

INTERNATIONALISING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

A review of support in Germany, Greece,
Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, and the UK

Mark Richardson

SOCIAL
IMPACT
CONSULTING

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Introduction

This report was written as part of the IntSEnSE project, funded through Erasmus +. The brief was to undertake desk based research to produce a report that:

- (i) maps out existing support mechanisms for social enterprise development on a pan European level and
- (ii) appraises the use of current support mechanisms available in each partner country for social enterprises wanting to internationalise their trading practices.

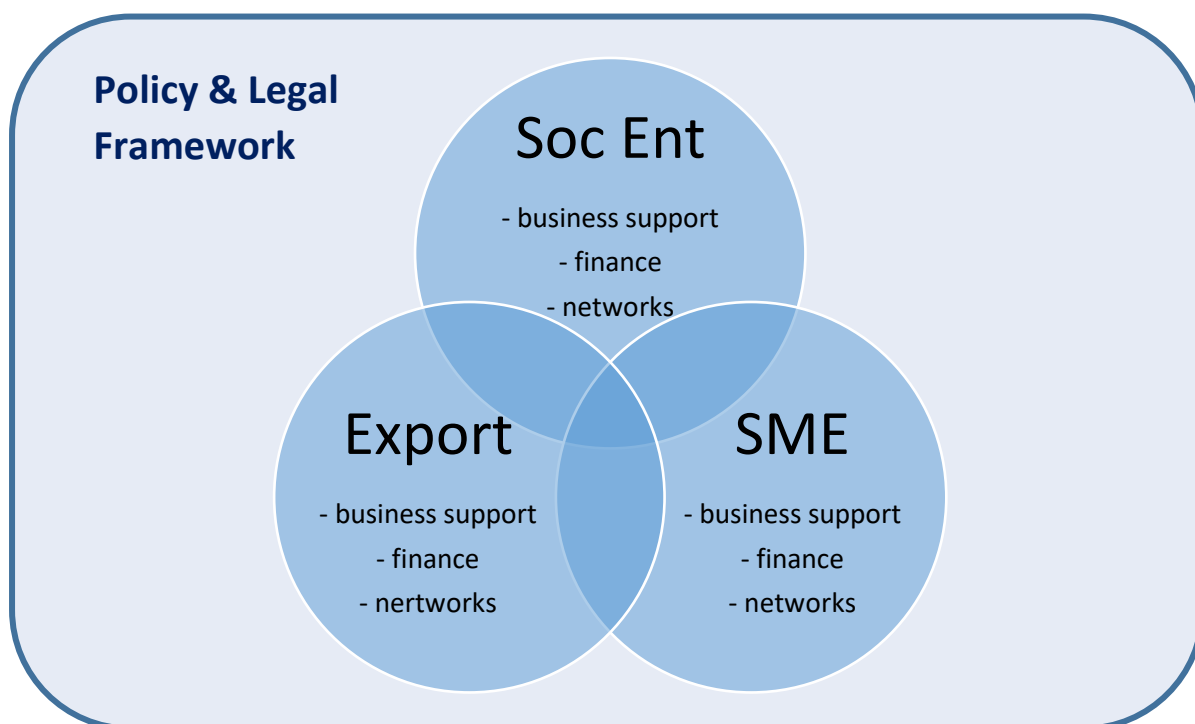
It sets out the framework which supports and enables social enterprises to internationalise, and then maps the support that exists at an international or European level, and at a national level in each country in the study: Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, and the UK.

Support Framework

Social enterprises can, and do, internationalise without any specific support at all. Social entrepreneurs are good at finding any resources they can. But appropriate structures impact in four key areas:



Social enterprises are able to take advantage of formal support in three overlapping sectors, although support which is not specifically for social enterprises or export can be of limited value, and specific support (where the sectors overlap) is rare.



Building blocks of support infrastructure

To help them internationalise, social enterprises are able to take advantage of existing infrastructure that exists at a European level, and at a national level. Some of this publically funded, through the EU, national or regional governments. Some of it is funded through NGOs, trusts and foundations, or through social enterprise models.

Some of the social enterprises taking part in this research had accessed support from a variety of sources, particularly financial support during their early development and business advice to enable their international trading activities. However very little of this is specifically focussed on supporting social enterprises to internationalise, and as such was not always helpful or appropriate. Most social enterprises did not access any support at all.

“We have not received any help from the institutions, rather on the contrary.”
(Italy)

“No, everything we start and continuous doing with our own funds.”
(Lithuania)

“We went to the agencies that are there to support you, but we did it ourselves in the end.”
(UK)

This mirrors the findings of the EU report on internationalising SMEs, which found that only 10% of microenterprises that were trading internationally had accessed any public funding or supportⁱ.

Our research suggests support focussed on raising aspiration or awareness of international opportunities tends to be limited to export opportunities for mainstream businesses. Business support itself generally falls into two categories: general social enterprise support; and support for SMEs to trade internationally. Specific support for social enterprises to internationalise is only available in Scotlandⁱⁱ. Networks are generally local or national rather than international. And finance available to social enterprises is rarely focussed on internationalisation, although some European programmes, such as Interreg, do encourage cross border cooperation.

The level of specialist, social enterprise support varies significantly from country to country, and within countries too. While specific social enterprise support can provide some help to social enterprises wishing to internationalise, for example guidance with business planning, or access to social investment, the expertise of the advisors tends to be domestic¹. This means that social enterprises need to look beyond the sector to other forms of business support when seeking advice specifically on internationalisation.

Support for international trading of SMEs exists, to some extent, within all countries in this study. This is primarily focussed on export and can be useful for social enterprises with straight forward commercial trading models. A social enterprise wishing to export a product will benefit from standard SME export advice. But this advice is not usually suitable for social enterprises with more complex trading or funding models². As our research shows, social enterprises seeking to replicate or scale their impact abroad, or wishing to build partnerships with NGOs or social enterprises in other countries, are not able to benefit from this type of support.

The support, some if it funded and some of it paid for by the social enterprises themselves, can be categorised as follows:

¹ E.g. Social Business Wales.

² E.g. Social Enterprise Academy in Scotland.

	Legal / Policy Framework	Business Support Infrastructure	Networks	Finance
European / International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition • Guidance • Integration into funding programmes • Commitment to social enterprise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International social enterprise networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European funding programmes including social enterprise as a component <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some, e.g. Interreg, specifically encourage international cooperation
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition • Legal structures • Ease of doing business • Taxation • Commitment to social enterprise • Specific commitment to internationalisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic business support • Social enterprise specific support • Export specific support • Social enterprise internationalisation support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National social enterprise networks • Sector specific networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial finance • Government backed finance for SMEs • Grants for SMEs / SEs exporting • Social Finance for SE growth
Regional / Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to social enterprise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local business support • Local social enterprise support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local social enterprise networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local grant / loan funds

Social entrepreneurs are adept at accessing support and finance from wherever they can get it, putting together the best possible package to support their vision for internationalisation. However, the reality is that:

- The legal and policy framework still makes running a social enterprise easier in some countries than others, and differences between countries create pitfalls for those wishing to internationalise.
- Business support, where available, rarely combines expertise in social enterprise AND internationalisation. At best, advisors have some expertise in one or the other.
- International social enterprise networks are weak and disjointed. Generally, international networks connect social enterprise intermediaries rather than social enterprises themselves.
- Some EU funding has encouraged cross-border cooperation and trading. Most funding is focussed on local or national impact.

Financial Support

Just as when operating domestically, social entrepreneurs are adept at finding innovative ways to finance their social enterprise international growth. This can be a mixture of grants, loans and social finance. In rare cases, these funds were specifically for internationalisation.

