



Social B Newsletter - Nov.2020

Welcome to the first SocialB Newsletter! Read on to find out what we've been up to in 2020...

Social B - a brief refresher

And in case you've forgotten what SocialB is...

- Social B is an Erasmus+ Knowledge Alliance project between 8 partners¹ from the social enterprise, training and Higher Education sectors in 4 countries – Ireland, Greece, Italy and Slovenia.
- The strategic objective of the project is to develop a common suite of training materials, available to a wide range of stakeholders, through the SocialB Learning Repository.
- Learning materials will be presented in the framework of blended learning materials in 16 – 24 Learning Units, and will be designed to address identified skills gaps and training needs in key areas critical for the development, sustainability and expansion of the Social Enterprise sector.
- The project will run until December 2022.

¹<https://socialb-erasmus.eu/project-summary/project-partners/>



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What have we learned this year?



We've learned lots about Social Enterprises!

And a big 'thank you' to all of the organisations, individuals and collaborators in Greece, Ireland, Italy and Slovenia who took the time to participate in our survey work, and in follow-up interviews and discussions. These included:

- 93 Social Enterprises;
- 25 SE Advisors and Advisory Organisations;
- 20 collaborators and partners of Social Enterprises;
- 98 HEI/VET training programmes and courses;
- and 56 interviews with HEI/VET course directors.

Management & Sustainability

Based on our research, Social Enterprises consider their biggest challenges to be:

1. Insufficient paid staff resources & funding to recruit required staff
2. Meeting and responding to increased demand for services and/or goods they provide
3. Unsustainability due to low levels of income generated for services and goods they provide
4. Lack of marketing expertise, to connect with customers and target groups

Social Enterprises consider their *single biggest challenge* to be over-reliance on statutory funding, with overly-high organisational running costs cited as the next biggest challenge.

There was unanimous agreement on the most effective definition of sustainability for Social Enterprises:

For Social Enterprises, sustainability means...being financially viable while serving their social objectives.

Social Enterprise Growth

According to the Social Enterprises which participated in our research, the main type of growth which they are working towards is the expansion of new products and services to their existing customer bases. Generating more income through trading of goods and services is another high priority, while the third priority growth area is generating more income through securing grants and/or government funding.

Insufficient funds to invest in growth is considered to be the biggest growth challenge amongst those who participated.

Training Needs



We investigated a wide range of skills and training needs. While most are considered to be important for Social Enterprises, 7 particular areas stood out, according to over 85% of our survey and research participants:

1. Expertise in maintaining, managing and developing sustainability and growth;
2. Financial planning and management, including risk management and internal auditing;
3. Communication, sales & marketing skills;
4. Soft skills and interpersonal skills;
5. Management, development and motivation of staff;
6. Fundraising and funding from varied resources;
7. Business & strategic Planning.

A comprehensive summary report will shortly be available on the SocialB website², providing much more detail and information on our findings across all 4 project countries. Check back soon to download it.

What's next for 2021?

Based on our research and survey findings, the skills gaps and training needs which we've identified will form the core themes of the Learning Units and learning materials which we will be designing developing throughout 2021.

We anticipate that the SocialB Learning Units will adopt the European Qualifications Framework Level 6 standard, and we hope to be ready to pilot some of the materials by the end of 2021 with Social Enterprises and other key collaborators.

Stay up to date with SocialB



To keep up to date with SocialB as the project develops, we would love you to sign up for our newsletter on the homepage of our website. We promise not to bombard you with emails, but we do expect to issue 2 or 3 newsletters in 2021, with updates on our progress.

We'd also be delighted if you shared this newsletter with colleagues, and with anybody else who might be interested in following our progress, particularly Social Enterprises, third level institutions and training and education bodies which are active in the field of training for social enterprises.

Sign up here for our newsletter³.

Contact Us

SocialB is a collaboration between organisations in Greece, Ireland, Italy and Slovenia, led by Limerick Institute of Technology, Ireland. The easiest way to contact us is through our website, where you'll also find information and links to the organisations involved in the project⁴, and contact details for the Project Officer in each partner organisation.

Visit us on the web at <https://socialb-erasmus.eu>

²<https://socialb-erasmus.eu>

³<https://socialb-erasmus.eu>

⁴<https://socialb-erasmus.eu/project-summary/project-partners/>

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