct management, including, if necessary, by attracting additional investments for the implementation of public or private sector’s SI projects.

3.7. Support for SI

In recent years, it is increasingly recognised that most SI initiators need specific support and/or consulting and/or capacity strengthening. It promotes not only the development of SI ideas, but also facilitates maturing of SI up to increasing its social impact at least to national, if not international level. The task to promote the improvement of SI capabilities and provide necessary support is becoming more and more important. EU member states must, therefore, look for and/or implement solutions that meet this recognized need.

In the opinion of the EC and the authors of this report, in every Member State would most likely be necessary an organisation or body (for example, a CCSI) to pursue the task of supporting SI, including by providing advice and support, promoting SI initiators’ and implementers’ skills development, creating or improving relevant cooperations and networks of mutual support, as well as providing financial support.

In Latvia, there is currently no single specific SI support structure that would purposefully provide all kind of support for SI, however there are good, high-quality activities in this area. At the same time, it should be noted that support for SI, especially financial support, has so far been mostly provided within the framework

of specific projects, which affects both the development of SI initiative, as well as maturing and sustainability.

It must be said that, in general, a wide range of support is available for SI in Latvia: trainings, consultations, financial grants, etc. Some examples and information about available support is mentioned further in this subsection.

At national level, for example in the period of 2014–2020, MoW uses ESF financial support for initiating and implementing several projects in the social field²⁵, as the result of which the professional performance of social work specialists could be improved, new social services could be developed and/or methods of social work and CBSS financing could be improved.

Thus, in 2016, MoW started implementation of the ESF project “Support for Social Entrepreneurship” [39], with the aim - to identify and test optimal solutions for the creation and development of SOC LLCs, including the support work integration SOC LLCs. In 2017, within this project, MoW, together with cooperation partner - ALTUM, started to implement several activities for targeted SI (in this case - SOC LLCs) support - activities for informing and consulting social entrepreneurship performers. For the allocation of planned financial support ALTUM also ensured examination of applications and business plans of associations, foundations and merchants.

A little later, at the end of 2018, the State Chancellery started implementing a new initiative to improve the innovation culture of public administration and to promote achieving the goals of the “Public Administration Reform Plan for 2020”. The purpose of the three initially created laboratories was “to be a platform for creating new solutions for “old problems” by creating prototypes for overcoming certain challenges” [78]. In these laboratories were tested various new co-creation working methods:

- to reduce the administrative burdens;
- for strategic management of public administration human resources;
- strengthening the reputation and image of public administration (by putting values in practice).

Currently one laboratory is operating. Its mission isn't changed. Since the beginning of 2021, the laboratory has its own website [113], where one can find out all about

²⁵ For example, the project “Development of professional social work in municipalities” and “Improvement of the support system for social services” (including on models of individual budget and respite service at place of residence), etc. More information is available at <https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/projekti?page=1>

public sector innovation, working methods, good practices and implemented projects, etc.

A good example of support for SI at national level can also be mentioned the support provided by SIF within the grant programmes. Currently, as the most important areas of support offered by SIF and fields of activities should be noted - support to NGOs, ethnic minorities, families, diaspora, socially excluded and discriminated groups, as well as the media.

The “NGO Fund”²⁶ administrated by SIF is one of the largest financial support mechanisms for non-governmental organisations in Latvia. For this programme the results’ evaluation of its last two years of performance was carried out at the end of 2021 [96]. It is pointed out in the prepared report that 124 NGOs received support within the NGO programme only in 2020–2021 alone. It was concluded that support received organisations with different scales of activity - local, regional, national or international. In terms of the topics addressed, the target groups covered and the activities included, the implemented projects were characterized by a great diversity. However, the projects were most often focused on topics and issues related to development of civil society, children, youth and families, social protection, inclusion and various services, as well as health. Recently, the proportion has increased significantly of those NGO projects which foresee cooperation with other organisations, institutions or experts and which focus on involvement of citizens, activities of different target groups and development of local communities.

In the NGO survey conducted as part of the evaluation, more than half of the organisations indicated that their implemented projects had following types of direct impact:

- strengthened the NGO’s capacity,
- increased NGO’s recognition,
- increased organisation’s influence,
- arose new ideas for other projects,
- improved competences of NGO members and employees,
- implemented new activities and measures that did not exist before.

In addition to this, opportunities of support for SI are also provided at municipal and regional level, for example, mentioned earlier in this report the innovation support funds set up in some municipalities.

It should also be noted that significant and necessary support in LV, especially for SOC LLC is offered by SEAL [58, 60, 61], Reach for Change Latvia [101], the Social

²⁶ SIF is a public foundation, operating since 2001. The aim of SIF is to financially support and promote integration of society in accordance with development planning documents [94].

Innovation Centre [106] and other organisations. For example, SEAL already for several years offers support for those SI initiatives that are directly related to social entrepreneurship in municipalities. The SI hackathons organised by SEAL [15] were as one of the most successful events for SI support. Those were 48-hour long idea marathons, where with support of professional mentors - experts, the authors of SI initiatives had the opportunity to create new social business models based on modern technologies, which at the end of the event were evaluated by potential investors attracted by SEAL.

So far and currently SOC LLCs and social entrepreneurship start-ups in LV have also available other types of non-financial support - seminars, trainings, consultations, mentoring, services of incubators [63] and accelerators, matchmaking, pitch competitions [64], etc. In addition, the established innovation offices, science parks and other structures currently offer advice, skills development, premises, contacts, additional working methods, and similar non-financial support for individual entrepreneurs that help at SI development process, at least in the initial stages.

It should also be noted that, particularly recently, the significant base is forming with informative and educational materials and resources useful for SI development, including on support for social entrepreneurship, for example on the SEAL website [61]. The NGO "Social Innovation Centre" also supports SI and social entrepreneurship initiatives informatively and educationally, including by implementing both local and international projects. For example, together with foreign partners a special e-platform [103] has been created and is regularly updated, which allows to support SOC LLCs [102] and other organisations at national level and even more widely - at least in the countries of the Baltic Sea region. MoW also continues to organise events to support SI, for example the Week of SOC LLCs, informative seminars and training for social entrepreneurship start-ups.

Significant support for SI in LV was the second competition on business ideas of social entrepreneurship start-ups organized in 2021, as a result of which consultations were offered to all 20 winners and the opportunity after founding and registering their SOC LLC to submit a business plan to ALTUM for receiving the grant.

In addition, it should be noted that one of the important forms of support for SI and its ecosystem is research and academic materials, which can make a significant contribution to the implementation and development of SI. Research and academic literature on SI in LV are not available in huge amount, but some studies and publications are publicly available [18, 67]. In the process of preparing this report,

the authors got acquainted with the Scientific Monograph²⁷, in which SI and its essence studied directly interdisciplinary. At the same time, it gives answers to questions about the SI impact on sustainable development of society, promoting and hindering factors for SI, reviews scenarios of SI development and examples of good practices from LV and other countries. The work also analyses less frequently used sources of SI financing. The monograph is intended for SI researchers, practitioners, social entrepreneurs, policy makers, heads of municipalities, educators and heads of educational institutions, students, and all other, who is interested in SI and its promotion issues. In the opinion of the authors of this report, some elements of the research included in the monograph according to their content could be considered as elements of the mapping of SI ecosystem in LV.

Overall, it is thought that the small amount of LV research and academic literature is most likely due to the fact that SI as a concept is relatively new in LV, it is not precisely and clearly defined, and SI can be viewed from perspectives of different sectors and/or as a cross-sectoral issue.

In the context of SI development, it should be further noted that one possible forms of support for SI is performing socially responsible and innovative public procurements, which could promote greater involvement of NGOs and SOC LLCs in procurement procedures, thus contributing to the SI development process.

At the moment, socially responsible procurement is still a relatively new practice about which it is necessary to inform and educate both entrepreneurs and SOC LLCs, municipalities and NGOs, as well as society in general. Based on publicly available information, for example SEAL and the Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS have engaged in educational activities [99]. For example, in cooperation with the Procurement Monitoring Bureau "Guidelines for Implementing Socially Responsible Public Procurement" developed [62] and in cooperation with the Procurement Monitoring Bureau, line ministries and other institutions articles prepared [100] and various informative events, such as discussions, held [30].

²⁷ The monograph "Social Innovation: Challenges and Solutions in Latvia" is published within the project 5.2.7. "Involvement of the Society in Social Innovation for Providing Sustainable Development of Latvia" of the National Research Programme "Economic Transformation, Smart Growth, Governance and Legal Framework for the State and Society for Sustainable Development – a New Approach to the Creation of a Sustainable Learning Community (EKOSOC-LV)". The monograph is an [interdisciplinary scientific monograph of a team of authors](#) from Riga Technical University, University of Latvia, Latvia University of Agriculture, Riga Stradins University, and Latvian Academy of Sciences [80].

All possibilities of support are important for SIs, including for budding social entrepreneurs to get to the own business idea implementation and creation of a viable SOC LLC, and later also to applying to ALTUM, receiving the grant and using it meaningfully.

Within the BuiCaSuS project information about good practices of supporting SI, including in Latvia compiled. It can be found on the project's website [8].

Overall, it can be concluded that currently in LV has been established a strong system of support for SI, specifically in the field of social entrepreneurship.

4. Case studies

This section of the report provides information on four SI initiatives (one from each interviewed NGO) that were reviewed and analysed during the second stage questionnaire and interviews while preparing this report. All selected NGOs have experienced both rapid progress and slowdowns and failures over the many years of operation. All organisations (the associations) — “Riga City’s “Child of Care””, “Samaritans Association of Latvia”, “Resource Center for People with Mental Disabilities ZELDA” and “Wings of Hopes” in Sigulda — are moving forward for decades, developing “alternative” social services in Latvia. Individual associations’ experiences of SI development, upscaling and social impact increasing help to create an overview and better understand the currently existing SI ecosystem in Latvia.

