

REPORT ON THE PARTICIPATION IN EXCHANGES AND MUTUAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

D 11.4

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1. Executive Summary

This report (Deliverable D11.4) details SEED2SCALE's efforts to enhance social innovation's global visibility and stakeholder engagement during its first 18 months, focusing on transnational exchanges and collecting best practices.

Section A highlights three online cross-consortia meetings that facilitated crucial knowledge exchange:

1. **Policy:** Discussions revealed diverse national strategies and the relationship between National Competence Centers (NCCs) and authorities, suggesting that some administrative distance can foster innovation.
2. **Business Models:** Participants explored NCC funding sustainability, including entrepreneurial models, CSR, and foundation support, drawing insights from Sweden, Belgium, and Slovenia.
3. **Stakeholder Collaboration:** Sessions examined effective engagement models to bridge gaps between policymakers and innovators, emphasizing strategic and participatory approaches. Slovenia and Slovakia shared their views and experience.

These online exchanges encouraged mutual learning but remained a little superficial, maybe due to the early stage in the project they took place. In the next 18 months, we aspire to better align with thematic priorities at all levels of transnational exchange.

Section B outlines the collection of five best practices from each of the five consortium countries for the European Social Innovation Match (SIM) database, aiming to showcase diverse and impactful projects. Not all achieved it. But the activities provide insights for informing the ESF + SI initiative about various national priorities as well as bottom-up popular challenges to address. The projects reflect alignment with ESF+ priorities, although some themes like material deprivation and gender equality were less represented. Helix possibilities also varied across countries, indicating diverse collaborative approaches.

Cumulatively, both sections can boost the level of action in each of our NCCs.

2. Introduction

Considering the overall objective of this work package WP11, i.e. to “*enhance global visibility [...] and facilitate engagement with stakeholders in the international community regarding social innovation*”, this specific task D11.4, focuses on two small steps in the above ambitious journey: The first is to find a way of keeping in touch with other consortia; we thus organised three online meetings for knowledge exchange. The other is to make sure that each of our SEED2SCALE consortium countries feeds the Social Innovation Match platform with at least five (5) good examples of implemented social innovation projects. During the past 18 months, both activities gave rise to questions such as a concern about the sustainability of future transnational exchanges between Competence Centres, or ideas about methodologies and criteria by which we evaluate the best cases selected for the SIM platform. The presentation of outputs below presents the output of these activities and sets ground to further explore these questions during the next 18-month period.

3. Deliverable D11.4 and how we planned it

The deliverable has two sections: The first (Section A) concerns the description of activities that relate to transnational exchange processes between consortia and the second (Section B) concerns ensuring the identification of at least 5 best cases of social innovation projects fit for the SIM platform, from each member state of our SEED2SCALE consortium, i.e. Italy, Romania, Slovenia, Croatia and Greece. The list of participants for both sections of this working group team are [here](#).

3. Section A: Transnational Cross-Consortia Exchange

From “Twinings” of SEED project 2021-2023 to three (3) online meetings for SEED2SCALE 2024-2027

This activity was initially seen as a continuation of the first phase of SEED, conducted between 2021 and 2023, then named “Twinning” where consortia representatives met in couples and logged the meetings by noting the topics shared and the learning exchange process.

But after evaluating the previous results, the SEED2SCALE team thought of widening the circle of participants. “Twinning”, after all, constrains the arrangement to happen only between two persons at a time. People meet in twos and exchange their project experience over coffee and in session breaks all the time. In the previous 18 months, there have been 6 real-life meetings organised by ESF (Brussels - Oct 2024, Torino - Nov 2024, Vilnius - Mar 2025, Prague, Bucharest - Jun 2025, Malmo - Sept 2025, Brussels - Oct 2025) and other side events that happened in the wider SI european ecosystem.

The next thing we were concerned about, was not to repeat other transnational consortia exchange occurrences covered by the Community of Practice (CoP events) or other Mutual Learning events organised by the ESF Plus Social Innovation Initiative. These online events have systematically covered different experiences from most of the organisations of each of the 6 consortia and the member-states' representatives involved. There were at least 6 online CoP Mutual Learning events planned for 2025.

