



Social innovation ecosystem development



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1. INTRODUCTION

In the framework of the SEED project, the Italian partnership has been planning to establish a Design Policy Lab for ESF national authorities to co-design a SI policy to be implemented in the next ESF Operational Programmes.

In order to pilot the Policy Lab, during the Advisory Board meetings involving the ESF managing authorities (ANPAL, NOP Inclusion, NOP Metropolitan Cities), the partners had the chance to identify the National Programme “Metro Plus 2021-2027” as the target programme where to test the implementation of a Design Policy Lab in the framework of a newly designed funding measure addressing middle sized cities in South Italy: *OP4 - Priorità 5: Servizi per l'inclusione e l'innovazione sociale - città medie RMS* (Policy Objective 4 - Priority 5: Services for inclusion and social innovation in - medium sized cities - Less Developed Regions in South Italy).

The SEED Italian partnership thus supported the Territorial Cohesion Agency, through a series of online working sessions, to better outline the mentioned funding measure according to the European, national and local priorities and challenges. In a second phase, a training program was designed and implemented for the support of the identified beneficiaries (39 cities).

The expected result is the improvement of the capacity of the beneficiary cities in designing local policies, processes and projects mainstreaming Social Innovation with an active involvement of the final beneficiaries also in the role of co-producers of the solutions.

2. MAIN OBJECTIVE

The main objective of the Italian pilot project is, on the one hand, to support the Territorial Cohesion Agency in outlining a specific funding measure that could be a convenient tool for public local authorities to implement innovative policies for local development.

Specifically, the actions envisaged to achieve this goal included:

- identification of an internal working group;
- finalising the text of the funding measure in the National Programme Metro Plus 2021-2027;
- evaluation of possible models to be studied and adapted for the implementation of the measure (e.g. URBACT, Social Innovation Fund, ...);
- identification of evaluation criteria and KPIs;
- identification of support services for the implementation of the measure;
- drafting of guidelines in support of beneficiaries (including best practices as inspiring examples).

On the other hand, the goal of SEED - as a test of one of the services that could be provided by the future National Competence Centre for Social Innovation - is to increase the capacity of the public administrations to mainstream the approach of Social Innovation in their policies. In order to do so, the pilot project included a process directly involving the 39 cities identified by the Territorial Cohesion Agency as beneficiaries of the funding measure “Services for inclusion and social innovation in - medium sized cities - Less Developed Regions in South Italy”. Such process consists of two main milestones (two in presence workshops) aimed at:

- approaching the concept of social innovation;
- analysing some relevant examples of SI projects/practices already implemented by other Italian cities;

- familiarising with the tools and working methods typically used in SI processes (stakeholder involvement, co-design, peer learning ...);
- collecting the needs in terms of social innovation of the involved cities;
- identifying potential services to be activated.

2.1. Our starting point /Where we are?

The pilot project of the SEED Italian partnership was completed on 15 March with the second co-design workshop involving the 39 mid-sized cities from South Italy involved in the National Programme Metro Plus 2021-2027. The process involved the following steps:

August - December 2022: series of online workshops and consultations among the SEED Italian partners mainly involved in the pilot project implementation (City of Torino, Politecnico di Milano, FGB, EURICSE) and the Territorial Cohesion Agency to define the tools in support of the beneficiary cities addressed by the funding measure. In particular, the SEED partnership elaborated the *Guidelines on Social Innovation for the medium sized cities of the Less Developed Regions* including the following sections:

- the European and national framework on Social Innovation and the related priorities in the NOP Metro Plus 2021-2027;
- a definition of social innovation;
- general characteristics of the projects supported by the programme: approaches, tools and examples;
- procedures to activate the Priorities in the beneficiary cities;
- support actions towards the implementation.

2.2. What added value do we want to bring through the pilot? /Where do we want to go?

The key dimension that the SEED partnership is tackling through the pilot project is the capacity of public administrations to adopt a more integrated and human-centric approach into the development of policies and concrete projects on the topics of sustainable urban development. The involvement of local communities and civil society as not only beneficiaries but also co-producers of solutions is the main innovation that the pilot project intends to introduce in the design of public policies.

The direct engagement of 39 Italian cities in the project represents a very important result in the impact of the SEED pilot action at national level. The commitment of the Territorial Cohesion Agency - as ESF Managing Authority - in all the design and implementation phases confirms the awareness of national authorities of the potential of mainstreaming a social innovation approach in policy making.