The examples of SI initiatives included are arranged by the name of implementing organisation in alphabetical order.

The description of each case study is structured according to the content of the SI initiative, providing information on the SI initiative and its development, the actors involved and their interactions, the opinions of the associations’ representatives on the factors facilitating and hindering SI development. At the end of each description the views of the interviewed NGOs’ representatives on what the CCSI should look like and how it should operate.

4.1. Association “Cerību spārnī”

The association (“Wings of Hopes”) [4] started operating more actively in 2003, uniting parents having children with disabilities, because no other appropriate solutions or social services were offered at that time. In 2013, initial ideas arose about employing young people and adults with disabilities who otherwise have difficulty entering the labour market. As the result, an initiative was implemented which in this case turned into a social enterprise “VISI VAR” (“Everyone Can”) in 2018 [105] (hereinafter - VISI VAR or CS initiative).

The aim of VISI VAR is to promote and support the employment, well-being, and education of representatives of social risk groups while doing entrepreneurship, organizing educational and working skills strengthening events. The CS initiative purposefully supports implementation of charity projects. This set of these measures is fully in line with the approach implemented by the association - to

develop various alternative²⁸ social services for people with any type of disability, with a great emphasis directly on promoting employment. Thus, VISI VAR influences several areas of social policy and social services, solves social problems and difficulties faced by members of the target group on a daily basis. It certainly addresses problems caused by disability and reduces lack or difficulties of employment, by supporting especially people with intellectual development disorders or mental illnesses (hereinafter - persons with MI²⁹) with different degrees of severity. Considering the association's location outside of Riga - in Sigulda county - this initiative geographically has regional character. It therefore simultaneously addresses the problems rising at rural/outlying area and positively affects society development, including by changing the attitude towards persons with disabilities and the opinion about their ability to be employed.

The development of VISI VAR is related to the widest range of interested parties involved - starting with NGOs and ending with municipal, regional and state-level public administration institutions and/or their structural units (i.e. municipalities, planning regions, branches of regional institutions, ministries, bureaus, state institutions, the Cabinet of Ministers and the Parliament. The creator and developer of the CS initiative is the association, that cooperates with other representatives of the non-governmental sector and, of course, the local community, such as persons with disabilities. Partners of VISI VAR include both private for-profit companies and other registered social enterprises. The association notes that things move forward only by working together. Representatives of the association regularly participates in working groups and meetings of ministries on relevant issues and are pleased to admit that their opinion is now being considered. For example, several changes have been implemented in the field of social entrepreneurship. They affect all employment-related SOC LLCs in Latvia. Thus VISI VAR initiated a joint meeting of MoF and MoW looking for a solution regarding the payment of employer's tax from national budget if persons with disabilities works at SOC LLC.

The CS initiative still works, and it can be considered to have an impact at individual, group's, community's and societal levels. By receiving the necessary support, skills and abilities of service users are developed. Thus, person can be as independent as possible. As a result of the SI initiative, 14 persons have started participation in the

²⁸ Social care and social rehabilitation services similar to those rendered in long-term social care centers (SCC), provided outside the institutions, including at the person's place of residence and/or in the territory of municipality.

²⁹ According to the Law on Social Services and Social Assistance, mental impairment – a mental illness or mental disorder restricting the ability of a person to work and to take care of himself or herself, and also makes it difficult for him or her to integrate into society and that is, determined in conformity with the current version of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, (ICD).

free labour market and some - independent life outside the services offered by the association, i.e. in the community. Those who work for this SOC LLC are able to support themselves. The municipality is also beneficiary, because the number of social benefits' receivers really decreases, and there are more people paying taxes. VISI VAR has a positive impact on improvement of the well-being of persons with disabilities and their relatives, the enforcement of human rights, and life in dignity. For example, if persons with more severe functional impairments receive social services offered by the association throughout the day, relatives can leave the worries and fully engage in employment.

VISI VAR uses various financial sources, including revenues from the sale of goods and products (including within the social entrepreneurship) and public resources – financing of EU funds, state and municipal budget.

The CS initiative has received support for its development, including for the preparing of an action plan, attracting human resources and capacity building, as well as for provision of funding. VISI VAR also received the support for the evaluation of the idea implementation process and the results.

To consider as much as possible opinion of end users, the association organises evaluation of satisfaction of service users every year. Learning takes place continuously, flexible approach is used and adaptation to the market and/or clients' needs. Association measures social impact of VISI VAR every year.

The CS Initiative is using digital options alongside the rest of the world, including under the influence of the pandemic³⁰. For example, the online shop was created [105], which is simultaneously the website of VISI VAR. Social networks for example *Facebook* are regularly used where the public and clients are informed about the current activities of CS initiative.

Although now no concrete impact upscaling strategy has been chosen and prepared, the association considers VISI VAR as scalable SI. It would require partners willing to start and build something similar, and then franchises or branches could be set up.

Experience so far has shown that educating the public is important. The association does this actively and purposefully, in order to create a more positive attitude towards persons with disabilities and to demonstrate the nature of every human being. For example, to help the public see the humanity in each service user, and to facilitate the integration of persons with disabilities in society, the association creates video stories. The association also has two shops where representatives of

³⁰ The impact of COVID-19 since 2020, including the impact of the state of emergency announced nationally, restrictions on gatherings and face-to-face sales.

VISI VAR speak and talk about the company, the organisation, and the services, because “everyone, both healthy and people with disabilities are in the same society. It is important that the buyers and society in general see a product and that it has quality, not the poor ones, to feel sorry for”.

The DI process³¹ throughout Latvia has given an additional incentive to paying more attention to the needs and abilities of people with MI as well as to their employment. The head of the association stresses that it is very important that offered social services are substantial and meaningful, offering employment and useful occupation, not just leisure time options. In the opinion of the association, one of the tasks of VISI VAR is to look for "strengths" in people, specifically in the area of employment, to find talents and to use everyone’s abilities.

The association currently provides services and ensures their continuity throughout a person’s life (from infancy to old age). In the opinion of the association, the participation of the municipality is essential and necessary in the development of its activities. Currently, after many years of activity, municipality sees the association as an important resource for solving social issues and problems.

The representative of the association emphasizes that in the context of the SI ecosystem, in the development of SI it is essential that all parties understand the issue, set and achieve common goals, have mutual trust and delegate the tasks, work together and communicate, as well as there are possibilities to finance SI initiatives at least in their initial stages and supporting them in various ways, including in evaluation of their results and impact.

In the opinion of the association, the most important factor contributing to the development of the SI ecosystem is exactly the human factor. Starting some SI initiative, implementing it or scaling up, it is important whether those people involved are interested and ready to face the difficulties and not lose the initiative. Similarly, from the side of the cooperation partners “the human factor is what determines whether you will be heard. Cooperation is formed when the parties hear each other. It is the same in state policy – practitioners need to be listened to and their opinion considered at the policy level.”

In the question of obstacles and hindering factors to the development of the SI ecosystem, the association’s experience shows that practitioners are often supposedly listened to, but unfortunately not taken into account. Hinders also

³¹Deinstitutionalisation (DI) is a process of setting up a system of services that provides a person with limited self-care capabilities the necessary support to live at home or in a family environment. Therefore, DI should prevent situation when a person must move to a long-term social care and social rehabilitation institution because he/she do not have access to necessary support at place of residence or community-based services, including social services.

human envy and unnecessary competition of interested parties when unable to find mutual complementarity. In such cases, typically losers are people - potential or existing service users and others involved. An obstacle can be insufficient competence and knowledge of staff and stakeholders (for example, on social work and/or social entrepreneurship issues), which is necessary for the successful development of SI in the field of social services, as well as insufficient commitment to act. Still in reality there is a need to sacrifice your free hours and resources. If it is not possible, this is a barrier hindering from forming a successful SI ecosystem. At the same time, "if you don't have next to you a team of passionate people who are committed to the idea and the goal, you can't do anything alone." And finally, no matter how much one wants to admit it, "money is always the main thing. If there is no funding, will alone is not enough. For example, in the case of employment-related SOC LLCs, there could be a problem even to pay wages and taxes."

Asked about what considered when planning, setting up and managing a CCSI in Latvia, the representative of VISI VAR emphasized in fact three things:

- a CCSI must have educational elements. Education is important - both theoretical and practical, including from experienced implementers of SI initiative.
- Developers of SI initiatives lack information on all kinds of opportunities, including on project calls and/or financial support options.
- Mutual cohesion is important. For example, SEAL invites people for discussions and groups both by specific fields and by organising meetings of SI leaders, said to be something like covision³², and thus the leaders strengthen each other.

4.2. Association "Latvijas Samariešu apvienība"

LSA ("Samaritans Association of Latvia") [57] has been operating since 1992 and, like all other NGOs included in this chapter, it has been involved in the development of the social field, including with the SI initiative launched in 2014 - Mobile Care Complex (hereinafter - "MC complex" and "LSA Initiative").

This LSA initiative is a mobile complex of home care solutions that combines several existing solutions and a unique custom-made care vehicle. The established mobile care centre - in fact a vehicle with the necessary equipment and the appropriate professionals [55] ensures availability of care at home in regions with insufficient infrastructure [56]. The association has created a unique service to enable elderly

³² Covision is a form of supervision that helps a team to look for solutions in targeted, productive and systematic way and improve itself.

people to continue living in their own homes, even if they are far away from parish centres. The MC complex helps to reduce the need for long-term social care in an institution, if the reason for this is related to the person's age or disability, and at the same time solves the problems rising at rural/outlying area.