So, to ensure “the multiplication of results in synergy with other consortia” we initially reflected on what was missing from the formal sessions and discussed possible uncovered topics and interests, or just needs about preferred topics to exchange with other consortia in an informal way.

In October 2024, the SEED2SCALE group of WP11 team members selected a range of topics and questions they wanted to discuss with other consortia. Notably, the focus at that moment had to do with specific aspects of the project development, and less to do with wider concerns relating to the future of social innovation in Europe or the state of the ESF SI + Initiative in the future programming period. Such topic interests occurred later and could be considered for the next 18 months (M18–M36). At this stage, indicative topics that interested our team were the following:

- **Policy:** National Innovation Strategies
- **Mapping:** Compare criteria for the mapping exercise between different NCCs, How can mapping be kept updated? How can the results be used effectively? How does mapping differ between rural and urban areas?
- **Business Model:** Menu of services and future funding sustainability, How can the NCC ensure financial and social sustainability after the project's completion?
- **Private vs Public Sectors:** How can collaborations be established with stakeholders from different sectors (private, NGOs) to achieve collective impact?
- **Thematic Clusters:** What are the main social innovation priorities set by each country?
- **NCC Governance:** How do NCCs secure equal collaboration between different levels of government (local, regional, national)?
- **Communication**

In November 2024, a second meeting finalised the preferred top three topics for cross-consortia exchange. These were: Policy, Business Models and Stakeholder participation.

In the following months, between December 2024 and April 2025, the team prepared the three sessions by inviting other consortia to participate in both the preparation and each final event.

3.A.1 THEME 1: POLICY - First online meeting

WHEN: 24 April 2025

WHO: The people attended were 20, from 11 countries and 4 Consortia

S2S

1. Greece (Katerina Chantzi, Yiorgos Alexopoulos, Marianna Kondylidou, Amalia Zepou)
2. Italy (Gianluca Salvatori, Erica Arbarello)
3. Slovenia (Karmen Kukovic)
4. Romania (Raluca Preluca)
5. Croatia (Jelena Pavlovic, Danijel Baturina)

SI PLUS

1. Slovakia (Matus Tluscak, Alexandra Telepčáková)

BIRDS

1. Latvia (Renate Lukjanska)
2. France (Alexis Bouges)

INSISST

1. Ireland (Cate Friedrich)
2. Denmark (Anne Voore)
3. Germany (Stefanie Jellestad, Daniel Kruger, Zoë Rott)
4. Estonia (Evelyn Valtion)

SEE ANNEX 1 below for additional online material

WHAT:

During the preparation phase, Kollektiva conducted some one-to-one discussions to identify key questions and key reasons why team members had wanted to exchange experience on the theme of Policy. Anne Vorre Hansen from Denmark (ex-ESIA now INSISST consortium) and Jelena Pavlovic from Croatia (S2S) participated in this preparation. The issue with Policy at this stage related to the concern about the extent to which authorities in each country are close to the NCCs' building efforts. The

assumption was that the closer the authorities are to NCCs, the higher the probability of the government to adopt and support social innovation policies in the future.

The general perception was that the Commission should put pressure on governments who, in our experience and in some cases, do not seem to consider social innovation as a priority.

Therefore, the goal of the session at that moment was to get a sense of different models of relation between authorities and NCCs in different member states and identify obstacles of concern to the participants.

HOW:

This first meeting, just below an hour long, was structured around a Miro board exercise and followed the following format:

A. Plenary: Welcome and Framing

As an introduction, we presented a (slightly superficial but indicative) AI research on the positioning of social Innovation in each country (with 1 low and 5 high), to get a sense where social innovation stands:

- **Greece, Romania:** 2 – Early stages with minimal policy support.
- **Croatia, Slovakia:** 2.5 – Developing landscape, fragmented support.
- **Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia:** 3 – Promising initiatives but in progress.
- **Italy, France, Germany:** 4 – Advanced national support systems.
- **Denmark:** 5 – Robust policy frameworks and stakeholder collaboration.

B. Miro board exercise - 6 positionings of countries

The session was based on the use of a Miro board reflecting the initial questions of the team:

- **Stakeholders** - are the public authorities committed and is there a rich diversity among them?
- **Participation** - do members of public administration and key organisations participate in the workshops and events organised by the NCC?
- **Funding** - are regional/local authorities open to consider funding from national sources?

