



German National Strategy for Social Innovations and Social Enterprises (SIGU)

“The SIGU Strategy and the SIGU Platform represent key milestones on the way to improved framework condition for social innovations in Germany.”

Florian Birk, Social Impact gGmbH

History and Political Context

In September 2023, the German Federal Cabinet adopted the National Strategy for Social Innovations and Social Enterprises (SIGU) developed under the leadership of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK). This strategy aims to strengthen social innovations and socially oriented enterprises by reducing disadvantages and improving framework conditions to address major societal challenges.

A specific measure called for by the SIGU Strategy was the establishment of a platform for social innovations and social enterprises, which should serve as “the first point of contact for those who develop, research and support the implementation of social innovations” (BMWK & BMBF, 2023).

Aim and Approach

The Platform for Social Innovations and Social Enterprises (SIGU Platform) is a collaborative initiative by Social Impact gGmbH, the Social Entrepreneurship Network Germany (SEND) e.V., and TU Dortmund University.

It serves as a central hub offering information, practical guidance, support and networking opportunities for social innovators, funding and financial partners, as well as academic institutions and research projects.

The key objectives of the Platform are:

- To improve transparency and facilitate access to relevant funding schemes.
- To enhance the capacities of social innovators and foster better networking among them.
- To increase the overall visibility of the social innovation sector in Germany.
- To raise awareness of the SIGU Strategy and promote it among relevant stakeholders.

The SIGU Platform offers a number of tools which help innovators and relevant stakeholders to screen available funding schemes, to measure the impacts of social innovations, and to network in the frame of targeted events:

1. The **funding finder** provides a structured overview of consulting, coaching and qualification offers, as well as funding and financing opportunities across Germany for social innovators and social enterprises. As of December 2024, a total of 178 offers were included in the underlying database. The available offers can be filtered by types of applicants (e.g. startup, foundation, research centre), types of support (financial support or consultancy services), implementation phase of the initiative (pre-founding phase, start-up phase or growth phase), themes (e.g. bioeconomy, infrastructure, tourism) and location.

2. Measuring the impact of social innovations can be challenging. To help researchers impact investors, intermediaries and enterprises to tackle this challenge, the SIGU Platform provides an overview of available **impact tools** that include a selection of proven methods, instruments and tools for impact measurement and management.
3. To support networking and exchange among relevant stakeholders, the SIGU Platform provides an overview of relevant thematic events. These include events organised by the Platform, as well as **events** organised by other relevant actors across Germany. Event organisers may contact the Platform to have announcement of their public events listed on the Platform.

A key feature of the Platform is that it specifically also targets practitioners and experts from the finance sector with the aim to develop impact-oriented funding and financing approaches for social innovations and social enterprises.

In this context, a **Taskforce on Financing Social Innovations (FSI)** has been established, bringing together key stakeholders from relevant sectors to develop innovative solutions in the frame of a participatory multi-stakeholder process. The ultimate goal of the FSI Taskforce is to make a significant contribution to the sustainable transformation of the financing ecosystem for social innovations in Germany.

Replicability

The SIGU strategy and the SIGU platform can be seen as important milestones for strengthening the social innovation sector in Germany. The SIGU Platform has filled an important gap when it comes to providing a structured overview of the various funding and support schemes for social innovations that are available in the country. EU Member States with similar, multi-level funding and support structures might greatly benefit by following the German approach of developing a cross-sectorial national strategy for social innovations, aiming to streamline national efforts in strengthening the sector. Furthermore, the establishment of a dedicated platform which supports social innovators and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation of their initiatives, can serve as a key tool when it comes to providing effective guidance and support.

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Sources:

- <https://sigu-plattform.de/>
 - Interview with Florian Birk (4 December 2024)
 - Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz (BMWK) & Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF) (2023). Nationale Strategie für Soziale Innovationen und Gemeinwohlorientierte Unternehmen. Available online: <https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Wirtschaft/nationale-strategie-soziale-innovationen-gemeinwohlorientierte-unternehmen.pdf>
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