The idea of the MC complex grew out of a personal and very real situation with a relative who lived in the countryside, clung tightly to his place of residence and did not want to leave his home, even if he needed care or a helping hand with daily tasks that caused difficulties. The members of LSA visited the relative every week and at that time provided only the most necessary support they could. The MC complex now allows people living in rural areas with no access to amenities and having difficulties to fully care for themselves, to stay in their own homes and live fulfilling life in their usual environment. The association addresses opportunities for participation of these service user through direct communication with the client that is service recipient.

The main idea of the LSA initiative - care must go to the person. The vehicles are specially equipped and have space for providing the necessary care. The MC complex has an autonomous power generator, a shower with hot and cold water, a toilet, a gas stove, a fridge, a washing machine, specialised equipment for foot care and hair cutting. It goes to a person at his place of residence, even if it is remote - with water in a well and an outdoor toilet. Such a modern, mobile, and operative form of care is almost the only way for these people to continue a dignified life in their own homes as opposed to have care at institution. Assistance and care staff of service go to the person in accordance with the individual needs. Help can be with everyday things - bringing firewood into the house, doing the laundry, helping to get to the post office, shop, social service office -, or at personal care - helping to take a shower, take care of feet, etc.

At the service - MC complex "the goal is a happy person, not a made visit/trip". In order to ensure that the service continues to meet a person's real needs and changing living conditions, at least once a month the association has discussions with the heads of the LSA units about the organisation of the daily work and the identified necessary changes.

The geographical coverage of LSA initiative is national and implementation of it involves various stakeholders: NGOs, local community representatives, social enterprises and public administration at both regional and municipal³³ level.

The MC complex is still operating, offering so much-needed support, because the LSA initiative is currently funded by municipalities financial means. Meanwhile,

³³ municipalities, their institutions and structural units, their employees

during the creation and development stage, the SI initiative attracted public funding, including financing from EU funds and programmes, international funds and donors. However, at that time, the association did not receive any mentoring or support events from some consulting office or incubator.

The possibilities offered by IT are essential for the provision of the MC complex, especially for the continuous documentation of development and operation of the LSA initiative, as well as for the evaluation of results.

The social impact of the LSA initiative can be observed at all levels - the individual and group, community and whole society. It improves the social inclusion of seniors, improves their well-being and promotes a dignified life. Currently, the MC complex is used by 1200 service users throughout Latvia, especially in counties with outlying environment, and their number is growing by approximately 10% every year. For measuring the social impact of this SI the association uses statistical data:

- availability of care-at-home in municipalities (at the place of residence) as opposed to availability of care in SCC,
- municipal expenses for provision of care-at-home as opposed to municipal expenses for provision of care in SCC,
- dynamics of the number of clients for seven years already.

The evaluation includes those municipalities that territorially are not just a large city, for example data of Riga and Liepaja are not considered. The association points out that in 2014 there were no care-at-home service in more than 20 municipalities (out of 119³⁴). The number decreased by half approximately until the territorial reform on 01.07.2021, when it was easier to compare data. Unfortunately, around 60% of people who need care still receive it in SCCs. Similarly, in most cases, the informal care provided by family members or relatives, or neighbours is not statistically counted.

The introduction of the MC complex has affected the situation when care at institution, which was the only form in 2014, now has a significant and cheaper alternative, which uses new methods and new form of organisation. During the development stage of the LSA initiative, there was a learning, for example, the initial intention prepared for the funder differed from the real situation, and one of the reasons was very practical – possibilities of fitting planned equipment in car that is

³⁴After 1 July 2021, Latvia has 43 municipalities instead of 119 previously. Accordingly, the Republic of Latvia is currently divided into 7 municipal territories of the State City and 36 municipal territories of County. There are 15 municipalities that were not affected by the territorial changes at all, because the boundaries or composition of the municipalities were not changed (for example, by adding a parish or another former county) - Daugavpils, Jelgava, Jurmala, Liepaja, Rezekne, Riga and Ventspils cities, and Aluksne, Gulbene, Livani, Olaine, Salaspils, Valka, Varaklani, and Ventspils counties.

the care vehicle. Also, in the process of the development and expansion of the MC complex, some solutions were specified, for example, currently the association addresses and engages the person's neighbours in the care process, including as part of the "Safety button"³⁵ service, because sees its added value. In addition, based on previous experience adjustments in placement of the equipment were made in the last of the seven care vehicles custom-made so far, but the specialists, who are essentially for provision of basic human needs, did not actually change. Currently, it is optimal for care vehicles to visit a person no more than twice a week, providing support in other forms at the rest of the time.

In fact, for the development of the LSA initiative and improvement of the process happen, it is made more effective and more relevant to the concrete situation.

The association admits that "staff changes are related to the trend of increasing the provision of the service. Those who come to work "with their heart", stay there".

The annual turnover of the MC complex as a structural unit, has exceeded two million EUR in recent years and is growing every year.

In the opinion of the association, digitisation in the social system is extremely necessary. As documenting is an integral part of the social field and 10–60% of the working time is devoted to it³⁶, 80% of employees (including in the association) believe that the documenting process needs to ease. Digitisation is one possibility. However, as the association notes, digitisation in Latvia, especially in the social field, is moving forward very slowly. Therefore, since 2014, in parallel with the development of the LSA initiative, the association has been working on the creation of a digital system³⁷. For each client, an e-file is created in the system, where in one place is summarized, stored, made visible and daily useful the information on the provision of service, the formulated work task (including from the municipality), the planning of performance and the done work. In the system the beneficiaries of the MC complex are listed electronically, and changes can be seen immediately, including when re-assessing the needs of the person and the service, the effectiveness of provided service can be seen and evaluated, too. The system makes

³⁵ The "Safety button" ("Drošības poga") service includes round-the-clock monitoring of a person, emergency assistance, and psychological support using a special communication system - a communication device and a signal button located in a wristband or a pendant [57].

³⁶ According to surveys conducted within the social sector in other European countries (according to information provided by the LSA representative)

³⁷ "An e-care" solution - which combines assessment of personal needs, service planning of the services and recording the performance of work. In 2019 the solutions and complex approach of the "e-care" system were showcased as one of the European social field innovations at the EURO CITIES Social Affairs Forum in Warsaw.

it possible to give up with the paper documents and its cumbersome circulation, to cooperate faster and more efficiently in the interests of the client. The system is already used by municipalities and SCCs and has also proven its undeniable effectiveness, but from 2022 the system has been supplemented with the sections exactly for the MC complex planning and performance.

The Association helps municipalities, if necessary, not only by offering the service of MC complex, but also just at the level of ideas and support. In the context of upscaling and expanding the social impact, the owners of the LSA initiative are happy to provide information in various campaigns in LV and internationally. The association has observed there is an interest about this SI initiative within the cross-border programmes and has accordingly informed those interested about the service and the existence of the customized MC complex vehicle.

Since care-at-home is an autonomous function and responsibility of the municipality, the association sees the signs of service sustainability. The LSA initiative has been positively evaluated by the service users and is financially beneficial from the point of view of the municipal administration. This increases the likelihood that the service will be provided in the future. The association has noticed that during the existence of this initiative, attempts have been made to repeat part of the given service.

When assessing the extent of upscaling of the MC complex so far, the association states that in 2014 it started with the provision of a care complex in five counties. By 2021, the number of municipalities had grown to 43 counties (out of 119), which after regional reform implemented last year now is 19 (out of 43),. It has also been observed that in municipalities where the association does not provide the service of LSA initiative there is a tendency to set up requirements very similar to the MC complex for other service providers or within the procurements, thus in fact seeking for care service with the same content.

In addition to all the above, in the opinion of association the LSA initiative brings together the elderly with the community and society. LSA expresses the desire to believe that opinion-forming and awareness-raising (through outcome and impact evaluation) changes the attitudes of the middle level of politics that is municipalities. Experience of the association shows that discussions between the MEPRD and the MoW can arise about the understanding of specific social services and the rules for their provision, but the change of attitude to positive side usually results in the spread of the service and an increase in the number of beneficiaries.

Thinking about the relation of the LSA initiative to the policy of social services in the country, the association notes that the solution of the MC complex is one of the

possible solutions, which includes the social services defined in LV, as well as the social policy included in the regulatory framework and planning documents concerning the social field. In the context of the current DI process, care-at-home and “safety button” services are used, and their costs are covered within the DI process implemented in LV, both for persons with MI (if at the same time there are other FD³⁸) and for children with disabilities.

Asked whether the LSA initiative had strengthened the community, the representative of the association confirmed that it had. He pointed out that in practice, from the first day, the association had invited and involved the nearest neighbours of the service recipient, including for motivation allowing to use the infrastructure available in the MC complex, and thus improved the socialisation of the neighbours.

Likewise, the association has examples of good practices when cooperating with a construction issues vocational school, whose students within their practical training were able, for example, to repair the wood stove of a person - MC complex service recipient. Unfortunately, further development of this successful cooperation was slowed down by the spread of COVID-19.

The LSA initiative has mechanisms to ensure the involvement of the beneficiaries — the service users — in the process. For example, they can make complaints and express their needs. Similarly, daily, the users express their opinion, for example, “I want to/don’t want to wash today”, because they are part of the care process. A survey of the beneficiaries is used regularly at the MC complex operation.

According to the opinion of the association’s representative, the LSA initiative has clearly influenced and strengthened the voice of NGO, for example, by drawing the attention of the public administration to ensuring that the decisions they make are as relevant as possible to the needs of the service users and have a positive impact on the possibility to provide care. The representative was also convinced that the idea of this service can be replicated and used elsewhere.