- **Capacity building** - is the NCC viewed as a hub for learning SI methods?
- **Curiosity and exchange** - are the authorities involved interested in what other countries are doing?
- **Role** - How keen are the public authorities involved to play an active role in the future board of the NCC?

C. Break-out Rooms

Next, during the break-out rooms' discussions, the five obstacles previously identified were discussed:

- **Regional and local authorities are slow in getting engaged with SI practices**
- **Community engagement is considered too time-consuming**
- **The creation of a solid database is not a priority**
- **Weak effort to overcome the silo effect between public services**
- **Communication strategies do not succeed in making SI popular**

D. Conclusions drawn from the first meeting

Given the limited time, the discussion never developed to a satisfactory degree. The Miro board ended up isolating the participants and there was very little time left to reflect together. We decided not to repeat the use of the Miro board in the next two sessions and later analysed the fragmented outputs of the Miro board exercise and some feedback from the breakout rooms.

Key take-aways from the process were:

1. The range of involvement of the government in NCCs can be separated in three categories: Fully involved (secures funding, takes decisions, selects priorities), Not involved at all (in some cases the presence of a government official may only be on the board of directors) and Hybrid (the usual).
2. The involvement of the authorities in the running of the NCCs does not necessarily secure an advancement in social innovation policy making. On the contrary, our NCCs mission is to empower in each of our countries our social innovation ecosystems, and in some cases (Greece, for example) a certain distance from the

administration and its own bureaucratic inertia may be more effective in letting the spirit of social innovation spread from below.



3.A.2 THEME 2: BUSINESS MODELS

WHEN: The 2nd meeting took place on 5 May 2025

WHO: The people attended were 20, from 10 countries and 4 Consortia:

S2S

1. Greece (Katerina Chantzi, Eleni Kontonasiou, Yiorgos Alexopoulos, Effie Amanatidou, Lamprini Triantou, Andrianos Pappas, Marianna Kondylidou, Amalia Zepou)
2. Italy (Sara Chinaglia, Erica Arbarello, Buyan Bold)
3. Slovenia (Karmen Kukovic, Jan Peloza, Alenka Sluga)
4. Croatia

BIRDS

1. Sweden (Anna Tengqvist)
2. Latvia (Renate Lukjanska)
3. France (Alexis Bouges)

INSISST

1. Ireland (Cate Fraedrich)
2. Belgium (Kaat Peeters)

ESIA

1. Germany (Stefanie Jellestad)

SEE ANNEX 2 for additional online material

WHAT:

Here is how the second meeting was held.

A. Plenary: Welcome and Setting the Scene

Participants were reminded that the initial interest in this theme had come from the team members' preoccupation concerning the future funding sustainability of our NCCs: How can the NCC ensure financial sustainability after the project's completion? Will a menu of services secure income?

B. 3 Presentations: Sweden, Belgium and Slovenia

This time the format was going to be based on presentations, and 3 organisations from 3 different consortia helped prepare questions and different approaches: BIRDS with Anna Tengqvist from Sweden, INSISST with Kaat Peeters from Belgium and SEED2SCALE with Jan Pelosa from Slovenia. Here is a brief description:

- a. Anna Tengqvist's [presentation](#) established the structure of Sweden's NCC, based on the FfSIS Forum that connects 6 Swedish universities. Among its business model prospects was to explore the possibility of future funding from other government sources. For that reason they conducted a «policy mapping» to identify such future opportunities.
- b. Kaat Peeters' [presentation](#), among other things, highlighted a difference from Sweden concerning the entrepreneurial approach: Belgium rules out membership fees and charging clients for services, unlike Sweden who is more open to it.
- c. Jan Pelosa's [presentation](#) for Slovenia stressed that they were still at an earlier stage in the setting up but very keen in embracing the culture and ecosystem of social entrepreneurs.

Questions and Answers

Thanks to their input, some key questions were drawn:

- What type of legal frame would secure the authorities' obligation to support the NCC with NSRF funds? In cases where the NCC does not include a public body, what type of appropriate legal framework is adopted?
- Once the project has ended and after the current EU programming period, would entrepreneurial forms of funding be viable? e.g. charging for services, membership fees?
- Is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding a prospect for many NCCs? How about donations from Foundations (popular in Greece)?

