



INSPIRE

Exploring Social Entrepreneurship: Selected Case Studies

**KA220-VET - Cooperation Partnerships in
Vocational Education and Training**

**Innovation for Social Entrepreneurship Project
(2021-1-FR01-KA220-VET-000034853)**



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**WORKPLACE
INNOVATION
EUROPE**

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INTRODUCTION

Social entrepreneurship takes many forms reflecting the great diversity of social entrepreneurs themselves – their backgrounds, their motivations, their aims, and the settings in which they operate. This diversity of experience and practice represents a powerful learning resource, both for established social entrepreneurs in comparing their own journeys and achievements with those of others, and as a source of inspiration and practical guidance for those just setting out.

The Erasmus+ INSPIRE project has prepared a fascinating range of case studies from Europe and beyond. We offer this carefully selected sample both as a celebration of social entrepreneurship internationally and to encourage its further expansion, bringing fresh thinking and energy to how we address our multiple social, economic and environmental challenges.

Peter Totterdill
Workplace Innovation Europe CLG
Cork, IRELAND

October 2023

Brazil

SABOARIA RONDONIA



Saboaria Rondonia History

This social enterprise is the First Cosmetics Industry of Rondônia idealized and managed by Rural Women. The history of Saboaria Rondonia begins inspired by the dream and persistence of Rural Entrepreneurial Women in the interior of Rondônia, in the Tourist Resort Ouro Preto do Oeste. What in 2015 was just an idea over the years turned into a community-based project. It is a work that combines environmental preservation, female empowerment, and socioeconomic development. The Amazonian biodiversity is in each of our products, Unique, which offer an unforgettable skin care experience.



1. To you what is Social Entrepreneur?

The meaning of social entrepreneur is to create solutions to a problem and that this solution reflects in the collective, focused on creating better social and economic conditions, and considering the sustainability of the world. In our case, a sustainable development action through the development of natural cosmetic products.

<https://www.saboariarondonia.com.br/>

Saboaria Rondonia aiming at the balance of the world in which we live and aims to develop cosmetic products with the principle of environmental preservation, with quality and irresistible



aromas, removing its raw material from nature always striving for the preservation and future of the generations of the Amazon Biome. Thus, it develops a community-based work with Rural Women, combining plant extractives with the recovery of areas, previously degraded, in recovered and productive areas, generating income, development, empowerment and a certainty that sustainability can be achieved.

Sustainability is a term widely used today and is defined as "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs", that is, a way to ensure the perpetuation of the human species and everything that is necessary to keep us alive.

Sustainability asks us to look around and see beyond our desires and covetousness, the balance that must exist between developing our livelihoods and maintaining the source of all the raw materials we use to carry out this development.

To be sustainable it is not enough to know how to preserve a forest, but also to use its resources in order to benefit those who consume it without causing ecological damage from where the product was removed. To be sustainable is to know how to respect the existence of humans, plants and animals in a balance necessary for the world to develop and maintain.

2. Can you tell us your journey, how did you decide to be a social entrepreneur rather than the traditional way?

The journey of social entrepreneurship begins in making a project that brings the solution of a collective that in our case applies on the tripod, where we act in a way that sustained rural development can be sustained through the mobilization of rural female entrepreneurship and also the valorization of the regional productive chain generating a circle of benefits to rural communities when adding economic value to assets of amazonian biodiversity and in this way enables a model of keeping the forest standing and profitable.



The choice of this model of undertaking in a social rather than the traditional way, is so that we can leave a legacy making a transformation and that this can also bring benefits, not only the generation of the now but also for the generations of the future.



3. What kind of skill does the social entrepreneur need to perform when he decides to start his journey?

When it comes to the kind of skill that the social entrepreneur needs to perform when he decides to start the journey, I understand that it is leadership, so he must be a leader to lead this idea and validate it in the sense that everyone can have benefits and thus be even replicated the idea. If a good idea is validated and it can be replicated is a guarantee that this action on your business in your enterprise, it will make a difference in multiple locations.

4. But what kind of need and skill do you need to start your own entrepreneurship? What can an entrepreneur do about a problem and a difficult situation?

The ability that the entrepreneur needs to start this entrepreneurship is to have knowledge of the business to be implemented, because this will facilitate the management of this enterprise and thus, he can act effectively when encountering a problem and this problem become a solution.

In our specific case the main dimensions of knowledge and skills are associated to the Environmental Awareness, Empowerment of Rural Women, Valorization of the Regional Productive Chain, to add economic value to Buriti and Babaçu Palmtrees.

5. Did you get support when trying to start your company, some foundation that got you at the beginning used your own source as a final financial effect?

To start in the company there was no incentive and was done by all the disbursement initially, with own resources with the growth of the business is that were creating connections and people supported, were making partnerships and effecting, but the first, the moment, the kickoff was given by us.

6. What do you think about support and continued support for social entrepreneurship? How do you like it in the regional, national, and international perspective?

What I think about continued support for social entrepreneurship is that public policies should be a different look. Some solutions they are mostly doing the role of the state itself. And even if it is not exercised by the State itself. All social entrepreneurship he carries there in his bulge a result that is always going to generate positive aspects in the inserted ecosystem.

7. What were the main challenges and how did you overcome them?

The main challenges were in the financial sense, precisely because it did not have the necessary financial contribution. In relation to the need for initial investment, this slowed down, it is up to the market entry and to overcome all these challenges, it was necessary imbue with strength, will, determination, focus, perseverance. So, persistence was a constancy in our trajectory and that's what made us and makes us move forward.

Challenges exist and we must overcome them. This overcoming, it can come in various ways, so with the support of other organizations of people who also adopt this idea and start to contribute. This contribution, it can come through a simple way of being publicizing the business. In particular, I understand that the business model that we do, it can be replicated to several other companies regardless of the product, that is, not necessarily that it is Cosmetics Producing Industry, but this model can be applied, for example, in another community where it may be working products derived from milk or organic products. Anyway, several other products that may also be doing all this mobilization as our business model today is acts.

8. Have you received support from other social enterprises?

For a period, as already mentioned there was not, but we received support yes, through mentoring and learning workshops, opportunity of knowledge and bring visibility to your idea. But as I mentioned earlier, socially undertaking requires a lot of persistence and a willingness to really make a difference. It's hard work, but it brings gratifying strength there in knowing that you've been able to mobilize, to change, to make a difference at some point.

9- What would be your advice to newcomers?

The advice I have for newcomers is that you can. And I always open all my speeches saying this: believing is always the first step. You believe and you go in search and that's how it all materializes. So, focus, determination, gradually you're also going to be that transformation agent you can and you're capable of.



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France

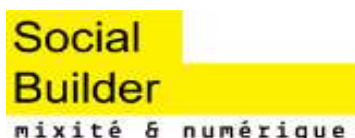
AN INSPIRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CASE STUDY

Social Builder, France



Emmanuelle Larroque founded Social Builder, a social enterprise whose mission is to achieve equality and diversity in a digital world. The organization works on 3 pillars: create the conditions for a culture of equality, develop women's skills to become leaders, and give tools for people to become changemakers themselves for an inclusive digital world.

Social Builder has trained 35,000 women in leadership, digital and entrepreneurship skills since 2011. It partners especially with Facebook around bootcamps bringing together up to 2000 women.



Social Builder carries an Innovation Lab that incubates tech4good projects such as Adabot, a chatbot that will help 100 000 women enter the tech industry in 3 years.

Fatma: Can you tell us your journey, how you decided to be a social entrepreneur rather than the traditional way?

Emmanuelle: So thank you for this interview. I started 11 years ago to build the Social Builder, that is empowering women in the digital economy. I've always had creative projects. And, you know, being an entrepreneur is not only creating a company, but you know, I created a nonprofit, and I really was involved in different kinds of projects really trying to shape solutions. And 11 years ago, when I was wondering, what would be my next step, to have an impact, I was either going to work for the United Nation, or for a campus, you know, for education. And I was really, I really asked myself what I wanted to have an impact on. And I decided that it was for gender equality that I wanted to fight for. And then at that time, when I was looking at the ecosystem, who was working on that kind of issue, there was very seldom organization, there were more traditional nonprofits, but not very startup minded with high objectives and maybe an objective for disseminating all over the world. And so I decided that it was my time also to try to shape something new, with that kind of ambition. So I started from scratch. And we're 40 People now, with an impact of more than 7000 women already that have supported, doing lobbying, also, in France, for women empowerment in the tech industry. And, and I think it's, so it's a long journey. But it makes total sense, once you want to create something new, to have. And to have an impact to really use the, I would say the tools of entrepreneurship, to kind of reshape the way we are supporting and changing the dynamics for social impact.

Fatma: Thank you so much. It's really amazing, inspiring to know about your journey. What kind of skill the social entrepreneur needs to run, when they decide to start their journey?

Emmanuelle: From my experience, and also looking at other social entrepreneurs, the first thing is really, very being very pragmatic. I think that what we need are solutions, and to build new ways of supporting people or looking at problems differently, or also offering governments or companies new ways of challenging or targeting or supporting an issue. It really requires people to, to be pragmatic,

we need to look at problems, look at problems, look at problems, and then reshape the ones the way we address those problems. So that would be the first thing. The other thing is to be a pragmatic problem solver. We need really to, to not only talk, but really try to find new ways of communicating or addressing issues of engineering things. So yeah, that's another problem problem solving. And I think also, working with different stakeholders is really partnership building, we address issues of magnificent scale, that really need for people to really work together. That's the most challenging part. So being really looking at who can bring what's as part of the solution and how I can really complement this or work with them, or help them work differently. So it's really a lot of humility, a lot of empathy and a lot of you know, finding a good way of interacting with other stakeholders. And that's pretty much it. And of course, the last skill is being resilient.

Fatma: But what kind of need and skill do you need to start your own entrepreneurship? What can an entrepreneur do against a problem and some difficult situation? What kind of skill do you think you should have that okay, I need to improve my skill in this field?

Emmanuella: I think as any entrepreneur, we need to kill the HR skill, the management skills. So I think what is very important is to know how to make people work together with the budget constraints, constraints, and the people who join our organizations, they are very dedicated to have an impact. And as any other organization that may be more in social entrepreneurship, you need to have very good management and organization skills so that people can feel that they have an impact. And at the same time that they're working in an environment that is structured that can bring the right information and where they can have, you know, value. So our main skill and I think peer to peer learning is very important.

Fatma: Did you get support while trying to start your company, any foundation you get at the beginning or you use your own source as a final financial effect?

Emmanuella: So at the start of the first year, we were selling our services to women directly. And then after year three, we started to have support from private companies. They were actually buying certain services, or the government through subsidiaries. And around five to six years after the start, we started to be very attractive for foundations and international organizations that have had foundations. And with time we are actually getting more interested in the bigger, bigger foundation.

Fatma: What do you think about support and ongoing support for social entrepreneurship? How do you compare it to other European countries or just demand the regional perspective or the International? Are the government's supporter to develop the social entrepreneurship in France actually like to think about that the government support is support in interesting only process or they support also in same time the monitoring and guidance or how is the politics before social?

Emmanuella: So, the ecosystem of the robotic social attributes thing has gotten stronger in the past couple of years. There is impact hubs which is a an organization that is more likely to not only social entrepreneurship, but impact organization that is providing kind of a moral lobbying, that helps you know, explain what difficulties we are going through as far as capturing funding constraints, you know, building the organization with the constraints we have or that also try to get more positive conditions to access public contracts. For example, we have also University of Management schools like a sec or HEC, they have specific program for social entrepreneurs that are free and accessible at

different time of their gross benefited from the support of Autopia on topia, which is one of the main ecosystem where main actor to accelerate impact and social impact are in addition, there are other actors like Ashoka or other organization with that gift prices. I would say that what is lacking the most is financing. We have a very few organizations. We have one that is called perspective that gives credits or subsidies to a social entrepreneur, but it's not enough to cover the needs.

Fatma: What were the main obstacles and how did you overcome the obstacles?

Emmanuella: The main obstacle was first to really understand what was the need that I wanted to address. So the first thing was really understanding the problem. Then, the other obstacle was getting my message out there meaning like when nobody knows you, and nobody trusts that, you know, we can change the rules or create something new. So it took a long time for us to be taken seriously. So that's the other obstacle. And the third obstacle is to work with very, very small resources. At a time when you need to communicate a lot you need to do to build a strong solution. And if you don't have money to pay nobody. To overcome the problem, the first thing that I did was to personally contribute my own money to the project. The other thing is I tried to knock at a lot of doors, talking to everybody about the project, and see who was interested in supporting it in one way or another. So I did a lot of outreach to people and my philosophy was talk to anyone about what you're doing, and there will be people coming in to you for more information. And the third thing is, I spent quite a lot of time learning by myself about all the other issues that I was going through, you know, from creating my own website to facilitating group exchange and training myself coaching. And so I spend a lot of time learning to be able to handle any kind of jobs that need to be done, and to be able to recruit better people. And that's pretty much it.

Fatma: Did you get support from other social entrepreneurs?

Emmanuella: I didn't have much but from social entrepreneurs, because I didn't know so many of them. So I had support from other entrepreneurs who gave me information and access to networks so that I could, you know, figure out things or capture, support, money, monetary support. And I started to have peer to peer learning from other social entrepreneurs three years ago. So six, eight years after the creation of the organization, when I was introduced to a group that was content. It's a pure learning group. For social entrepreneurs, and that was a very, very interesting way of, of, you know, learning. But before that, it took quite a while.