“We sourced some funds which were explicitly for internationalisation. These were Scottish funds and we used them quite quickly to build that plan and go and get investment. So, we took social investment from Big Issue Invest and Social Investment Scotland. And because we were going for a loan, we managed to get funding from Highlands and Islands Enterprise Support, and Scottish Government also put in some funds to match the loan. So, we had a grant and a loan situation. This was important to us to build that investment track record and to becoming investment ready.”
(UK)

But in most cases the focus of the finance available to social enterprises is national or local.

“The biggest grant has been received from Ministry of Welfare – ALTUM grant.”
(Latvia)

“We have definitely had assistance over the years, we have had assistance from Welsh Government and the Welsh Assembly, such as payments towards overseas trips for conferences, which have been useful. We have had a jobs grant in terms of growing and sustaining jobs. We have also had a grant to support product development. The Welsh Government has been our biggest supporter from a grants perspective. It has definitely been very helpful and has come when we needed it.”
(UK)

Many social enterprises had also received financial support from local councils and municipalities, however, this was generally aimed at supporting local activities, rather than international trading.

A small number of organisations had received funding from private foundations such as the Soros foundation. One social enterprise has received financial support from a private donor to grow its business at both a community level and to promote itself internationally.

Social enterprises may also be unaware of some of the sources of finance that are available to them. Only 10% of all internationally active SMEs in the EU had accessed public funding. This was as low as 5% the UK. Of all the countries in this study, Latvia had the highest proportion, but this was still only 17%ⁱⁱⁱ.

Mapping the support to the challenges

According to the EU report *Supporting the Internationalisation of SMEs*, the barriers mainstream SMEs face when trying to internationalise are as follows:^{iv}.

- not enough working capital to finance exports;
- the difficulty of identifying foreign business opportunities;
- not enough information to help them locate/analyse markets;
- inability to contact potential overseas customers;
- the difficulty of obtaining reliable foreign representation;
- lack of managerial time;
- not enough and/or untrained staff
- the cost of or difficulties with paperwork needed for transport;
- laws and regulations in the foreign country;
- cultural differences (including business culture).

Social enterprises face all the barriers confronting mainstream SMEs, but they also face additional barriers. Research by the British Council and SEUK identified four key barriers facing social enterprises wishing to trade internationally^v. These barriers also map to the four areas identified above: the legal and policy framework; business support infrastructure; networks; and finance.

Existing infrastructure can be utilised by social enterprises, but in most cases is not geared up to provide the specific support needed to overcome these challenges.

- **Understanding local regulation**
 - Mainstream business support services are often able to help with market information for commercial products and services, but not for social impact
 - Pay-for services such as specialist law firms are often prohibitively expensive, and are also unlikely to have specific expertise in social enterprise
- **Finding customers and markets abroad**
 - Most social enterprises begin exporting based on personal connections rather than strategic market analysis.
 - Mainstream business support services are usually able to support with regular, commercial import and export activity, but not when social enterprises are looking to replicate their model, or sell complex services.
 - Paid for consultancy services and trade missions can be useful, if appropriately targeted. But most social enterprises struggle to get the right advice in this area.
- **Access to local networks**
 - Unless operating a simple import export model, social enterprises usually need local partners to support the delivery of social impact models in new countries
 - Again, most social enterprises internationalise based on personal networks and connections rather than strategic market analysis.
 - National social enterprise networks could provide introductions, but are not geared up or funded to do so.

- **Financial / cash flow**

- Social enterprises wishing to internationalise are often able to access a mixture of mainstream finance, social finance and grants, however...
 - Most funding looks at local or national impact
 - EU funding is usually second tier, funding either support infrastructure or research
 - In many countries mainstream banks are still reluctant to lend to social enterprises

The sections below explore the support that is available to social enterprises wishing to internationalise, even when this support is not always entirely appropriate.

International / Pan-European Social Enterprise Support

This section explores the support that is available at an international level to help social enterprises internationalise. Some of this comes through inter-governmental institutions like the EU and the UN, and some from NGOs and private foundations committed to social entrepreneurship.

Legal / Policy Framework

The European Commission identified the value and potential of social enterprise and set up the Social Business Initiative in 2011^{vi}. This has helped to create a positive narrative about social enterprise within the EU, supported the development of social enterprise friendly policies at a national level, and led to the inclusion of social enterprise within EU funding programmes.

While not specifically focussing on internationalisation, some of these programmes do have an impact on this area. And the Commission is committed to developing support for international scaling in future. For example, in their communication on the Start-up and Scale-up Initiative, the European Commission states:

“[Many social enterprises] have potential for scaling proven business models which could be replicated in other territories. However, these companies still find it hard to secure funding and support, especially due to the following factors:

- *lack of recognition and understanding of their economic potential;*
- *insufficient exploitation of modern technologies.*

*... Building on the Social Business Initiative, the Commission will encourage social start-ups to **scale up**, including through measures focussing on better access to finance, improved access to markets, and strengthening regulatory frameworks by advising Member States on policy design.”^{vii}*

The GECES report from October 2016 recommends stimulating cross border operations for mutuals and cooperatives to use full potential of internal market^{viii}.

Business Support Infrastructure

Most business support infrastructure is organised and delivered at a local or national level. There are a small number of international organisations that do provide some form of business support to social enterprises, and which are increasingly recognising the importance of connecting social entrepreneurs globally, often using the shared language of the Sustainable Development Goals^{ix} to aid communication and collaboration.

Ashoka^x, for example, now has over 3,500 fellows across 93 countries, but this specialist support is not open to any social enterprise, only those few who are chosen.

Impact Hub^{xi} is a network of incubators and co-working spaces as well as an online community reaching more than 40 million people. Until recently the Hubs have been locally focussed, but this vision is now becoming one of global collaboration.

The British Council^{xii} runs a social enterprise support programme in 29 countries, and while this utilises international expertise, the focus of social enterprise development is national rather than international. Nevertheless, this support had been extremely valuable to some of the social enterprises in this research.

“A very important partner and network is the British Council that has helped our extroversion in various ways: through its involvement in our projects; through the dissemination of our actions and outcomes is its network; by providing training opportunities for our team; with mentoring sessions; and with financial support.”

(Greece)

NESst^{xiii} also operate support for a small number of social entrepreneurs across several countries, including the Baltics. But again, while the organisation is international, the support tends to be nationally focussed.

Plus Acumen^{xiv} run online courses and connect social entrepreneurs in 190 countries, but do not provide specific advice or support for individual social enterprises.

Spring Impact^{xv} (formerly the International Centre for Social Franchising) was specifically founded to help organisations scale and replicate their impact internationally.

Meanwhile the EU funds a network for national social enterprise support intermediaries. **COP-SE**^{xvi} provides online resources and a directory of support organisations across Europe. They also offer a **Connector Service**^{xvii} that links intermediaries supporting social enterprises with international scale-up plans to support organisations and other partners within Europe.

The Global Social Entrepreneurship Network (GSEN)^{xviii} also links social enterprise intermediaries with international counterparts to share best practice, but this doesn't focus on the internationalisation of social enterprises themselves. .

Some EU funded projects, particularly through the Interreg programme have provided cross-border business support for social enterprises. These projects generally connect project partners from different European countries, and provide some opportunities for cross-border learning for the social entrepreneurs involved. Examples include:

SPARK^{xix}, a social enterprise accelerator involving partners from England, Belgium, Holland and France as part of INTERreg 2 seas programme

European Certificate in Community Enterprise (ECCE)^{xx} is a vocational qualification developed by partners from UK, France, Spain, Sweden and Romania. The project also developed a cross border social enterprise learning network.