Here is a sample of the Q&A flow

Q (Cate): **Which Model do you apply for bigger organisations? Does it involve consultancy work?**

A (Kaat): It doesn't involve consultancy but instead building partnerships. We only engage with larger organisations if we can strengthen at least 10 different social innovations through a co-created program focused on a challenge the company/government wants to address - e.g., access to healthcare, inclusion, etc.

A (Alexis): We do the same as Kaat, and I agree - it's definitely not consultancy work.

Q (Lambrini): What is the legal form you've chosen for the establishment of the NCC? Can public bodies be stakeholders or partners in this entity form?

A (Jan): We use a cooperative for the NCC. Yes, public bodies - and even individuals - can join. We're working on making the structure as inclusive as possible.

R (Renate): CSR programs in corporations can support social innovation at a regional level. Coordinated, pan-regional efforts could establish shared revenue models. Someone must take responsibility for organizing and sharing insights across the European sector. Proper positioning is essential.

A (Kat): We did a regional cooperation project together with The Netherlands (Johnson & Johnson project). Otherwise this wouldn't be possible.

R (Yiorgos): There seems to be fertile ground for transnational cooperation among NCCs

Q (Amalia): What legal framework is required to access structural or EU funding? As you seek government or European funding, what legal form is needed to qualify?

A (Anna): We are a consortium of national universities, placing us in the outer public sector, which enhances credibility and funding access. Universities and similar structures qualify.

To all (Jan): Is equity in social enterprises or social innovations possible as a business model?

Closing Remarks

The presentations worked really well and the participants got a better sense of learning from each other. The session covered expectations such as the goal to explore funding landscapes of established NCCs.

3.A.3 THEME 3: STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

WHEN: The 3rd meeting was about Stakeholders' Collaboration and happened on 15 May 2025

WHO: The people attended were 18, from 10 countries and 4 Consortia

S2S

1. Greece (Alex Koutras, Katerina Chantzi, Lamprini Trianti, Andrianos Pappas, Marianna Kondylidou, Amalia Zepou)
2. Italy (Luca Testoni)
3. Slovenia (Tadej Slapnik, Karmen Kukovic, Rebeka Zerovnik)
4. Romania (Raluca Preluca)

BIRDS

5. Sweden (Anna Tenquist)
6. Latvia (Renate Lukjanska)
7. France (Dominika Szereda)

INSISST

8. Germany (Stefanie Jellestad)

SI PLUS

9. Slovakia (Matus Tluscak, Alexandra Telepcakova)
10. Austria (Barbara Willberger)

SEE ANNEX 3 for additional online material

WHAT:

A. Plenary and Framing

The interest in this topic rose with the question on how will NCCs identify relevant stakeholders and plan effective collaboration with them. The goal of this exchange was to compare notes about mutual efforts to bridge the communication gap between policy makers and grassroots innovation actors. The exchange aimed at encouraging efforts toward a reciprocal learning process, ensuring that NCCs can effectively connect governance structures with field-level initiatives.

B. 2 presentations by Slovenia and Slovakia

- a. Tadej Slapnik 's [presentation](#) on Slovenia showed how a model of stakeholder collaboration is both strategic and necessary for systemic social innovation. It also

repeated emphatically that participatory, inclusive governance models lead to stronger legitimacy and long-term policy impact.

- b. Aleksandra Telepcakova's [presentation of the Slovakia model](#) highlighted that challenges to engage with stakeholders include siloed funding, time/resource demands, and complex coordination—but the benefits outweigh the costs.

C. Questions and answers

Q (Barbara): In Austria, we try to combine two processes—not only bringing together different sectors but also building stakeholder collaboration with various EU funds (e.g., ESF+, ERDF, the agricultural fund etc.). These funds address the same topics but in different ways. It's not about scaling but about transformation. We aim to integrate the possibilities offered by different EU funds through collaboration. How do you manage this?