Fatma: What would be your advice for the newcomers?

Emmanuella: So the suggestion for newcomers is to talk to anyone about your idea, I think it's very important people can get very private about their ideas. And it's really pushing ideas into the world that helps to have feedback. I would say try to get into programs that help entrepreneurs, whether it's social entrepreneurs or not, to meet other entrepreneurs very rapidly. And because the program is often connected to a source of financing, whether its foundation or you know, so it's very important to be seen, and those actors, ecosystem, you know, accelerators, their job is really to identify entrepreneurs and support them. And the third thing that I would say is, is to think it's very important to find some people who will support you when it's difficult. And it could be a partner, your partner, it could be your kids, it could be an aunt or friends, I think it's very important to identify very rapidly

people who will cheer you up. When, when you are in, in, you know, in the difficult times, so that you don't give up.

Fatma: Thank you so much for taking your time to tell your story for us and for the entrepreneurs yet to come. It was really inspiring to have a conversation with you.

Emmanuella: You're welcome.



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<https://inspire-eu.com/EN/>



Ireland



AN INSPIRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CASE STUDY

Mother Tongues, Ireland

Mother Tongues is a social enterprise working to promote multilingualism and intercultural dialogue in Ireland, sharing positive and inspiring messages about bilingualism with parents and empowering parents and children to embrace their mother tongue using creative, arts-based approaches (<https://mothertongues.ie/>).

Dr Peter Totterdill interviews the founder of Mother Tongues, Francesca La Morgia.



Peter *Can you tell me about Mother Tongues and what it does?*

Francesca I founded Mother Tongues in 2017 in Dublin. My background is linguistics so I spent the majority of my career training teachers and speech and language therapists to understand how bilingual children develop two languages simultaneously.

And I found not only a lack of understanding but also a lot of concerns around how to raise bilingual children, how to educate them. There's always been quite a negative attitude towards people who speak more than one language. So, no one is going to tell you, "oh, you shouldn't be speaking English to your children" anywhere else in Europe, but the minute you are speaking say, Polish, Lithuanian, Swahili or Urdu in an English-speaking country, there is a little bit of misunderstanding, a concern that the child may not fully develop English properly and may not be able to socialise and interact.

I found both in the UK and in Ireland that parents were consistently told not to speak their own language to their children, and were told that they should prioritise English. Not only were parents not speaking their language to their children, but were sometimes doing it and feeling guilty about it. And feeling that they were doing damage to their children rather than giving their children a gift.

So that's how Mother Tongues really started, a space to give talks about the topic, to talk to parents. Some were European, some were non-European, mostly parents of under 5s because that's the stage of life when you are most concerned about what's going to happen to your child and when children start to talk.

And then, suddenly, we started to bring this conversation into the classroom. We started to bring in teachers and early childhood educators together with parents and their children in situations where they could speak their own language together. Surprisingly the parents told us that it was the first time they had spoken their language outside the home. Usually, it is "English everywhere and my own language only at home". But it doesn't need to be this way.

Peter *So what does success look like in terms of outcomes for the children and families?*

Francesca For parents I think the biggest success is their confidence, reinforcing the idea that their identity matters and that their language matters, and that they don't need to break with their heritage. What it means for grandparents is that they can speak to their grandchildren, as simple as that. We know what the lack of success means when we see 17/18 year-olds saying, "well I was never taught the language of my parents so I was never able to visit my family because they don't speak English."

As we work in Ireland, we cannot forget the Irish language. Only recently, an Irish speaker and a strong advocate for the Irish language told me, "I look at your resources because they keep me going, they keep me motivated". She's struggling to keep up the Irish in her home because her partner is an English speaker. So it's not only an issue that concerns migrants, it's something that concerns quite a lot of people in Ireland. There are more than 200 languages spoken in Ireland and 20% of children speak more than one language, so it's not a rare occurrence, it's the reality we live in.

Peter *Tell me more about how you're working in schools and with groups of families.*

Francesca It's normally either in the classroom - bringing artists to visit the classroom for multilingual activities - or we invite parents from the local community to South Dublin where our office is based. Now we are running sessions in the library, and parents come from all different language backgrounds. There is an artist who facilitates the story telling and the interactions. All the families of course interact with each other in English, which is perfect. But they also speak their own language to their child. It's not rude if you speak your language to your child and no one else understands, because we will find other ways to understand each other.

Peter *Do you play a role in advocacy with public authorities and other actors?*

Francesca Yes, for example we work with Languages Connect, which is the government's initiative to make sure that all Irish people come out of secondary school knowing two languages like all other Europeans. So, it's your mother tongue plus two other languages. There's been a big drive on language learning - we obviously don't do language learning but we advocate 'heritage languages', what we call the languages that the parents pass to their children.

We also advocate weekend schools where children go and learn Polish, Lithuanian and Greek. We had a podcast with [RT Junior](#) which showcases stories of families around Ireland who speak different languages, the teachers who find themselves in this multilingual community of students, and also the weekend schools.

Peter *You've been describing an amazing range of activities Francesca. But you've given up a successful academic career. That must have been quite a transition for you.*

Francesca It was like a slow death. It wasn't a sudden decision; it was progressive over about 8 years, reducing and reducing and reducing my work at the university. I never really saw myself as a business person and still don't. I see myself as someone who likes to think of new ideas and collaborate with people. Thinking of myself at the ages of 50, 60, 70 and comparing the university route with the Mother Tongues route - I just couldn't see myself on the academic route in the next 20 or 30 years in terms of what I want to achieve as a person.

Peter *Because the university structure wouldn't allow you to do what you wanted to do?*

Francesca No. This is not to criticise the university, it is the way it is. Thinking about spending time on a publication, I do understand the importance of sharing knowledge but I realised I have another way of sharing knowledge - sitting in a big room full of people.

The truth is, that there is very little you can do as an academic. You can publish research, but for me it's more meaningful to work directly with the children and their parents affected by this problem.

I could see change happening immediately through Mother Tongues, which is not what I saw in my university work. I had academic colleagues who were clinicians, so they could really see themselves making a difference to children on a regular basis and that's what kept them at the university, pairing up research with practice. But for my kind of work, it's very academic, it's very theoretical. I felt after a while that I preferred to be with children, to speak to the parents, to measure the changes and to drive something that keeps me motivated and passionate.

The one thing that I miss is the students and the teaching.

Quite a lot of people ask me about the economic uncertainty that comes with it. Of course, there's the prestige that an academic roll might have but it's also the solid stability that a full-time permanent job gives you that a social enterprise with one and a half people doesn't.

Peter *So you've managed that transition. You say that you are not a business person, but you clearly have entrepreneurial skills. How would you describe the skills that you've needed to create Mother Tongues from scratch?*

Francesca It's the drive. And it's not only motivation, I would almost call it a competitive feeling that I get when I see a call for funding, I am up for it, I am going for this. So maybe the vision gets blurred every now and again, but I have something that tells me, "keep going in that direction and you will change things a little by little".

What I lacked from the very beginning was knowledge of anything financial because I always worked for other people and had my pay cheque at the end of the month since I was 22. I found myself asking "what's tax? what's company registration?"

The other side that was never spelt out to me in the academic world was leadership, because you are always expected to be doing things independently in the university. Yes, you collaborate but you are very much a sole trader for a lot of the time. I always had my own office and my own duties, and I went about in my own world carrying my own agenda. You lecture on your own, so you are developing leadership skills. I had leadership roles, managerial roles but I never thought they would also be roles that would transfer to the real world. And that's something to be said for university work, because when I started to say, "I cannot manage a company because I never managed a company" then I thought "okay, but I managed classes of 150, I managed entire courses and modules, I managed parents coming in with their big children, I ran conferences, I ran events".

These are skills that you develop and take for granted. But they are really useful in the world of social enterprise, especially Mother Tongues. I think what was missing for me was feeling that I was an entrepreneur. And I don't know why I thought I wasn't, because when I spoke to people they said "people trust you, people follow your advice".

Peter *Which specific knowledge and skills did you have to acquire during this journey?*

Francesca Governance. Financial compliance and all that kind of stuff. Managing other people of course. Being responsible for an organisation, for everything that happens to it, but also being responsible for other people. During Covid for example, making decisions at the level of saying, "Are we opening or are we closing? Are we allowing families or are we not?" What

about people wanting to work from home, certain decisions that are core to the management of the company I would never have had to do before.

And giving feedback to other people. You are the person they are relying on for feedback on how they are getting on and for reviewing their work in a positive way. There is a lot of emotion, it's reviewing a person who has a life and a family and a job.

Communicating, introducing myself properly, it doesn't come naturally to me and I just need to practice. It was the most difficult thing for me to be sitting in front of someone who is a potential funder and tell them what I am doing and why I need the money.

Peter *Looking at your website, you have built an impressive team of people. How did you bring these people together? How did you have to sell the idea?*

Francesca From the point of view of the Board, some of the people were personal contacts who were just pushing together to get Mother Tongues started. None of the Board are paid.

And then we went through job ads, and we interviewed for the last three roles. It works so much better. I am all for recruiting non-friends and bringing new perspectives. For staff, Elena helped set up Mother Tongues and came on board six months into it. She came in mostly to support the website but is one of those people who just learns, she would do a course every couple of months to learn new skills. Now she can do finance and management, she is a life-long learner. We now have a proper recruitment process.



Peter *What's the relationship between the Board and the Executive Team?*

Francesca Some of the Board members are in an advisory role, some are more executive. It's a one-year-old Board and 3 executives were hired before Christmas 2021. What we have done since November is to establish procedures, governance and communication, from sharing information to making decisions and so on.

We have also undergone a strategic review, potentially to get funding, but also to look at removing some of the things that we are doing. The three of us work many, many hours, and it's not really the way forward. We need to focus on the key things. The Board was involved with this process from the start, and they've become much more engaged than a few months back.

We consult the Chair, the Secretary, the Treasurer, and there's a frequent discourse or conversation. With the others, they might be asked to do certain things, or ad hoc there might be a moment where we need to review something and they are called upon for their expertise. They are all really, really knowledgeable and well connected, so it is fantastic.

I wish I had one other person harnessing the power of the Board because my time is limited as Director, and I also have to deliver the programmes.

Peter *How has your role changed as the business developed?*

Francesca At the start it was very much based on emotion. We discovered another library looking at the issue so let's get on board. Now, especially as there are other people involved, you have to respect yourself but also respect other people. That's where the strategic review is really helpful because we can say, "what is our goal? does this address our goals?" We have a procedure for deciding whether we are going or not going for a grant. And it has to meet every single one of our criteria otherwise that job is not going to be taken on.

But this has only been happening for the last six months. It's been a slow weaning off me deciding "yes let's do this". It's more of a collective decision based on checklist which is not something I invented on my own. This is not visible on the website, where it might seem that we do a million things. But in six months' time, when we have everything organised and a lot of projects have been put aside, it will be much clearer - not only to ourselves but also to the other people that we are really trying to focus on, the families. It's very important to realise that this is not just my company, and that's why I made it into a not-for-profit and a charity. Everything is in place for someone else to take over if something happens.



Peter *How do you manage the balance between working with clients and running the business?*

Francesca It could be 40:60, I'd say. We are doing timesheets a bit better this year. Since Soraya went full time, I am not going into the classroom, so I can also help with the strategic review and put the procedures in place. I think it's something that is slowly developing into a more sustainable model.

Peter *Interesting. Back to beginning, who did you first talk to, go to for help when you have the idea for setting up a social enterprise.*

Francesca My father-in-law, who is a business man. In my family no one is a business person, so I didn't know who to call. He's Irish as well, so I had a lot of questions.

Peter Did you go to any of the support agencies?

Francesca First, I joined [The Wheel](#) [a network organisation for charities]. Then I went to the Dublin LEO [Local Enterprise Office]. I had a mentor for a period of time, maybe six months. Then because we are based in South Dublin, I went to South Dublin LEO which is a different organisation, and from here I got financial support for a website.

But in terms of setting up, I think it was mainly attending training with The Wheel, and mentoring from South Dublin City Partnership. I took up quite a lot of hours of mentoring in communication, grant applications, and financial management. That was really useful.

And I have been on a programme with [Social Enterprise Ireland](#) this year.

Peter *How useful is the Social Enterprise Ireland programme?*

Francesca Really useful. I applied already a couple of years ago, but this year I had a much clearer idea of what I was doing. I suppose having Sophie from SEI to speak to has been really useful, and having a programme that is tailored to the needs of the organisation. It's not only the

knowledge that you develop but it gives you what you need in the specific moment. The governance support I got was specifically because I wanted to set up a system, looking at corporate sponsors and how to liaise with them, and they identified the right person to talk to. This is stuff I would never have been able to find out on my own.

Peter *You mentioned the initial funding for the website. Were there any other start-up costs that you had to meet?*

Francesca We generated income from the beginning. Even when it was just myself and Elena, the talks and training covered a lot of the day-to-day costs, and we didn't have an office. Then we started to get grants, really small pots of money, seven or eight hundred Euros. But that was enough because I was volunteering. I started to be employed since July last year, which means I volunteered for about three years. I only left the university last summer.

Peter *What were the main obstacles you had to overcome?*

Francesca The uncertainty. The financial instability also comes with not knowing if your idea is really good or not. And thinking that maybe this is just all in your mind and it's not going to work.

