

## Social Innovation Plus – Competence Centres (SI Plus) Thematic network meeting: ESF+ Administration (online)

**Facilitation:** Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Slovakia

On July 27, 2023 a transnational meeting was held within the thematic network for Administration of ESF+, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (MoLSAF SR) and thematic network Poverty and Social inclusion, which is coordinated by IFKA, Hungary.

Within the thematic network focused on the administration connected to the programming of ESF+, the individual outputs of the participating countries of the SI PLUS project were presented. Planned support systems were presented, which are described in the developed outputs of the project referred to as a joint blue print for a strategy for the implementation of support for social innovations from ESF + resources from each country.

Matúš Tluščák (MoLSAF SR) opened the meeting, welcomed all participants and introduced the agenda. The first presenting country was Slovakia, while the output of the project called the Support system for social innovations from the ESF+ in the Slovak Republic until 2030 was presented by the external expert of the project, Zuzana Polačková, who participated in the development of this document. At the beginning, she presented the important role of the Slovak NCCSI in the process of defining support for social innovations from the Programme Slovakia in programming period 2021-2027. In connection with this support, she introduced the future National Competence Centre for Social Innovation and its two main parts the Secretariat and an Advisory Body. Next she presented 4 important goals to focus on at the national level in the field of social innovation in the up-coming years, which are spreading the same definition of social innovation, raising awareness of social innovation and improve access to financial and non-financial support. She emphasized that the entire system of support for social innovations is based on two important principles - monitoring and partnership. The future tasks of the NCCSI in Slovakia should be connecting stakeholders, transnational cooperation, mapping the ecosystem and its needs, an online platform, methodological support, monitoring and evaluation, and data collection.

Later on, Juraj Mikuš presented a Guide to social impact monitoring and evaluation of social innovations, which will be used by beneficiaries of support from ESF+ in the future. There are 4 sections within this guideline - the first is the theory of monitoring and evaluation, then there are the monitoring methods, the data collection system and the actual evaluation of the impact of social innovations. He also emphasized that the entire process of monitoring and evaluation is explained in the manual using a concrete example of social innovation.

Matúš Tluščák presented case studies that were developed under the NCCSI in areas such as circular economy, education, social inclusion, employment, etc.

Next presenter was the SI PLUS project leader, Barbara Willsberger, who introduced two organizations which were involved in the implementation of the project in Austria: L&R Social Research and Arbeit Plus. They started the project implementation process by mapping the ecosystem, getting to know the definition of social innovation and the needs of social innovators. Later on, they were

developing the criteria necessary for the operationalization of social innovations and identifying needs in connection with the administration and support of social innovations, creating the necessary networks of actors, which also resulted in the preparation of project outputs. She also described the establishment of 2 regional innovation labs with the aim of re/upscale social innovations. Then she presented the support from NCCSI for the implementation of social innovative project within the ESF+. Therefore, the NCCSI together with the MA developed a checklist with 4 criteria, which have to be fulfilled to be eligible as a social innovative project in the ESF+. These criteria are part of the ESF+ monitoring-database. At the end, she presented the content of the blue print strategy for the social innovation support and the future of the Austrian NCCSI, which in an ideal scenario should function as a network of organizations. Austrian ESF MA already announced a call to support the implementation of the future NCCSI.

Another presenter was Denitza Lozanova from the Sofia Development association, who described the involvement of the Bulgarian organization in the SI PLUS project. During the implementation they were mapping the ecosystem and identifying the needs of social innovations in Bulgaria. They also worked on the same definition and awareness of social innovations, organized several discussions, workshops at the national level, piloted several activities which also led to the development of a blue print strategy for social innovation, which she then presented. She emphasized the need to connect and inform the various actors in the field of social innovations, while starting to build partnerships within the project and mentioned the need to build partnerships also on the transnational level to share knowledge, experience and for the capacity building. Then she talked about the need to collect the necessary data and to spread all important information, in accordance with this they created an online platform with inspiring examples and information about available support called social innovation club, which they plan to develop further.

Tamás Szenttamasi from IFKA Public Benefit Non-profit Ltd. (IFKA), Hungary presented the involvement of the organization in the SI PLUS project. He introduced the plans for the future support of social innovations in Hungary from ESF+ especially through the Human Resources Development Operational Programme PLUS (HRDOP Plus) and its priorities 7.1 and 7.2, namely the two pillars of the Emerging Settlements Programme. Next, he presented the support that the Hungarian NCCSI provided to ESF+ programming. He presented the results of the mapping process, the establishment of the competence centre itself, its connection with the ESF+ MA and its main activities, such as the establishment of an online platform or the organization of the „IFKA Social Innovation Award“ as a national social innovation competition. At the end, the strategic recommendations developed by IFKA based on the results of the initial mapping to support the development of the social innovation ecosystem in Hungary were presented. The strategic vision is focusing on horizontal priorities such as the creation of an enabling regulatory framework (Priority 1) and the creation of a support system adjusted to the characteristics of the social innovation ecosystem in Hungary (Priority 2). The strategic recommendations elaborated by IFKA also focus on the implementation of a thematic priority (Priority 3 – Developed knowledge management) including specific objectives such as the development of knowledge creation, the development of knowledge transition and the development of knowledge application.