A (Tadej): In Slovenia, we believe that solving social innovation challenges requires collaboration across stakeholders. There's much room for cooperation between social economy companies and traditional businesses, especially at the municipal level - this is where innovation happens. We work on finding funding opportunities while preparing action plans and allocating national funds. However, funds are still siloed. We have action plans and possibilities, but moving and combining this money remains difficult. If we sit at the same table, with equal voices and access, we can merge and amplify these opportunities.

A (Alexandra): We use a two-step approach. For the first time, social innovation is a clear priority in our social experimentation efforts. There is strong potential within stakeholder groups to initiate “boost” projects that operate outside ESF+. These projects support social innovation in new ways—e.g., through microgrants. We've identified great potential within academia and NGOs. From our experience, smaller NGOs are very open to social innovation but often lack the capacity to implement it. They partner with academia to access methodologies, tools, and frameworks. Academia contributes the methods; NGOs implement the innovations.

Q (Lamprini): **Do you use more than one platform to distribute information? If yes, are these platforms interconnected? Could you provide a short description of what kind of information you share, with whom, and how many people support your NCC?**

A (Aleksandra): We are a team of 3.5 people, which gives us flexibility—for example, enabling mothers with young children to participate. We distribute information about participatory calls using historical knowledge from the consistent outreach over the past two years. We send concise, clear, and informative invitations via email that include what the project is about, when and where it takes place, and how to register. We also rely on partner networks, NGOs, advisory board members, our website, and social media. We usually reach around 100 participants per session (90-minute events). After meetings, we share the presentation and a form for submitting follow-up questions. Our website includes successful examples of social innovation, recommendations from our advisory board, and relevant calls from other partners.

Q (Marianna): **Have you done any stakeholder analysis in terms of interest, power, or influence regarding support or opposition to social innovation collaborations? How do you work with wicked challenges? What's an efficient way to identify stakeholder positions, especially intermediaries?**

A (Tadej): We map actors at the national, regional, and local levels, across different topics (e.g. academia, businesses, etc.). We've tried to get ministries - such as Social Affairs - on board. In Slovenia, the topic moved from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Ministry of Economy in 2014. Getting them involved is an ongoing challenge. Mapping is essential to know who is ready to engage.

Q (Amalia): **Do we want more or less involvement from the EU in the NCCs?**

A (Tadej): We want more support and guidance from the European Commission. When they initiate programs, there should be clearer decisions on how NCCs are established and how member states must engage. For example, in the case of the European Digital Innovation Hubs, national ministries were automatically involved when EC support was given. We need similar clarity and structure for NCCs - so that in 4–5 years, it's not a political choice but a requirement, with clear provisions for co-funding and sustainability.

Q (Stephanie): **Could you tell us more about how CatalystNow is helping you strategically? We recently joined as NCC Germany and see a lot of synergy and interest in connecting with the NCCSI Network.**

A (Tadej): CatalystNow (formerly Catalyst2030) was introduced to us through Luxembourg and France. A former EU Commissioner - previously the Minister of Labour in Luxembourg - helped establish a strong network. Global actors like Ashoka and Deloitte are involved, along with European stakeholders. Ministries are part of CatalystNow - not just external actors but actual colleagues. This supports alliance-building. Check out <https://catalystnow.net> and explore the European hubs. There's a special program for collaboration among social innovators.

R (Renate): In Latvia's NCC, we've done stakeholder mapping and are now piloting an advisory board. The goal is to see how this structure could shape the future network of the NCC. The advisory board helps identify who is truly engaged and committed. It also structures the process and strengthens the network.

R (Amalia): The criteria for identifying the right stakeholders at a given time is something we all seem to share across different countries.

R (Marianna): Through experience, we see that many stakeholders didn't initially see themselves as part of this, but once they are involved with the topic, they become very enthusiastic—e.g., academics in the health sector doing tech and ICT research. They became stakeholders immediately, even though we hadn't initially identified them as such. How do we identify these "hidden gems"—the actors who don't yet consider themselves as stakeholders?