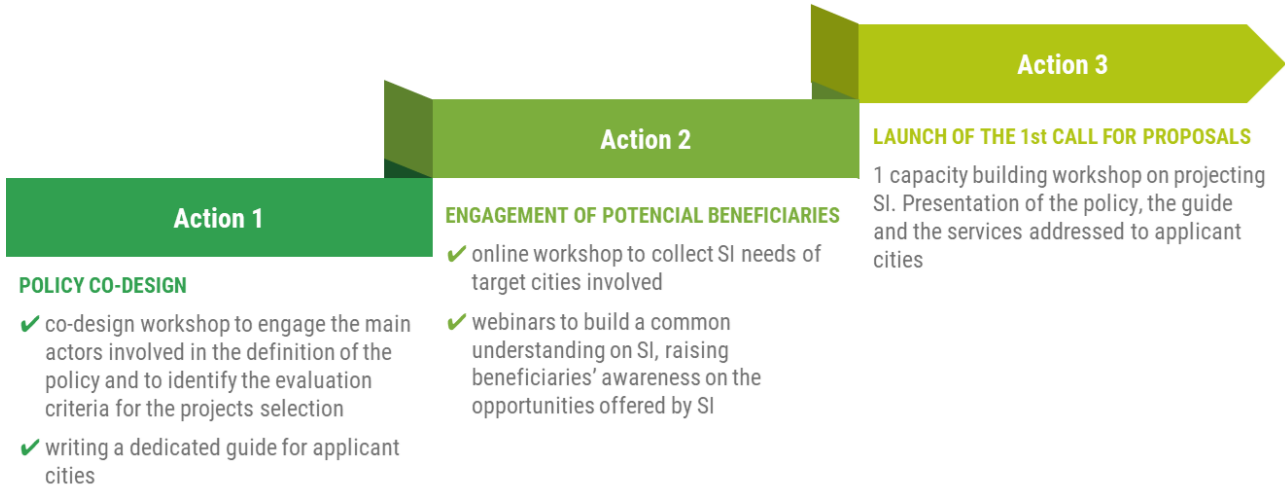
The overall aim of the Italian pilot project is how a National Competence Center for Social innovation could:

- support National Managing Authorities in better understanding the needs and resources of the beneficiaries of their funding programmes;

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- support local authorities in acquiring skills, tools, methodologies that could be useful to design local policies and shared solutions to common local challenges in a more integrated and collaborative way;
 - support the local authorities designing a methodology to: 1- involve the local stakeholders that can be relevant in addressing the identified challenges; 2- better collecting, supporting and interlinking the existing initiatives of the private and third sector;
 - represent a networking/ connection platform able to facilitate the link between public authorities and the national ecosystem of social innovation;
 - identify the best legal tools to implement public-private partnerships, as well as existing barriers and needed improvements in the national/local regulatory framework;
 - identify local, national and European good practices that could be analysed (and if possibly adapted) to similar contexts.

3. HOW DO WE GET THERE

Overall workplan description



3.1. Action 1

Action Num.	1	Action Name	POLICY CO-DESIGN		
Lead actor (Main responsible & monitoring agent)	Key actors (External / internal support)	Outcomes (Measure the change in the situation)	Cost of delivery (Investment needed, HR cost, procurement)	Resources available (Local budget / assets to dedicate)	Timescale (Implementation period)
City of Torino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Territorial Cohesion Agency (MA) ● Politecnico of Milano ● FGB ● EURICSE 	From top down design of the policy to co-design of its implementation	Human resources / meetings with the MA	SEED budget + key actors own budget (mainly human resources)	May - December 2022
Main activities the action entails (Include time)		<p>Support the MA in identifying the needs of the beneficiaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - their level of awareness on SI - the maturity of the local SI ecosystem and their capacity to mobilize it - their administrative capabilities <p>Support the MA to draft the calls for proposals addressed to the beneficiaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify a suitable funding model (one shot vs multiple phases e.g. planning-implementation-transfer) - identify the evaluation criteria - identify and deliver supporting tool for applicant cities (e.g. guidelines) 			
Milestones		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kick-off meeting with MA and identification of the core working group (June 2022) - Definition of a methodology to identify the beneficiaries' needs (September 2022) - Definition of the call for proposals model (November 2022) 			

(Main achievements that show action progress towards the expected result)	- Release of the supporting tools for beneficiaries (December 2022)		
Deliverables and KPIs (quantitative output expected as a result of the action, e.g. number of beneficiaries, number of sub-actions implemented etc.)			
<p>Delivery of the funding scheme for the policy implementation</p> <p>Delivery of the evaluation criteria</p> <p>Delivery of a guideline for target cities</p> <p>N co-design meetings</p>			
Risks	Misalignment in the timing of the pilot project and of the MA policy approval process (e.g. delay in identifying the policy target cities...)	Proposed mitigation measures	risk Retiming of the action

