Social Innovation ⊕ Initiative

European Competence Centre for Social Innovation
ESF+ Community of Practice on Social Innovation

Work Programme 2024

The activities of the Social Innovation Community of Practice (SI CoP) aim to enhance the ESF+ support for social innovation through transnational cooperation and mutual learning between Member States (MS) to further explore the various ways to design, manage, and implement ESF+ programmes efficiently to foster social innovations across Europe, from its emergence to its scaling-up and mainstreaming.

This 2024 Work Programme has been developed following the guiding principles of co-creation and needs-based approaches, taking into account the conclusions of the SI CoP workshop held in Brussels on 26/10/2023 as well as the responses to the online survey launched on 05/12/2023 to better assess the real needs of the SI CoP members after one year of activities (Annex 2). This proposal is shared with the EC and the SI CoP members for comments and validation and will be reviewed at mid-term.

The scaling-up and transfer of successful social innovations and experiments, the ultimate goal of the ESF+ Social Innovation Initiative, remains the overall objective of the SI CoP.

The detailed results of the 54 responses from 23 MS to the online survey can be found in Annex 2.

1. SI CoP Priorities for 2024 based on key lessons from 2023:

- **Collaboration between ESF+ bodies** (ESF+ Managing Authorities (MAs) and Implementing Bodies (IBs), i.e., the main target audience of the SI CoP): Specific needs will be addressed by organising events dedicated to their management issues, such as funding or call preparation and implementation. The Annex 3 is the Analysis of Social Innovation dedicated Priorities within ESF+ programmes (2021-2027), prepared as part of the activities of the SI CoP in 2023. The report is primarily meant to serve ESF+ MAs and Intermediate bodies, as well as other key ESF+ stakeholders such as the National Competence Centres, as a source of information and inspiration. This overview at EU level aims to create a better common understanding as well of showing different existing models and approaches, with similarities and differences, that each SI CoP member can use and adapt to its own context to improve the delivery of ESF+ SI priorities. It will thus facilitate and enhance mutual exchanges, collaboration and peer learning, notably among ESF+ MAs, within the framework of the transnational cooperation activities of the SI CoP.

- **Collaboration between ESF+ MAs and the National Competence Centres (NCC), the Social Innovation Match (SIM) validators, and the EaSI National Contact Points (NCP):** These three other categories of key SI ecosystem stakeholders are crucial to create a robust SI ecosystem. Other spaces and networks will support the internal collaboration among NCC (NCC Working Group (WG)), SIM validators (virtual space to be created), and EaSI NCPs (EC network).

- **Cooperation and complementarity between the SI CoP and its NCC WG:** Their objectives and activities will be closely linked and coordinated to ensure mutual support between their activities and outputs, benefitting the whole SI ecosystem across the EU. Particular attention will be paid to the new NCC missions (from June 2024) and the mapping of social innovation ecosystems. A regular exchange of information between the SI CoP and the NCC WG will be ensured, as well as joint work and collaboration, which is essential for the effective implementation of ESF+ programmes supporting social innovation and the promotion of social innovation across the EU.

The Work Programme of the NCC WG for 2024 can be found in Annex 1.

- **Collaboration with the other thematic CoPs[1]:** The SI CoP aims to support the other CoPs to better embed social innovation into their sectoral/thematic public policies in order to address complex challenges in these specific areas. Therefore, SI guidelines, tools, and methodologies applicable to each policy field will be collected and analysed during the SI CoP events to create a SI Toolkit, which will be updated and enriched during the CoP (from the preparation of SI calls to the results and social impact assessment, including approaches to transfer and scale-up of social innovations with the financial support of ESF+ thematic priorities). Projects and practices presented during the SI CoP activities will, as far as possible, relate to the other CoPs fields and priorities. A proposal to experiment with continued collaboration with the EES CoP in 2024, testing different practical modalities of cooperation, while remaining open to other CoPs. This model could be replicated with other CoPs in the following years.

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[1] Social Inclusion, Employment / Education / Skills, Migrant integration, material support.

- **Focus on practice-oriented activities:** The exchange of testimonies, experiences, and inspiring practices will be maintained and reinforced, drawing on the experience and knowledge of SI CoP members to nurture exchange and mutual learning. Examples will be selected from ESF+ programmes as well as from other EU funded programmes such as the ESF+ EaSI strand. Examples supported by national and regional programmes may also be used if they have the potential to be supported by ESF+.

- **Reinforcement of the SIM database:** A more systematic use of the SIM database will be encouraged to improve its content, scope and functionalities, notably its matching dimension to policy challenges and its link with the overall EU SI ecosystem.