D. Conclusions

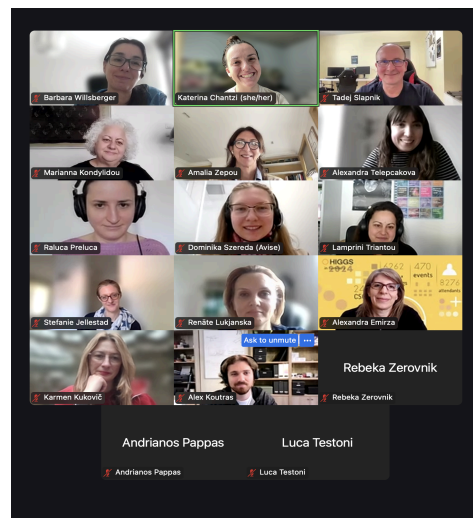
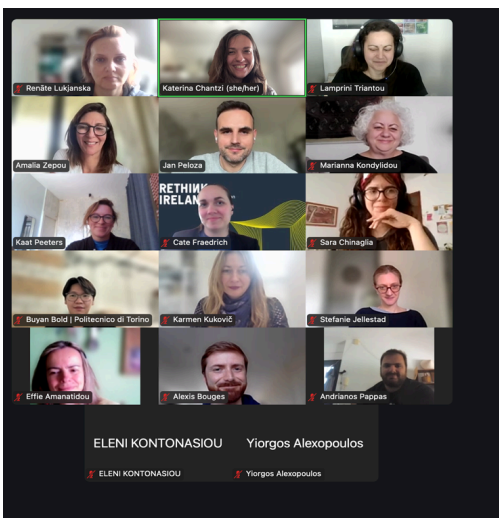
Cross-national exchanges like this one build collective capacity and help align local innovation with broader European priorities.

3.A.4 CONCLUSIONS TO Section A and next steps for M18-M36

The three sessions just described above were an attempt to create new contexts in which participants from different countries and different consortia can keep in contact. The initial goals and targets may have been slightly above our capacity: I read in our initial notes that we aimed at creating deliverables such as “a map of recommendations for addressing business model challenges” or “a list of actionable tips to overcome challenges in securing renewed policy actions”.

We may not have come up with such ambitious tips and deliverables, but we did achieve to create a relaxed context where people coming from very different social innovation cultures can exchange attitudes and approaches. But the emphasis was put in the How, not so much in the What.

For the next 18 month period, we would like to repeat some exchanges. This time the goal is to better align themes and challenges with EU and national priorities. Other transnational exchange and mutual learning opportunities should be in accordance with the final deliverable of this activity.



3. Section B: SEED2SCALE consortium collecting 5 best practices from each country

Best Practices for SIM

In the Annex below, each country displays a number of best cases in the excel table, with their title, the link to the SIM platform, a short snapshot description, the theme they cover and the quadruple helix possibility, as mentioned in the grant agreement.

SEE ANNEX 4 [- separate excel](#)

where each country presents 5 cases with project title, link to the SIM platform, theme with target groups and helix possibilities

3.B.1 Participants

Working Group Team

The following persons actively participated in the Section B exercise of collecting the at-least-5 best cases from each of the 5 countries in our S2S Consortium:

- **Greece**

Katerina Chantzi (GR, KOLLEKTIVA - facilitator),
Amalia Zepou (GR, KOLLEKTIVA),
Kostas Nikolaou (GR, UnivSSE),
Ifigeneia Douvitsa (GR, UnivSSE),

- **Italy**

Erica Albarello (IT, COTO)
Gianluca Salvatori (IT, EURICSE),
Buyan Bold (PoliTO)

- **Romania**

Marta Stanciu (RO, C8),
Vilia Rugel (RO, C8),
Raluca Preluca (RO, C8)

- **Slovenia**

Karmen Kukovic (SI, Center Noordung),

Jan Peloza (SI, IH Ljubljana),
Tadej Slapnik (SI, Hashnet),
Rebeka Zerovnik (SI, Technology park Ljubljana),
Lidija Kovac (SI, BSC Kranj)

- **Croatia**

Danijela Paska (HR, ACT Group)
Jelena Pavlić (HR, ACT Group)
Mija Crnjaković (HR, FEB,)
Kosjenka Dumančić (HR, FEB)
Lovro Brtan (HR, UMN)
Iva Kapusta (HR, Hashnet HR)
Mara Stipić Bagarić (HR, NORA)

3.B.2 Number of Best Cases and Organisations

from each SEED2SCALE country (Italy, Romania, Slovenia, Greece, Croatia), please go to [D11.4 \(Annex 1\) 5 Best Cases per country for SIM](#). Here is a short summary:

Italy uploaded 21 new projects on the SIM platform in 2025. Of these, several came from the process of this project and 5 new organisations appeared. Now (December 2025) Italy has a total of 42 projects on the SIM platform and a total of 75 Italian based organisations.