3.2. Action 2

Action Num.	2	Action Name	ENGAGEMENT OF POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES		
Lead actor (Main responsible & monitoring agent)	Key actors (External / internal support)	Outcomes (Measure the change in the situation)	Cost of delivery (Investment needed, HR cost, procurement)	Resources available (Local budget / assets to dedicate)	Timescale (Implementation period)
City of Torino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Territorial Cohesion Agency (MA) ● Politecnico of Milano ● FGB ● EURICSE ● Target cities 	Raising awareness and getting commitment from the policy beneficiary cities in developing local policies and projects on SI	Human resources from SEED partners and from target cities	SEED budget + key actors own budget	December 2022 - March 2023
Main activities the action entails (Include time)		Support the MA in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - help beneficiaries familiarize with the concept of SI - establishing a methodology for the analysis of the local contexts/ecosystems and identify a way to apply it in each local context 			
Milestones (Main achievements that show action progress towards the expected result)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beneficiary cities identified (December 2022) - Capacity building programme designed: methodology + workplan (January 2023) - Draft of Guidelines as supporting tool (January 2023) 			
Deliverables and KPIs (quantitative output expected as a result of the action, e.g. number of beneficiaries, number of sub-actions implemented etc.)					

<p>No of beneficiary cities involved</p> <p>No of workshops organized</p> <p>Methodology for the analysis of the local contexts</p>			
Risks	<p>Delay of MA in identifying target cities</p> <p>Weak response from beneficiary cities</p>	Proposed mitigation measures	risk
			<p>Action postponed once target cities are identified</p> <p>Redefinition of the approach strategy, identification of different subjects to be contacted/involved</p>

Action 3

Action Num.	3	Action Name	NATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING FOR TARGET CITIES		
Lead actor (Main responsible & monitoring agent)	Key actors (External / internal support)	Outcomes (Measure the change in the situation)	Cost of delivery (Investment needed, HR cost, procurement)	Resources available (Local budget / assets to dedicate)	Timescale (Implementation period)
Territorial Cohesion Agency (MA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Torino • Politecnico of Milano • FGB • EURICSE • Target cities 	Concrete funding opportunity (including technical support) for mid-sized cities of South Italy to develop/support the SI local ecosystem	Human resources PON Metro+ Funds allocated for the call for proposals Cost of organisation of 2 in person capacity building workshops	SEED budget PON Metro+ funds	February - March 2023
Main activities the action entails (Include time)		Organisation of an in-person meeting for the presentation of the funding measure for the target cities (February 2023) Organisation of 1st capacity building workshop in person in Rome (February 2023) Organisation of 2nd capacity building workshop + study visit in person in Torino (March 2023)			
Milestones (Main achievements that show action progress towards the expected result)		1st Capacity building workshop delivered (February 2023) 2nd Capacity building workshop delivered (March 2023)			

Deliverables and KPIs (quantitative output expected as a result of the action, e.g. number of beneficiaries, number of sub-actions implemented etc.)			
PN Metro Plus approved and launched Guidelines for the beneficiary cities presented No of cities attending No of cities applying to the call for proposals No of successful proposals			
	Cities not interested in the call for proposals Cities not attending the capacity building workshop	Proposed mitigation measures	risk More focused communication actions from MA Workshop planned with due advance, budget for participation granted by the MA

4. CONCLUSIONS

The SEED Italian pilot project was intended as a first experimentation of a possible service offered by the National Competence Center for Social Innovation to a national ESF+ Managing Authority, the Territorial Cohesion Agency in this case.

The process of pilot outline was itself an exercise of co-design and innovation, considering the involvement of the National Managing Authorities as SEED Expert Board Members in a dialogue with the SEED partners representing different types of organisations.

Even if the partnership agrees that the Competence Center should be a reference point not only for public authorities but for the whole national ecosystem of social innovators (including the Third Sector, private companies, active citizens...), the pilot plan targeted local authorities (cities) as powerful connectors of the different levels of stakeholders (from citizenship to national funding authorities).

The participation of policy makers (mainly Mayors and Deputy Mayors) and high level staff of almost all the 39 target cities in both National Capacity Building Workshops (Rome, 6-7 February 2023 and Torino, 15 March 2023) demonstrates that the National Programme Metro Plus 2021-2027 managed to intercept their needs and - overall - their readiness to include the social innovation as a mainstreaming approach in their policies on 4 main topics: poverty, housing, active inclusion, culture & tourism.

The participants have proven extremely open and receptive towards the co-design approach and its tools, and they particularly appreciated the possibility of a direct dialogue on the one hand with the Managing Authority, and on the other hand with their peers. The good practices presented by Italian Metropolitan Cities and visited during the Torino workshop have given an added value to the learning process and have once more highlighted the importance of learning from concrete examples.

The legacy of the SEED pilot project will be represented by the project applications that the beneficiary cities will submit and by the actions that will therefore be supported and further developed in the framework of the PN Metro Plus. The final goal is the growth and reinforcement of local social innovation ecosystems for a stronger and more impactful Italian social innovation ecosystem.