The other barrier might be more linked to this as well, because of the lack of stability we may have taken on projects that were not exactly relevant to our mission. And that also made me doubt whether I am really good at this. Or am I making it up as I go along? It took a lot of thinking to realise that this was just the interim process and we needed to accept things that maybe we won't accept now.

An example of this is in the pandemic when we were asked to teach language classes for second generation children. We want children to speak the language of their parents, but we never set out to be a language school. But during the pandemic, when we had no funding and no projects and couldn't see anybody, there were a lot of families who wanted their children to be entertained and to learn their language, and there was a lot of isolation, so why not do that? We then had to sit down six months ago and say, "this is not what we set out to do", so we stopped.

Maybe the other barrier was understanding how to speak to people who have never had the experience of growing up with two languages, to explain the problem and why it can lead to a missed opportunity for the child. Social Enterprise Ireland helped with that, with the confidence in saying, "actually I can show that this is a really important issue not just for families but for society as a whole".



Peter *If you rely mostly on grant funding, the money is typically focussed on tangible deliverables meaning that you don't get much margin for organisational development or core costs. How do you manage that?*

Francesca For ourselves, we know that if we don't get core funding we won't survive. We are exploring the potential of going through The Arts Council or to the local authority as a core funder. It's taking us a long time to build our profile, and to build trust through volunteers to get the funding. Finding out about funding information is not straight forward.

Peter *How much were you able to draw on the experience of other Social Enterprises or not-for-profit organisations to support you and help you overcome problems?*

Francesca At the beginning, the opportunity was really not there, other than having attended one or two talks. More recently, there are two Social Enterprises that I have been in touch with, and we sometimes ask each other the very basic questions. They are based in different parts of the country but at least we are there for each other and it has helped. They both work around migration, so I feel there is a bigger connection there.

I went to one of The Wheel networking events and didn't find that suitable for me. I felt I was so pressed for so many other things that I didn't even know how to use the help of others. It was too soon for me, I think.

If I was going to networking events now, I would like them to be focussed on learning from each other about something like finance or communication rather than just for the sake of getting to know each other.

Peter *How do you measure the social impact of Mother Tongues?*

Francesca We have surveys that we do after every training and after every webinar. For the festival and the families programme we also do interviews with the families and case studies. This way it gives us a sense more or less of what has changed. We ask teachers to tell us what they are going to put into practice that they didn't do before, and then we call them six months later to see if they have done anything differently because of the training or webinar.

Peter *How do you use the results of that feedback?*

Francesca At the moment, it's for the annual reports. Some of those kind words we use across lots of different places. In the festival report published yesterday, we have a lot of quotes from attendees so we are going to use them in different places such as reports and on the website.

Peter *If you could give one piece of advice to somebody thinking about setting up a Social Enterprise, what would it be?*

Francesca I had someone in my office who was trying to set up a Social Enterprise so I'm trying to think what I said to her. There is something about the passion aspect. That's a very important piece because anybody I've met who has set up a Social Enterprise was motivated by a personal problem or a personal passion. They started off like me, volunteering a lot and not thinking very strategically or very much about finance, because you just love what you do. The only piece of advice I would give is "okay, can you just quantify your input, can you put a price on your work?" But I said to her, "don't listen to me, I am not your advisor because I didn't do it for myself, but if I started again, that is what I would do".

Peter *Thank you, Francesca. Your passion and your entrepreneurship are truly inspirational!*

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AN INSPIRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CASE STUDY

The Rediscovery Centre Ireland

The Rediscovery Centre is a social enterprise in the Ballymun area of North Dublin, working to promote the circular economy through the creation of socially useful employment, education and training opportunities, and research (www.rediscoverycentre.ie/).

Dr Peter Totterdill interviews Claire Downey, the Centre's Director of Policy & Research.



Peter *Good to meet you, Claire. Could we start with a short description of the Centre?*

Claire The Centre is a Social Enterprise born from the regeneration of the Ballymun area in North Dublin. When the flats in Ballymun were knocked down, there was a move to provide environmental education and job opportunities in the area with the redevelopment. The Ballymun Regeneration Programme was focused on the social, environmental and economic triple bottom line redevelopment of the area. That would have been 17 years ago.

Rediscover Furniture, a Social Enterprise, was the first project. As people were moving out of the flats, they were getting rid of so much furniture, and the first initiative was to say, "can we do anything else with this?" While also providing jobs, it was trying to find ways to minimise the impact of the regeneration project itself. That's really where it all came from. Very much rooted in the community.

A number of other Social Enterprises were set up including Rediscover Fashion, Rediscover Bikes and Rediscover Paints, so all working to repair and reuse those different products, and to provide jobs and training opportunities for people in the local area.

Much later, the Boiler House that used to provide district heating to the flats was due to be demolished. The Boiler House is a well-known building, it's quite iconic. With European Funding and Dublin City Council support, the Rediscovery Centre was able to completely redevelop that

building and turn it into a National Centre of Excellence demonstrating circular economy principles. That's now the headquarters and meeting place for all four Social Enterprises, and it's a visitor centre as well.

For quite a long time there were units scattered around Ballymun until the Boiler House opened in 2017, and then they all came together in the one place. Still providing jobs, still with a very strong local community focus, but now with a national remit thanks to the partnerships that we have.



We have an education arm, providing workshops for schools at primary and secondary level, and we are trying to get the circular economy onto the curriculum. Also, we have on-the-job training for those participants in the Social Enterprises and the different community employment programmes. We have a demonstration element in the Centre, and the Social Enterprises provide demonstration workshops to people.

One key activity that we have is called the Circular Economy Academy. We support new Social Enterprises to get off the ground around the country. It's a one-to-one mentoring programme for six months or a year for any organisation wanting to participate, and we help them plan new activities or start up something in this space, either replicating the models we already have or creating something completely different in the circular economy. That's the kind of space that we work in.

We also work on policy advocacy, doing research to support policy development particularly in the circular economy and Social Enterprise areas.

Rediscover Furniture



Our funding model is split roughly fifty-fifty between earned income and grants. We have a partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency that supports the Academy as well as other pieces of work with them. We have a partnership with Science Foundation Ireland to deliver the education modules, and we have a partnership with Dublin City Council for our local reach, the local community space. There are national and local level partnerships, and then we collaborate with European entities on social issues and the circular economy. Reuse Network Europe is a Social Enterprise network for those in this space and there's the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform.

Peter *That's quite an impressive story. How many people does the Centre employ now?*

Claire There are around 22 full time employees and another 20 on different community programmes. A new Community Services Programme scheme on bikes has seen quite a few new employees come on board. It is growing quite fast, and especially over the last years of lockdown we have been very fortunate to have made these partnerships, and to provide services that allow us to grow.

Peter *Are you actively targeting people from the local community for jobs?*

Claire Yes. It depends on the role of course. Different roles, different skills levels. A lot of front of house staff in the café and shop, and people in the workshops themselves, textiles, furniture and bikes, all of those are very much connected with local organisations that manage community employment schemes. For the other roles requiring different skills levels, they are advertised nationally, but of course if people are from Ballymun all the better.

Peter *Ballymun remains a disadvantaged area?*

Claire Significantly so. There are pockets of up to 50% unemployment among young males, so it is still highly disadvantaged in parts.

- Peter *Which types of training and support do local people need when they are recruited?*
- Claire People may have different approaches to work time, hours and reliability, so there's always more HR challenges than average because you are working with people who haven't been in employment, or don't see the benefits of employment as opposed to being on unemployment benefit. It is a challenge.
- There is a full induction programme and we are working on professional development all the time. In the workshops, training is quite structured because you are passing on mechanical and sewing skills.
- Peter *One of the most impressive aspects is how the Centre has managed to grow so consistently over 17 years when many Social Enterprises never achieve significant growth.*
- Claire Much of the growth has been around the Centre itself and in the four Social Enterprises, although they are not separate, just one organisation. I suppose the game changer has been getting the European funding for the Boiler House and the staffing. And then behind that we landed the national level partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency to provide services or advocacy work around the circular economy. It's the diversification of income sources that helps keep the other programmes going.
- So, certainly, it is very challenging. I suppose what's evolved is the thinking about how much emphasis there should be on earned income, trying to make the Social Enterprises pay their own way. If you really push Social Enterprises like these to make money, then you can't put as much time into training and development. And so the decision was taken that training and development were far more important than making the Social Enterprises profitable. That's where that fifty-fifty balance came in, so what we try and do is to get partnership agreements and other income for the Centre to support that work.
- Peter *But isn't there a problem with reliance on grant funding because it's something of a treadmill – continually having to apply for new funds? And because grant funding offers very little margin to cover developmental costs.*
- Claire Yes. For example, part of the funding for the Social Enterprises comes from labour subsidies labour from Dublin City Council's regeneration programme. There is still funding for Ballymun's regeneration because it is still a very disadvantaged area. That has continued over a number of years but local authority funding is closely watched at the moment, and has been cut and will continue to be cut in the coming years. So as a Centre we are asking, "what else can we do? what other options are there?"



Fortunately, in the bike workshop, we were able to secure a partnership, a three-year Community Services Programme to deliver refurbished bikes to families and individuals who can't afford bikes. Some are going to Ukrainian refugees, some to the local area youth clubs and so on who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford bikes. So that programme is supporting the new placements that I mentioned. And through that programme we are also able now to develop accreditation for the bike mechanics. So, more than just delivering a bunch of refurbished bikes and employing a few more people, those programmes can be really beneficial in other ways.

Peter *Do you have people who are permanently involved in writing bids for project funding?*

Claire No. The policy and research team, my team, works with one or two others in the Centre on grant writing. It's falling into our area. But when there is a big programme, everyone pitches in and does their best, it works sometimes.

Peter *How would you describe the leadership structure?*

Claire We have an Executive Team in the centre led by the CEO. The Centre Director manages all the front of house activities, tours and all of the visitor experience. The Programmes Director manages the Social Enterprise workshops and the education offerings, and then I'm the Research and Policy Director. And then we have a wrap-around team for marketing and strategic projects. It's all kind of new and evolving, we have been growing so fast. You are always trying to find the ideal set up, but that is how it's working at the moment. We have regular group meetings throughout the week as well. There's so many things going on, so we need to keep connected.

Peter *I can understand the challenge. So how do you make the whole greater than the sum of the parts? Isn't there a temptation for people to work in their own silos?*

Claire Yes. The Executive is important, we meet regularly. Since October last year we started to develop a full strategic plan, up until then, there had just been partial plans. But the new strategic plan really helps to focus everybody on what we are supposed to be doing. You are a Social Enterprise, you have all the social impact as well the environmental impact to bear in mind. There is so much you could be doing and the strategic plan helps us to focus all the time. Discipline on the work plans, discipline on how we measure true effectiveness and not just counting numbers. All of those things are emerging from this process, so it's still quite new, but hopefully will be better and bigger next year with the benefit of the strategic plan.

Peter *As well as measuring the effectiveness of projects for funders, do you have an overall measure of social impact?*

Claire Yes that's the aim of the plan, to have that bigger picture in mind, and we are working on the metrics at the moment. We are going through the process with Social Impact Ireland to achieve the Social Enterprise mark. With that, we will be more structured in measuring and recording social impact as well.



Peter *This might be a difficult question, but how would you describe the most important skills and attributes of the leadership team?*

Claire Our CEO Sarah has incredible vision, she is strategically capable and has been able to navigate very, very, very difficult and complex waters for the past 17 years, from the initial concept to this incredible Centre. There's no question that this is down to the CEO's vision and her strategic approach. Then you have a Centre Director who is extremely capable at operations and keeping the focus on the community, and we have a Programmes Manager who's very mindful of social impact and runs five programmes - an extremely big workload – and is able to juggle an awful lot of priorities at once. There is myself, I bring a policy angle to things, trying to tie everything into the bigger picture and make sure we are aligned and able to both inform and avail of the policy and funding trends.

Peter *I'd like to know more about the Academy, and why you felt there was a gap that needed filling in the Social Enterprise support system.*

Claire This was an initiative of the CEO. She felt that projects in the recycling, repair, reuse area are not easily profit-making or viable businesses at the moment. While there is a big push at national level, and bits of project funding here and there, there isn't really a clear pathway to setting up new activity. Generally Social Enterprise is the model that works because these types of activities are all labour intensive, so they lend to providing new training and job opportunities to people.

What was apparent in this niche area is that you need support and hand holding just to get over those initial barriers, and to find the model that's going to take off. The Academy provides quite tailored support, so it's not just bog-standard workshops with slide shows. Each participant, and there are ten in the programme in a year, will assess where they are currently and what they need to get to the next phase through tailored mentoring. Some might be at a very early stage – 'what type of model, business model shall we go with? where is the funding?' Others might have a very specific growth plan, and we can support their business planning, point them to models we've seen work elsewhere, show them where the funding is, and how they can move into that phase. And peer-to-peer support as well. It's a mix of supports, but very much tailored and one-to-one.

Peter *What is the percentage of people going through the Academy that eventually set up a successful social enterprise?*

Claire This is only the second academy so far. From the last one, it was higher than fifty per cent. One thing we did notice, one very popular replicable model was paint reuse activities. You take surplus paint, blend it, add colour and sell it back. And there are now six new paint reuse

activities that weren't there or wouldn't have set up without the Academy - three or four of those came through the Academy and a few more came afterwards. We were also given funding to set up a paint reuse network, and through the network we can give the same kind of guidance from start up to growth specifically for paint activities. In a way it grew new legs and a new network, and we have goals now to get more and more on board with that.