Slovenia uploaded 9 new projects on the SIM platform in 2025. Of these, 6 best cases and 5 organisations came from the process of this project. Now (December 2025) Slovenia has a total of 17 projects on the SIM platform and a total of 45 Slovenian organisations.

Croatia uploaded 7 new projects/ case studies on the SIM platform in 2025. Of these, 5 case studies and 8 organisations came from the process of this project. Now (December 2025) Croatia has a total of 15 projects on the SIM platform and a total of 40 Croatian organisations.

Romania uploaded 14 new projects on the SIM platform in 2025. Of these, most came from the process of this project. Now (December 2025) Romania has a total of 20 projects on the SIM platform and a total of 38 Romanian organisations. 6 new projects were added based on the efforts made by the SEED2SCALE team. One additional project was uploaded as a best practice carried out by consolid8 as part of the actions of the National Competence Center (consolid8 festival).

Greece uploaded 12 new projects on the SIM platform in 2025. Of these, 6 came from the process of this project but many submitted projects are still pending. 4/6 are currently uploaded on the actual SIM database, and 12 new organisations from the Greek scheme have been accepted. Today (10 December 2025), Greece has a total of 42 projects on the SIM platform and a total of 61 Greek organisations.

3.B.3 Themes

The SIM platform criteria require us to be aligned with the investment areas of ESF+, i.e. “active inclusion, social integration, employability, and equal access to education and services”. The platform itself offers 16 thematic sub-groups to choose from. It also allows multiple choice.

In the above best cases the range of themes stated by each country for this project period (SEED2SCALE M1-M18), do cover the main investment pillars. Broadly separated, there are 11 cases under the Social Inclusion sector, 10 cases under Employment, and 14 under Education, within each country and across them. These are all mentioned in the below attachment called “[D11.4 \(Annex 1\) 5 Best Cases per country for SIM](#)”. Among the 16 sub-themes, only 3 of the boxes are not checked: Material deprivation, Gender equality and Quality employment. But this observation may occur for different reasons: We assume that it may be because many categories overlap, or a slight confusion because of lack of clarity in the particular category.

Moreover, at least two best cases (from Slovenia and Croatia) refer to strong environmental goals of their respective best cases and another two (Greece, Italy) to cultural tools as levers of change. These two criteria are not included in the thematic list, and if the SIM team is open to discussion, members of this working group may be willing to contribute in ideas and proposals as to how to incorporate them.

Last, 3 out of the 16 sub-themes refer to some kind of structural change of a particular system: (1) “Adaptation of workers and enterprises to change”, (2) “Modernization of social protection systems” and (3) “Modernizing labor market institutions and services”. The above three sub-themes are very much in line with the definition of social innovation and its principles, but seem to belong to a different category from the other themes. As a thought to share, sometimes themes and target groups as articulated in the ESF+ investment areas come in apparent (not necessarily real) contradiction with the actual innovation of these particular cases: Social innovation is often innovative because of its different ways of finding solutions.

It may target a system rather than a group. The ESF + target-group may be included in the project, but the project may be focused on a wider socially transformative process. For example if the focus is “housing affordability”, and the project is experimenting in a particular neighborhood, then the target groups are many, and the project may not refer to each particular target group (eg migrants, or unemployed, etc) separately. This may cause confusion (“does it belong to ESF+ priorities or not?” “is it an example to upload on the SIM platform, or not?”). This is also a topic that may be of interest to national validators in the next 18-month period.

3.B.4 Helix Possibilities

With the expression “helix possibilities”, we assumed that the particular interest of the ESF+ SIM team would be to have a sense of the institutions and stakeholders involved in each project for two reasons: Either to appear as possible partners for future projects or to mark the extent of administrative impact that each particular project has had, as an indication of its scaling up potential.