In the question on the SI ecosystem in LV, the representative of the association noted that there are several actors of the ecosystem who are often forgotten in everyday life, for example, in the case of the LSA initiative they were the controlling

³⁸ FD are any type of functional disorders, which can be congenital or obtained as a result of musculoskeletal, muscular, connective tissue or surgical diseases or various injuries, and which make it difficult for a person, including a child, to care for themselves or perform daily activities. These can be, for example, visual, hearing or mobility impairments, disorders of growth, behaviour, language development or physical and intellectual development. In other words, it can be said that because of the functional disorder a child, an adult or his/her family might have special needs or difficulties to fully integrate into society.

institutions, the authorities approving the technical solutions (for example CSDD), and the customers who could influence how fast the SI initiative develops. The environment in which the SI initiative operates, the local authorities and, for example, SEAL, also determine and influence the situation.

Thinking about the roles of the specified actors, the association expressed the hope that entire development process of the SI initiative was/is a joint action and its outcome. In the association's view all involved actors should be beneficiaries and cooperation is based on trust. Representatives of SI initiatives can help policymakers develop the necessary and improve existing regulatory framework. If the conditions are clearly defined, innovators themselves can multiply good examples from one place/region to another. In the case of the MC complex, there was no strong counteraction, but there were certain situations that hindered the SI development.

The association pointed out that the development of the SI ecosystem is facilitated by the existence of good practices and experiences of NGOs, and by the fact that the delegation and purchase of social services is defined in the regulatory framework and exists. It is also important that certain trust has been established among the cooperation partners so far.

As an obstacle in turn, the association points to various types of fear, including fear about new initiatives, fear from controlling institutions, fear to learn about new things, fear by politicians and decision-makers to make decisions about usage of public funding for a new initiative, as well as reluctance to use groundwork already done in LV (because it is better to buy something from other countries). The association also notes that sometimes those involved in LV are late in finding out about initiatives and developments elsewhere.

The association has also observed problems with intersectoral cooperation. For example, in the case of the MC complex, difficulties to cooperate had representatives of health and social sectors. Although the association was able to demonstrate with specific statistical data the reduction in number of ambulance calls after the usage of the "safety button" service, it faced a lack of interest from the responsible authorities in the solutions proposed by the association. Thus, the provision of the service created by this LSA initiative was burdened.

The association noted that, unfortunately, everything involving the participation of public administration tends to be limited and slowed down or delayed because of the various official procedures to be performed. For SI forming and development, in the opinion of the association, it would be good to have a recognised platform/centre that says - "this SI is necessary".

Asked at the end of the interview about what the CCSI should be like, the representative of the association said that “I would very much like the CCSI to be an encourager, a supporter of initiatives in overcoming administrative obstacles and a kind of guarantee for cooperation partners.” In the opinion of the association the centre should be sufficiently flexible and able to mitigate the barriers to the implementation of SI to get initiatives started and operating. The representative of the association also expresses appreciation: “It is good that there are talks about the existence of the CCSI in the public space. It is necessary to find solutions for the best possible operation of CCSI.”

4.3. Association “Resursu centrs cilvēkiem ar garīgiem traucējumiem “Zelda””

One of the SI initiatives implemented by ZELDA (“Resource Centre for People with Mental Disabilities ZELDA”) [88] is the Support Person’s Service in Decision-Making (hereinafter - SPSDM or ZELDA initiative) for adults with MI to whom disability group I or II were assigned. It is support provided to a specific person, according to his/her abilities, using a person-centred approach. Within this service, a person with MI is helped to exercise his/her legal capacity and capacity for action equally with others. Information provided within the service:

- helps the recipient to understand the consequences and circumstances of his/her actions;
- helps to plan and make decisions about his/her life, health and social care, finances and property;
- allows the person to express his/her will and choice;
- helps to improve person’s ability to represent himself/herself and protect his/her rights and interests;
- helps the person to expand their natural circle of support.

In 2013, ZELDA developed and in the period from 01.09.2014 to 30.04.2016 implemented a pilot project for the introduction of supported decision making in Latvia. Within the pilot project four professional support persons were trained and direct support in decision making for 28 persons with MI was provided.

According to the order of the MoW, in the second half of 2017, as an alternative mechanism to limiting the capacity for action, ZELDA³⁹ created a SPSPDM. As part of

³⁹ The need for creating the SPSPDM is linked to the obligation of member states under Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - to take appropriate measures to help persons with disabilities to exercise their legal capacity. Almost 10 years ago, on 19.11.2013, the CM

the ESF co-financed project “Improvement of the support system for social services” and the support person’s service pilot project this was piloted between 01.12.2017 and 30.11.2019, providing services to a total of 332 persons [87]. Considering the results of this project, until 30.11.2020 proposals were prepared for the implementation of SPSDM on a national scale.

Within the SPSDM, support for a person is provided in six areas: (1) protection of rights and interests; (2) finances; (3) daily life; (4) health care; (5) social care; (6) forming a circle of support. Currently, SPSDM offers three levels of support’s intensity: up to 8, 24, or 40 hours per month.

In the support person’s work, the main priority always is the will and wishes of the supported person, but not the judgement of professionals or the opinion of relatives.

Within SPSDM, several stages of support provision are distinguished:

- clarifying the wishes/will of the supported person,
- obtaining and provision of relevant information,
- identification of the possibilities and choices of the supported person,
- decision making, implementation and evaluation.

The ZELDA initiative solves several social problems and difficulties experienced by persons with disabilities and specifically persons with MI. For example, SPSDM helps solving issues on difficulties or lack of employment, conflict resolution, appropriate education and health care, respect the rights and self-determination.

The ZELDA initiative has national geographical coverage. Its development involves NGOs and local community representatives, as well as public administration at all levels (national, regional, and local).

Considering that currently state budget funding is not ensured for this initiative, the service is provided to a limited extent. In 2020, ZELDA provided SPSDM to 77⁴⁰ persons in 10 municipalities⁴¹ and in 2021 - to 52 persons in eight municipalities,

approved the “Informative Report on proposals for the legal framework on the support mechanisms for persons with disabilities”. Simultaneously with the approval of the Informative Report 2013, the CM assigned the MoW to take measures to ensure the development of a support mechanism for persons with disabilities and the financing of the support service from the EU funds allocated to the welfare sector in the planning period of 2014–2020.

⁴⁰ 17 out of the 77 persons received the service before and 60 were new users. It was possible to provide SPSDM thanks to the ESF co-financed pilot project of the individual budget model, which facilitated the provision of community-based social services for adults with MI.

⁴¹ Liepaja and Jelgava cities, Ogre, Tukums, Cesis, Gulbene, Talsi, Balvi, Bauska and Daugavpils counties (which were separate territorial units until the territorial reform implemented on 01.07.2021).

including by using the funding of the state budget⁴² and from three municipalities⁴³. On the other hand, in 2022, the provision of SPSDM continues for 16 persons in two municipalities⁴⁴, which finances it from the municipal budget or within the DI project. Recently, in July 2022, a contract was signed on service provision in the third⁴⁵ county and another municipality⁴⁶ continues to show the interest.

The impact of the ZELDA initiative [42] also can be observed at individual, community and societal level. For example, within the pilot project at least 52 persons with MI found paid job and 40 registered with the SEA. The employed persons improved their well-being and economic independence. At the same time, as the result of SPSDM, were reduced stereotypes and prejudices existing among employers and society and created a better understanding of the abilities of people with MI. Likewise professional suitability were determined for 26 persons, 13 - started and completed the training offered by SISA, and 10 more - various courses. Three persons obtained the professional qualification⁴⁷, while several started or continued their studies to obtain secondary education. At least 37 persons started receiving CBSS, improved cooperation and/or communication with the social service office, were able to apply for and receive appropriate social assistance and at least 20 - improved their living conditions. The SPSDM users experienced less loneliness and isolation in their daily life. Several of them found new hobbies, expanded their circle of support persons, improving relationship with relatives or family, found a partner, etc.

The ZELDA initiative reached many persons with MI who had not received CBSS before, and/or had not contacted or cooperated with the social service office. Thus, the previously unmet social needs of the specific persons were addressed, including by using new operational methods, and at the same time the new social service was created.

Both private and public financial resources were invested in the development of SPSDM, including funding from EU funds, state and municipal budgets, as well as international funds. The initiative has not received any of the possible forms of support for the development of SI provided by incubators or consulting offices.

⁴² ZELDA provided the service to 41 person in the period 05.03.2021 to 31.08.2021, receiving funding within the tender for projects to mitigate the consequences of COVID-19 [86].

⁴³ In the municipalities of Talsi and Tukums counties, and Jurmala city

⁴⁴ For 14 persons in Talsi county and for 2 persons in Tukums county,

⁴⁵ Gulbene county municipality

⁴⁶ Jurmala city municipality

⁴⁷ bricklayer, social carer, masseur

The ZELDA initiative is well-documented, clearly presented, and its achieved results are evaluated⁴⁸. The procedure and basic principles for the provision of SPSDM are defined in the “Guide for support person’s service providers” [40].

As in others, in this ZELDA initiative learning happened during the development, for example by significantly changing the service evaluation tools. SPSDM has a digital component, for example, relevant information about the service recipient is obtained and stored digitally, and SPSDM providers - support persons weekly prepare and submit the reports on the support provided to each person directly in digital form [42, pp. 61–71].

ZELDA is the only SPSDM provider in Latvia, which in accordance with regulatory requirements since March 2020 has been registered in the Register of Social Service Providers of the Ministry of Welfare.