Peter *How effective is the government's Social Enterprise policy framework at present?*

Claire One big change we've noticed is that we are talking a lot more about circular economy. We've seen the circular economy identified as a key Social Enterprise activity in the policies, plans and other publications. And on the flip side we've seen more and more reference to Social Enterprise and its value in the circular economy. We've started to see those connections happen, so that's been really positive.

The third Social Enterprise policy goal was collaboration and policy integration across government and we've seen that quite a lot. The Department of Transport had some money to support sustainable mobility and they wanted to get more people on bikes, especially people who couldn't afford them, so they talked to the Department of Environment and the Department of Rural and Community Development. Through the Community Services Programme administered by DRCD they set up this bike up-cycling scheme. It provided for refurbishment of bikes, provision of bikes for people who can't afford them, training of trainees and working on the accreditation of mechanics. We've got three Departments involved in administering a big important fund - three years of multi-annual funding. It's fantastic to see, that's all happened since the Social Enterprise plan has come out.

We are also involved in raising awareness through the Arise Programme. We're making some videos on the value of Social Enterprises in the circular economy - we will be shouting about that, beating the same drum in an effort to communicate better about Social Enterprise.



Peter *Are there any recommendations you would make to government for filling gaps in the existing policy framework?*

Claire We were talking to OECD two weeks ago, they were doing a review of the strategy and found that there's still a little bit of an identity crisis for Social Enterprises. The model for registering as a Social Enterprise is just CLG [Company Limited by Guarantee] or charity status. That can come with down sides, particularly if you are a charity then you are not understood to be an actual business. You are seen to be more on the begging bowl side of funding than on earning income and trading. It excludes Social Enterprise from local enterprise support schemes.

The awareness piece will help with that and it is improving, I think Enterprise Ireland is starting to get it and to get support. We have no relationship with the Department of Enterprise, and that's strange when you think about it, that they are completely outside the Social Enterprise space. That's the main area we need to continue to work on.

Government procurement is very slow moving but we are seeing some good new projects there, for example the Probation Service has an excellent procurement strategy involving social clauses, so that's getting there.

Peter *Claire, that's been very helpful indeed. Thank you for sharing your experiences and insights.*

June 2022

Siule Eile, Ireland

Siul Eile is a social enterprise helping communities come together to form walking programmes, using the under-utilised local environment and developing a sustainable walking culture. It helps local communities to live quality, healthy lives, socialise together, and combat rural isolation (<https://siuleile.com/>).

Dr Peter Totterdill interviews Siul Eile's founder, Liam Fleming.



Peter *Liam, what is Siul Eile's main purpose?*

Liam Clogheen in County Tipperary is a lovely scenic area, mountains on one side, mountains on the other side. The big thing for me, being from here, was that I would go out walking and you would meet nobody. Occasionally you would meet the odd walking group from outside the area, but you would meet no locals. That's really what got me asking 'Why haven't the local people taken advantage of this?'

We did a programme of different walks every year as part of a national health improvement programme in Ireland, a lot of villages around the country would do them, generally one walk a week for eight weeks. That didn't sit right - walking once a week for eight weeks isn't really going to make a whole lot of difference to your life.

So I was looking for other initiatives. Our local GAA [Gaelic Athletic Association] club was looking for initiatives that weren't centred around football, so I came up with the 'Couch to Mountain Top Programme' with four walks a week over 12 weeks, each of them different. That was the kind of thinking behind my idea - to show off all these different walks in the area.

That got a great response from local people. I think 160 participated and they were amazed at all the different walking trails. We started them off by walking around the local football fields, nice flat walks. Each week, over the 12 weeks, we'd gradually build in hill walks and brought them up Galteemore, one of the highest mountains in Ireland.



It was great, they were amazed at all these walking trails that were there, but the feedback that I got was actually about the social side of it. They found it great, most of the walks were an hour to an hour and a half, just a good way of meeting up with the neighbours, getting out, getting a bit of exercise, catching up with the local news.

People came back for more because everything is moving online, local shops and local banks, all the local facilities are all slowly closing down - these are traditional social outlets and the opportunity to meet your neighbours is becoming less and less. The walks were a great way to catch up with everybody.

Peter *You attracted people from all sections of the community?*

Liam There would have been a cross section in the initial groups, but as it's developed, it's clear that there is one dominant section, females aged 45 to 65 are 80% of our participants.

At the end of 'Couch to Mountain Top', we got invited by [Social Impact Ireland](#) to do a Social Enterprise Incubation Programme for six months, and that's really where Siul Eile kicked off. We then got a contract with the local Sports Partnership to start rolling out to other communities in Tipperary. Over the last four or five years nine Siul Eile communities have been created throughout Tipperary.

We walk all throughout the year with something like 15/16 different walking programmes, so no matter what community we go into we can find two or three different programmes that would suit that community. There have been over 5,000 people participating in the Siul Eile walking programmes since we started spreading it out.

Peter *Why do you think your main client group is women in that 45 to 65 year age group?*

Liam I suppose women are more naturally social, so the social walk appeals to them. A lot of them, probably before 45, they are busy rearing families. By the time they reach that age their children are up to 10-13 and can look after themselves a bit better, and it gives them a bit more opportunity to come out and participate in other things. Women don't feel safe to walk on their own, especially going into the woods and places like that. The main reasons that people walked was it was safe, it was sociable, it was organised. It appeals to that cohort.

Peter *What's your background Liam, how did you get into this?*

Liam My background is that I went to college in Waterford and studied business studies. From there I went into the book making [betting] industry, the bookies, for ten years. I wanted a change so changed as a life coach and performance coach, and did that for three or four years until the Social Enterprise started to take off. and that's become my full time focus since 2016 or 17.

Peter *That's really interesting. What motivated you to make such a big career change?*

Liam Two things from my side. I have always been into the health and wellbeing benefits of walking. Where we are from, it's a scenic area but it wouldn't be on the tourist map. My other thing was putting this place on the tourist map.

One of the things that has come out of it, we developed a rhododendron walking festival over the June Bank Holiday weekend. That's been a huge success. With the pandemic, we haven't done it for the past two years, but in 2018 and 2019 over a thousand people came to participate. The area is beginning to be put on the map as a walking destination. At the weekends now, people are coming and hiking in the area, which is great to see. My own two things that motivated me, the health and wellbeing side for the community and then, I suppose, tourism.



Peter *You had support from the incubator programme - what did you actually gain from it?*

Liam It was totally new to me. I wouldn't have come across Social Enterprises before that, or understood them. It was done over two blocks, in the first block you just sit back and take it all in, don't make any decisions as to where you are going with it. That's what I did! The first block ran from September to December, and then we came back in January for the second block, to try and mould your idea into a social enterprise.

Anything that I have learned about social enterprise all would have come from that incubator programme, without that there wouldn't be a Siul Eile. I can't exactly remember my thinking at the time, but I imagine that I would have just been focussed on this area where I am from. Being on that incubator programme, the idea came to spread it out to other areas. That was a big game changer.

Peter *What about the business aspects, the finance side, marketing and so on? Did the incubator programme offer you help with that?*

Liam The marketing side especially, our logo and the marketing. Kasia was the marketing person and she still helps me out to this day. It's top class the marketing side of it. The financial side still is a struggle but we are making strides, it is progressing

Peter *How are you making money from this?*

Liam Tipperary Sports Partnership took us on to spread the walking programmes out to other communities. They pay us to go into a new community for an eight-week programme, and when the eight weeks is up, it's up to Siul Eile to keep it going. That initial fee is just to get it started in a community.

In Clogheen, where I am from, there's three national way marked trails, one is a 75-kilometre trail, one 56 kilometre and the other 95 kilometre. We put on walking events around those, we break them down into 10km or 20km sections, and 150 or 200 people will sign up and pay a fee. And then, during the pandemic, we did guided mountain top walks, and they were all paid walks. People pay for those, that's how we finance it.

Peter *In terms of your start-up costs, such as setting up a website, did you get any financial support?*

Liam We got support from a local agency for setting up the website. Tipperary Sports Partnership are a semi-government agency, their funds come from government and they helped set up the initial eight-week programmes. There wouldn't have been any other public funding received. At the back end of last year, [Rethink Ireland](#) took us on as one of 25 start-up organisations. We received funding from them, it was €9,000 in cash and €4,000 of business mentoring support.

Peter *That was a good level of support from Rethink Ireland.*

Liam That was great. I suppose what was a bit of a hurdle for me is that the best route to go down was to set up as a Designated Activity Company [DAC]. In Ireland the DACs aren't recognised as Social Enterprises - you have to be set up as a Company Limited by Guarantee. So it puts us off limits from some supports, but now they are changing the definition of Social Enterprise and DACs are coming in under it now.



Peter *If you were advising somebody setting up a Social Enterprise, what are the skills that you think they would need?*

Liam Perseverance, I know that! I suppose it's no different to any other business, there's no easy way of doing it. You are trying to juggle two things, the social impact you are having and then the business side. For me initially, right or wrong, I very much focussed on the social side for the first two to three years with very little focus on the business side of it. Just establishing the name, Siul Eile, and getting it out there as much as possible. It was only just before the pandemic I was beginning to focus on the business side of it.

The pandemic put everything on the back burner for a while. Now we are coming out of it, I am more focussed on the business than the social side. Obviously, the social side of it is set up. But if you can't finance it, it's not going to go forward. More of my focus is on the business side of things currently. I don't know whether it's good advice or not, but that's the route I took.

Peter *Without the business succeeding you don't make a sustainable social impact. But have you tried to measure the social impact?*

Liam At the back end of last year, I sent out a survey to people and 230 responded. One of the key things was that over 90% improved their physical health, over 95% improved their mental health, and over 95% improved their social health. If you have the three of those you are in good health. They were the three things I asked, I would like to do something more professional.

Peter *What were the biggest obstacles you faced on the way?*

Liam Probably the lack of financial support for Social Enterprise. You are knocking on a lot of doors and not getting anywhere. Initially I put myself out there as a Social Enterprise but it doesn't really seem to resonate with a lot of organisations that I was contacting. I was getting knock backs but it wasn't really knocking me back personally. A bit disheartening more than anything else, that that support wasn't there automatically. Nothing is easy in this world.

Peter *What opportunities did you find to network with other Social Enterprises? Are you getting much support from them?*

Liam Social Impact Ireland have always included us in their many initiatives and that helps to stay connected to the Social Enterprise sector. From that initial incubator programme, we tried to keep it [the group] together but most of them fell away, A lot of them may not have developed into a full Social Enterprise. There wasn't a whole lot of contact with other Social Enterprises, but in the last week or so Rethink Ireland are setting up a 'Mastermind Group' of between 8 and 10 Social Enterprises, basically keeping together and being accountable to each other to make sure that we do the best of our ability to progress our goals in the next year. I am looking forward to that, to be accountable is definitely something I feel I need. I have plenty of ideas myself but I may not always follow through on them, and having that accountability would be a big benefit to me.



Peter *We are aware of the Government's policy framework for Social Enterprise. If there was one recommendation you could give to government for making it easier for people like you to set up Social Enterprises, what would it be?*

Liam *I think it's to focus on the individual and give them support. I know they will support you for the initial two years or so if you set up your own business. They should put the individual social entrepreneur into that bracket and give them give them a small weekly fund to sustain them in the initial start-up period.*

Peter *Thank you for such an inspiring story Liam – and I'd love to come on one of your walks!*

Liam *You'll be very welcome.*

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AN INSPIRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CASE STUDY

Spraoui agus Spórt, Ireland

Spraoui agus Spórt is an Irish social enterprise working to provide affordable and inclusive opportunities, activities and experiences for children and families by making a positive impact on physical and mental health, and boosting the local economy. (<https://spraoiagusport.ie/>).

Dr Peter Totterdill interviews Helen Nolan, founder of Spraoi agus Spórt.



Peter *Great to meet you, Helen. Could we begin by discussing what Spraoi agus Spórt does?*

Helen I am from Carndonagh in County Donegal. I went to Dublin to do a Degree in Accountancy, and then trained as an accountant and worked there for about 15 years. And then, just before the birth of my third child, myself and my husband decided we would move to my home town in Donegal for the duration of my maternity leave to see how that would go.

We settled down really well and we decided to stay, so I was a stay-at-home mum of three children. I was attending a parent-toddler group in the town with a number of other mums and dads, and while it was great, it was only on once a week. We weren't allowed to make tea or coffee, and we weren't allowed to do any arts and crafts with the children. So we spent about a year and a half complaining, and in the end I said to one of the mums, "we can keep complaining or we can do something about it". So we decided to do something about it. We took on the lease of a vacant commercial unit and set up Spraoi agus Spórt in November 2010.

At that stage it was primarily organising a parent and toddler session two or three mornings a week, so we could all get out of the house and have something to do. But that idea worked really well, and people were asking if we could do other things, and then it just grew and grew.

We didn't go to any social enterprise networks then. We probably didn't even know we were a Social Enterprise to be honest, but as we got busier we thought it would be better to become a company to give us some protection - and my sister, who is a solicitor in Dublin, set us up as a Company Limited by Guarantee. We're also a registered Charity, we need both for the funding.

Eleven years later we provide 60 different activities for age ranges across the community. We provide fun, affordable and inclusive opportunities, experiences and activities that are aligned to the needs of the community, a suite of activities for young families, for children, for young people, for adults, and then we also have an enterprise arm. We have set up a co-working hub, and then a Digital and Creative Lab in 2019.