In this first 18-month period of the current project, the “organisations only” collected on the SIM platform are 24, as mentioned above: 10 from Greece (4 NGOs, 2 Social Enterprises, 3 Public authorities, 1 Private/research body), 5 from Italy (1 municipality, 1 Social Enterprise, 2 Research Institutes, 1 Small/medium enterprise) 4 from Slovenia (2 Public and 2 private bodies), 5 from Croatia (1 private, 1 public, 1 research Institute, 2 NGOs) and 1 from Romania (a Social Enterprise).

Through their projects, a much richer mix appears: European-funded projects attract a wider collaboration often involving Research Institutes and Universities teams, Local and Regional bodies, expertise from various NGOs and other local associations. Among the EU funded projects, a different mix appears from EUI or (ex)UIA funding than Regional or structural funding procedures. Non EU-funded local projects usually attract the collaboration of the local municipality and NGOs. Some projects may also be self-funded, and were encouraged to submit their project for their innovative approach to effective humanitarian causes. More research could be centered on this topic, too, for the next 18-month period.

3.B.5 Methodology

Each country adopted a different way to collect and evaluate best SI practices in order to encourage their organisations to upload them on the SIM platform. Italy, for example, launched a campaign from May to July 2025 based on a national call. It served to collect best practices but also to promote national awareness of the NCC particularly in regions that were totally unaware of the competence center's existence.

The Slovenian consortium, based on its knowledge of the social innovation ecosystem in Slovenia, established a list of 60 examples of good practice in the country. From this list, it selected six practices that are fully developed and operational. The partner acting as the national coordinator then contacted the organisations behind the selected practices and invited them to register in the SIM database, providing technical support in the process. All registered practices were also offered the opportunity to be published on the platform of the National Competence Centre for Social Innovation, and all organisations accepted the invitation. They were further informed about the existence of the Social Innovation Forum and invited to submit their good practices to be considered to be a part of the Forum.

Greece, too, like Slovenia, collected initially a number of cases from personal selections from each of the partners of its national scheme. After the first 16 best cases, the Greek NCC partnership conducted a voting process to end up with 5 top ones. But the voting happened too soon (February 2025) and more cases, and better ones, continued to appear in the Greek internal excel list. Today (DEC 2025), there are 35 cases out of which 8 were supported to submit their entry form to the SIM platform. The process

established a closer connection to the Greek national validator and allowed better design of a more accurate selection process for the future.

A discussion and analysis of the different methodologies adopted are not required in this report, but, if the teams agree and consider it as an important information for consortium learning exchange in the next 18 months, we will include a resume in the next and final report of M36.

3.B.6 CONCLUSIONS TO SECTION A & B

For the next 18-month period, the activities corresponding to A12.3 will aim to refine approaches to knowledge exchange while ensuring that best practices contribute effectively to the SIM platform. Plans include exploring methodologies for selecting exemplary cases and enhancing transnational dialogue among stakeholders to address the challenges in securing sustainable funding and fostering effective collaboration. We would also recommend to focus on the way we use the SIM platform which has proven invaluable for transnational contacts, for encouraging separate national efforts and for joining forces to recommend solutions for upscaling.

In conclusion, Section A and Section B outline a productive period of learning and collaboration, setting a potential foundation for strengthening social innovation efforts across Europe, and particularly with the aid of our respective NCCs. But a successful outcome for each of the 5 NCCs remains to be seen.

Annex 1

Additional material for the online Cross Consortia meeting theme on Policy, 24 April 2025

[Participants' list 1](#)

[Participants' list 2](#)

[Online Group Photo Policy](#)

[Miro Board](#)

Annex 2

Additional material for the online Cross - Consortia meeting theme on Business Models, 6 May 2025

[Participants' list 1](#)

[Participants' list 2](#)

[Sweden Presentation](#)

[Belgium Presentation](#)

[Slovenia Presentation](#)

[Online Group photo Business Models](#)

Annex 3

Additional material for the online Cross - Consortia meeting theme on Stakeholders' Collaboration, 15 May 2025

[Participants' list \(1 shot\)](#)

[Slovakia presentation](#)

[Slovenia presentation](#)

[Online Group photo Stakeholders](#)

Annex 4

List of best cases from each SEED2SCALE partner member-state

[separate excel](#)