



# Summary Report

## ESF Transnational Cooperation Platform

### Community of Practice on Social Innovation

#### Webinar: Scaling social innovation

30 March 2021

The webinar introduced ESF managing authorities and stakeholders to the processes and practices of scaling social innovation. It aimed to equip them with the know-how to take full advantage of Article 14.2 of the ESF+ Regulation: "Member States may support the upscaling of innovative approaches tested on a small-scale [...]".

The meeting included three sessions:

- 'Opportunities for scaling social innovation under ESF+' with Risto Raivio, Senior Expert at the European Commission;
- 'What pushes and pulls social innovations to scale?' with Stephen Barnett, lead thematic expert for social innovation in the Community of Practice
- 'How to assess the scalability of a social innovation' with Madeleine Clarke of Genio, Ireland, and Bianca Faragau of EUROCITIES.

The present summary report draws on these inputs and discussions and includes "self-reflection questions", which can help the reader to make use of the content in their own context. The webinar and its report are steps along the way to the publication of a toolkit on scaling social innovation in ESF+ due by June 2021.<sup>1</sup>

#### A typology of scaling

The audience was introduced to a sample of evidence on scaling that could be applicable in the ESF+ context. These included the four different routes to scaling a social innovation, based on Devalli C., et al. (2015):

1. **Knowledge dissemination:** a social innovation 'owner' gives or sells its knowledge to a new partner who delivers the model in a new location.
2. **Branching:** a social innovation 'owner' brings a social innovation to a new location principally acting alone.
3. **Localised growth:** a social innovation 'owner' grows in its original location by offering new services to its target public ('capacity-building' in Devalli C., et al.).
4. **Affiliation:** a social innovation 'owner' builds a partnership with an organisation based in a new location to deliver the model and plays a quality control role.

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<sup>1</sup> The online event, organised by the Transnationality Team on behalf of the European Commission, was attended by 39 participants representing managing authorities (MA) or other ESF stakeholders from Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia. The European Commission officers and Stephen Barnett (Lead Thematic Expert) also attended the event.

There are more precisely defined scaling models grouped into those four headings in the literature.

### **Self-reflection questions**

1. Which routes are open to social innovators in the non-profit sector?
2. Which routes are open to public sector innovators?
3. Which routes would be open to a project partnership from different sectors?
4. What implications does this have for the design of ESF+ scaling calls?

### **Evidence from mutual learning by cities**

"Knowledge dissemination" is an important transnational route to scaling social innovations, and EU programmes and networks have facilitated this over several decades. The URBACT programme ran knowledge transfer partnerships in 2019 and 2020. It commissioned an independent study by M. Bacqueriza-Jackson, which revealed several transnational and city-level factors that need to be in place.

In the partnerships themselves, participants of the survey rated very highly:

- The presence of a highly competent lead partner (originator of the social innovation) to manage the project and process.
- A high degree of continuity of leadership in all the partners to build up relationships and commitment underpinning knowledge transfer.
- A strong willingness to learn from each other, not just from the lead partner but among all partners.
- A combination of expertise in the knowledge transfer learning and subject matter expertise in the social innovation.
- A tailor-made co-designed learning methodology in which all partners have a stake, not only the lead partner or knowledge transfer expert.

In the participant cities, the following factors were favouring effective knowledge transfer:

- Pre-existing political support for the social innovation initiative to give validity for engagement of all city stakeholders.
- To have the innovation relate to a pre-existing plan or widely recognised local societal challenge.
- To build in from the start interdepartmental and stakeholder collaboration.
- To engage citizens locally from the start, especially the intended beneficiaries of the social innovation.
- A passion for the initiative and a willingness to undertake the hard work to transfer the practice.
- A high degree of engagement in the new locations of the originator of the social innovation.

### **Case study: Welcome centre (Germany-Stockholm)**

Stuttgart has a big community of recently arrived migrants. Representatives from Stockholm went on a study visit to see a welcome centre that helps migrants with language courses, skills audits, and matching them with the local businesses with vacancies. It so happens that Stockholm was at the study visit, represented by colleagues both from the social services and employment services, and those

colleagues had not worked together. Administrations are quite big so that the study visit created a favourable context for them to meet each other.