RAiSE^{xxi}, which connected intermediaries to improve the level of social enterprise business support across Spain, Hungary, Ireland, Scotland, Italy, Sweden and Austria.

SuNSE^{xxii}, provides support for potential social entrepreneurs in the UK, the Netherlands, Ireland, France, Switzerland and Luxembourg.

There is also support available to SMEs looking to internationalise, which is relevant to some social enterprises, through **Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)**, set up by the European Commission^{xxiii}. Through partnerships with local providers, EEN provides personalised advice and support with internationalising. The offer varies from country to country. Italy has 50 centres offering this support, Ireland has 32 the UK 24, Greece 9, Lithuania 3, Latvia has only one.

Networks

Most social enterprise networks in Europe are still relatively weak, informal and disconnected. Many of the social enterprise related networks funded through the EU connect intermediaries to share best practice, rather than the social enterprises themselves³.

Some areas have local or national networks where social enterprises themselves can meet and exchange ideas, learn from each other and collaborate. However these networks do not provide the cross-border connections necessary for internationalisation.

There are some international networks.

The **Social Enterprise World Forum^{xxiv}** started 11 years ago as a one off event in Scotland and has now become an annual gathering of over 2,500 social entrepreneurs and experts from 49 countries. This provides opportunities for social entrepreneurs to learn from each other, and develop international partnerships.

The **EUCLID Network^{xxv}** is supported by the EU to deliver exchange programmes, events and programmes designed to connect social entrepreneurs across Europe.

Ashoka^{xxvi}, as already mentioned, connects a network of 3,500 high-performing social entrepreneurs across 93 countries. They also run [Changemakers](#), which is a global peer support network open to all social entrepreneurs.

[Citizen Network^{xxvii}](#) also connects social entrepreneurs across the globe through an online network.

³ For example [COP-SE](#), [Social Entrepreneurship Network](#), and [RAiSE](#).

Finance

The European Commission recognises the importance of providing appropriate finance for social enterprise. Its primary levers for achieving this are:

- Creating guarantee schemes to encourage lending and investing in social enterprises
- Creating grant programmes which include funds for social enterprise, managed at a national level

Initiatives that help social enterprises access finance include:

The EaSI Programme^{xxviii}, which helps social enterprises access investments of up to EUR 500,000 via public and private investors at national and regional level.

European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) Equity instrument^{xxix} which helps social enterprises access equity for pilots.

Most of the EU funding programmes are too large and bureaucratic for social enterprises themselves to access directly. However, some organisations involved in this research had accessed European funding through such programmes as Interreg and LEADER and International funds such as the UN Environment Fund.

“Well, of course the Interreg programme was helpful. This was also so sustainable / because it tied us together over a certain period of time and I don't know if we would have done it so intensively without the Interreg programmes. “The disadvantage with Interreg, or at least with us in the region, is that it has a relatively high level of co-financing... 40 percent co-financing has to be provided by the participants themselves.”

(Germany)

Most EU funds though, are distributed to social enterprises through national or local intermediaries. Some of these funds can be used to scale, and even to internationalise, but they do not have an international focus. In fact, many of the outputs the intermediaries commit to delivering are specifically local or national (jobs created, for example). This can make these funds inappropriate for any internationalisation where the social impact is abroad rather than local^{xxx}.

The European Commission provide a summary table^{xxxi} of EU finance for SMEs, some of which is appropriate for different social enterprises wishing to internationalise:

Programme	Type	Amount
Social Change & Innovation	Microfinance	< €25.000
	Investments	< €500.000
COSME	Guarantees	< €150.000
	Equity	
Creative Europe	Guarantees	
InnovFin (Horizon 2020)	Guarantees	€25.000 - €7.500.000
	Equity	
Private Finance for Energy Efficiency	Loans	< €5.000.000
Natural Capital Financing Facility	Loans, equity	€5.000.000 - €15.000.000
European Investment Bank, European Investment Fund, European Structural and Investment Funds, European Fund for Strategic Investments	Loans, guarantees, equity	

*

Another potential pan-European source of finance for scaling and internationalising is the **European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA)**^{xxxii}. This includes international impact investors such as **Ananda**^{xxxiii}, who invest in growth social enterprise headquartered in Europe. None of the social enterprises in this research had used it however.

There are also interesting new models of international social finance developing. For example the [world's first cross-border social impact bond](#) was launched in Germany in 2016^{xxxiv}.

Country Specific Support

Support available to social enterprises wishing to internationalise is rarely specifically focussed on this outcome. More commonly, it is focussed on:

- Supporting the growth of new / existing social enterprises
- Supporting the growth of new / existing SMEs
- Supporting new / existing businesses to export

The tables below summarise the support available in each country. They do not provide an exhaustive summary of all support that could be utilised by social entrepreneurs. As already noted, social entrepreneurs are skilled at using whatever sources of support available. It does however aim to include the main programmes of support under these three headings.

Germany

With six enormous, quasi-public sector social enterprises making up the vast majority of Germany's social sector, there has been relatively little social entrepreneurship and relatively little support for social entrepreneurship.

Specific social enterprise support at a Federal Government level has been limited, although the Green Party in Germany have been pushing a social enterprise agenda. Most public funded support available to social entrepreneurs is mainstream SME business support, or for-profit incubators. SME business support, and social enterprise support where it exists, is organised at a regional or local level, with the exception of export support which is organised nationally.

There is some specialist support for social enterprise supported through foundations and social enterprises rather than by government. The German Social Enterprise Network (SEND) is supporting the growth of this ecosystem. Bonventure and Ananda Venture lead the growing impact investment market.

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
Legal and Policy Framework	German Government	No definition of social enterprise, policy or action plan.	http://news.trust.org//item/20181003103301-xvynh/
International Business Support	German Government – Economic Affairs Ministry	Export promotion services	https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Dossier/export-initiatives.html
	German International Chambers of Commerce Abroad	SME support for internationalisation	https://www.ahk.de/en/services/
	IHK - Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Business support in Berlin, with particular reference to import and export	https://www.ihk-berlin.de/English/en/s_987416/International_business/General_information/Export_english/3310114
	Germany Trade and Invest	Information on foreign markets	www.gtai.de
	GIZ	Trade Promotion Desks in countries supporting import and export and international development	https://www.giz.de/en
	Nuk (Köln)	Events, coaches, etc.	neuesunternehmertum.de/

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
Mainstream Business Support	Startplatz (Köln)		https://www.startplatz.de/
Specialist Social Enterprise Support	Start Social	Start-up support Transfer of knowledge between business and social project work	https://startsocial.de/
	Economy for the Common Good	Start up support for social enterprise	https://www.ecogood.org/en/
	Impact Hub	Co-working space and network	https://berlin.impacthub.net/
	Heldenrat		http://www.heldenrat.org/
	The DO School	Network and business support, peer network across 100 countries	http://thedoschool.org/
	Social Impact	Strat up consultancy and impact labs	https://socialimpact.eu/en/company/
	Social Entrepreneurship Akademie	One year certificate in social enterprise and incubator	http://www.seakademie.de/
	Anders Gründer	Free supporting program (up to 8 months) - Free workplaces - Professional guidance	https://andersgruender.eu/
	Hilfswerft	- Free consulting services - Coaching - Project support	https://www.hilfswerft.de/
	Investment Ready Program	4 month programme for social entrepreneurs	http://investment-ready.org/
	Project Together	Coaching for young social entrepreneurs	https://www.projecttogether.org/
	WeWork Creator Awards	Funding & mentoring for social enterprise.	

