



The
SEEING
Project

Social Economy Enterprises for Innovation and Growth

Welcome

to the first issue of the SEEING Project newsletter

The SEEING Project is an EU project supported by funds from DG Employment and Social Affairs. It focuses on Social Economy Enterprises as a means to create employment, social inclusion, innovation and economic growth and on the benefits of interaction between the social economy, private sector and public sector.

Now you might ask; "What are Social Economy Enterprises"? And the answer is that Social Economy Enterprises are businesses which exist to address social or environmental need. Profits are primarily re-invested for social purpose rather than to benefit shareholders.

Social Economy Enterprises could be described as

Sustainable Businesses with a Heart

Background

Europe is going through difficult times in recent years with the financial crisis, leaving our society fragile in relation to a decreasing level of innovation and long term investments in the social sector, little social entrepreneurship, increased unemployment and exclusion of vulnerable citizens from the labour market and a potential risk of having a rising number of European citizens having an income below the poverty rate¹. Europe is thus facing significant challenges and it is therefore important to invest strategically in the development and implementation of innovative models, which can lead our society towards a more INCLUSIVE and SUSTAINABLE growth.

The SEEING Project is exploiting social economy enterprises as a strategic means for local authorities around Europe to establish an inclusive labour market, where "businesses with a heart" create employment possibilities for ALL citizens at the same time as they create innovation and economic growth.

The SEEING Partnership

The SEEING partnership is made up of three European local authorities that are all front runners in respect of the social economy, each in their own way.

Local authority of Kolding in Denmark is a front runner in the area in Denmark, being the first local authority in Denmark to have developed a local strategy for Social Economy Enterprises and is now showing the way for other Danish local authorities.

Devon County Council in the UK is a front runner in the UK, having participated in several national projects, one – among others, where they have developed a local action plan for social entrepreneurship. The UK in general is one of the European countries where social enterprises have the longest tradition because of the strong presence of charity organisations in the business environment.

Local authority of Vielsalm in the province of Luxembourg in Belgium is a front runner in Belgium, being one of the first local authorities having invested in the creation of social economy enterprises and adapted work places for citizens with a disability as far back as 1961.

Our goal with the SEEING Project is, through collaboration in our European partnership, to identify, test and approve good practices that can be reproduced in other EU countries and regions to support the use of social economy enterprises as a strategic means to create employment, social inclusion, innovation and economic growth.

¹ <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tessi124&language=en>



The SEEING Project

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Where are we now?...

Where are we going?...

Where are we now?

The SEEING Project started in September 2012 and has since then developed the following results that you can find on our website:

A state of the art report, providing:

- an overview of the different instruments in Denmark, UK and Belgium that support social economy enterprises.
- an overview of the European contexts in relation to policies, commitments and programmes.

3 Guiding templates to support strategy development and implementation on local level.

1. Strategies, local co-operation & networks - to assist local authorities to develop a local strategy on how to use social economy enterprises as a means to create employment, social inclusion, innovation and economic growth.
2. Advice, counseling & training - to assist local business development agencies to plan and develop local business development initiatives such as entrepreneurial advice, financial advice and concrete training focusing specifically on social economy entrepreneurs.
3. Economic models & financing schemes - to assist local authorities on how to get an overview of or / and establish a local funding opportunities for social economy entrepreneurs.



The Seeing Project Team in Vielsalm (B) - 2013

Where are we going?

The partners will meet in September 2013 and by that time each participating local authority will have worked with the templates and will present drafts of strategies, action plans and concrete activities to be implemented on local level.

The strategies will be available on the website by the end of the project as inspiration material for other local authorities around Europe.

The SEEING Project will finalise its activities through a final conference in Brussels, which will take place on the 4th of February 2013.

You can already reserve the date !



The SEEING Project

Social Economy Enterprises for Innovation and Growth

The SEEING Project in Kolding, Denmark

In Kolding, ...

Background

Social Economy Enterprises and Social Entrepreneurship are relatively new and unknown terms in Denmark. Nevertheless, the interest in this field has been significantly increasing in the political arena in the last few years. Recently, the Government decided to investigate this area in order to eliminate some of the challenges that Local Authorities face.

Today, a number of Local Authorities in Denmark have recognized that Social Economy Enterprises can play a major role in the creation of new welfare solutions, but only a few have worked systematically with this area. The Local Authority in Kolding is a leader in the area having worked systematically on this since the beginning of 2009. The Local Authority in Kolding was the first Local Authority in Denmark to develop a strategy and an implementation plan for Social Economic growth.

The SEEING Project

The Local Authority in Kolding has been pioneering in the area of Social Economy and has faced a lot of challenges throughout the process. Kolding has learnt from the experience and today Local Authorities from other towns are seeking our advice.

As part of the SEEING project the Local Authority in Kolding has decided to develop a Version 2 of the Social Economic growth strategy. The future strategy will be developed by following the template created in co-operation with the SEEING partners from England and Belgium.

In Kolding we have a Social Economy Steering Committee with representatives from the Social and Health Department, the Local Business Development Agency, a Volunteer Centre and a Social Economic Enterprise. The development of



the coming strategy will be rooted in this steering committee.

Right now we are in a research phase in order to identify challenges and possibilities before formulating the strategy. One of the focus areas is to involve the Procurement Department and identify opportunities for greater use of social clauses. Another area for focus is to be better at attracting potential Social Entrepreneurs.