In April 2022, the MoW submitted to the CM the Conceptual Report [46] “On the Implementation of Support Person’s Service in Decision Making”, which aims to provide proposals for the implementation of Article 12 of the UN Convention in Latvia, among others introduce the SPSDM for persons with MI by the middle of 2023.

The SPSDM pilot project implemented in Latvia is the largest known pilot project on supported decision-making so far. The experience gained can be used to develop the service not only in LV, but also in other countries, adapting it to local conditions and the needs of the target group. ZELDA has already shared the acquired experience with organisations working in other countries that develop similar services (for example the Czech Republic, Israel, and Lithuania). Also, in 2017, the director of ZELDA presented the experience gained at that time at the conference of Council of Europe held in Cyprus, dedicated to the launch of the new EP Disability Strategy. In summer of 2021, a conference and seminar on SPSDM [44] was organised in cooperation with the MoW for a wide range of stakeholders and representatives of social service offices. Information about the ZELDA initiative is provided publicly, including in the media addressed to professionals, such as lawyers⁴⁹.

In parallel to the development of the ZELDA initiative, there was and is observed the formation of other alternatives (social mentors, change agents, SEA’s support

⁴⁸ The summary and evaluation of the qualitative and quantitative performance indicators of the pilot project [37], and description of the service, organisation and financing procedures [43].

⁴⁹ The thematic edition of the magazine “Jurista Vārds” “How not to discriminate, to protect and treat people with mental disorders” (15.03.2022. No 11 (1225)) had published an article “Support person in the decision-making: experience of creating and providing the service in Latvia” [66] prepared by the director of ZELDA I. Leimane-Veldmeijere.

persons), where the adoption and adaptation of the operating principles of SPSDM can be seen.

Since in general there was a lack of CBSS for adults with MI in Latvia so far, this initiative, especially within the pilot project, was a very good resource and mean to address and reach many people who lived passively until now, did not receive the services they needed, and/or did not contact the social service office, despite their daily needs and rights to do so. The experience of ZELDA so far shows that a person with MI may have the necessary skills to take care of himself, but he/she needs psycho-emotional encouragement, as well as support in decision-making and implementation, to be able fully realize the potential, including for the benefit of society. It has also been observed that as the result of SPSDM the need for regular treatment in psychiatric hospital decreased for several persons, and at the same time communication with the outpatient doctor-psychiatrist and people around improved. At the beginning and at the end of the receiving SPSDM for all users subjective quality of life assessment tool was used. Overall, it was concluded that the users' self-assessment about their quality of life had increased over the course of two years [42, pp. 159–166]. In addition, the greatest improvement was observed in such areas as relationships with friends and others, living conditions at home, and financial situation. As a result of SPSDM, supported persons felt more included in society, improved or restored relationships with relatives or other persons, as well as made new friends or got involved in some association or event organising.

SPSDM is designed according to the human rights principles and using a person-centred thinking and planning approach. The ZELDA initiative is in line with the national policy of social services and complements existing social services by providing the necessary support to persons with MI, which fully complies with Article 12 (3) of the UN Convention. SPSDM makes an already functioning system much more personalised. This is a good way how at a micro-level to adapt services to people with MI. At the same time, it was concluded that it is important to maintain and improve existing social services provided by a social mentor, family assistant, or assistant, and to introduce SPSDM. The person, if necessary, could receive the specified services at the same time [48, pp. 107–157]. Then a person with MI could fully and equally enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including receive the support in decision-making. At the same time, the state would simultaneously provide a quality service for acquiring the necessary skills and solving social problems.

Supported persons are involved in all the stages of the service provision - from the person's express desire to receive the service (by writing an application) to the evaluation of the service (for example, the used questionnaire is adapted to the

person's disabilities and therefore is also prepared in the easy language). Within the SPSDM the person's individual support plan is prepared and written in easy language without complicated professional terms, using the supported person's own words, designations and expressions, thus ensuring that the plan is easy to perceive and understandable for the supported person. The signed agreement on provision of support in decision-making⁵⁰ is important when communicating with third parties such as institutions, banks, health care service providers or law enforcement authorities as it confirms the status, role, and responsibility of the support person, thus enabling the support person to participate in the supported person's communication with third parties. It is essential and significant that support for a person with MI is also available during the decision implementation phase, promoting the person's self-growth, and motivating to implement his/her decision and/or react to possible discrimination. According to the SPSDM approach, the support person does not have to support the implementation of all decisions of the supported person, as some decisions may be dangerous, risky, or unethical. In that case, it is explained to the supported person why such a decision cannot be supported within the service.

During SPSDM, the supported person has the right to refuse the service or, for example, to ask for a change of the support person if a conflict situation has arisen or the persons cannot cooperate with each other.

In general, the ZELDA initiative was initially based on the ideas of local community members, but was later implemented according to the instructions and decisions of the national authorities.

It must be noted that this ZELDA initiative strengthened the non-governmental sector, increased its capacity, reputation and influence, as well as contributed to a better representation of NGOs at the political level. The implementation of SPSDM has ensured the recognition of the association both in the local community (including among the relatives of persons with MI) and at municipalities, including social service offices.

SPSDM can also be provided in other places and countries, adapted to the local context (including the regulatory framework, already existing social services, etc.). In the opinion of the ZELDA initiative's authors, it is important that SPSDM has developed

⁵⁰ The agreement defines both the areas of support in which support is provided in decision making and implementing process, and information on the protection of personal data. The contract also stipulates that the support person can help to the supported person: obtain information, understand the available options so that the supported person could make a favourable decision, make decisions in different areas of life, inform others about the supported person's decision, as well as participate in conversations of the supported person's choice.

a strong internal monitoring system that ensures the transparency of the service and compliance with human rights standards, at the same time avoiding the risk of abuse.

When asked about the development of the SI ecosystem in Latvia, the representatives of the association pointed out that MoW and MoJ, as well as the CM play an important role in deciding on the future implementation of SPSDM throughout the country and its financing system. The Ombudsman's Office, which monitors the implementation of the UN Convention in Latvia, has repeatedly pointed at the need to earmark also state budget funding for the provision of a range of community-based services, including SPSDM, across the country⁵¹. Some role in the development of the ZELDA initiative have also had the State Audit Office, which in 2018 pointing out the need for adults with MI for living outside the institution to be provided service of support person or a service that "provides support so that the person can exercise his/her capacity for action by planning and making decisions about his/her life, health or social care, finances and properties" [54, p. 37].

A reference to SPSDM and its results in the field of employment is also given in the research done by the Analytical Service of the Parliament [52], including that "currently in Latvia only a small number of persons with MI are provided with support in decision-making".

The representatives of the association pointed out that several municipalities have recognised the positive impact of SPSDM on the improvement of the life of person with MI and the local community and expressed their willingness to provide SPSDM to their residents, but this is not possible within the existing funding. Some municipalities have expressed their willingness to co-finance SPSDM if the state would provide even partial funding. Municipalities, therefore, also have a role to play in the development of the SI ecosystem.

In the case of the specific ZELDA initiative, a role was also played by the UN Committee, which stated in the concluding observations on the initial report of Latvia: "The Committee recommends that the State party repeal the legal provisions in civil law concerning substituted decision-making and restore full legal capacity of all persons with disabilities through a supported decision-making regime that respects the autonomy, will, and preferences of the person [36]."

⁵¹ The Ombudsman has repeatedly pointed out the need to "provide a wide range of community-based services throughout the country, including the support person's service, providing for this state budget funding". (for more information, see the 13.10.2020 letter of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia to the Prime Minister K.Karins [53].

In fact, all the named actors of the SI ecosystem have contributed to the SI initiative's ability to develop from an initial small idea to implementation at national level. Each stakeholder has contributed to joint exploration of problems, finding new solutions, planning and development of the SI initiative, including initiating or piloting and upscaling of new social services. However, the association notes that development of the ZELDA initiative has taken a long time and there are still no clear guarantees that in the nearest future the financial means will be found to finance SPSDM at national scale.

Although ZELDA has prepared the service description, implemented the pilot project and prepared all necessary evaluations, as well as ensured the sustainability of the project after the end of the pilot project (although to a very limited extent), the responsibility for the development and further progress in CM of the above-mentioned conceptual report stays with the MoW, in cooperation with the MoJ.

Answering a question about the factors contributing to the SI ecosystem, ZELDA pointed that the following are important:

- specific examples of positive experiences that actually prove the need for the SI (service);
- clear and provable performance indicators that show the impact of the SI, such as prove of successful social inclusion and/or the effectiveness of the social service;
- support of social service beneficiaries, relatives, and other organisations in the promotion or implementation of the initiative, for example, by expressing an opinion on the need for the service;
- availability of permanent and sufficient funding (including state funding) for the continued provision of the service.

The association identified the following as impeding factors and obstacles:

- lack of a strong lobby outside of the SI initiative implementing organisation;
- lack of sufficient motivation among other institutions and organisations to implement SPSDM throughout Latvia;
- constraints of human resources that determine the capacity and ability of the organisation to drive SI initiatives and expand their impact.

In addition, in the case of the ZELDA initiative, social service beneficiaries are often exposed to risks of stigmatization and discrimination, and are afraid to express their opinion, even if they believe and are convinced that the new social service is very necessary and useful. And when all available financial resources are exhausted, the proposed initiative cannot survive and develop, even if it has excellent results.

At the same time, an obstacle can be the fact that the results of the SI initiative and achieved indicators in the case of persons with MI can be variable and often depend on the psycho-emotional state of the person.