DG EMPL ESF+ Geographical Desk Officers are encouraged to participate in SI CoP events and activities, including contributing to surveys and publications. With the aim of making better use of ESF+ programmes in support of social innovation, in particular the Social Innovation priorities, they are also encouraged to disseminate and use this information with the ESF+ national and regional Managing Authorities and relevant stakeholders involved in the implementation of ESF+ programmes.
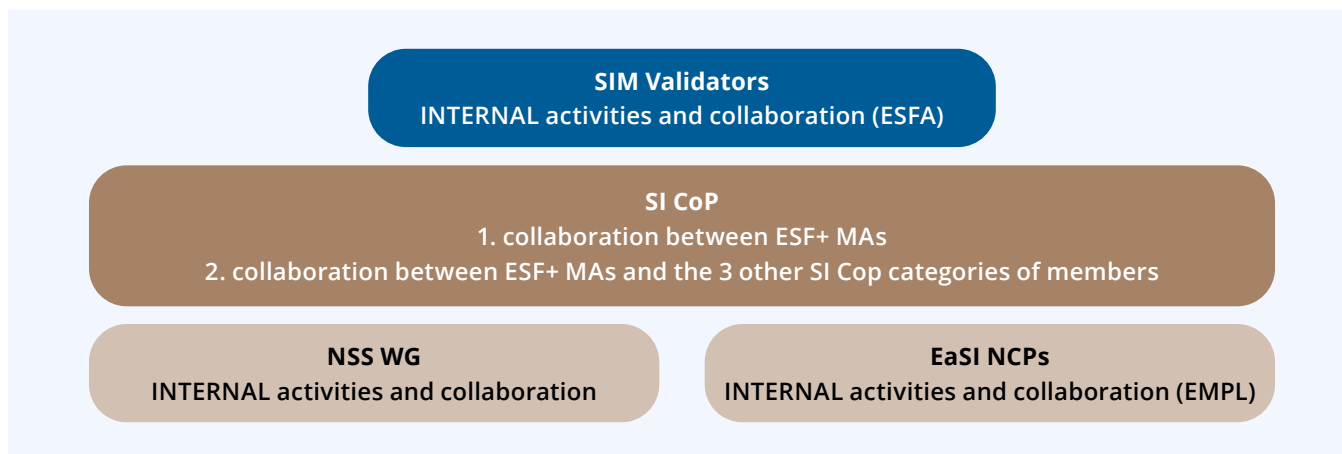
With regard to the formats of the events, the **duration of the** event **will generally be 2 hours, with possibility of break-out sessions** to allow for work in smaller groups and to deepen the **discussions**. Short online surveys will also be used between events to prepare events well-adjusted to the needs of participants, to take into account the diversity of situations, to collect practical information and to ensure that activities and results are co-created.

2. SI CoP governance

In order to ensure the best use of ESF+ to support social innovation, the **audience of the CoP is the ESF+ MAs (primary audience) as well as NCC, SIM validators, EaSI NCPs,** and other **key actors of the ESF+ social innovation ecosystem**. It should be noted that some participants (organisations or individuals) cumulate several functions (e.g., NCC, SIM validator, EaSI NCP). Depending on their topics and objectives, some events will target certain categories of stakeholders as a priority. **At the end of 2023, the SI CoP had 287 members:**

Type of Organisation	Number
ESF+ National Managing Authority	47
ESF+ Regional Managing Authority	13
National Competence Centre (NCC) for Social Innovation	35
Intermediate Body	21
Line Ministry	15
Implementing Organisation	27
NGO/Non-profit organisation	40
European Commission (including geographical ESF Desk Officers)	34
Other ESF Stakeholders	65
Total	287

Other spaces and networks will support the internal collaboration among NCCs (NCC WG), SIM validators (virtual space to be created), and EaSI NCPs (EC network).

SIM Validators
INTERNAL activities and collaboration (ESFA)

SI CoP
1. collaboration between ESF+ MAs
2. collaboration between ESF+ MAs and the 3 other SI Cop categories of members

NSS WG	EaSI NCPs
INTERNAL activities and collaboration	INTERNAL activities and collaboration (EMPL)

3. 2024 work programme activities

All SI CoP events aim at collecting, reviewing and sharing methods, practices and tools that can be applied to any thematic or policy field, thus supporting the development and scaling-up of social innovation in various policies and programmes from the other ESF+ CoPs.

All tools, methods, practices and examples analysed during the SI CoP events will be continuously collected in a practical toolkit/repository for SI stakeholders.

After each event, a summary report including presentation slides will be shared with all SI CoP members.

3.1. Online mutual learning workshop, 08/02/2024: 'How to manage and adapt ESF+ financial support to social innovation projects?'

Main target audience: ESF+ Bodies (ESF+ MAs and IBs).

