

Erasmus +



Internationalising Trading for Social Enterprise Sustainability and Education

Project Summary

intsense aims to support the development of innovative practices in the education and training of individuals who are either seeking to expand their expertise in relation to the internationalisation of social enterprise (SE) trading or are already engaged in social enterprises and wish to develop their capacity to trade their goods and services internationally and so enhance their sustainability. The outputs of the project will impact on the capacity of the social enterprise sector at organisational, local, regional, national, European and International levels.

The project partnership is led by Wrexham Glyndwr University (UK) and is both cross sectoral and pan European in its complexion as it includes four higher / vocational education colleges (Wrexham Glyndwr University - UK, Limerick Institute of Technology - Ireland, Panepistimio Patron - Greece and Pädagogische Hochschule Freiburg - Germany), three independent vocational training organisations (Archivio della Memoria - Italy), Inovaciju biuras - Lithuania, Socialas Inovacijas Centrs - Latvia) and one social enterprise research/training agency (Social Impact Consulting Ltd. - UK). The establishment of the partnership will internationalise the operations of the partner organisations and further embed them in European and International networks.

The cross sector nature of the project partnership ensures the open access multi-media inter-active blended learning materials. Video and case study material will help to improve / internationalise high quality formal and informal social enterprise programmes of higher education and further and vocational education / occupational adult training across Europe which is relevant to national and European labour market needs.

Context

Although it is acknowledged that some social enterprises are trading internationally, limited work has been undertaken on this subject.

intsense conducted a study across its partner countries that explored, on a qualitative basis, the reasons why social enterprises engage in international trade and the barriers and enablers that facilitate this form of enterprise. The study explored factors such as: motives behind foreign establishment, typical forms of trading international, relevant resources and the barriers and challenges faced.

Project Outputs

intsense accordingly developed a number of outputs, namely:

- A framework of factors that act as enablers and barriers to the internationalisation of social enterprise trading of goods and services that reflect differing business models currently in use. This is an entry level framework and acts as a summary to the whole of the project;
- A desk-based research report that maps out and appraises the use of current support mechanisms available in each partner country for social enterprises wanting to internationalise their trading practices;
- Case study materials that act as pilot lights to show exemplars of social enterprise international practices, collected from social entrepreneurs that are already trading their goods and services internationally; and
- Formal and informal educational and training materials relating to the international trading of social enterprise goods and services, their sustainability and support mechanisms available. The materials will comprise an online interactive business canvas, video summaries and written modules, based on the findings of the project that can be adapted to a variety of educational settings.

Thus the target groups for this project are students/learners, teachers, trainers, partners institutions, other educational institutions, research centres, employers and their associations, third sector voluntary bodies and policy-makers, new social entrepreneurs, existing social enterprises & their employees seeking to develop their knowledge and expertise and achieve lifelong learning.

Organisational Summary

A Total of 54 Social Enterprises (SEs) took part in this ERASMUS+ project; of those 54, 48 were already exporting their goods and services internationally and 6 were considering internationalisation.

Principal Sector of Activity	No. of Social Enterprises
Employment Skills	4
Consultancy	1
Education and Training	8
Business Support	1
Arts and Crafts	6
Health and Well-being	5
Culture and Tourism	6
Social Care/social support	2
Retail	3
Sports/Leisure	1
Agriculture, Food and Drink	9
Environment (including Energy)	2

Work Space	0
Financial Support	1
Humanitarian aid	2
Other	3
Total	54

Mode of Internationalisation	No. of Social Enterprises
Direct Export*	22
Cooperative Export	1
Subsidiary	4
Fair Trade	3
License	3
Franchise	3
Consultancy	1
Joint venture	14
Partnership/Collaboration	2

Note: Some SEs were utilising more than one mode of internationalisation.

*Direct export included: business to business sales, export via contract, export via e-commerce, export through a distributor, direct sales to cross border communities and direct sales to ex pat communities.