Seeing how well the model in Stuttgart works, they were determined to go back to Stockholm and create their own project. Now, there is a welcome centre where social services and employment services work together for the fast-track labour market integration of migrants. This happened within 12 months of the study visit. It was about determination, personal relationships, the reputation of the model, and the model's validity. Of course, they had to obtain political support, but there was a significant need on the ground in Stockholm, so that's why it went pretty fast.

## Evidence from social enterprises

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“People have to stand back from going in and making a traditional business pitch.”

(Madeleine Clarke, Genio, Ireland)

A study focussing on social enterprises had suggested two pre-conditions, four success factors and two further considerations for scaling a social innovation led by a social enterprise (Weber et al., 2015). These factors would not all be relevant for scaling a public sector-led social innovation but are worthy of reflection.

The two pre-conditions include:

1. **Viability of the model:** The financial business model and the impact model must be viable.
2. **Commitment and readiness:** scaling becomes a realistic prospect when the social enterprise is mature enough that there is a secure basis for considering growth.

If those two pre-conditions are in place, then social enterprises could consider the next steps.

Mr Barnett went on to explain the four success factors outlined by Weber et al. as follows:

1. **Management competency:** a high degree of leadership and management competency across impact and financial areas has to be present.
2. **Replicability:** the impact and financial model have to be sufficiently simple and describable that the innovation can be reproduced.
3. **Capacity to generate new resources:** the social enterprise has the capacity not only to continue running in its original location at the same quality level but also the skills, connections and time to bring in new resources to launch in a new place.
4. **Legitimacy/Reputation:** the model, the social enterprise and the leadership team have to be seen as reputable to gain support for scaling to a new location.

Finally, two further considerations were noted, which require clear choices on the part of the leadership team and potential partners, rather than a pre-set recommendations for success.

5. **Degree of control by and dependence on founder:** the leadership team has to consider its own role in scaling – is it to lead on the scaling effort or empowering others to do so?
6. **Clarity over internal and external transfer costs:** the team has to have clarity over the costs in staff time and outside resources of the various scaling routes.

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“The aspect of replicability is a huge consideration: is it a simple model or is it something very particular to a certain setting?”  
(Bianca Faragau, EUROCITIES)

## Knowledge transfer into policy

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“You probably wouldn't start with a public official by asking them whether they would be interested in scaling a social innovation. You would be more likely to ask ‘what are your objectives?’”  
(Madeleine Clarke, Genio, Ireland)

The audience was introduced to [Nesta's five standards of evidence](#), which help to understand what kind of evidence existed for a given social innovation.

1. “You can describe what you do and why it matters, logically, coherently and convincingly”.
2. “You capture data that shows positive change, but you cannot confirm you caused this”.
3. “You can demonstrate causality using a control or comparison group”.
4. “You have one or more independent replication evaluations that confirm these conclusions”.
5. “You have manuals, systems and procedures to ensure consistent replication and positive impact”.

From there, Mr Barnett presented four types of knowledge usage, based on and simplified from Nutley S. et al. (2009):

- **Instrumental use:** policies are changed – however, this is rarely the direct result of academic evidence.
- **Conceptual use:** minds are changed but not policies – there are other factors hindering policy change.
- **Persuasive use:** evidence is used to support a fixed policy or support a pre-existing political position or ideology.
- **Influential use:** practice changes without policy change – because there is sufficient margin within legislation for practice to change without policy.

When considering any type of knowledge usage by policy-makers, the following are a selection of the behaviours by academic advocates of policy change, which favour use of evidence – drawn from Contandriopoulos et al. (2010):

- **Mapping policy-makers:** knowing precisely which people one is seeking to influence and considering how to do so strategically.
- **Encouraging ownership:** reaching out early on to policy-makers to ask them what they would like to know, by when and how they need it presented.
- **Offering timely support:** presenting evidence at a time in the policy cycle when it can realistically be used, e.g. not after legislation has already been passed.
- **Translating evidence into policy proposals/options:** not only presenting the bare results of a scientific study but interpreting the findings and converting them into possibilities.

