

# Social Innovation Plus – Competence Centres (SI PLUS)

SI PLUS is building up national competence centres for social innovation in Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia. It boosts social innovation, notably with a focus on employment and the labour market. It organises mutual learning and breaks down research results into practical approaches and tools for practitioners implementing ESF+ programmes. SI PLUS also mobilises the expertise of partners from Germany, Slovenia, Croatia and the European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE).

## Building national competence centres for social innovation in the EU Member States

SI PLUS is one of the six projects supported by the European Commission in order to establish national competence centres for social innovation across the EU. During two years (May 2021-May 2023) social innovation organisations, research centres, ESF managing authorities and other partners design and develop competence centres, which can help their countries to promote social innovation, including with funding from ESF+ and other EU programmes.

The national competence centres will focus on several functions:

- ⦿ **Capacity-building:**
  - Building capacity among a range of stakeholders: ESF+ managing authorities, local and regional authorities, practitioners, support organisations, donors, etc.
  - Raising awareness of the social innovation concept.
  - Developing tools and methods to achieve and scale-up impact.
- ⦿ **Networking, synergies and resources:**
  - Collaboration between public, private and third sector organisations, academia, etc.
  - Synergies between different EU funding schemes.
- ⦿ **Transnational exchange**
  - Sharing knowledge: what does/does not work?
  - Beyond sharing: cooperating in joint endeavours, active mentoring and partnerships.