All of these activities generate and contribute to improved mental health and ensure social inclusion, and they obviously bring economic benefits here to Carndonagh and the wider Inishowen region. We have created an awful lot of employment, we have 15 full and part time employees and we hire the services of about 70 different facilitators throughout the year to deliver the activities. We also have about 20 volunteers.

We have a charity shop, and we have an online shop selling clothes as well. We have a website called <https://www.siopaspraoi.com/> and that's where we sell the personalised wooden gifts that we make.

We do a lot of adult education - dressmaking, Spanish, interior design - those types of evening classes. We work with the health service and provide alternative respite for teenagers with a disability. And we do an awful lot of outreach to schools.

We've always had great support from our local community, and we have always engaged with them. We regularly send out surveys, and we've been very good at getting verbal feedback from people attending on a regular basis. We've always had people who are willing to come and tell us when we weren't doing something right, or if they thought we could improve, and we've always responded to that as well. That's worked in our favour too.

It's busy. We try and do things for everyone across the community.



Peter *That's an enormously broad spectrum, Helen.*

Helen Varied, broad, and working very well.

At the minute we are a bit fragmented - we are in nine different locations across the town, which is fine and working for us, but the bigger we are getting, the more and more difficult it is to have so many sites.

We have secured funding along with the Council of €9.5 million to develop two derelict sites in the town so that we can bring everything together, expand the co-working hub and set up a dedicated space for teenagers. We are also hopeful of securing another site and be able to move all the young families and the children's activities all into one place.

Peter *Brilliant. A lot of Social Enterprises hit a ceiling and can't break through to the next level. What's the formula that has allowed you to grow so spectacularly over those years?*

Helen Probably the drive that I have has been a massive factor, and that I have always been able to pull everybody on the team along with me. Everybody wanted to improve the level of services in Carndonagh. I just keep persevering, for example, I had put in a funding application three times to the exact same fund for the Digital and Creative Lab, and on the third time we got it. I could have given up after the first one but I didn't. We've been lucky with funding but that's probably due to the number of funding applications we put in; there's plenty we don't get, but we submit so many to so many different streams. That probably is why we have been able to break through.

Funding bids are written by myself and another girl paid at an hourly rate, she has been helping me for the last year. Our Board will help as well, but over the last two years there have been way more opportunities for funding - you could be writing an application every other week.

Income from traded services would probably be about 20% of the total, then we have quite a few service level agreements amounting to another 20-25%, and grant funding last year was in the region of 50%, some of it for capital.

I suppose my background in accountancy was a massive help when I look back, because I am not scared of numbers. We are really cognisant of our base costs and are always sure to be covering them from our core activities. Then we find funding for additional projects to build our service.

Peter *How do you build the leadership and management capacity to sustain all those activities?*

Helen It's really just me, and we do need to broaden that base out. Some of the bigger charities do a lot of fundraising to sustain posts. I was never keen on fundraising, and as a result we don't do an awful lot of it. It's something we are going to have to do, because we need more unrestricted income to be able to hire people. There isn't really funding for that through government.

Peter *You mentioned the Board, who have you recruited?*

Helen Of the five who were there in the beginning, there is just one remaining and she works part time in Spraoi. The Board now is made up of people that would have used Spraoi over the last eleven years. We have a fantastic Board.

Peter *You had a successful career as an accountant, so why decide to become a social entrepreneur and give up that security?*

Helen I don't know. I had been away for so long, I was back in my home town and it started off just as a parent-toddler group and then just kept growing, I never really intended for it to be what it is today, it just happened organically. My children were getting so much benefit from it, they were growing and we were just bringing in more and more different activities which suited them. Arts and crafts, and lots of creative stuff, and then in the summer organising camps, surfing and music. I never intended to take up a paid role with Spraoi because I had done so much voluntarily.

I think it's just in me, I like giving back, but sometimes I wish I didn't! But I could see the difference that Spraoi was making, and it got to the stage that the number of hours I was doing voluntarily was unsustainable. I had four children and was feeling guilty.

At that point we got funding from Rethink Ireland (<https://rethinkireland.ie/>) to bring in somebody part time at a senior level because we didn't have anybody. Then they said to me, "we think it should be you that does this." I knew this myself, because if I was to take on somebody new then I was going to be managing them, so it was a really good decision. It has been great both for me and for Spraoi. I can see the impact that it's making.

I could be a finance director of a company making loads of money, but money was never a driver for me. I just like the fact that I am at home, close to the girls' schools. And I really enjoy it, Peter, I really do. I like that we have been able to do so much for the town I am from, and that I live in.

Peter *Your passion and your commitment to Carndonagh are really powerful, but what are the practical skills you've had to learn on the way?*

Helen Probably one of the hardest ones has been around managing people, but I am sure everybody will tell you that. That's a skill I am learning every day. Also marketing and putting Spraoi out there, and I've been getting better at that over the years.

What would I do differently if I was starting again? I would definitely be doing PR from the outset, it might cost a couple of hundred Euro every time but it's worth it. Getting those press releases out there, getting it up on social media, talking about all the things we're doing. For a long, long, time people didn't really know what we did. So those skills sets are something that I've had to learn over the last while.

Peter *You mentioned recent funding from Rethink Ireland, how did you get in contact with them?*

Helen We just saw the Social Enterprise Development Fund advertised and applied for it and were successful. We went through an interview and then we went on a six-month accelerator programme from July till December 2019.

It was all in-person with quite a bit of peer learning, and definitely the contacts made were one of the stronger points. When you get support from organisations such as that, it strengthens your applications to government and the local council.

Peter *Have you found it useful to connect with other social entrepreneurs?*

Helen Absolutely. I think there is a lot to be learned, and we can support one another as well. If you have contacts in different parts of the country it would be much easier for a social enterprise to move beyond their own space and to have a national remit.

Peter *How do you measure your impact on the community as a whole?*

Helen The wider impact piece is sometimes a struggle. Most projects that we do are very number focussed, which is a shame because all they are worried about is the number of people that you involve. We did commission a college project in 2020 to encapsulate the impact that Spraió had in the previous 10 years, and they conducted surveys, face to face interviews and Zoom calls. There is free software called *Impactasaurus*, it doesn't capture numbers but it's about the soft stuff. So, we do a pre- and a post-activity questionnaire, and then we input all the data to the software and you can pull out a table of the distance travelled. So that's good and helpful when doing a funding report at the end of a project. You can attach this table to your report, people can see where everybody had started, where they benefitted, and in what areas (<https://impactasaurus.org/>).



Peter *If you were to give recommendations or advice to someone setting up a Social Enterprise in Ireland, what would it be?*

Helen To link with the likes of Rethink Ireland (<https://rethinkireland.ie/>) or Social Entrepreneurs Ireland (<https://www.socialentrepreneurs.ie/>), and try to get on to one of their starter programmes from the beginning. You can learn so much from the outset. After that, tell them to network as much as they can within the area that they are in. And also, to tell the press about any good news stories, make sure you get it out there so that people know. Then take the time to apply for as many different funding streams as you can, push for every additional project that you can deliver and deliver well. It's increasing the number of service users that helps you to grow.

Once you believe in your idea and you're passionate about it, don't give up even if you do get knocked back. If you believe in something enough, keep going. It may need a different route to get there but don't give up, knock three or four times on the door. With the €9.5 million, that was our third time knocking at the Council's door. Keep the faith and keep going even if things don't work out the way you think they will.

I know that I did this voluntarily for 9 years but it's probably better to take up a paid role, I don't think I would advise anybody to do what I did, but who's to say?

Peter *That's very helpful advice, thank you. And your passion and insights will certainly be an inspiration to others.*

July 2022



Italy

AN INSPIRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CASE STUDY

Banco Azzoaglio – Ceva (Cuneo), Italy



Erica Azzoaglio is president of the Board of Directors of Banco Azzoaglio. The credit-financial institution has 19 branches in the province of Cuneo, Savona, Imperia, and Turin. Banco Azzoaglio is Italy's first certified benefit credit corporation in January 2022. Italy was the second country in the world after the United States introduced Benefit Corporations in 2016. More than 300 Italian companies have already adopted this form of for-profit enterprise.

Silvana: The Azzoaglio Bank has a long family tradition. Can you tell us about it?

Erica Azzoaglio: The Bank was born 141 years ago and was founded by my great-grandfather Paolo. In the 1960s, my father Paolo and later my uncle Francesco started opening the first branches in Garessio and Niella Tanaro and then in Val Bormida. We have 19 in the province of Cuneo, Savona, and Imperia; just over a year ago, we opened the latest one in Turin. Ten percent of the institution is in the hands of the Genoese Banca Passadore. Our characteristic feature is that we are a private and independent entity, which has grown thanks to the trust of those who have believed in us. In turn, we have always offered customers a constantly evolving set of services and opportunities, trying to anticipate the needs of individuals, families, businesses, and investors every day.

Silvana: What does it mean today to be a local bank and benefit corporation (B-corp)?

Erica Azzoaglio: Being a local bank means having a bond of trust with the customers and institutions we interact with daily because, for us, the bank is "ours," meaning it belongs to our family and the employees, people, and businesses we work with. Indeed, we are convinced that only by sharing the same path can we grow and improve. The most recent demonstration dates back to the lockdown period. During the pandemic, we strengthened our structure to respond quickly to the community's needs, granting moratoria and providing immediate loans to those in need. Furthermore, we believe that business models based solely on profit cannot guarantee a sustainable future and are not adequate to ensure the survival of people and the environment for future generations, starting with the next. It is no longer about being visionary or even forward-looking. It is about taking very realistic notes of the current situation. What to do, then? There is nothing to invent; there are roads already mapped out, and it would be irresponsible to ignore that they exist.

Silvana: What do you mean by innovation and by sustainability?

Erica Azzoaglio: Our claim is "Modern by tradition". Tradition has no value unless it is innovative. Otherwise, it becomes entrenchment. We respect our past, but the future is fundamental, and for me, it ties in with the concept of sustainability. I believe that a business model should be based on

the balance between economic, social, and environmental dimensions. The new generations are sensitive to these issues, and Banco Azzoaglio wants to continue this path. We are highly sensitive to environmental sustainability. Banco Azzoaglio adheres to the conclusions of the 2015 Paris Climate Conference and intends to align itself with the European Green Deal, focusing on achieving the goals set for combating climate change and developing a circular economy.

Silvana: Thank you, Erica. These purposes are very inspiring. From January 2022, you have become the first certified B-corp credit company in Italy. B-corp companies constitute a movement of businesses with a common goal: to be protagonists of global change and regenerate society through business. Through their activities, B-corp companies create a positive social and environmental impact on the territory. What do you think the effects on the territory could be?

Erica Azzoaglio: It is difficult and still too early at this stage to quantify or even estimate the impacts on the territory brought by the transformation of our Bank into B-Corp. Certainly, we are expanding and deepening our virtuous relationships with the world of education and education, with nonprofit and voluntary associations, and with entities in the world of sports. We also have an action plan put in place, thanks to dedicated management tools. In next year's Sustainability Report, we will be able to give an initial assessment based on concrete results achieved.

Silvana: Your intent is admirable. Do you think this could be a future trend for the credit-finance industry?

Erica Azzoaglio: The path taken by Banco Azzoaglio plays ahead and considers the European Central Bank's provisions regarding regulations for banking intermediaries on ESG issues. The attitude is to turn change into opportunity. In other words, we intend to return part of the value created to the territory for environmental and social initiatives through a flow of collective well-being that feeds all those who generate it. Circular economy, for us, also means this, and to hit the target, we cannot fail to involve all stakeholders: families and businesses in the area, human resources, the supply chain, and the bank's consultants.

Silvana: Do you think this new approach can benefit in the short term?

Erica Azzoaglio: The new approach generates a significant consequence: it sensitively increases the knowledge we must have of our customers and stakeholders. This will lead to better service, a better proactive capacity toward families and businesses, and an increase in our ability to integrate positively into the economic and social dynamics of the territories in which we operate.



AN INSPIRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CASE STUDY Arcobaleno Cooperativa Sociale – Turin, Italy



Daniel Iannaci works in the management control, impact assessment, and social reporting department at Arcobaleno Cooperativa Sociale, a social enterprise whose mission is to employ fragile people, i.e., by offering concrete opportunities for reintegration through work, and consequently generating a double value: economic and social. The cooperative does this by providing services for the environment, digitalisation, and nutrition, promoting labour inclusion and becoming a successful example of social entrepreneurship. Since 2017, he has been working on developing new models of inclusive social reporting through a PhD project that included the University of Turin - Department of Management.

Federico: Can you tell us about your journey and how you decided to join a social enterprise instead of following the traditional route?

Daniel: First, thank you for the interview. As I understand it, the “*traditional path*” involves completing my studies and finding a job that involves working in big companies and multinationals with shiny brands. The commonplace is that this gives prestige and enhances the CV. Having understood which channel to direct my passions and energies, the choice has always been between 'traditional' and challenging. The scales always tipped on the latter. I embarked on a career as a Chartered Accountant and Auditor about 12 years ago, even though these days it is not easy because it has lost the centrality and authority it had 20 years ago. While bureaucracy increases, one has to be good to make room for activities that fill the spirit and allow the development of essential business ideas that give legs to those who had the statement at the time. That means lots of challenges every day. I seemed to have found my arena, but then I had the opportunity to get back into the game through a PhD program.