The exciting new direction in the Version 2 strategy is that the Local Authority in Kolding has decided to make one overall strategy that includes three focus areas:

1. **Corporate Social Responsibility in the private sector,**
2. **Development of the Volunteer sector and**
3. **A good environment for Social Economy Enterprises.**

In Kolding we see these three areas as highly interrelated. The Strategy for Social Economic Enterprises will therefore be a part of the overall strategic focus in the Social and Health Department.

See all the partners of the Seeing Project in Kolding <http://www.seeing-project.eu/where/kolding-denmark/>



The SEEING Project

Social Economy Enterprises for Innovation and Growth

The SEEING Project in Devon, United Kingdom

In Devon, ...

Devon is a large rural county in the south west of the UK. Home to over 1 million people, the county has beautiful coasts and moors, two national parks and a World Heritage Site. Devon's main industries are agriculture, tourism, the service sector, specialist marine sector and armed forces. While a sought-after place to live, work and visit, the county has pockets of rural isolation, deprivation and housing is expensive when compared with average wages.

In common with the rest of the UK, Devon has a strong voluntary and community sector (social economy enterprises) providing 29,000 FTE jobs and supported by 63,000 volunteers. There is a growing innovative social entrepreneurial spirit in Devon. Enquiries for support double each year and estimates suggest there are between 300-900 organisations operating with social entrepreneurial business principles.

Since 2009, Devon County Council - the top level authority for much of the Devon - has taken part in a national pilot project resulting in a five point action plan to support social entrepreneurship, including developing methodologies for measuring social impact and encouraging collaborative working. With more public services being procured or 'spinning-off' from the County Council, the SEEING project will help it to recognise and investigate ways of measuring social impact when services are delivered by the private, social enterprise and voluntary and community sectors. The SEEING project will also help the Council and its partners to promote better information channelled through the Devon Investment Partnership regarding financing opportunities.

Peninsula Enterprise is the private sector SEEING partner bringing expertise in the field of business support and offers a specialist strand that focuses on social enterprise development. Peninsula Enterprise is committed to increasing work with the social and community enterprise and to build



strength and capacity in the sector. This is in part being achieved through the support it offers to the new and emerging Social Enterprise Networks.

Two social enterprises, Devon Community Foundation (DCF) and Well UK are the other core partners.

Devon Community Foundation is the main channel for individuals, families and businesses to give to local charities and community groups which address pressing social issues, bringing about positive social change in Devon by being a link between donors and local needs. DCF distributes around £1,000,000 of grant funds a year as well as piloting micro-finance initiatives for individuals facing financial exclusion. DCF bring extensive knowledge of local needs and responses as well as acting as a connector between public, private and voluntary sector. The SEEING project is helping DCF consider its approach to supporting social enterprises with grants and its loan scheme and the links from this work to other local partners.

Well UK specialises in the development of partnerships and consortia, especially innovating in health and well-being and demonstrating the impacts and value of its programmes. Well UK contributes to the SEEING project experience of the consortia approach to tendering and procurement, impact measurement and the practicalities of managing private/ public and social economy partner projects as well those with a European dimension.



The
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The SEEING Project in Vielsalm, Belgium

The SEEING Project partners are wired to a range of networks and initiatives that can be included in this project and which will benefit from the project outcomes including the support of future networks and support programmes.

Our work so far demonstrates that whilst there are significant opportunities for greater interaction between the social economy enterprises and the public sector, there are still a number of significant and persistent barriers that the SEEING project can help to find ways to overcome. In short, the SEEING project is allowing the Devon partners to come together to find new and innovative ways of supporting the social enterprise economy in our area, to increase its resilience, strength and recognition with the overall aim of maximising social impact.

See all the partners of the Seeing Project in

Devon <http://www.seeing-project.eu/where/devon-united-kingdom/>

In Vielsalm, ...

Social economy plays an important part in the Belgian economic context. In Wallonia and Brussels alone, social economy accounts for 1,300 accredited companies. If we consider the sector to include cooperatives, non-profit associations and mutuals as well, the number is 7 times more important. Social economy, resulting from solidarity, is increasingly being presented as a way forward for a new kind of entrepreneurship. For many years now, the opportunities offered by social economy have been a focal point of discussion in the local economy and politics of Vielsalm.

The Seeing project

The social economy model is recognized throughout the Vielsalm region and the province of Luxembourg. Even though there is still strong need for consumers to see products and services from social economy enterprises as competitive

and qualitative as products and services coming from traditional enterprises. With the experience in Vielsalm nearly having become one of historical importance, it seems absolutely defensible we offer social economy its own strategic model. The insights of the other partners, the United Kingdom and Denmark, will be valuable for realizing this step.

The social economy has already been supported by several companies in both the profit-making and non profit-making sector in Vielsalm, a small town of 7500 inhabitants. The local community has initiated various support initiatives that strengthen the dynamics and promote employment in the sector. The town has also recently opened a local development agency, which is hoped to have an important role to play in the future within the area.

In this context, the reflective work carried out by the local partners in Vielsalm is actually focusing on about ten goals that will all contribute to the development of a global strategy. A strategy we need to ensure the perpetuation of, in favor of existing businesses, new initiatives and unemployed people. The actions to be implemented in the coming months will create awareness amongst local authorities and traditional businesses, and encourage collaborative projects in a creative way. This massive awareness campaign will be complemented with promotion or communication activities yet to be defined.

The strategic objective is to gather all the knowledge and tools in order to create a common frame of reference for social economy, that the whole community supports.

See all the partners of the Seeing Project in

Vielsalm <http://www.seeing-project.eu/where/vielsalm-belgium/>



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