## Expected results for each country



**Competence centre for social innovation**



**Blueprint for a strategy and action plan**



**Analysis of strengths, weakness and sources of inspiration**

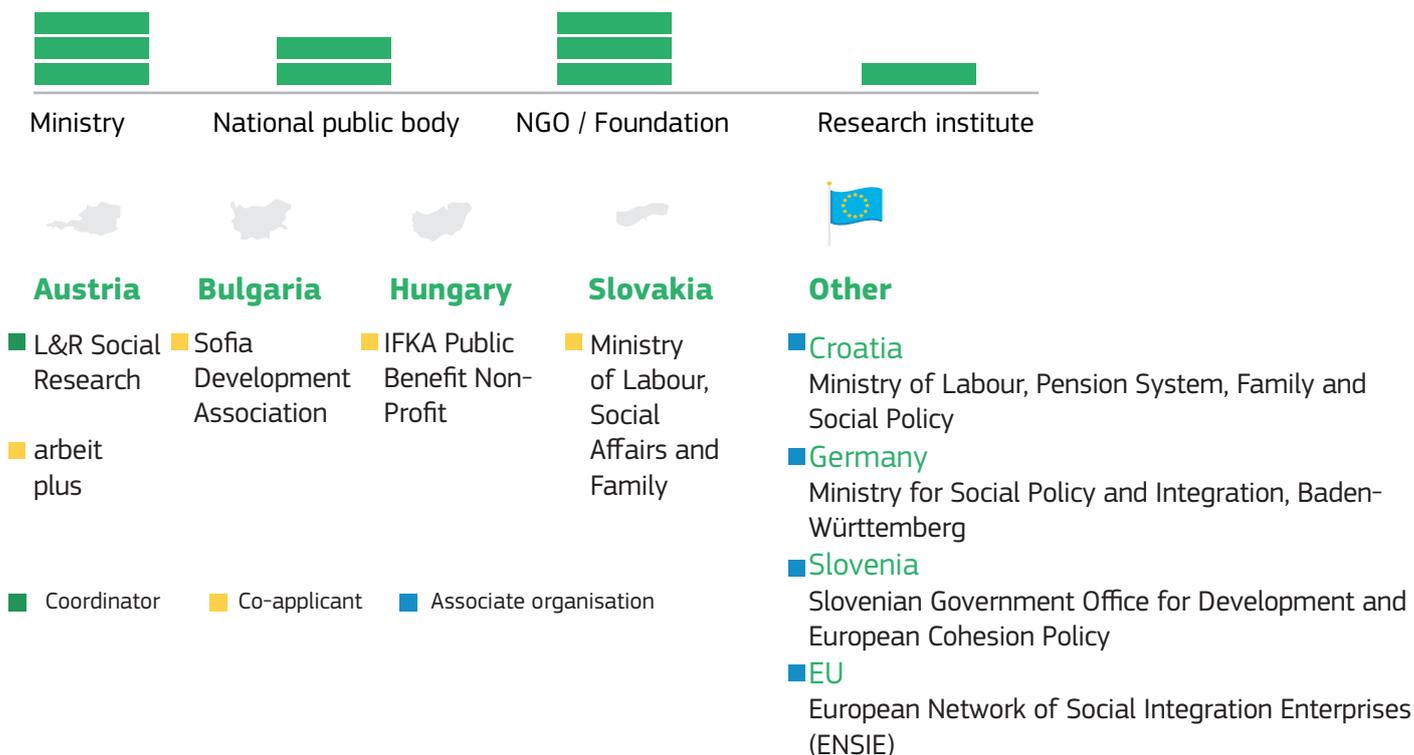


**Collection of initiatives started or replicated**

**Each project will test the replication or scaling-up of one or two social innovations.**

# Overview of Social Innovation Plus – Competence Centres (SI PLUS)

## 9 organisations



## Key contact points

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## Background

- The project builds on the network of ESF Managing Authorities in the Danube Region – an initiative in the framework of the European Strategy for the Danube Region.
- SI PLUS includes institutions from countries with diverse levels of economic development and different experiences of social innovation.
- The project was set up to facilitate knowledge transfer between countries with varying experiences of social innovation.



## Activities planned at national level

### ⦿ Austria

- The first step is to reach a shared understanding and joint criteria for the operationalisation of social innovation. ESF+ stakeholders, civil society representatives, public policy partners, researchers and practitioners will be included in this process.
- L&R Social Research and arbeit plus will identify, collect and analyse existing social innovation policies and practices at national level. The competence centre serves as an information hub for social innovation policies and practices.
- Austrian partners will build the structure for the national competence centre that will foster knowledge exchange and capacity-building, and increase cooperation between all relevant ESF+ and other structural funds stakeholders.
- The competence centre will promote experimental spaces to assess regional development needs in respect of employment and the labour market. The goal is to create socially and ecologically sustainable jobs for vulnerable groups. In order to achieve this, the national partners will facilitate participatory processes with citizens, civil society representatives and regional stakeholders.

### ⦿ Bulgaria

- Together with national stakeholders, the Sofia Development Association will define and agree the competence centre's purpose.
- Sofia Development Association will set up the structure and key components of the national competence centre.
- The Bulgarian competence centre will build networks with national, regional, and other Member State partners to exchange knowledge and build national/regional capacity to broaden the basis of social innovation.
- The national competence will select successful social innovation projects and pilot scaling-up to establish good practice.

### ⦿ Hungary

- IFKA will map existing social innovation policies and practices to develop a national social innovation strategy and action plan.
- It will create a structure for the national competence centre, together with an online tool to develop social innovation initiatives.
- The Hungarian competence centre will facilitate knowledge exchange, capacity-building and networking among national/regional social innovation partners in the areas of local economy, green circular economy, and just and quality employment.
- The competence centre will support the managing authority in planning, tailoring and implementing programmes under ESF+ and foster integration of social innovation approaches across social and economic development in the country.

### ⦿ Slovakia

- The Slovak Ministry will map existing social innovation policies and practices to assess national social innovation needs and priorities.
- It will establish a national competence centre for social innovation to address stakeholder needs.
- The Slovak competence centre will support mutual learning and networking with relevant national/regional stakeholders to build capacity for social innovation.
- The Slovak Ministry will communicate project results widely through existing networks of national partners and by involving national/regional actors.

### **'Experimental' knowledge exchange in Austria**

The national competence centre will promote 'experimental' (open) spaces to foster knowledge exchange between the public sector, civil society and all citizens affected by structural changes in the economy that generate unemployment. These spaces and exchanges will prompt innovative tools for social innovation. The national competence centre will establish regional social innovation laboratories for ESF+ stakeholders, including managing authorities, representatives other structural funds, and citizens. These laboratories will assess Austria's development needs, with a focus on employment and the labour market.

### Activities planned by associated partners

- The European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE) and the German regional managing authority of Baden-Württemberg will contribute expertise and support dissemination activities, including seminars and peer learning events.
- The Croatian and Slovenian managing authorities will exchange information and experience with the aim of setting up their own national competence centres.

### Activities planned at transnational level

- SI PLUS will foster peer learning at partner level through 'twinning projects', development of joint action plans, meetings, staff exchanges and a transnational online platform to exchange good practices.
- It will establish three thematic networks and hold workshops with social innovation promoters, academics and practitioners to assess each country's social innovation context.
- SI PLUS will replicate and test one or two social innovation projects from Austria and Hungary to test their transferability and adaptability.
- At EU level, it will exchange knowledge on best practices with other competence centres for social innovation.

### Social innovation twinning

SI PLUS will develop and implement a 'twinning projects' approach to enhance knowledge transfer between Austria-Slovakia and Hungary-Bulgaria. Peers will develop joint action plans on cooperation, including their strengths and weaknesses on social innovation, and joint goals. They will also exchange staff members to share learning on working methods. Finally, peers will provide written reports on the results of the joint projects and their effects on national social innovation.

### Want to know more about other competence centres for social innovation?

More factsheets available on the [ESF+ website](#)



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