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
	Schwab Foundation	Global network for social entrepreneurs	https://www.dw.com/de/social-entrepreneurs/a-2247437
Networks and connections	SEND – Social Entrepreneurship Network Germany	Social enterprise network, primarily focussed on start-ups	https://www.send-ev.de/
Finance i.e. Grants, loans, investment	Seif Social Entrepreneurship Impact & Finance.	Awards, seminars, coaching and mentoring programs	http://seif.org/en/
	Ashoka Deutschland	Supporting social enterprises all over the world Financial support	http://germany.ashoka.org/%C3%BCber-uns
	FASE	Financing agency for social enterprise	http://fa-se.de/
	BonVenture	Provides its projects with long-term financial resources as well as a network and professional support	http://www.bonventure.de/home.html
	Ananda Ventures Social Venture Fund	Impact investment from €500K to €7 million	https://evpa.eu.com/members/ananda-ventures-social-venture-fund
	Tengelmann Social Ventures	Social investment and advice	https://tengelmann.de/en/company/business-units/e-commerce/tengelmann-social-ventures.html
Finance	Bertelsmann Foundation	Funder with particular interest in social entrepreneurship	https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/home/
	Social Impact Finance	In cooperation with Deutsche Bank Social Impact Finance supports social enterprise	https://socialimpactfinance.eu/
	KFW Stiftung	Foundation for financial and content support	http://www.kfw-stiftung.de/kfw-stiftung/
	Berliner Investment Bank	Investment for SMEs and social enterprises	

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
	A growing range of impact investors	Social investment	https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/user_upload/Market_Report_SII_in_Germany_2016.pdf

Greece

The legislation and policy underpinning social enterprises in Greece were only settled very recently. At the moment most social enterprises operate at neighbourhood, local and regional levels, with only a small minority operating nationally or internationally.

The support system for social enterprise in Greece is under development, with 90 'hubs', run by the government, planned to open in 2019. At present it is not clear whether these will have any expertise in internationalisation. Until they open however support for social enterprise is almost non-existent

The most challenging aspect for social enterprises in Greece wishing to internationalise is the legal framework governing their operation is highly restrictive.

Greece also has one of the worst infrastructures in the EU for the internationalisation of SMEs^{xxxv} including lack of information and unhelpful systems and procedures.

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
Legal and Policy Framework	Greek Government:	Law 4019/2011 on Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship	https://government.gov.gr/
International Business Support Infrastructure	Start up Greece	Guide for SMEs exporting	https://startupgreece.gov.gr/sites/default/files/exportguide_low.pdf
	Global Greece	Private consultancy offering internationalisation support to businesses	https://www.globalgreece.gr/00000000.en.aspx
Specialist social enterprise support	Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity, Special secretariat for the social and solidarity economy	Support hubs for social enterprise	https://kalo.gov.gr/ https://kalo.gov.gr/etisia-ekthesi-2017
	Koinsep	Online centre of support for the social economy	koinsep.org
	Higgs	Social enterprise incubator, accelerator and support	https://higgs3.org
	Impact Hub Athens		https://athens.impacthub.net/en/
	Social economy institute	Support for social economy	https://www.social-economy.com/english.html
	Special Secretary for ERDF & CF MANAGING AUTHORITY OF EPAnEK	Social enterprise development	http://www.antagonistikotita.gr/epanek_en/index.asp
	Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs and Ministry of	Funding for unemployment initiatives	http://www.epanad.gov.gr/ https://www.ypakp.gr/

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
	Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity		
	Ashoka	Business and impact plan and access to finance	https://www.ashoka.org/en
	Solidarity Now	Supporting programs design and implementation	http://www.solidaritynow.org/en/businessforyouth/
	Social Economy	Business consulting services and support for finding access to finance for social enterprises	www.social-economy.com/koinsep.html
	SoSEDEE	Social enterprise training courses, business planning and mentoring	https://www.sosedee.eu/
Networks			
	Athens Startup Business Incubator (Th.E.A.)	Networking activities	www.theathensincube.gr
	Social Dynamo – Boddosaki Foundation	networking opportunities	www.socialdynamo.gr
	Orange Grove	collaboration and connectivity	www.orangegrove.eu
	Higgs	sharing of best practices and networking opportunities	www.higgs3.org/?lang=en
	CENTRE “ERGANI”	business counselling on networking	www.ergani.gr
	City of Athens Development and Destination Management Agency – Epixeiro Koinonika – Enterprise Socially	Support services for integration of vulnerable groups members, synergies and networking	www.social.developathens.gr
	Athens Cooperatives Network	Supports network members, and co-op start-ups	
	Coordination of Koin.S.Ep.	Coordination, catering, promotion	www.syn-koinsep.org
	Hellenic Federation of Social Cooperatives with Limited Liability	Representation and coordination	www.pokoispe.gr
	PROSKALO Cooperation Initiative for the Social and Solidarity Economy	Promotion	www.proskalo.net

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
	Social cooperative enterprises network of Western Macedonia	Networking platform for SSE and social cooperative enterprises in western Macedonia	www.facebook.com/pg/diktyokoinsepdm/about
	Social cooperative enterprises network of Central Macedonia	Promotion of cooperation with organisations across central Macedonia that recognize and support the SSE and its structures	www.diktyokoinsepkm.blogspot.gr
	Social cooperative enterprises network of Eastern Macedonia and Thraki	Support for communication and solidarity relations, dissemination of information and good practices in the field of social entrepreneurship and cooperation	www.diktyokoinsepamth.gr
	Social Entrepreneurship Forum	Promotion of social entrepreneurship based on shared values, principles and features. Stimulation of dialogue among social economy enterprises, stakeholders and support organisations, to boost efficient networking and cooperation, develop appropriate dedicated financial-economic tools, and contribute to the self-organisation of communities	www.seforum.gr
	Networking Platform for SSE organisations	online platform that aims for the visibility and networking of SSE organisations operating in Greece	www.foreis-kalo.gr
Finance	Ministry of Economy and Development	Funding for Internationalisation, Social and Solidarity Economy Fund	https://www.espa.gr/el/Pages/ProclamationsFS.aspx?item=3869

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
			https://www.minfin.gr/web/guest/home
	Ministry of Economy and Development, Special Secretary for ERDF & CF MANAGING AUTHORITY OF EPAnEK	Funding for entrepreneurship development of the existing and start-up social enterprises	http://www.antonistikotis.gr/epanek/prokirixeis.asp?id=15&cs http://www.antonistikotis.gr/epanek_en/index.asp
	Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs	Funding for employment in Social Enterprises	http://archive.minedu.gov.gr/english https://www.minedu.gov.gr/ http://www.epanad.gov.gr/default.asp?pid=25&la=1
	Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity, Special secretariat for the social and solidarity economy	Social and Solidarity Economy Fund	https://kalo.gov.gr/
	Labor Force Employment Organization	Funding for employment in Social Enterprises	http://www.oaed.gr/
	Action Finance Initiative	Provision of access to financing (microcredits) to those who have a business idea/project and unable to find funds	
	The People's Trust	Privately funded Anglo-Hellenic initiative operating as a Not-for-Profit in Greece that supports start-ups and small, existing businesses. Offers microfinancing of up to €10,000 and free of charge business development services.	
	Praksis: One Up Crowd-funding and Business Coaching Centre	Crowd-funding platform for young entrepreneurs to source public donations as seed capital	
	Bodossaki Foundation	grants to NGOs and other non-profit organisations	

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
		whose mission and activities are aligned with its vision and scope	
	Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF)	grants to social enterprises	
	Latsis Foundation	grants to organisations creating positive social impact in areas such as emergency relief of citizens in need, infrastructural improvement, NGO capacity building and community development, academic and research output reward, and highlighting of the cultural wealth of Greece	
	Tima Foundation	grants to Greek and Greek-related non-profit organisations in the areas of social welfare, healthcare, education, arts and culture, and science	
	CHIVAS VENTURE	\$1 million in no-strings funding to social entrepreneurs, who blend profit with purpose to have a positive impact on the world	
	Co-operative bank of Karditsa	‘ethical’ bank with a strong emphasis on social enterprises	www.bankofkarditsa.gr
	Pancretan Cooperative Bank	cooperative bank with a focus on cooperatives and social enterprises financing	www.pancretabank.gr

Ireland

Recognition of the importance of social enterprise in Ireland has been growing over the past few years, and the Irish Government have published a draft Social Enterprise Policy for 2019-22 which is currently out for consultation^{xxxvi}.