- **Working with societal intermediaries:** working with civil society groups and service providers to help them understand the evidence and advocate for change.
- **Offering ongoing support** throughout the legislative and implementation process from piloting to system change.

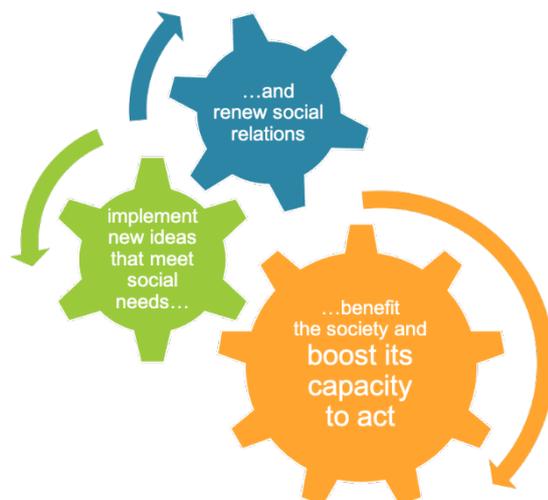
Different stakeholders can adapt these behaviours for their specific role in a political system, so that for example: a social enterprise could reach out to an academic institution for support in measuring its impact; or an ESF managing authority could support advocacy efforts for systemic change based on a social innovation it had funded.

### Self-reflection questions

5. Can you think of an example of each type of knowledge transfer from your own context?
6. Which type of knowledge transfer do you think you could fund under ESF+?
7. How would you adjust a call's eligibility and selection criteria according to the different types of transfer?

### Opportunities for scaling social innovation under ESF+

Risto Raivio, senior expert at European Commission, began by recalling the key elements of social innovation according to the ESF+ Regulation. The first is the cog of new ideas that meet a social need; the second cog is creating new social relationships or collaborations; the third cog boosts society's capacity to act. The cogs all turn together and create an engine for social innovation.



ESF+ supports the generation of new ideas and models. It also supports transnational piloting phases where these new ideas are then shared and discussed with peers from other EU countries or regions, and their applicability and replicability is tested, measured and piloted. Finally, it also encourages to reach the level where social innovation helps to improve the key systems of our societies. The ESF+ includes a range of support mechanisms: a social innovation database due to be launched in 2021; the national competence centres for social innovation due to go live this spring; and the European Competence Centre, which will be established as of 2022. With all these

elements, the Commission intends to support not only the initiation phase of social innovation but right through national and transnational scaling, ultimately through to systemic change – both with direct funding to all stages of social innovation and with funding for boosting competences and capacities.

### Self-reflection questions

8. Which routes could be supported by ESF+ social innovation funding?
9. In which policy area in your context, could ESF+ funding be used to bring about systemic change?
10. Depending on the intended route, how would a call for scaling projects need to be adjusted in terms of eligibility and selection criteria?

## Key messages

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“Try not to make the calls too prescriptive – much better to leave some room and take risks inherent to innovating.” (Bianca Faragau, EUROCITIES)

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The webinar set out to identify the factors that pull and push social innovations to scale. The push factors are primarily within the control of the social innovation 'owner,' i.e., leadership capabilities and the evidence of impact. Pull factors relate to the external environment and include the demand for policy change and the credibility of the innovation model. Further than this, we learnt together that:

- Strong evidence is not enough to bring about systemic policy change;
- There are different routes for scaling;
- Social enterprises may be comfortable with the language of 'scaling', but public authorities may prefer 'rolling out' or other terms;
- Underneath the linguistic differences, there are similarities in the behaviours that favour scaling.

At best and whatever its origin, scaling should be a conscious process with its own specific strategy, which depends on a partnership between a range of actors, which bring their expertise and interests together to pursue a common societal objective.

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“Align ESF+ with national policy objectives and harness efforts towards solving the problems that we all agree need to be solved.”

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(Madeleine Clarke, Genio, Ireland)

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