As hindering factor ZELDA also indicates the need for amendments to the existing regulatory framework and/or the development of new regulations, where the situation of SPSDM the support of the MoJ or the ministry of relevant sector would be particularly important.

ZELDA representatives also point that, unfortunately, the lack of understanding is seen and unwillingness to delve into the proposed solutions, which often leads to not achieving positive results of the SI initiative. Similarly, in the conditions of limited financial resources, a significant burden is the need to provide resources for new social services without reducing and/or jeopardising the provision of existing services at the same time.

And finally, in the case of this initiative, the nature of SPSDM has also been the hindering factor, as it has elements of both social service and rights protection.

When thinking of what should be considered when planning, setting up and managing a CCSI in Latvia, ZELDA representatives pointed that a new bureaucratic institution should not be created. There must be sufficient clarity about the purpose of the CCSI, one must know what it will do, for example, whether it will only support SI or at the same time it will channel some funding for the development SI. In ZELDA view, the CCSI should probably act as a lobbying entity for new SIs and initiatives at all necessary levels.

4.4. Association “Rīgas pilsētas “Rūpju bērns””

The association (“Riga City “Child of Care”⁵²) is a non-governmental organisation which since 1995 takes care for people with mental (intellectual development) disorders, their social rehabilitation, employment, care, education, solves their problems and promotes integration into society. It informs the public [3] about the target group and the support it needs to ensure the best possible inclusion.

⁵² The association ‘Riga City “Child of Care”’ operates in the field of social inclusion, advocacy, and provides community-based social services for persons with MI. The association desires to create an environment that for people with MI promotes the improvement of the quality of life. Since 1995, in the 27 years six day care centres, two group apartments, one group home and three specialised workshops have been established and are operating. In addition, the association provides family assistant and individual social rehabilitation services, as well as provides other support in the field of social inclusion.

One of the recent (since 2018) initiatives of the association, still operating, is the individual social rehabilitation service for persons with MI, which provides them with a place to live, by renting an apartment in general housing fund, and other necessary support⁵³ (hereinafter – “RB initiative”).

The RB represents the community, and the specific initiative came from RB, when the State Audit Office pointed to the problem of the Riga municipality and the need to find a solution in the crisis situation. The wishes and needs of persons with MI - potential users then turned into a social service offer.

The RB initiative influences the improvement of the quality of life of persons with MI by solving disability-caused problems, reducing or ending the need for long-term social care in an institution. This RB initiative directly improves the inclusion of person with MI and influences public attitudes towards the target group. It ensures a dignified life, especially after the person with MI is involved in employment, and helps also other persons with MI, for example, to understand that they need to look for employment opportunities in order to cover their daily expenses. As the result of support the person’s financial security often changes and well-being improves. The impact of the RB initiative is manifested at all levels: from the individual with MI to the local community and society. The interviewed representative of the association thinks that the RB initiative contributed to the creation of good relationship of neighbours, acceptance of persons with MI and public awareness about them. Overall, this SI initiative strengthened cooperation with the municipality, resulting in better mutual trust and reliability between the parties. The provision of this modern service has certainly strengthened the influence of NGO at the national level.

In fact, the finding of a new working method ensured a new approach to social rehabilitation service that meets the real needs of the individual and the society, including in the context of the DI process. According to the association, the need was “old”, but no suitable solution had been found.

Since the service users live implementing the greatest possible independence and with responsibility for their own decisions, their participation in the whole process is self-evident.

Geographically, the RB initiative is provided at the level of municipality – in the State City Riga. Therefore, two main stakeholders are the NGO and municipal level public

⁵³In addition to a place of residence, the individualized support of a family assistant required for a specific person is provided, for example, in areas like finances, purchases, health, payments, daily planning or employment, and additional specialists are recruited in accordance with the need — psychologist, physiotherapist, psychiatrist, ABA therapist, etc.

administration. However, it is also definitely related to the interests of the local community representatives and even more so to those private for-profit companies that rent out the residences of specific type, as persons with MI (currently 12) live next to other members of society in ordinary, most often multi-apartment residential houses⁵⁴. The association points that initially cooperation with mentioned companies was slow, but recently the landlords are ready and cooperate willingly, because they know clearly - they will receive regular rent payment and the tenants will not cause unnecessary problems, because they do receive appropriate support from the RB staff.

This particular initiative was not supported at the stage of its development, but cooperation with the municipality was essential at the time, when several meetings of the association and municipality representatives were held, discussing the need and possibilities to provide support to specific persons with MI immediately after the termination of the services, they received then in the long-term social care and social rehabilitation institution.

Public funds are important for this RB initiative, i.e., the municipal budget financing, without which it would not work, because in most cases the target group has relatively low-income. The association has also the budget data of this RB initiative. Currently, the association has good cooperation with the municipality, and it is known that the municipality has earmarked a certain amount of budget funding for this service's form. This allows to hope that the RB initiative has a long-term nature and certain sustainability is ensured.

At the same time, the association points that in order to receive municipal funding for the provision of a specific service, the activities and impact of the RB initiative are constantly documented, and the results are regularly evaluated. For example, achievements of each person are assessed once in every six months. The association also notes that changes and learning are still taking place, for example, following the audit, the developed forms of the RB initiative documentation and results' evaluation are revised.

This RB initiative does not have its own separate digital system. However, the documents are stored at the data cloud and it uses application - SOPA [115] created in the state for the administration of social assistance and social services provided by municipalities. The SOPA is linked with many other databases, including those used and maintained by state institutions, for example, the SRS, State Commission, SEA, State Land Service, and the of Enterprise Register.

⁵⁴ Community-based residence - an apartment in a multi-apartment residential house, next to other society's members, whatever they may be.

Asked about the upscaling of the SI initiative, the association pointed that so far, a large part of the new social services originate in the capital of the country – Riga city, and usually after some, often longer time they are “transferred” to other municipalities. The RB initiative is very suitable to small municipalities, as existing resources have to be used. For example, by directing the right support and part of the available funding to this form of service, the need to build a special infrastructure or seek for other additional resources disappears.

In the opinion of the association that this RB initiative is easily adaptable, and any municipality can adopt it, if wish so. For example, an article has been published about a service offered by the RB and information has been provided for several stakeholders about the specific RB initiative. The association talks about this solution in the municipalities when it meets with their representatives to discuss other RB activities. Although the association has not developed an upscaling strategy for this RB initiative, it expresses the hope that in the foreseeable future (approximately 10 years) other municipalities could adopt this practice. The main condition - any municipality must be willing to look for solution and use previous experience, already tested and existing elsewhere. RB explained that the initiative started in 2018 because the Riga municipality agreed to the association’s proposal that persons with MI, who at that time received services in the group flats created by RB, could start even more independent life in the community, and thus urgently would free up the group flats’ places, so much needed for the then residents of SCC.

The association stresses that this RB initiative has definitely promoted and continues to promote solidarity and inclusion, especially in multi-apartment buildings where a person with MI and other neighbours live side by side. It also changes the opinion of the closest circle or community and significantly affects the opinion of Riga municipality’s politicians, the administration and other involved stakeholders. It directly corresponds to the EU DI idea and plan, as well as the LV DI approach. It complements the current DI process in Latvia and even goes beyond with a more modern and inclusive solution.

Up to now, the association has not had the opportunity to provide information about this SI initiative outside LV and the representative of the association doubts whether the RB initiative could be directly adaptable to an additional target group - for example, seniors. However, it has proven itself with service users - persons with MI who lack independent living skills.

Answering questions about the SI ecosystem in LV, the representative of the association pointed that in the case of this RB initiative the Riga City Council,

especially its Welfare Department⁵⁵ played an important role and the association itself.

The SI ecosystem in general is also clearly influenced by MoW as the social field manager. Usually, MoW regulates all social services, but so far has not defined detailed regulation for a specific service within the RB initiative. Therefore, the association can still provide a very wide range of support for each service user – “everything that a person needs”. RB expresses concerns, based on previous experience, that in case of “when the service will be regulated, restrictions will begin – from which resources what can and what cannot be” done. Sometimes the set restrictions and regulatory framework totally ruins a good SI idea or even completely stops the further development of the SI initiative.

Thinking of the involved stakeholders and their roles, the association points that the already mentioned real estate lessors had a certain role in the context of the RB initiative. Since in most often the municipality provides the funding, successful cooperation between the municipality and the RB as a part of the NGO sector is invaluable. RB also notes that low-income persons and people with disability everywhere daily face problems, but the Welfare Department of Riga municipality has an Employment, Social Work, and Practice Research Unit [90] that actually studies the social problems of the residents and looks for possible solutions, for example for children. In the opinion of the association this is an important role of the municipality in the development of SI initiatives and a good practice that is worth adopting.

In the Association's view, NGOs see a problem, but municipality has the resources necessary to solve it, and when both parties work together, it is clearly the best way to do things. For example, in the case of the RB initiative, both parties were thinking about and looking for solutions together and then agreed on a possible process and outcome.

In RB's view, the development of the SI ecosystem in LV is facilitated by the fact that the NGO sector is relatively mature, and the role of NGOs in the provision of social services has increased. The municipality has grown reliance that “NGOs can do more than organising a little concert” and therefore listens, takes into account and

⁵⁵ The Welfare Department is the leading institution of the Riga City municipality within the competence set for it in issues of social services, social assistance, access to health care, health promotion and prevention, including the limiting the spread of addictions and promoting the employment of residents. It aims to create a stable and responsible social system that provides the minimum material security, as well as support in social problem solving and in case of reduction of social functioning abilities of individuals, ensures the availability of health care and health promotion measures. Yearbook 2021, page 10.

involves the non-governmental sector in development of possible solutions. Consequently, SI initiatives develop more strongly.

