

# Policy recommendations on deploying measures supporting social innovation



Zoritza Kiresiewa, Ecologic Institute, 9 September 2025



Funded by  
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

# Policy & Funding Frameworks for SI



- **EU strategies & initiatives** that integrate SI as a tool for sustainability:
  - European Green Deal
  - Bioeconomy Strategy
  - Circular Economy Action Plan
- **National strategies (examples):**
  - Germany: National Strategy for Social Innovation & Social Enterprises (2023)
  - The Netherlands: Circular Economy Programme (2021–2030)
  - Finland: Social Enterprises Strategy + Circular Economy Strategy
  - Spain & Portugal: Comprehensive programmes fostering eco-innovation and impact investment
- **Funding & support programmes:**
  - Horizon Europe (European Innovation Ecosystems) → citizen empowerment & green transition
  - European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) → skills, jobs, inclusive society
  - SEAP (2021) → strengthens social economy, access to finance, regional innovation
  - LEADER → fosters local partnerships and bottom-up strategies



# Methodology



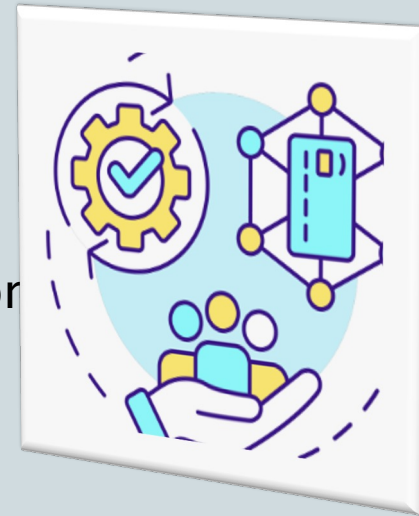
- **Data collection:** 17 in-depth interviews conducted Nov 2024–Feb 2025 with SI initiators identified as good practice examples.
- **Focus areas of the interviews:** challenges; support mechanisms; vision for a supporting policy environment
- **Analysis:** interviews coded and analysed using MaxQDA
- **Validation:** validation workshop with 21 stakeholders



# Financial & Regulatory Challenges

## Key Barriers Identified

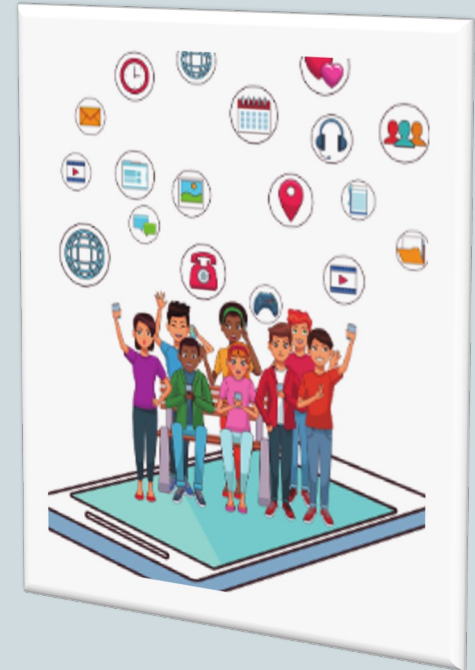
- Social innovation projects struggle to secure public and private funding
- Public funding is often uncertain, complex, and affected by political shifts
- High dependence on public grants limits long-term planning for social innovators
- Legal and regulatory rules are often rigid, not tailored to the needs of non-profits or smaller organisations
- Expensive certifications and slow approval processes make market entry hard



# Collaboration & Networking Barriers



- Lack of awareness and recognition of social enterprises as "real" businesses
- Limited awareness of their goals makes it harder to gain institutional support
- Fragmented networks hinder knowledge-sharing and coordinated action



# Key Policy Recommendations 1/3

## Funding & Regulatory Support

- More accessible EU Funding and simplified application processes; tailor grants to SI themes (e.g. loneliness, sustainability)
- Empower regional development agencies: financial and personnel resources, capacity-building & training
- Introduce tax incentives for SI and sustainable practices
- Encourage private sector engagement in social financing and promote mechanisms like Social Impact Bonds
- Support certification costs and offer guidance programs



# Key Policy Recommendations 2 / 3

## Structural & Strategic Measures

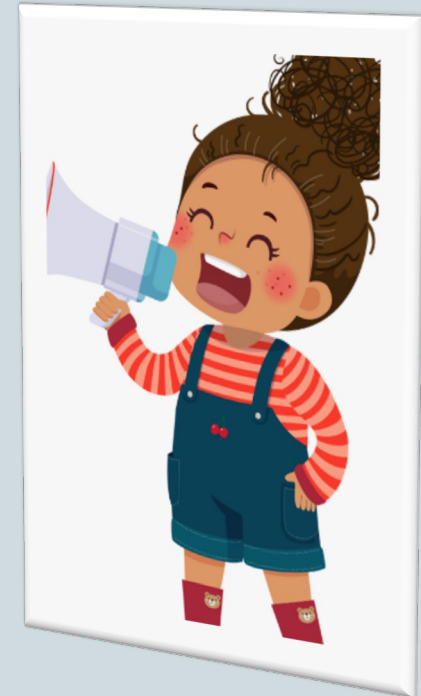
- Prioritize public procurement favoring social enterprises, e.g. formulation of legal requirements for fair and sustainable public procurement
- Improve regulatory standards, e.g. regarding greenwashing and value chain transparency (e.g. Green Claims Directive)
- Reduce regulatory burdens: streamline administrative and reporting tasks
- Ensure policy stability: long-term funding disconnected from political shifts
- Develop impact-oriented funding criteria and monitoring frameworks



# Key Policy Recommendations 3 / 3

## Strengthening Collaboration & Public Awareness

- Launch awareness campaigns to reshape public perception; e.g. informational events to increase understanding of social innovation
- Facilitate networking and collaboration among social-sector representatives; support multi-stakeholder collaboration: NGOs, government, private sector

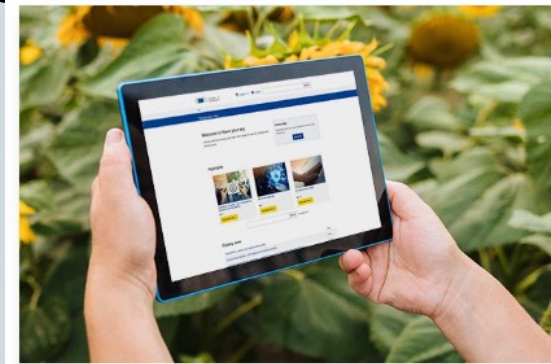




# Windows of opportunity within EU policy development



- Strategic Plan for the upcoming Research and Innovation Framework Programme (FP10) (2025–2026)
- EU Bioeconomy Strategy – Review and Update
- European Semester – Country-Specific Recommendations
- Implementation of the Green Claims Directive
- Implementation of the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive



## Public Consultations and Feedback

Have a say on upcoming EU policies and on simplifying existing laws.

# Thank you

Zoritzia Kiresiewa, Ecologic Institute, 9 September 2025

[zoritzia.kiresiewa@ecologic.eu](mailto:zoritzia.kiresiewa@ecologic.eu)

[www.ecologic.eu](http://www.ecologic.eu)

*Source for the icons: Canva database, <https://www.canva.com/>*