This policy makes some reference to the international context of social enterprise, in particular it commits to:

“Ensuring that Ireland engages closely on social enterprise policy developments at international level so that Ireland can influence international Social Enterprise policy development and, where relevant, social enterprises can benefit from international supports.”

It also refers to the potential for social entrepreneurs to

“...scale up their ideas, both nationally and internationally.”

The draft policy commits to improving the support available to social enterprises in Ireland, although no specific mention is made of internationalisation in this context.

Support for social enterprises in Ireland is currently provided by a confusing range of bodies including the Department of Rural and Community Development, Local Development Companies, Local Authorities, and support organisations. The level and quality of support is variable and it can be difficult for social enterprises to work out what support is available to them.

Local Authorities are involved in delivery of a range of supports to social enterprises through initiatives such as the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), and the Community Enhancement Programme.

There are 49 Local Development Companies (LDCs) across the country, many of which provide support for social enterprises.

There are 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) located across Ireland, one in each Local Authority Area. They act as a ‘first stop shop’ for those in business or starting a business, including social enterprises, providing support such as training and mentoring. They also provide direct financial support to microenterprises with international trade potential – which could be available to some social enterprises.

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
Legal and Policy Framework	Irish Government	Draft Social Enterprise Policy 2019-22	https://www.socent.ie/resources/social-enterprise-policy-2019-2022/
	Forfás	Policy Document ‘Social Enterprise In Ireland: Sectoral Opportunities and Policy Issues’	https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Forfás/Social-Enterprise-in-Ireland-Sectoral-Opportunities-and-Policy-Issues.pdf
	Pobal	Community Services Programme	https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/community-services-programme-csp/
	Pobal	SICAP	https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/social-inclusion-and-community-

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
			activation-programme-sicap-2018-2022/
	Department of Justice and Equality	Social Enterprise Strategy	http://www.justice.ie/EN/PB/WebPages/WP17000016
	Rural Strategy Unit	National Policy on Social Enterprise – currently being developed	http://www.ruralireland.ie/policies/social-enterprise/ https://www.wheel.ie/notice/online-consultation-Irish-social-enterprise-policy
International Business Support Infrastructure	Enterprise Ireland	Export support for SMEs	https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Export-Assistance/
Specialist social enterprise support	Local Enterprise Office	advice, information and support to starting up or growing a business. Aligned to local authority	https://www.localenterprise.ie/
	Enterprise Ireland	Research and innovation; management advice; exporting	https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/
	Social Entrepreneurs Ireland	Advice and support	http://socialentrepreneurs.ie/about/
	Local Authorities	Varying levels of social enterprise support	
	Local Development Companies (LDCs)	49 LDCs across Ireland, many provide support for social enterprises	http://ildn.ie/
	Bnest	Incubator Programme	http://bnest.ie/
	SEDCO	Mentoring and incubation	http://sedco.ie/
	Bnest	Incubator Programme	http://bnest.ie/
	The Wheel	Training and advocacy / research for community and voluntary sector	https://www.wheel.ie/
	Maynooth University	Cert. in Social Enterprise	https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/study-maynooth/undergraduate-studies/courses/certificate-social-enterprise
	UCC	MSc in Co-operative and Social Enterprise	https://www.ucc.ie/en/ckl10/

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
	An cosan	Intro. to Social Enterprise Development (QQI Level 6)	http://ancosanvcc.com/intro-to-social-enterprise-development-qqi-level-6/
	National College of Ireland	Certificate in Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship	https://www.ncirl.ie/Courses/Course-Details/course/Certificate-in-Social-Enterprise-and-Entrepreneurship-CSEE
	DCU Ryan Academy	MSC in Social Enterprise Leadership	https://www.dcu.ie/universityofenterprise/ryan-academy.shtml
	Bnest	Incubator Programme	http://bnest.ie/
	SEDCO	Mentoring	http://sedco.ie/
Networks	Irish Social Enterprise Network	Advocacy	https://www.socent.ie/
	Community Action Network	Online advice and funding	http://www.canaction.ie/home/
	North South Social Innovation Network –	cross-border learning and collaboration?	http://northsouthsocialinnovation.org/
Finance	Community Finance Ireland	Loan finance to social enterprise	https://www.communityfinance.ie/
	Clann Credo	Loan finance to social enterprise	http://www.clanncredo.ie/
	Ulster Community Investment Trust Ireland	Loans to third sector organisations in Northern Ireland and Ireland	https://www.ucitltd.com/
	Enterprise Ireland	Grants	https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/
	Pobal	Community Services Programme – co-financing of managerial staff	https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/community-services-programme-csp/
	Social Innovation Fund	SE Finance – government initiative	http://www.socialinnovation.ie/social-enterprise-development/
	Probation Service	Kickstart' Seed Fund programme	http://www.probation.ie/EN/PB/WebPages/WP18000018
Professional services	CPA Ireland	Accountancy firm Produced a report on the social enterprise landscape in Ireland and internationally	http://www.cpaireland.ie/docs/default-source/Social-Enterprise-Report-2018/social-enterprise---the-irish-and-international-landscapes.pdf?sfvrsn=0

Italy

Italy has a strong social economy with a large number of social cooperatives and other forms of social enterprise. This is supported by a strong policy framework, although focussed on domestic delivery, not internationalisation.

In the wider SME sector, Italy performs below the EU average in internationalisation, with weak trade facilitation^{xxxvii}. Business support is however available for SMEs wishing to export, and is backed by the government's 'Made in Italy' programme. This includes funding and advice and is useful for social enterprises with simple export business models, but not for those with more complex models of internationalisation.

Chambers of Commerce are involved in promoting social entrepreneurship through the establishment of a Committee for Social Entrepreneurship and Microcredit. Most specialist social enterprise support however is provided through social enterprises coming together in networks or consortia. There are over 400 local social enterprise consortia in Italy. Again however, these are not focussed on internationalisation and lack expertise in this area. Finance is generally available through government guaranteed loans.

"If you are specifically focusing on social entrepreneurs there is not any specific support network in Italy. The biggest Italian umbrella associations for social coops have their offices in Brussels but they are mostly focused on EU grants or policies. Internationalisation is something which is considered not in line with the Italian tradition of social coops (90% of social enterprises in the country) which are supposed to be very close to the needs they serve. We are trying to work on that with some other small private organisations but our impact actually is still very limited."