The association also recognises that attitudes towards what social services should be and understanding of what people with disabilities can do are changing. However, understanding of municipalities and politicians that social services are valuable investments and not the regular costs with low results, is still a vision for distant future.

But in the opinion of the association, the municipality always has funding. The only question is to whom, when, and how it is directed. For example, in fact, the actual cost of the RB Initiative service is less or like the expenses of a group flat service, but the result is a more stable and dignified life and higher level of well-being for person with MI, receiving exactly the support that each individual needs at the given time.

Asked about the obstacles to the development of the SI ecosystem, the association points out that there is certain level of social services capacity, lack of human resources, insufficient awareness, weakness of the social work sector (no status, no data collection, lack of bigger structured form), in many places social services are not a priority and funding is available only if it is left over from other sectors.

It is also disturbing, that the coverage of NGOs is not the same across the LV territory. This, in turn, means that only in those places where there are strong NGOs, SI development happen and moves faster.

The association admits that now it seems that everyone is satisfied with what is already there. Not knowing, lack of understanding, protecting one's position, rejecting offers of anything better, those are the attitudes often experienced in the daily life of the association. People do not want changes, even if the better life is promised, because they are used to what everyone has. In the field of social services, the association has encountered a lot of resistance and scepticism, especially in the case of new SI initiatives. However, the association expresses its understanding that it is not possible to quickly change person's attitude and life approach.

Finally, the association sees as an important barrier the fact that people respond more appropriately to a social need and the necessity for solutions if they personally have a similar experience and/or problem. This applies to everyone, but especially to decision-makers and funding providers. Unfortunately, the human factor has a very high level of influence in this aspect.

Thinking about the development of SI and the possible CCSI - what it should be, the association says that "we would like the CCSI to help ensure greater coverage of NGO/SI initiatives by improving cooperation with municipalities and regions". In the opinion of the association, the DI working groups and/or project teams of the

planning regions should be used as those responsible for the development of social services at the regional level, both as drivers of the use of the services and their development. The association also thinks that it would not be all right to create only one centre in Riga, because there are regional differences, for example, the amount and capacity of available human resources. One of the tasks of the CCSI could be to promote the experience exchange in municipalities regarding the adaptation/upscaling and financing of SI and social services. It would certainly be necessary, and support should be given to SI idea generators, in the development of project management or human resources capacities, ensuring, for example, knowledge transfer.

In addition, the association points that SI should be a priority at the national level.

5. Analysis of the SI ecosystem in LV: needs and challenges

This chapter describes the needs and challenges of the development and improvement of the SI ecosystem in LV. It is divided into four main blocks - knowledge and understanding of SI, political and conceptual support for SI, long-term financing and gaps of the SI ecosystem. It must be said that, in the opinion of the authors of this report, the aspects of SI development included in the subsections are closely interlinked, sometimes overlap or complement each other. Perhaps this analysis will also help to answer the question: what should be the national strategy for improving the SI ecosystem and creating CCSI?

5.1. Knowledge and understanding of SI

The concepts of SI and SOC LLC are still relatively new to LV. Academically also, there are not many researches in LV related to SIs, their development processes, and the society involvement. Even for experienced actors of the SI ecosystem the amount of knowledge and understanding of SI development processes is different and, often related only to the need to clarify specific issues because of direct job duties.

At the same time LV has no explanation of the SI term and easy-to-follow political guidelines. It should also be acknowledged that the currently existing regulatory framework is fragmentary and incomplete to determine SI as a priority resource and to use it effectively to identify societal challenges and solve problems.

The already conducted study [80] has conclusion that the implementation of SI initiatives is equally negatively affected by the lack of necessary information, the passivity of stakeholders, and the lack of openness to the experience of and cooperation with other people or organisations.

At the same time, the absence of an SI definition/term does not necessarily mean that the SI principle was not applicable while creating and developing a service or product. The term “SI” or “innovation” is often used ambiguously. For example, when talking about innovation in a socially significant field, the context and one of the definitions of SI clearly shows that it is precisely SI that is discussed.

Therefore, at least the definitions and terms proposed by the EC must be explained and put into practice in LV. It will help not only to understand what values and benefits that SI can bring to individuals, organisations, and for society in general, but will also promote the emergence and development of SI to solve more effectively the societal challenges requiring urgent and often yet unused alternative solutions.

Since SI and related concepts need to be clarified and updated, it is probably necessary also academically to expand knowledge and conduct researches on SI, including by cooperation of representatives of various sectors and countries, because SI is still a relatively new field.

5.2. Political and conceptual support for SI

Even though SIs in fact address nationally important social problems and needs for some of the target groups at risk of exclusion, such as persons with disabilities, the experience of SI initiatives' developers shows that in several cases the initial reaction of key actors, for example state institutions and politicians, was resistance to change. Likewise, for a long time the ignoring and even pushing away of SI initiators can be observed- "what do they need again?", "again they are coming with their problems". The view has often prevailed "so let them (for example NGOs, SOC LLC, municipality) take care of solving their own problem".

In addition, there is a lack of interest and information at the level of politicians and decision-makers, and consequently insufficient understanding of the issues. This in turn influences further decisions on supporting SI initiatives, for example on financial investments. Often, public administration institutions and politicians think more of norms, additional expenses and control of SI implementers and less - of the results or the positive social impact of SI solutions.

On the one hand, in a situation of limited available financial and human resources, the inability immediately to satisfy/solve all social needs, which are constantly changing and anew being rediscovered, is understandable. But on the other hand, there is a lack of a forward-looking and sustainable systemic thinking approach to SI development issues, including determining the priorities in issues to be resolved or the choices of which development direction to take in the near future. LV would need greater political support for the revitalization of SI at different levels of the decision-making and executive power for SI to develop more successfully up to the extent of expanding their social impact at national scale. Useful would also be a clearer SI support strategy - goals and structure/governance, as well as funding mechanisms that drive SI issues at the national, regional and local levels.

It should be noted that in recent years, as the NGOs capacity has strengthened and their involvement in political decision-making has increased, the state and municipalities' trust in the non-governmental sector has improved, as well as reliance and cooperation with NGOs and community representatives. In addition, continuous cooperation at the development and updating of different level (regional, national, sectoral, municipal) planning documents helps to reduce such an obstacle to the development of the SI ecosystem, as distrust to cooperation partners, for example, NGOs.

The strength of professional organisations of social field and attitude towards SI development processes has not been sufficiently supportive, if there was any at all. In recent years, social work specialists have been fighting for the prestige of the profession rather than demonstrating support for some concrete SI initiatives. In the authors view, this is due to the weakness of social field professionals and professional organisations, the limitation of various resources, capacity and will, and sometimes also lack of susceptibility and courage.

Municipalities are closest to the local citizens and therefore should be more aware and much interested in SI development processes and should be involved in them. And often they are both interested and involved in SI development processes, but limitations arise when financial resources and support opportunities at the municipal level are not sufficient for promoting SI flourishing throughout its development process up to the maximum level of social impact. Therefore, it should be noted that awareness of the thinking and decision-making processes of municipal politicians and administrations is an important factor that can contribute to the sustainability and success of SI initiatives. In addition, cooperation of all parties is essential, not only at the start and end stages of the SI initiative, but also throughout the SI development process.

There is a challenge to bring into the public administration's sight SI as an important resource (rather than as "another additional expenses again"). This requires changes in thinking and perception, flexibility in the development and implementation of rules and procedures, establishing and maintaining cooperation with other sectors and various involved actors, etc.

5.3. Long-term financing

Currently, funding for the SI is mainly linked to the various available funds, including those of the EU and other financiers. In this case, support for SI is based more on a "acquisition of funds" or project approach, rather than on targeted, focused search and support for long-term solutions. This means that funding is available for a limited period (for example, 1–2–3 years), and in a limited amount (the maximum amount of financial support available for one project and therefore for one SI initiative is set). The project competition approach also means limited time for developing and testing new ideas. Funding therefore usually can be obtained for the first stages of SI development, i.e., for the possibility to develop SI ideas and pilot them to some extent or, for example, to improve the quality of social services. Relatively more rarely, funding is available for "continuing" SI initiatives — for expanding or upscaling, or for increasing social impact. This means that SI initiatives face a particular challenge in the further SI development process, when the possibilities of getting funding differ significantly. Implementing, strengthening, and upscaling SI in such a situation is much more difficult. Many good SI initiatives in the social field do not reach the seventh stage of development - system change (which

is very important in the context of DI processes), included in the SI development spiral visible at the beginning of the report.

Perhaps the best recent example and exception is the ALTUM programme for the support of SOC LLC, which offers the opportunity to receive financial support-grant repeatedly [112]. Of course, this is possible if certain conditions are met, but such a possibility exists.

The study [80] also shows that the most significant obstacle to the development of SI in LV was the lack of funding (24%), only then followed by the society's passivity (19%) and administrative or bureaucratic obstacles (19%). Most likely, the situation has not changed dramatically from the time the study was conducted up to today.

It is precisely the lack of long-term funding that is a significant hindering factor for the SI ecosystem in LV, to SI further develop and be upscaled, if receiving sufficient support. Therefore, it would possibly be helpful to have a funding mechanism that supports SI initiatives at different stages of their maturation and development. For example, if funding continues to be based on a project approach, project competitions could be announced in several rounds, where the participant of each previous round, after achieving a positive result in it, could be eligible to apply for support for the next stage of the SI initiative development - in the next round of the project competition.

5.4. Gaps of the SI ecosystem

Lack of policies and long-term funding for SI support undeniable influences the SI ecosystem, making it weaker and increasing unclearness for SI initiators, potential funders and support providers. SI developers often lack clear "rules of the game" and consistent long-term support.