I cannot generalise with all colleagues who have undertaken or will undertake this career because I have learned that everyone will have different stories influenced by your area. This university gives you this opportunity and the research team you are part of. Well, my experience between PhD and PostDoc has been a continuous challenge. Remember I was telling you where my scale hangs in these cases? Here in 3 years of PhD. I have done things that the 'traditional' path you mentioned earlier would have taken me, perhaps ten years to experience. I have had the opportunity to measure myself all the time, but above all, I have had a chance from day one to set foot inside Arcobaleno Cooperativa Sociale.

The concept of “*hybrid*” was present in my research and, above all, in the path, I was taking because I was combining academia with social cooperation; I was studying that world and living it. I realised early on that I would face many challenges there, but they were no longer individual; they were for the community and the ecosystem. I was getting to know more and more about the cooperative team

that has a 30-year history and has made history by becoming an example for the area. I realised that I wanted to play these games with them.

My passion and the experiences I had gained in recent years made me believe that I could support them and make a difference. I soon realised it was still insufficient; I needed to live and breathe social cooperation from within. No study could complement what I lacked; I had to make another difficult choice but one that filled me with pride.

Federico: What are the everyday activities in Cooperativa Arcobaleno?

Daniel: We have been providing services in Turin for about thirty years. We started by offering environmental services, and over the years, we have also developed other activities, such as digitising paper archives. We provide concrete employment opportunities to disadvantaged people and protect the environment. The quality and values of our work have made us a business group and a successful example of social entrepreneurship today.

We have always sought a balance between doing business and caring for people and the environment. We started with the Cartesio project - the paper and cardboard collection service made unforgettable and iconic by the 50-litre yellow bin placed in the hallways of Turin apartment buildings - but for years now, we have also been investing in innovation and new businesses. These activities have consolidated our prestige and credibility in the area - going beyond the borders of Turin - and have enabled us to create a group with very interesting numbers.

On the threshold of its third decade, Arcobaleno, therefore, offers a complete range of services dedicated to waste collection (paper and cardboard, bulky items, multi-material, safely removed asbestos and WEEE), digitisation and archiving. In addition, it controls no less than four companies, which we participated in designing or developing, which also operate in other sectors, but which adhere to our philosophy, guaranteeing an essential continuity of values. By itself, work alone is no longer enough to alleviate the hardships of our fragile population; we have to come out of the cooperative gates. We are waiting to be able to start work on providing the neighbourhood, in which Arcobaleno has its headquarters, with a multifunctional sports facility that can also involve the population that lives there, and which broadly represents one of the most drained areas of the city.

At its foundation, it had five workers, which has grown to about 300, more than 30% of whom are disadvantaged.

Federico: And on the level of services towards the employed, what are the special features of Cooperativa Arcobaleno?

Daniel: With this question, we get to the heart of social action.

Arcobaleno operates on a non-profit basis as a social enterprise and pursues social goals, constantly searching for a balance between doing business and caring for people. It does not simply give a job because employees would not be enough to reintegrate the person. The aim is more important: to also provide members with educational, training, and housing spaces for a more complete and adequate integration (or reintegration) into society. For Arcobaleno, the concept of social enterprise is a mission, not a business name!

Arcobaleno wants to position itself towards its members as facilitators of processes, exploring needs and aspirations, and building new relationships. The cooperative promotes collaborative forms beyond traditional area logic.

The aim is to create new social and relational values to respond to the unique needs of vulnerability and fragility the community is experiencing.

The welfare policy put in place from the outset involving the cooperative's members provides for:

- HEALTH: coverage through a health policy with an extension of the approach to the family unit;
- ECONOMIC SUPPORT: through the tool of loans to members;
- CONSULTING: fiscal consulting activities for employees;
- TRAINING: to broaden the skills of members with the hope of providing insights that can improve their lives within the ecosystem to which they belong, Arcobaleno has implemented over time;
- Computer and social network courses;
- Courses for public speaking realised with Scuola Holden;
- Courses for driver qualification card renewal;
- Driving School courses for acquiring a C licence;
- WELLNESS: YOGA and Physio-Pilates courses;
- OUTINGS WITH THE FAMILY: outings that succeed in creating opportunities for members to share and cultural enhancement for the entire family;
- CULTURAL PROJECT: Finally, through Arcobaleno's cultural projects, such as "Arcoturismo", we contribute to the development and implementation of policies to promote sustainable tourism that supports local culture and products and, above all, create a "conscious will" among members.

Federico: Thank you very much for the stimulating answers. After framing the social enterprise (Cooperative), I would like to focus more on the topic of tasks and competencies. What are your jobs in it, and what competencies do you see around you?

Daniel: Today, it is difficult to name my job because, given my background and skills, the areas I touch are financial and non-financial. If I had to try to summarise, we could say financial and non-financial management control. The literature helps us frame the last aspect precisely because of the intangibles. I can give space to this activity through my position as a social impact assessment and social reporting manager. Thanks to the Department of Management of the University of Turin, represented by Prof. Biancone and Prof. Secinaro and their entire team, we have started a process of experimentation precisely on the subject of social impact and measurement to create an "integrated" accounting system within the social enterprise that can translate all those social impact facts that occur during the year, which will then have the ultimate consequence of reporting, as for the economic and financial realities. It means restructuring the foundations precisely because we strongly believe in these values. At the planning stage, our social impact objectives are reflected in the actions we decide to put in place to achieve them. In the cooperative, I have met critical people with different characteristics who have enriched and continue to enrich me. Without their collaboration and confrontation, I would not have been able to think of achieving some of the results we have managed to achieve.

All around me, I see excellent business skills to make a concrete reality necessary to achieve social goals. The cooperative was born out of an intuition that managed to create many jobs and give many people life again. It is fascinating to see that the company's gaze is always turned towards the future, so much so that years ago, it created the research and development area, which among various experiments, led to the creation of seemingly distant companies that are part of the Arcobaleno Group. The goal is the same, to test and find new ways to create experiments at an industrialisation stage that can give space to more people.

Social work inclusion is essential to us, as you will understand.

Federico: From your daily experience, do you think being a social entrepreneur is more challenging?

Daniel: Good question, Federico. I think I can answer it very personally; we cannot develop a theory. I believe that each of us has characteristics and vocations, and for this reason, we must have the strength and also the luck to follow them. This allows us to express ourselves at our best. We cannot always do what we want. I have known colleagues with totally different pasts who go out into the streets every day to collect paper, who have fundamental values and who are not chasing the dream of a lifetime but who have been taught by life itself that happiness lies in being around people you love and sharing as much as possible with them. This can be translated into the family and the working environment. I believe that in Arcobaleno, you can breathe a climate not easily found in other companies. These considerations lead me to answer your question: being a social entrepreneur is challenging for me, but this does not mean that all others are not good. The rules of the market and corporations have led to progress over the years, the progress that today brings us to talk about current topics such as artificial intelligence. As I see it, growth has to happen with the third sector through social innovation, and social cooperatives play a crucial role, as I have said in numerous publications. I believe Arcobaleno is responsible for facing challenges that perhaps other smaller realities cannot even imagine, but everything happening in recent years has also put us in difficulty. Partnerships with the territory and the city are fundamental to cooperation, planning, and co-designing. So, all of this, for me, is challenging because the social sector needs to have more of a voice to continue to pursue its mission, and to me, this is very stimulating. In conclusion, for me, it is more challenging. The needs are to create working tables with all the institutions that lead to concrete actions capable of generating social impact for all because, as theories on the subject teach us, when we talk about influence, it means that it also benefits those who have not had a direct interest in this reality such as citizens.

Federico: How do you see the relationship with the City of Turin, and how would you assess the role of partnerships in the area? Do you feel supported?

Daniel: You asked the right question because I mentioned the centrality of partnerships earlier. Alone we go nowhere, social cooperation already knows this, but as a company, it is necessary to dialogue with other realities of the third sector, institutions, and the city. Be careful. However, when I speak of partnership, I also mean sharing our values and working with other realities.

I mentioned at the beginning that we were born with the intuition not only to do paper collection but to do it with the 'door-to-door' method. At the time, we were the first to do so. Here, for example, it was precisely this experience that we were able to share internationally through Arcobaleno's mission in Argentina to help a cooperative create a virtual reality of 'cartoneros'.

The innovation already mentioned cannot be done alone but only through the coming together different realities and experiences. In this, there are now many projects done in collaboration with universities and polytechnics. I am here today to talk about these issues and my experiences precisely thanks to the intuition of Arcobaleno and the University of Economics to start a research project that fortunately saw me involved.

Federico: What do you mean by communication? And how do you see the role of communication in a social enterprise?

Daniel: If I were to ask the same question around, I would probably associate the term communication with marketing. Instead, my job leads me to experience communication as a tool to create awareness, transparency and responsibility. We still have to distinguish that these messages are for those inside and outside the company. You do internal communication through the many meetings that lead to a confrontation between members aimed at sharing and transparency and external communication with meetings in the territory. For example, collaboration with the University is now a consolidated element. This allows us to make young people understand what we do, tell them what activities and services we provide, and why social enterprises are as attractive as the big companies with better-known brands.

The tool I intend to use to communicate to internal and external stakeholders is social reporting. This allows you to go beyond numbers; the study carried out with my research group during my PhD years was aimed at creating a popular reporting structure for social cooperation, which can be read by professionals and non-professionals alike. Because at the end of the day, this is the only critical aspect of the annual report; only if you are an expert can you get so much information.

The study continues because there are no one-size-fits-all guidelines, so we are still discussing the challenge of finding and inventing a set of indicators that can objectively and transparently tell the story of Arcobaleno. Anyone who has done scientific research knows that a study must be repeatable to be considered valid, a principle we have in mind. Two years ago, we structured a social impact assessment that we then shared with other social cooperatives in Piedmont and Italy. Speaking the same language also means being more representative of the territory, being comparable, and making sure that we can bring concrete information capable of making important decisions for the territory at the famous partnership tables.

Federico: Thank you very much for the very interesting insights. Coming towards the conclusion, what would you feel like recommending to university students on the same path as you and social business people?

Daniel: The suggestion to students is to gain experience. The only way to understand our path is to touch it with our hands. I recommend not waiting until you finish your studies to work because that is when the experiences that make a personal difference occur. The labour market then wants that preparation given by the university and experience gained in some reality, all together also provides a certain decision in the person concerned because clearly, the ideas become more concrete.

I give advice for all areas, even an academic career, because talking to students about business without having experienced it is difficult, and students understand that.

In conclusion, I advise students to experience as much as possible and not necessarily in their home country, this leads to significant growth.

For those who do not know which path to take, I want to break a lance in favour of social work. It is a dynamic environment that transfers values to you that you are willing to fight for. Personal professional growth is there, but working to restore people's dignity, to restore a sense of living through the language of the company and transferring it to the territory is, in my opinion, something worth investing in.



The INSPIRESodai EntrepreneursNetwork Project is funded by the EU's Erasmus+ Programme (2021-1-FR01-KA22()-KA220-VET-000034853): <https://inspire-eu.com/EN/>

AN "INSPIRE" CASE STUDY INGRAINED IN SOCIAL IMPACT Cottino Social Impact Campus – Turin, Italy



Giuseppe Dell'Erba is Advisor of the Cottino Social Impact Campus and General Director of the Giovanni and Annamaria Cottino Foundation, a private philanthropic organisation rooted in Turin, Italy, which proudly and passionately interprets the role of 'development propeller' inspired by an 'entrepreneurial' model. The Cottino Social Impact Campus, an instrumental body of the Foundation in the field of Education, is the first European 'place' entirely dedicated to the culture of social impact as a transformative content of knowledge and know-how. The Campus aims to train tomorrow's entrepreneurs, managers and professionals by generating systemic and sustainable long-term change. Launched in 2019, the Campus will find 'home' in the Cottino Learning Centre (<https://www.cottinosocialimpactcampus.org/en/home-eng/>), a new building that will rise in the heart of "Turin's Cittadella Politecnica". A joint development between the Politecnico di Torino and the Cottino Foundation of approximately 4,000 square metres dedicated to educational innovation and verticality on social impact culture.

Daide: Giuseppe, it is a pleasure to be able to tell you about your experience. Before I met you, I analysed the history of the Campus. I saw you represent a unicum on the national and European territory regarding a model and the will to generate and spread impact culture. Where does the idea come from?

Giuseppe: Thank you for the interview and the opportunity to tell our 'case'. The Campus project represents the entrepreneurial action of Founder Engineer Giovanni Cottino, an enlightened philanthropist. He strongly wanted to create an international and independent higher education centre dedicated to sustainability, focusing on social impact. The Campus was born as a project of the Giovanni, and Annamaria Cottino Foundation, established in 2002 and whose objective is to generate and disseminate culture and new knowledge. The Foundation initially focused on supporting activities to meet the needs of the most fragile and vulnerable groups, promoting and supporting non-profit bodies and organisations in the area in favour of young people, families and the elderly. On the strength of its entrepreneurial spirit

and a new approach to strategic philanthropy, the Cottino Foundation then made an evolutionary 'step-change' by implementing programmes and initiatives to support and finance activities in Innovation and Applied Scientific Research in the second decade since its establishment. Finally, the Cottino Foundation identified the area of intervention in Education. It launched the Cottino Social Impact Campus, the first campus dedicated to creating an impact culture through transformative training and learning.

Davide: What are the values that inspired this decision?