Marco Traversi, CEO & founder Project Ahead

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
Legal and Policy Framework	Italian Government	Legal recognition of social cooperatives	Law 381/1991 on social cooperatives
	Italian Government	Allows local administrations to outsource services to social enterprises	Law 142 and Law 241/1990
	Italian Government	Legal framework on social enterprise	Law 118/2005 and Legislative Decree 155/2006
	Italian Government	Law governing benefit corporations	Law 208/2015
	Italian Government	Relaunch of social enterprise in line with EU definition	Law 106/2016 reforming the 'Third Sector'
	Italian Government	Supporting measures for the spreading and strengthening of the social enterprise	Ministerial Decree 3 July 2015

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
International Business Support Infrastructure	Italian Government	'Made in Italy' 2018-2020 programme	https://www.mise.gov.it/index.php/it/198-notizie-stampa/2037251-cabina-di-regia-per-l-internazionalizzazione
	Italian Trade Agency (ITA)	Export and import support for SMEs	https://www.ice.it/en/
Specialist social enterprise support	Avanzi	Consultancy and incubation for social enterprise	http://www.avanzi.org/en/
	Make a Cube	Social enterprise incubator	http://makeacube.com/eng
	FabriQ	Social enterprise incubator	http://www.fabriq.eu/
	Impact Hub	4 Impact Hubs offering incubation to social enterprises in Italy	https://impacthub.net/
	Social Fare	Social innovation accelerator	http://socialfare.org/en/
	Torino Social Impact	Social enterprise tech accelerator	https://www.torinosocialimpact.it/en/who-we-are/
	Kilowatt	Support and consultancy for start up social enterprises	https://kilowatt.bo.it/en/about/
	LAMA	Social enterprise consultancy	http://www.agenzialama.eu/?lang=en
Networks	Confcooperative Federsolidarietà	Network for Social Cooperatives	https://www.confcooperative.it/ https://www.federsolidarieta.confcooperative.it/
	Legacoopsociali	Network for Social Cooperatives	https://www.legacoopsociali.it/
	Local social enterprise consortia	Over 400 local consortia providing support for social enterprises	www.cgm.coop
	IRIS	Conferences for social entrepreneurs and researchers	https://irisnetwork.it/
Finance	The 'Guarantee Fund'	Provides guarantees to allow SMEs to access finance through banks	
	Startup innovative a vocazione sociale - SIAVS	Support Financial support for innovative social enterprise start ups.	https://www.guidafisco.it/start-up-innovative-sociali-siavs-1265
	Banca Etica	Ethical bank lending to social enterprises	https://www.bancaetica.it/

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
	Banca Prossima	Specialist bank lending to social enterprises	https://www.intesasanpaolo.com/it/banca-prossima/banca-prossima-diventa-intesa-sanpaolo.html
	Oltre Venture	Venture philanthropy fund	https://www.oltreventure.com/

Latvia

Latvia introduced a social entrepreneurship law in 2017, which is helping to strengthen understanding of social enterprise within the country, and the framework of support. The support infrastructure is still in its infancy by comparison with other countries in the report, but is growing.

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
Legal and Policy Framework	Ministry of Welfare	Social Entrepreneurship Law – legal framework	https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/294484 https://likumi.lv/ta/id/294484-sociala-uznemuma-likums
International Business Support Infrastructure	Enterprise Europe Network	Provides support for SMEs (including social enterprises) to innovate and grow on an international scale	http://www.een.lv/en/about-een-latvia/
	Labs of Latvia	Business tools, training and events, including on export.	https://labsoflatvia.com/en/support#export
Specialist social enterprise support	Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia (SEAL)	Consultancy, events and workshops on social entrepreneurship	
	Social Innovation Centre (SIC)	Education, mentoring, consultancy, created crowdfunding platform,	http://socialinnovation.lv/en/
	University of Latvia	Business Incubator for students	https://www.biznesainkubators.lu.lv/
	Riga Technical University	“IdeaLAB” incubator	https://www.rtu.lv/lv/valorizacija/studentiem/studentu-biznesa-inkubators-idealab
	Banks in Latvia, like “Nordea” and “Swedbank”	Grants, sponsorship, training programmes, mentoring	
	“New Door”	Social business accelerator	http://newdoor.lv/lv/media/news/lv-new-door-akcelators-sagatavos-uznemumus-labklajibas-ministrijas-grantu-programmai-2
	Reach for Change	Social Enterprise Incubator	https://www.facebook.com/r4c.latvia/

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
	Investment and Development Agency of Latvia	Education, hackathons, business incubator networks	http://www.liaa.gov.lv/en/about/about-liaa
	Open Society DOTS (Foundation DOTS)	Promoting social entrepreneurship; organising events and seminars	http://www.fondsdots.lv/en/
Networks and connections	Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia	Networking, education, interests' advocacy,	https://sua.lv/ https://www.socialauznemejdarbiba.lv/eng/
	Investment and Development Agency of Latvia	iNOVUSS festival - networking	http://www.inovuss.lv/par-festivalu/
	SIC	Social Entrepreneurship Support Network of the Baltic Sea Region - education, networking	http://www.socialenterprisebsr.net/
	TechHub Riga	"Tech Chill" networking event	http://www.techchill.co/startups/
	Coworking spaces	Networking + cheaper facilities	http://www.liaa.gov.lv/en/events/second-startup-academy https://darbavieta.rocks/ http://www.millriga.com/ http://www.birojnica.lv/
Finance	ALTUM (state-owned financial institution)	ALTUM Social Entrepreneurship Grant Programme	https://www.altum.lv/en/services/enterprises/grants/Social-Entrepreneurship-Programme/about-the-programme/
	Investment and Development Agency of Latvia	"Innovation Voucher Support Services" programme	http://www.liaa.gov.lv/lv/fondi/2014-2020/inovaciju-vauceru-atbalsta-pakalpojumi
	Investment and Development Agency of Latvia	Support for participation in trade fairs/exhibitions	http://www.liaa.gov.lv/lv/fondi/2014-2020/starptautiskas-konkuretspejas-

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
			veicinasana/u/individualais-stends
	Latvian Business Angel Network	Investments for startups	https://www.latban.lv/en/about-us
	Atspēriens (Kick Off)	Grant program which provides co-financing of up to 80 per cent to new entrepreneurs in Riga	http://www.investeriga.lv/en/start-up-support/
Professional services	Jauno Uzņēmēju Centrs "Jobs&Society"	Consultancy for startups	http://www.juc.lv/Sakums/Par_mums/

Lithuania

Social enterprises were originally narrowly defined in Lithuanian law as work integration social enterprises. Therefore, in Lithuania, term “social business” is used more often to refer to the wider EU definition of social enterprise.

In 2015, the Law of Social Business Concept come into effect, with a view to supporting the development of social businesses in Lithuania. Beside this, “Guidelines for the implementation of social business under the Lithuanian rural development program 2014-2020” are mostly used for applications of financial support to social business development in Lithuanian rural areas. A draft law on Social Business Development is still on the development stage. The law should lay the foundations for the creation and growth of social businesses, including state incentives.

There is no specialist support for the internationalisation of social enterprises, but there are a growing number of initiatives focussing on supporting social enterprise and social entrepreneurship. Enterprise Lithuania, the government’s business support agency also has some specialist support for social enterprise.