The understanding and/or explanation of the term SI is essential at the SI development supportive approach. For example, in some cases, project competitions, available for applying to both NGOs and municipalities, defined innovative alternative social services as a priority for support, at least in the documents. However, considering the lack of explanation of the SI term at national level and especially on SI in the social field or the existing interpretation possibilities, SI initiatives can only be recognised as innovative in some cases. It is well known that the discussion about what is innovative is ongoing on for a long time in LV and elsewhere. The conclusion of this discussion is really appropriate that "what is innovative in one organisation, community or country may not be so in another environment/place/time". And one can understand the dilemma existing at public management level - the need to define SI, but only in a way that combines all types of SI initiatives, including those suitable for different environments, places and times.

On the one hand, LV could have good conditions for the development of SI and SOC LLC, because the commitment to achieve the global Sustainable Development Goals is expressed in several sectors and their development planning documents. However, on the other hand, the planning regions and municipalities often lack regulatory documents, policies, and/or strategies promoting the creation and development of SI, including SOC LLC. Where such documents do exist, the used wording is not specific enough or it focuses only on certain aspects of SI development, such as digitisation or innovation in construction, which affects (impedes) both a common understanding of SI and wider engagement of society and stakeholders in SI development processes.

There are also difficulties to involve in the development of SI the target group and/or representatives of potential users of new social services. This is related to both the character and abilities of individuals, as well as the possible risks of negative attitudes or insufficient motivation to participate, including in SI development processes that are not easy to understand.

The unclear conditions currently existing in LV have negative effect on cooperation and networking of SI ecosystem actors. For example, it prevents SI initiators from operating actively, developing SI's quality and expanding its social impact. This disturbing factor is felt even more, and the situation becomes more difficult when the SI development process involves representatives of different sectors and organisations, often having absolutely different goals, experience and working methods. For example, when the solution of SI initiative at the same time includes simultaneous solving of several sectors' issues - as in the cases indicated by the associations - SI covers the competences of the MoW, MoH, or the MoW and the Ministry of the Interior. Then, for successful cooperation more time is needed, good coordination skills, and persistence from the organiser's side. Sometimes the question appears whether anyone at all is ready and willing to devise mechanisms that facilitate the change processes created by SIs, including in the cases indicated above. It is not easy to find an institution, a structure and an individual in public administration who daily dares to act "outside of accepted frames", even in the case of very good SI initiatives, to promote as much as possible its development and upscaling up to the change of the social services system. Similarly, it is not easy to find practical examples of how to improve the mutual, including cross-sectoral, cooperation of the different actors of SI ecosystem within the development processes, although without such cooperation upscaling of SI is almost impossible. To improve all kinds of cooperation when solving some issue is a goal easy to set, for which it is hard to find a simple and quick solution. When the cooperation of the different actors of SI initiatives is not coordinated, joint direction towards increasing the SI's impact is lost.

Recently, one of best practise examples is the implementation of the DI process in cooperation with planning regions and other stakeholders, when, for example, the

relevant Regulations of the CM are changed in accordance with the real situation and circumstances that occur during the process. However, at least one minus should be noted here - the process of making changes in any regulatory framework is disproportionately long comparing to the temp at which conditions appear and social needs are identified, that require urgent solutions.

As far as we know, there is no actor in the SI ecosystem in LV who would coordinate all SI initiatives and their development, including those in the social field and in the context of the DI process. Although in generally there are several SI support structures and examples of good practices were identified [8], the activities of all involved actors in LV are not coordinated and at the organisational level depend on available - often limited - financial, time, and human resources.

Currently in LV, there are no identified or defined structures or ecosystem actors, forms and types of operation suitable to the LV situation, that would help in SI development processes and fundraising, or that would provide ongoing support to SI of the social services field and, even more, long-term/continuously funding in the SI development process, especially in the last stage of SI development — upscaling at national level and inclusion/adoption into the national social policy.

The **lack of specific responsible structures**, such as the **CCSI, does not allow to manage, lead and coordinate the creation, development or upscaling of SI and to provide the necessary support to all stakeholders according to their roles and functions throughout the SI development process.**

6. Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter in a concentrated way summarises the main conclusions that occurred in the process of preparing the report and answers the question raised at the beginning of it: *What factors promote and what hinder "mature" SI initiatives transformation into a national policy in the social field?* These are not prioritized and rather complement each other.

Recommendations for the development of the SI ecosystem in LV, directly related to the obtained conclusions are included at the end of this section.

In the opinion of the authors of this SI Ecosystem's Development in LV Mapping Report:

- **Although** a specific definition or term of SI was not previously used, it is evident from the materials and examples reviewed and analysed within this report that social services were created and developed in Latvia for decades. Those can be considered SI, as they essentially meet its definition and content. It must be admitted that **SI as a process is not absolute novelty in Latvia.**
- To some extent, SI is currently on the agenda of LV, also because it is closely linked to the possibilities to use EU funding, but still **insufficient attention is paid to this issue, there is no unified vision and opinion that SIs are really needed.**
- **There is no clear definition of SI** in LV policy planning documents and the existing regulatory framework, except for the SOC LLC part, **and specific norms or conditions for SI development are not included.**
- **There is insufficient political support** when decisions on SI are made, including the still prevailing opinion that funding for social field is an ongoing expense rather than a significant investment.
- In LV, as in many other countries, **SI is most often associated with the operation and development of SOC LLC.**
- **The support of public administration institutions** for SI implementers **is still insufficient.**
- The form of operation of the national public administration - **separated responsibilities of sectors** is a sufficiently important obstacle that **do not promote the development process of SI initiatives.**
- The **public sector** as a potential user of SI **is not sufficiently involved** - national and municipal institutions often do not act as the customer of innovative, modern solutions (for example in public procurement procedures).
- **No state-level public institution in LV has yet taken a SI leadership role,** including in the social field, in the context of SI development and upscaling.

- Most likely that SI initiatives receive funding for the implementation of innovative projects and ideas in the social field also from public financial resources, however to date **no specific, targeted, and permanent programmes have been defined which are specifically intended to foster SI development processes.**
- Each **municipality addresses the SI issue within the limits of its capabilities,** available information and capacity of personnel.
- The **study** “Financial, informational, organisational, and overall involvement of society in social innovation processes in Latvia” [80] conducted in LV in 2019 **could be considered as the first attempt to analyse the SI ecosystem in LV.**
- **More knowledge and research are also needed on SI and novelties in the field of social services, including in the context of DI,** both in Latvia and beyond.
- **The range of actors and stakeholders involved in SI development processes in LV is relatively broad and can change** from case to case.
- Some organisations point out and must agree that **the lack of permanent, long-term funding** is one of the most important obstacles, and in many cases **leads to the fact, that SI initiative stops in its development process** and never reaches the stage when it is possible to start upscaling, take it over/implement at national level as part of social policy, maximizing its social impact.
- In general, **social innovation needs a clearer organisation for its ecosystem. SI can be supported more effectively if it takes organised and long-term forms.**
- **At the national level, a structure or institution (for example, CCSI) would be needed explicitly responsible for promoting and supporting the development of SI initiatives.**
- EU structural funds, and in particular **ESF+ 2021–2027, allow to promote the SI development process** under particularly favourable conditions.
- The representatives of stakeholders involved in the development of SI emphasize that, when looking for long-term solutions, **simultaneously it should be kept in mind of individual needs/features and a person-centred approach/perspective.**
- **At all stages of SI development,** when looking for the most effective and best solutions to social problems, the **emphasis should be on cooperation** - for example, municipalities + MoW + MoH + MEPRD + NGOs/entrepreneurs/ researchers.

- **Learning is important, including from the experience of other countries,** and so it is necessary to use the ongoing EC-supported initiative for better SI development processes understanding and direction.

Here are some key recommendations **for strengthening the SI ecosystem in LV.**

In order to ensure more permanent society's social problems solutions and in the long term to create more favourable conditions for the SI initiation, maturation, and upscaling at national level, it **is necessary to:**

- **improve knowledge and understanding of SI,** including by using the potential of academic staff and conducting research on SI-related topics, as well as by regularly publicising the results of SI development processes;
- **promote greater participation of the SI initiative's target group representatives in the SI development and in expressing their opinion,** thus using all available resources and contributing to the creation of a more socially inclusive society;
- **greater political support and clearer governance at national, regional, and local levels,** including by setting appropriate goals, flexible forms for SI support and SI implementation monitoring, and by regularly planning appropriate budget for SI and SOC LLC development;
- **review the adequacy of the requirements, especially in the context of CBSS,** so that the regulatory framework is not what prevents the effective provision of the availability of an innovative and much-needed social service;
- **promote the cooperation of all stakeholders,** including by creating the support measures, cooperation networks and platforms, at the same time fostering mutual learning;
- **improve the financing of SI development,** including by testing different types of financial instruments;
- **make tools to be used within the SI development process and especially in the upscaling phase** (including digitisation tools) **more accessible,** for example, by publishing them on the CCSI's or other websites;
- **create one coordinating structure (CCSI) with adequate time, financial and human resources that provides** various types of (consultative, financial, etc.) **support to SI initiatives throughout their development process.**

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Bui Ca SUS

Building Capacity for a Sustainable Society

“BuiCaSuS is an international project aimed to strengthen capacities of national competence centres for social innovation. The project partners are from Spain, Sweden, Latvia, and France. It is one of six consortia funded by the European Commission. Its tasks are to map current social innovation systems, to support piloting and upscaling schemes, to foster transnational learning on tools for innovation, and to develop policy propositions for National competence centres.”



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