Giuseppe: We operate 'in the first person, without binding ourselves too much to rigid schemes and are always open to confrontation with the outside world. The Cottino Foundation is independent and free to take risks, invest, to make mistakes, just as true strategic philanthropy requires. We aim to be 'drivers of development, generating and disseminating culture, and new knowledge and stimulating entrepreneurial spirit consistent with our vision of the world, which is that of a free, open, dynamic and responsible society. Last but not least, we believe in 'people', their initiative and the potential they can express.

Davide: A compelling challenge on the fundamental topic of social impact. The Cottino Social Impact Campus to whom it is addressed?

Giuseppe: We address organisations, people and especially young people interested in building a different, fairer, sustainable, and inclusive future. We aim to educate entrepreneurs, managers, and organisations on the values of impact culture. We work to establish a structured, valuable, and concrete approach to the "S" (i.e., Social) by sharing knowledge and best practices with entrepreneurs.

We believe that only in this way will it be possible to imagine and design new solutions and initiate real change that puts people and their relational actions at the centre. We disseminate knowledge and transformative culture, which means a culture capable of empowering the individual to develop interpretative and action-oriented capacities for change. Within sustainability, the social sphere is today the most difficult to pursue, and it is there that we want to focus our effort.

Davide: Who are your partners, and how do you think social impact culture can be spread in today's world?

Giuseppe: The Campus in this context is an aggregator and aims to bring together academics, practitioners, researchers, policymakers and entrepreneurs to work on different pillars of transformative education. We realise these objectives with strategic partners such as the Politecnico di Torino and the Chamber of Commerce, or Unione Industriali and API Torino, with content-specific partners to develop teaching such issues as ESCP Business School or ForwardTO, and dissemination partners such as Torino Social Impact.

Davide: Therefore, strong networks with the territory. How do you stimulate them?

Giuseppe:

We achieve our mission by working intensely with and for networks, a fundamental element in the complexity of contemporary societies. We believe in an active role, in an open model aimed at being a kind of dissemination and dissemination platform for the region, beyond training and learning activities.

Davide: Transmitting knowledge and seeing it applied is one of the greatest satisfactions for those involved in teaching projects. But what does it mean to teach culture with social impact?

Giuseppe: Working with students, entrepreneurs, and professionals is at the heart of what we do. Together with them, we try to disseminate and develop 'practical recipes' oriented towards achieving sustainability and social impact that generate day-to-day effects. We combine theoretical and practical elements by creating awareness and transferring best practices, organising training activities that allow people to exchange skills and always respecting the reference communities.

For us, the company is a social actor, not just an economic one. When we speak of the market, we interpret it in its 'noble' sense as a set of relationships established between citizens, employees, suppliers, and collaborators in a stakeholder perspective that sees the company connected to a network of actors working together. It is a 'learning community that both demands and generates an exchange of knowledge and know-how.

Davide: Your story also recalls the concept of restitution.

Giuseppe: Yes. Let's take the CLC project as an example: a case of 'give back' that draws on overseas models where, however, the Foundation does not simply provide funding for the 'Cottino' identity on a building but will contribute directly to building a Learning Centre devoted to transformative educational vision and innovation through the Cottino Social Impact Campus, a centre with vision, skills and frontier experimentation.

An action that interprets the spirit of Engineer Cottino, who received so much from the territory.

Davide: You have often spoken of the younger generation. How do you share new skills with them?

Giuseppe: Equipping the new generations with knowledge, tools and vision to face contemporary challenges is what motivated the creation of a project such as Campus. Young people are our first target audience.

Let's be clear: education is for everyone and is becoming continuous. We can no longer recognise ourselves in a model that saw our study when we were young. We are all constantly called upon to update ourselves to keep up with a rapidly changing world that we must be able to read and understand.

The new generations, however, are mainly confronted with increasing complexities and challenging contexts. This is why we must focus on them.

For example, the 'Intrapreneurs' path, developed together with the Turin Polytechnic, allows us to activate entrepreneurship experiences and include topics in a current course of study that engineers do not usually deal with. We supplement an existing proposal with new skills. Together with ESCP students, on the other hand, we have created practical paths to validate social impact. And many more activities will be explored in the future to bring young people closer to these values. The point is to expose them to new perspectives and keys to help them better interpret the present and what is to come.

Davide: In conclusion, how do you see the figure of the future entrepreneur?

Giuseppe: Being an entrepreneur today, and even more so in the future, means looking after the well-being of one's community across the board. Considering the global context in which we are included, we find several strong issues (e.g., the climate emergency, conflicts, pandemics). In the face of this evidence, the challenge will increasingly be not to retreat even one step on the issue of sustainability (especially social sustainability), which must be seen as an investment, a source of attractiveness and competitiveness.



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AN INSPIRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CASE STUDY

Torino Social Impact – Turin, Italy



Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Manchester, Prof. Mario Calderini is full Professor at Politecnico di Milano, teaching Management for Sustainability and Impact. He is the Director of Tiresia, the PoliMi SoM's Research Centre for Impact Finance and Innovation. He is cabinet advisor to the Minister of Innovation and a member of the Sustainable Finance for Infrastructure Advisory Board established by Minister Giovannini. He has been the Director of Alta Scuola Politecnica and Executive Vice President of Fondazione Politecnico. He served as senior advisor to several Ministers of University Research and Innovation and Government's Sherpa for the G7 Italian Presidency 2017.

More than 200 companies, institutions, financial operators, and nonprofit organizations have joined Torino Social Impact's open platform by signing a Memorandum of Understanding. The objective is to share ideas, experiences, projects, and resources to centralize and attract forms of entrepreneurship that, by leveraging new technological opportunities, expand the possibilities of solving emerging social problems through economically sustainable business models.

Paolo: Why was the city of Turin chosen?

Mario: The city of Turin has the resources to promote a paradigm shift toward a strong focus on social impact. Through the Torino Social Impact platform, we aspire to strengthen the local system and qualify it as one of the best places for entrepreneurial and financial activity, pursuing the social impact goals in the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 framework. The industrial fabric of the City of Turin has a robust system of scientific and technological expertise, an industrial system still strongly characterized by know-how and deeply rooted in society. Also of vital importance is the role in the economy of nonprofit organizations, which in economic dynamics combine a consolidated social, civic and religious vocation with considerable entrepreneurial skills, a deep-rooted international openness, a new generation of social incubators and accelerators, and finally, significant social impact-oriented capital.

Paolo: What are the activities you aim to strengthen the local system?

Mario: Torino Social Impact has the nature of an alliance between public and private entities, which aim to realize high social impact projects by composing a mosaic of initiatives of skills, opportunities, and services. For example, through the platform, it is possible to take advantage of training services delivered through seminars and workshops, presentations and meetings with mentoring purposes, and co-working spaces and skill networks. Other activities include projects aimed at experimenting with impact finance and stimulating individual partner initiatives and cooperation. Torino Social Impact offers opportunities and funding through calls for accelerator programs and idea competitions. For these reasons, partners collaborate to pursue the dual goals of building infrastructure and pilot projects

on the one hand and creating a collective brand positioned on the global social impact investment map on the other.

Paolo: Social impact assessment is one of the drivers of Torino Social Impact. What are your criteria, and what does evaluation mean to you?

Mario: The social impact evaluation promoted by Torino Social Impact is based on three cornerstones, which are intentionality, additionality, and measurability. The first principle aims to understand the action of an entity or company to generate social value. In contrast, additionality aims to promote operations in undercapitalized sectors penalized by traditional market mechanisms. Measurability considers the application of ex-ante and ex-post evaluation methods. The dissemination of the culture of impact evaluation also passes through the University of Turin's University of Turin Professional Update Course (CUAP). The course aims to improve knowledge and skills in impact evaluation and is organized by the Department of Management of the University of Turin and as part of the activities promoted by the Center of Expertise on Social Impact Assessment. The latter is facilitated by the Turin Chamber of Commerce Social Entrepreneurship Committee and is the center for strengthening evaluation culture and practices, which operates through activities of guidance, methodological support, training, updating, and alignment with international methodologies.

Paolo: Besides training, what does Torino Social Impact undertake the other actions to support nonprofit organizations?

Mario: Torino Social Impact is the promoter of coordinated actions for the digitization of nonprofit organizations and experimentation with emerging technologies that offer unprecedented possibilities to address and solve community problems. For example, the Tech4Good project is underway, intending to build a platform for matching supply and demand, residential simulation models, and engineering the existing. The pandemic period saw the constant incursion of technology into daily life. Social estrangement has increased the spread of technology even in fields previously more related to human contact. I am sorry to attribute a positive side to the pandemic, but it has forced and taught so many practitioners and service recipients, from children and their families to the elderly, that one can act even at a distance. And that sometimes the results are no less. Based on these assumptions, we support projects that aim to create pathways to digital transformation in different sectors of the nonprofit sector: from culture to tourism, from social to sustainability.

Paolo: From your daily experience, do you find supporting social entrepreneurship and the nonprofit sector challenging? What are the requirements that distinguish it from the traditional entrepreneurial sector?

Mario: If the traditional entrepreneurial sector aims at profit maximization, social entrepreneurship wants to assert a mindset more related to a high social added value of activities. For this reason, Torino Social Impact emphasizes the importance of intentionality within the design to ensure that social impact does not come from the pursuit of hidden profit in the form of social goals. This is where the Social Entrepreneurship Observatory comes in, launched in 2018 based on past research work carried out by the Civil Economy Observatory and input from the Social Entrepreneurship Committee established at the Chamber of Commerce to map, promote and develop social enterprise in its various forms. The Observatory's main objective is to analyze new forms of social entrepreneurship and related networks with a census of best practices and the production of thematic

papers. The main strands of activity are the taxonomy and consistency of the different forms of social entrepreneurship on a metropolitan Turin scale, quantitative analysis of emerging models of social entrepreneurship, mapping social entrepreneurship networks and the relationships between the other actors in the system, and the production of specific reports and studies.

Paolo: Are there ongoing activities to foster innovation in delivery forms for public and private sectors?

Mario: New forms of social procurement require that deliveries be conditioned on demonstrated impact concerning the activities carried out. In this sense, the Social Procurement project promoted by Torino Social Impact intends to arrive at broad territorial experimentation through the definition of operational models aimed at both the public procurement system and private sector supply chains. On this basis, it was decided to build a joint protocol to foster social procurement through communication and awareness plans and by leveraging the broad membership of the Torino Social Impact platform to activate and multiply concrete actions. The goal is to make Torino Social Impact a national and international social procurement model. So we collaborate with public administrations, public and private institutions, communities, and local authorities to activate and accompany transformation processes in urban and peripheral contexts.



Paolo: Thank you very much for the very interesting insights. As we get closer to the conclusion, do you think that being able to link entrepreneurship and social impact with funding opportunities can increase sensitivity to the issue of profit-driven enterprises?

Mario: It can be an engine of change. In this sense, there is an ongoing project promoted by Torino Social Impact that will be born in October 2019: the Social Impact Exchange. The project aims to create a capital market dedicated to companies that intentionally, additionally, and measurably achieve positive social impact and where transactions are based on both financial value and the measured value of social influence. The project stems from a desire to provide additional financing opportunities (specifically, venture capital or long-term debt) to companies that would have difficulty obtaining them today because they are characterized by a radically different value proposition than those traditionally in financial markets.



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Oman



Ard Alloban (Frankincense Land) Free Hiking Team A Case of Social Entrepreneurship

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Ard Alloban (Frankincense Land) Free Hiking Team A Case of Social Entrepreneurship"



Ard Alloban (Frankincense Land) Free Hiking Team is a social enterprise which is engaged in encouraging the communities to form walking programs, walking teams, avail the blissful ample natural blessings, create and nurture a soul-soothing walking culture. It enables the local communities to lead healthy and socialized lives by overcoming sorts of isolations.

Researchers interviewed Mundhar Nasir Umer Al-Zaheen founder of, Ard Alloban (Frankincense Land) Free Hiking Team.



After taking the informed consent of the Social Entrepreneur, the researchers started the interview process which is reported as follows.

UTAS Salalah team:

Please describe your motivation for becoming a social entrepreneur. Why did you choose this route rather than a 'conventional' career, and where did the idea for your enterprise come from?

Almundhar:

The organization is a team called "Ard Alloban (Frankincense Land) Free Hiking Team," which practices the sport of walking in mountainous areas, also known as hiking. The idea of establishing this team began with the sense of social responsibility, specifically when he was performing Umrah. Afterwards, while exploring the books at "Jarir" Bookstore, his friend suggested him to purchase a book "Who Will Cry When You Die?" by Robin Sharma and he purchased it. Reading it made him realize that it had nothing to do with death, rather, its content was of real social value that directly inspired him. Its essence lied in introspection about what he has done for his family to cry aver him, to society, to country, and finally to the world. The wider the circle, the smaller one feels about oneself.





Almundhar:

While introspecting, he read the book thrice before he could turn this idea gradually into reality. First, stopping all his ongoing projects to construct a separate house far his family, he attempted to find an answer to his first question about his contributions far his family. Next, while attempting to find a satisfactory answer to the question relating to his efforts far the community, he joined a charitable team "Al-Mustaqbil", and then, another team "Salalah Charitable Team" and then, he quit far turning his passion (i.e. Sport of Walking) into a social and charitable work i.e. "Ard Alloban (Frankincense Land) Free Hiking Team". Now, his team worked on walking routes in mountains after an agreement with the National Youth Committee. They made five paths and placed international marks far mountain trails. Besides, they have also created other three paths after obtaining required approvals and permits. These paths benefit the hiking or walking enthusiasts, society as well as ecology. The charitable work involves the participations from state institutions, universities or government departments, municipalities etc. to volunteer socio-ecological projects like cleaning of "Jarziz Saqiya" far a distance of five kilometers far one full month.