Aim of the event: to assess the practical financial issues faced by ESF+ bodies when using ESF+ to fund social innovation projects, notably through the implementation of the ESF+ SI priority, due to the characteristics of SI projects (management issues related to forms of funding, simplification, payments, national co-funding, financial support from several partners, risk management, etc.).

- Review of situations in context, clear and detailed 'mapping of issues' in all their diversity.
- In-depth exchange between peers on problems common to many countries and solutions found that could be helpful to others.

Outputs and deliverables:

- Background note describing financial issues collected from MS related to ESF+ funding of SI.
- Practice report, reviewing issues, their origin (EU or national), existing solutions, practical recommendations for their use, training content, and recommendations to be taken up at EU level.

3.2. Online mutual learning workshop, 24/04/2024: 'SI Calls, projects selection, implementation and monitoring'

Main target audience: ESF+ Bodies, NCC.

Aim of the event: to follow up on the 2023 event dedicated to calls for proposals and to further explore some of the key issues shared by SI CoP members (i.e., call preparation, guidance and support to applicants, call promotion, selection criteria and procedures, and monitoring systems and indicators). The event will be prepared in collaboration with the EES CoP.

Outputs and deliverables:

- Background note describing management issues collected from ESF+ bodies.
- Practice report describing various models and practices tested in some MS to overcome some of the issues faced and to improve the overall delivery of the ESF+ SI priorities while simplifying ESF+ administration.
- Policy guidelines on effective SI implementation (TBC).

3.3. Study visit, 4-5/06/2024, Paris (France): 'Scaling-up/transfer: analysing one model'

Target audience: ESF+ bodies, NCC (EaSI NCPs on the topics would be welcome, if places are available).

Aim of the study visit: to discover one a scaling-up approach of a country with a strong expertise on this topic, with tested methods and tools, and to learn from the ground through scaled-up project visits. Through peer exchange, participants can increase their knowledge and use some elements to improve their own practices. Experiences from other Member States with different approaches will enrich this learning from a comparative analysis perspective.

Outputs and deliverables:

- Background note describing the model/approach promoted by the country to visit.
- Study-visit report, including peer-reviewers' insights and comments.
- Practical guidelines on scaling-up & transfer.

3.4. Online mutual learning workshop, 18/09/2024: 'Assessing and measuring social innovation results and impact'

Target audience: ESF+ bodies in priority + NCC, EaSI NCP, EMPL G3.

Aim of the event: to explore what do we mean by impact and impact measurement to agree on a common approach among ESF+ bodies, in particular to support the definition and analyses of impact indicators and the growth potential of social innovation projects funded, including their potential of transferability to improve public service delivery. Get familiar with multidimensional analysis of impact that goes beyond the mere achievements of goals, including criteria and methods that allow for the comparison of the impact potential among projects.

Outputs and deliverables:

- Background note with concepts, definitions, methods and relevant case studies.
- Report including MS perspectives to measure beyond quantifiable measures.

3.5. Study visit II, 5-6/11/2024, Torino (Italy): 'Collaboration models between key stakeholders of the ESF+ SI ecosystem'

Target audience: ESF+ MAs and NCC.

Aim of the study visit: to analyse the challenges of collaboration between ESF+ SI key stakeholders by debating and exploring one MS model, as well as exchanging practices and solutions and how to adapt them in other contexts in order to reinforce the SI ecosystem. Prepared in close collaboration with the NCC WG.

Outputs and deliverables:

- Study visit report.
- Practical guidelines on collaboration models.

3.6. Online mutual leaning workshop, 10/12/2024: 'Integrated approach & multi-fund approach for SI'

Target audience: ESF+ MAs, NCC.

Aim of the event: to explore various multi-fund approaches (ESF+, ERDF, EAFRD) to support social innovation in a more comprehensive way, including those adopted in some ESF+ SI priorities.

Outputs and deliverables:

- Background note.
- Practice report presenting multi-fund approaches and models to support social innovation.

Name of Activity	Format	Date	Topics/Options
Mutual learning workshop	Online	Feb. 8	How to manage and adapt ESF+ financial support to social innovation projects?
Mutual learning workshop	Online	Apr. 24	SI Calls, projects selection, implementation and monitoring
Study visit I	Onsite France, Paris	Jun. 4-5	Scaling-up and transfer – analysing one model
Mutual learning workshop	Online	Sept. 18	Assessing and measuring social innovation results and impact
SI Forum	Onsite Belgium	Oct. 1-2	TBD
Study visit II	Onsite Torino, Italy	Nov. 5-7	Collaboration models between key stakeholders of the ESF+ SI ecosystem
Mutual learning workshop	Online	Dec. 10	Integrated approach & multi-fund approach for SI

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