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
Legal and Policy Framework	Lithuanian Government Ministry of Economy	Social business regulation Social Business Promotion action plan 2015-2017	http://www.socialinisverslas.lt/en/social-business-environment-in-lithuania/
Mainstream and international business support	Enterprise Lithuania (Versli Lietuva)	Government agency supporting start-up, development for commercial businesses in Lithuania, and for export support.	https://www.enterpriselithuania.com/en/ https://www.verslilietuva.lt/en/
	Invest Lithuania	Lithuanian governmental agency for investment promotion:	https://investlithuania.com/
	Lithuanian Business Confederation	Business association for commercial businesses	https://lvk.lt/?lang=en
	Association of Lithuanian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts	Self-supporting business association for commercial businesses.	http://chambers.lt/en/
Specialist social enterprise support	Ministry of Economy - Social Business Forum	Panel Discussion, and Working Groups	https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0BAFaf2iqeGUGMtQUNxQ19IYUE/view
	BiZzZ Social business camp	Two day course of presentations, workshops and hands-on work.	http://www.socialenterprisebsr.net/2015/09/summer-camp-on-social-entrepreneurship-in-lithuania/ http://www.nvoavilys.lt/ http://hubvilnius.lt/english/

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
			https://www.facebook.com/inovatoriuslenis/ http://inovatoriuslenis.lt/
	Advanced SO	Social enterprise incubator	http://advancedso.lt/
	Innovation Office	Social business incubator	http://www.inovacijubiuras.lt/en/incubator/
	Lietuvos LEADER	EU Community Initiative encouraging rural people and organisations to participate in the development of their community	http://www.leaderlietuva.lt/en/ http://lithuania.reachforchange.org/lt/
	Reach for Change	Incubation and support	http://lithuania.reachforchange.org/lt/
	Geri Norai	Support for businesses and NGOs implementing socially beneficial projects.	http://www.gerinorai.lt/
	Changemakers (C'MON)	'Boost Camps', training, and connecting social entrepreneurs worldwide	https://changemakerson.eu/
Finance	UAB "Investicijų ir verslo garantijos" (INVEGA)	Soft loans for SME start-ups	http://invega.lt/en/
	Investors' Forum	Voluntary, independent, largest and most active business association of Lithuanian economy investors	http://investorsforum.lt/en/
	NVO Avilys	Co-working space for social enterprise	http://www.nvoavilys.lt/
Professional services	Management Innovation Agency	Private consultancy offering funding and legal support for project development – not social enterprise or internationalisation specific	http://innovate.lt/english/
Other Support	Socialinis verslas internet site	Online info about social enterprise concept. No specific social enterprise support in Lithuania listed.	http://www.socialinisverslas.lt/en/

UK

The UK has a vibrant, well-resourced social enterprise sector, with particularly strong support in Scotland, and to a lesser extent Wales. Thirteen percent of social enterprises in the UK export some of their goods or services outside the UK^{xxxviii}, but for most this is not 'core business'. There is a growing awareness amongst social enterprises in the UK of the potential of trading internationally, with a report published by the British Council and SEUK in 2016, and the British Council's social enterprise programme now operating in 29 countries, frequently taking social entrepreneurs from the UK to share their experience. With the exception of Scotland however, there is not a strong support infrastructure for internationalising social enterprise, with most support, advice and funding focussed on domestic growth.

With devolution of powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the support available to social enterprises across the four nations of the UK varies enormously, with Scotland providing specialist support, finance and encouragement specifically for the internationalisation of social enterprise. This additional support available in the devolved nations is captured below the main UK table.

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
Legal and Policy Framework	UK Government	Civil Society Strategy 2018	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732765/Civil_Society_Strategy_-_building_a_future_that_works_for_everyone.pdf
	UK Government	2014: Introduction of social investment tax relief	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-investment-tax-relief-factsheet/social-investment-tax-relief
International Business Support Infrastructure	UK Government, Dept for International Trade	Online advice and guidance	https://www.great.gov.uk/
	Institute of Export & International Trade	Training, qualifications and advice	http://www.export.org.uk/
	Open to Export	Online toolkit	https://opentoexport.com/info/export-action-plan/
Specialist social enterprise support	Social Business Wales	Funded consultancy for social enterprises wishing to grow	https://businesswales.gov.wales/socialbusinesswales/
	UnLtd	Mentoring for early stage social entrepreneurs	https://unltd.org.uk/partners/mentoring-social-entrepreneurs/
	Ernst & Young	Mentoring from EY consultants	

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
	School for Social Entrepreneurs	Start-up support & Training	https://www.the-sse.org/
	Social Enterprise Academy	Training	https://www.socialenterprise.academy/scot/
Networks	SEUK	Network for social enterprises in the UK	https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/
	Federation of Small Businesses	Network for small businesses	https://www.fsb.org.uk/
Finance	Social Investment	Numerous sources of loans and equity specifically for social enterprises	www.can-invest.org.uk www.bigissueinvest.com www.cafonline.org www.bridgesventures.com Etc.
	Trusts and Foundation	Numerous private trusts and foundations offering grants, some specifically for social enterprise	https://www.the-sse.org/resources/starting/what-funding-is-available-for-social-entrepreneurs
	Trade and Export Finance Ltd.	Private company providing stop-gap finance for export	
Professional services Accountants, lawyers, export consultants etc.	Numerous law firms and accountants with specific international experience e.g. Strong & Herd	Export consultants	http://www.strongandherd.co.uk/home/

Additional support from UK nations and regions:

Business support is devolved in the UK, so Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all have their own business support programmes, both for export and for social enterprise.

Scotland

Scotland is a case study all of its own. It is the only country in this research that has a specific social enterprise internationalisation strategy.

“The Scottish government are very supportive. The strategies have been really well coproduced between the sector and government, it doesn’t feel top down at all..”
(UK)

And the strategy is backed up with considerable resources. There is money available to support social enterprises wishing to internationalise:

“Recently we had support from Scottish Development International and they had a raft of grants, for example around picking up 30 to 50% of the travel cost to new markets, supporting an international business development manager post even employing contractors overseas, that know the overseas markets. With their help you can find the right partners of find the right funders; you can travel to lots of meetings, set up, and hopefully win some business.”
(UK)

There is also specific expertise that social enterprises can draw on:

“Scottish Development International, for example, has a research team of 50 people. You can ask them a question and they will do the research and get back to you. It is having support like that which means that you do not have to waste your teams time.”
(UK)

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
Legal and Policy Framework	Scottish Government	Social Enterprise Strategy 2016-26	https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-social-enterprise-strategy-2016-2026/
	Scottish Government	Strategy on internationalising social enterprise	http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/09/3750
	Scottish Government	Building a sustainable social enterprise infrastructure	https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/publication/2017/04/building-sustainable-social-enterprise-sector-scotland-2017-20/documents/00516611-pdf/00516611-pdf/govscot%3Adocument
	Scottish Government	Awareness raising of export opportunities amongst new social enterprises	
International Business Support Infrastructure	Scottish Enterprise	Mainstream export advice	https://www.scottish-enterprise.com/support-for-businesses/exports-and-international-markets

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
Specialist social enterprise support	Just Enterprise	Free, specialist business support for social enterprise.	http://www.justenterprise.org/
	Social Enterprise Observatory	Bringing successful social enterprises from other countries to Scotland	
	CEIS Growth Programme	Supporting successful Scottish social enterprises to trade internationally	
	Social Firms Scotland	Support for social firms	
	Senscot	Affordable legal support for social enterprise	http://www.se-legal.net/
	Social Enterprise Academy	Training	https://www.socialenterprise.academy/scot/
Networks	Social Enterprise Networks	Peer networks	https://senscot.net/network/local/
Finance	Funding Scotland	Grants	http://www.fundingscotland.com/
	Social Investment Scotland	Loans and social investment	http://www.socialinvestmentscotland.com/

Wales

Wales does not have anything like the resources that Scotland has for social enterprise internationalisation, but it does have specialist support for growth social enterprises and for mainstream export.

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
International Business Support Infrastructure	Business Wales	Mainstream business support, including export	https://businesswales.gov.wales/zones/export
Specialist social enterprise support	Social Business Wales	Support for growth social enterprises	https://businesswales.gov.wales/socialbusinesswales/

England

England doesn't have any national support beyond that already identified at a UK level. There are local and regional networks and some support programmes available for social enterprise, although these are locally focussed. There is also some regional specific support for export.

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
International Business Support Infrastructure	Export for Growth	Export support for businesses in South West England	https://www.businesswest.co.uk/export-growth

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland also has a government backed body to support mainstream businesses with exporting, and also some specialist social enterprise support.

	Name of organisation	Type of support offered	Website
International Business Support Infrastructure	Invest NI	support, guidance and funding focussed on start-up SMEs with export potential	https://www.investni.com/support-for-business/thinking-about-exporting.html
Specialist Social Enterprise Support	Social Enterprise NI	Connecting social entrepreneurs and acting as a voice for the sector.	
	NI Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)	Advice support and training	
	Ulster Community Investment Trust (UCIT)	Advice and loans	

Conclusions and Recommendations

There is clear evidence that internationalisation can benefit social enterprises, and the communities they serve. However the practice of trading or operating internationally is still relatively rare amongst social enterprises, and the encouragement and support to do so even rarer.

Support for social enterprises to internationalise can be broken down into the following four categories:



- Support **raising awareness** of international opportunities tends to be limited to export opportunities for mainstream businesses.
- **Business planning and support** typically falls into two categories:
 - general social enterprise support
 - support for SMEs to trade internationally.
- Specific support for social enterprises to internationalise is only available in Scotland^{xxxix}.
- **Networks** are generally local or national rather than international.
- **Finance** available to social enterprises is rarely focussed on, and often inappropriate for, internationalisation

The advantages of supporting SMEs to internationalise are widely understood amongst governments.

“Internationalisation can result in competitiveness gains at firm level which may eventually translate into improved economic performance at national and European level:

- *Being internationally active strongly relates to higher turnover growth.*
- *SMEs that are internationally active generally report higher employment growth than non-active SMEs.*
- *The relationship between internationalisation and innovation is strong.*

In spite of this, few EU SMEs do business internationally, either inside or beyond the EU.”

[EU Guide to Supporting SMEs Internationalise](#)

The advantages of social enterprises internationalising are less widely understood, the proportion of social enterprises doing business internationally is even smaller than amongst SMEs generally^{xl}.

Social enterprises are (almost all) SMEs, and will therefore benefit from internationalisation in the same way as mainstream SMEs. However, being social enterprises means there are other benefits too:

- They can find new markets, increase their financial sustainability and bring new income into poor communities
- They can spread their social impact to communities in other countries
- They can build networks with cooperatives, volunteers associations, and NGOs to develop new social and commercial activities
- They help to reduce the wealth gap when disadvantaged producers from one country are helped by the consumers of another (normally richer) country

Recommendations for National and Local Governments

Appropriate support from intermediaries and governments undoubtedly helps social enterprises take advantage of the opportunities of internationalisation. The example of Scotland shows what can be done.

A comprehensive ecosystem to support social enterprises to internationalise would include these four elements:



Specifically, we recommend:

- Minimise the bureaucracy for social enterprises wishing to trade or operate internationally
- Raise awareness of the potential for social enterprise internationalisation through social enterprise networks, support programmes and online platforms
- Develop the role of schools and educational institutions in exploring the potential of social enterprise internationalisation
- Where specialist social enterprise business support exists, ensure officers are trained and aware of the potential for internationalisation
- Create links between specialist social enterprise support and specialist import / export support, sharing learning and jointly supporting social enterprises wishing to internationalise
- Ensure information on business internationalisation - such as understanding foreign markets, how to access foreign markets, legal requirements, etc. – is appropriate and specific for social enterprises
- Identify high potential social enterprises locally and provide support and investment to enable them to internationalise
- Identify social enterprises operating in other countries that could be beneficial locally, and provide support to enable them to expand or replicate
- Provide funding or resources for business networks to develop social enterprise expertise and capacity
- Provide funding for social enterprise networks to connect social enterprises internationally
- Convene networking and collaboration events for international social entrepreneurs, regular businesses, investors and government representatives
- Provide a suitable mixture of grants and guaranteed loans specifically for internationalisation

Recommendations for the EU

The European Commission has already recognised the potential for social enterprise internationalisation. In order to realise this potential there are further actions the EU could take, in particular:

- Including the 'international trade, cooperation, expansion or replication of social enterprises' as a specific criteria of Interreg and other regional cooperation funds
- Ensure the targets for business and job creation associated with European funding programmes are assessed on a pan-European basis, not on a local or national basis
- Support the development of a pan-European network of social enterprises, building on existing national networks where they exist
- Strengthen the Social Enterprise World Forum so that it can play a greater role in supporting European social enterprises to connect, collaborate and internationalise

Endnotes

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- ⁱ http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/20182/84453/Supporting_Internat_SMEs.pdf/f36577c4-53fc-4f44-a02a-d8f5e295158f
- ⁱⁱ <https://www.socialenterprisescotland.org.uk/files/6a5c2f61df.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/20182/84453/Supporting_Internat_SMEs.pdf/f36577c4-53fc-4f44-a02a-d8f5e295158f
- ^{iv} http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/20182/84453/Supporting_Internat_SMEs.pdf/f36577c4-53fc-4f44-a02a-d8f5e295158f
- ^v <https://www.britishcouncil.org/society/social-enterprise/news-events/news-Exporting-Social-Enterprise-survey>
- ^{vi} http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy/enterprises_en
- ^{vii} <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0733>
- ^{viii} <https://www.riposs.eu/the-geces-2016-report/>
- ^{ix} <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>
- ^x <https://www.ashoka.org/en-gb/home>
- ^{xi} <https://impacthub.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Impact-Hub-Global-Impact-Report-2018.pdf>
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- ^{xxi} <https://www.interregeurope.eu/raise/>
- ^{xxii} <http://www.nweurope.eu/projects/project-search/sunse-support-network-for-social-entrepreneurs/>
- ^{xxiii} <https://een.ec.europa.eu/>
- ^{xxiv} <https://sewfonline.com/>
- ^{xxv} <http://euclidnetwork.eu/>
- ^{xxvi} <https://www.ashoka.org/en-gb/home>
- ^{xxvii} <https://www.citizen-network.org/about/what-we-do/>
- ^{xxviii} <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1084&langId=en>
- ^{xxix} [European Fund for Strategic Investments \(EFSI\) Equity instrument](#)
- ^{xxx} <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=16864&langId=en>
- ^{xxxi} <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/11344/attachments/1/translations/en/renditions/native>
- ^{xxxii} <https://evpa.eu.com/>
- ^{xxxiii} <https://ananda.vc/>
- ^{xxxiv} <https://www.abnamro.com/en/newsroom/newsarticles/2016/worlds-first-cross-border-social-impact-bond-helps-jobseekers-in-enschede-find-work-in-germany.html>
- ^{xxxv} <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/32581/attachments/13/translations/en/renditions/native>
- ^{xxxvi} <https://www.socent.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/National-Social-Enterprise-Policy-Draft-for-public-consultation-FINAL....pdf>
- ^{xxxvii} SBA report, Italy.
- ^{xxxviii} <https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=a1051b2c-21a4-461a-896c-aca6701cc441>
- ^{xxxix} <https://www.socialenterprisescotland.org.uk/files/6a5c2f61df.pdf>
- ^{xl} 11% amongst social enterprises in the UK in 2014 – British Council / SEUK report.