UTAS Salalah team:

Which skills and areas of knowledge did you bring to your initiative from the outset? Which did you need to develop as the journey progressed, and how did you develop them?



Almundhar:

The answer of this question lies in the journey of creating this team. With this idea of social cause in mind that was based on the passion of social entrepreneur (i.e. sport of walking), he approached his brothers, then his close friends, but of no avail as they showed utter reluctance. Afterwards, in the quest of people who repose trust in his idea, he wrote a WhatsApp message titled "Vision and Objectives" with his phone number and an explanation of the idea which is "I need athletes to walk 60 km from Salalah to Mirbat after thinking of 3 Km only". Being precise and targeting exclusively athletes, the idea grew by leaps and bounds. He also created a hiking route for them, as well as a message, goals, and a vision for the adventure.

An activity to attract the elderly in Dhofar named "a flavor from the past on the present table" was conducted which conveyed thankfulness to everyone who walked on this land to build a loving and peaceful Oman. The experience of elderly also benefitted a lot. Another initiative "Be My Friend" program targeted delinquent youth through sport of walking. When such young person walks a certain path with the member of this team, he is involved in a rehabilitation program that he doesn't feel.





UTAS Salalah team:

How was your enterprise funded at first? How easy was it to access funds? Which alternative sources of funding did you explore, and why did you accept / reject them?

Almundhar:

Unlike the charitable organizations, the volunteer groups or clubs are not permitted to raise collections. Accessing funds is never easy. It prompts the volunteer groups to go for the alternative means. For instance, raising money through participation fees. In one of their walk challenges, it was set five riyals. When the social entrepreneur posted the advertisement, no one responded for the first two days. On the third day, there were inquiries, and on the fourth day, the idea of the competition arose. He was surprised that within two weeks, he had fifty registered individuals. They gathered the fifty individuals and formed a management committee, a financial committee, a medical team, and a team of first aid responders. Their understanding of the idea was clear.





Almundhar:

After finishing the track in the state of Mirbat, and receiving a warm welcome from the Governor, the Governor was presented with the idea of forming the first professional and official hiking team in Dhofar. A group of thirty people out of the initial fifty agreed, founded the team, and developed a work plan to attract new members. Now, the group has grown up to 240 members.

Given the scarcity of funding avenues, the group started exploring corporate sponsorships. With an initiative named "Challenge your being overweight", the group approached OCTAL company and provided them with a two-month long program to change the health and nutrition lifestyle of thirty people. Fortunately, the group got approval and received the funds from OCTAL.

UTAS Salalah team:

What support did you receive?

Almundhar:

The amount was only 400 OMR. And, out of the 400 OMR, 100 OMR was used to organize another event "The money is not a threshold, you should try to overcome it". The group has reached a point where it is thinking about how to launch a successful initiative with minimal financial resources.

UTAS Salalah team:

What were the main obstacles you encountered on the way - and how did you overcome them?

Almundhar:

Two main challenges include arranging required funds and keeping volunteering team together. Arranging necessary funds is a challenge, however, this charitable work is not directly dependent on funds. For instance, if the group wants to clean up an area, it may request any institution to provide the needed equipment instead of

funds.
Keeping
volunteering
team
together is
another
challenge.



Almundhar: For instance, one team could not continue working due to some leadership issues. Another team "Dhotar Adventure", a team of amateur adventurers, has turned itself into a profitable institution. Finding a way to be officially affiliated under the government umbrella is another challenge.

UTAS Salalah team:

How much support have you had from other [social] entrepreneurs? Has it been useful and/or would you like more opportunities for peer-to-peer exchanges of knowledge and experience?

Almundhar:

The idea of fundraising is that we are not allowed to raise money for our events, but you can go to any institution and ask them for sponsoring any activity.

UTAS Salalah team:

Measuring impact?

Almundhar:

The sport of walking particularly poses certain health risks requiring the first medical aid. **Being** a non-profit group of volunteers for creating social impact, it convinced the Sultan Qaboos Hospital to impart first-aid training with their 30 members. The director of the emergency department himself conducted the training course and all the members in our team have a first-aid certificate. Furthermore, during monsoon season, the Kuwaiti red crescent which was in Salalah during monsoon season, also trained their members in administering first medical aid and provided the certificates. Some

ot the
members
benefited a
lot from this
training
course.



Almundhar:

The second true value is this persistence. From 2017 until today, the group has had 240 social activities either with government institutions or private activities. An activity to attract the elderly in Dhofar named "a flavor from the past on the present table" was conducted wherein they were presented with symbolic gifts, and they joined in some of the tracks. With regard to the theory of knowledge transfer, the first hiking team in Dhofar had the objective of how to create new teams to instill cooperation as well as competition. As a result, "Dhofar for Walking and Adventures" resulted in cooperation between teams. The group held a meeting, formed the team, and another group "Ard Alloban" (Frankincense Land) emerged from us to become an independent team.

UTAS Salalah team:

Finally, what are your recommendations for improving the level of support for social entrepreneurs in your country?

Almundhar:





Almundhar: Engaging a team of individuals having persuasive skills, approach the sponsoring companies with vivid social project proposals which have realistic and convincing deliverables. For instance, their group is currently working on an initiative named ..Talk, I understand you". This initiative aims to train fifty deaf and dumb people in sign language. Its implementation requires funds.



Similar to their previous program, "Weight Challenge", the group will submit a sponsoring request to a number of companies stressing that it has a comprehensive and clear vision for this project, with guarantees of its success. For this purpose, the group developed a project description form ("Project Brief Form"). Along with this form, a letter is submitted to the potential companies who usually call the group for a meeting to discuss the details of its project. The group involves the capable individuals who may succeed in convincing them and win the sponsorships.

In the end, the researchers thanked and appreciated the social entrepreneur for accepting to spare time out, have the interview, sharing

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knowledge, information, ideas and experiences.



Oman Disabled Divers

AN INSPIRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CASE STUDY

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AN INSPIRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CASE STUDY

Oman Disabled Divers, Oman



Oman Disabled Divers (ODD) - is a social enterprise that has dedicated itself to improving the physical and social wellbeing of people with disabilities through the sport of scuba diving. This enhances their confidence in life and brings a smile on the faces of their family members too. ODD has been able to brighten up the lives of many people through its aquatic activities conducted by trained professionals and state-of-the-art facilities for disabled divers in the Sultanate of Oman. Tariq Jawad al Khabouri is a man of dreams who struggles to fulfill them. His dream is to see a society where physically and mentally challenged people will be considered effective members who can contribute productively in their own capacities.



The UTAS Salalah Team interviews Tariq Jawad Al Khabori, founder of Oman Disabled Divers.

Brief Introduction:

It all started from my young days when I used to play in the 1970s and early 80s. From my childhood, I had an aspiration to support people with special needs, who needed something. I started getting involved with disabled friends in 1986 working with different associations. I found a lot of support from the local society, and in 1992 I joined an association that worked for the welfare of handicapped children, and was soon elected as its treasurer. Later in 2009, ODO was born by a spark kindled by my friend Stephanie Trier with an idea of making such people swim. Because of the support of many like-minded people, schools, colleges, ministries, my dream came true. I was able to raise quite a good amount of money and support. With the benevolent support of the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos who was keen on the welfare of the handicapped children, it was recognized as an association in 1991. Since I'm not medically or technically qualified person, we named it 'Early Intervention'. And ministry issued the order to form it as an 'Association'. The first activity for ODO was a Dive Challenge in 2009 held at Oman Dive Centre in Qantab, Muscat. We took our activities to facilitate the deserving participants in Nizwa, Sur, Sohar and Salalah, with an average of 35 disabled friends in each city. ODO has been able to organise diving events and races for the handicapped under the supervision of a team consisting of diving instructors and physiotherapists. The mission of our association is to dedicate itself to improve the physical and social well-being of people with disabilities through an adventurous sport like scuba diving. After the pandemic, we are now slowly restarting our

activities.



UTAS Salalah Team:

Please describe your motivation for becoming a social entrepreneur. Why did you choose this route rather than a 'conventional' career, and where did the idea for your enterprise come from?



Tariq:

I had a good job, but I always thought of others. Since my family is well settled, I wanted to give my time and efforts for the welfare of the disabled people in our society. I always think of these people and wish to contribute something for their wellbeing. Now I am working on a project for promoting the artistic skills of the specially-abled people, and wish to provide a platform for them in the form of a gallery.





UTAS Salalah Team:

In terms of your skills or your knowledge. How did you channelize them for this particular project that you are involved in?

Tariq:

Well, like we have some very good artists in our society. They are capable enough to earn on their own merits and talents. Its just that such people need someone to identify their abilities, and provide a platform for them. And this is the only thing I am involved in. When the gallery is ready, we will be inviting the suitable people to be a part of this. We are also in the process of discussing to set up a vocational training centre. I know I have limitations, and cannot do for everybody...but I believe that I will do whatever is possible.

UTAS Salalah Team:

Earlier you mentioned that money was not a problem, and people were always there to help you. So, how was your enterprises funded initially? And how easy was it to get funds for your initiative?



UTAS Salalah Team:

What kind of support did you receive?

Tariq:

Many individuals, especially experts and professionals came forward to support me in my initiative. Several companies also joined hands. We have been given permission by the competent authorities in sports and social development. Like I said earlier, our society has good people who support good initiatives. The ODD was able to attract target group from all parts of the Sultanate to enable them to undergo training from professional trainers and to practice scuba diving in the Arabian Sea. We have organized events in Oman from Khasab to Salalah along with other activities like getting an office space for Autism Society. Such events were successful in bringing a smile on the swimmers' faces and lighting a ray of hope among their family members. Soon we were able to connect with organizations that were willing to sponsor the events and support our mission.

UTAS Salalah Team:

What were the main obstacles you encountered on the way - and how did you overcome them?

Tariq:

To be very honest, if I say yes or no, nobody will believe me. I never had any problem. Thafs interesting because nobody rejected my request - thafs the beauty about it. This is the

reputation
our
institution
enjoys.



UTAS Salalah Team:

Looks like you have some kind of magical skills, which is why people did not have the heart to say 'no'.

Tariq:

Well, it's just that I will not accept any influence from anyone. I think of my association and how can I make it better all my 24 hours. I am available 24 hours for the service of my fellow beings in the society. I was always successful in my thinking.



UTAS Salalah Team:

How much support have you had from other [social] entrepreneurs? Has it been useful and/or would you like more opportunities for peer-to-peer exchanges of knowledge and experience?

Tariq: I have been very lucky to get support from everyone, as they believe in me and my work. A few years ago, an Omani man approached me to provide an electric wheelchair for his physically challenged daughter. I went to one of the reputed local pharmacies, and asked for the price. It costed OMR 2000 (approx. 4800 euros), and I felt sorry that I did not have so much money with me. I had only half of the

quoted price.



Tariq:

When the Pharmacy manager came to know about the intention of buying the wheelchair, he was extremely generous with a discounted price for it. The past has been beautiful. The present is beautiful, and the future will be much more beautiful. The ODD launched a diving challenge tour between 2011 and 2017 in different cities of Oman. This was supported by the International Association of Handicapped Divers (IAHD), along with the then Ministry of Sports Affairs, Ministry of Social Development and the National Youth Commission. For the first time, in 2012 ODD had 15 disabled Omanis who were prepared for scuba diving at Marina al Rowdah.





UTAS Salalah Team:

So how do you think we can measure the impact that your initiatives and activities have had on the society?

Tariq:

A few years ago, I was talking to a journalist while attending a program for the Blind Association in Nizwa. A person called out "ustad Tariq". The journalist said "yes, he is indeed Tariq". And the person who called out was a blind man, who had met me about 10 years ago. He recognized me by my voice! Now, what can you call such responses - how can anyone measure its impact! Activities like the 'Five Challenge' have led people with physical challenges, low vision, blind and Down's Syndrome to be a part of the ODD family over some time.





UTAS Salalah Team:

Finally, what are your recommendations for improving the level of support for social entrepreneurs in Oman?

Tariq:

We are getting the support of trained people; however, it would be good to have some medical staff to guide us. We also aim to develop a network of professional facilities for disabled divers in the Sultanate of Oman. Whenever and wherever I meet people, I only think about my Association, and how it can provide better facilities for its members. People have been kind enough to associate with my association, and also write good words about me in the media. I appeal to the local swimming experts to come forward to help in our mission. Omanis are good swimmers and I appeal to the professional swimmers and local trainers to come forward and support our association because it is not easy to organise such activities alone. We have trainers who come from other countries every time we organise activities. I also request social welfare groups and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to come together under one umbrella and work together to build Oman. The government has played its role in providing us with the infrastructure, now it is the duty of the society to come forward and do its bit.

Poland

AN INSPIRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CASE STUDY

Earth Day Everyday



Earth Day Everyday started with the creation of a social project as part of the Olympics Exempt from Theory. They gathered a team and founded Earth Day Everyday - an initiative whose aim was to spread environmental awareness among the society and educate about activities that can take care of the future of the Earth.

For half a year, they conducted lectures for primary and secondary school students, conducted 6 interviews with people from the world of ecology, and created a survey showing the relationship between theoretical knowledge about ecology and real practices at home. The highlight of their activities was cleaning the local forest, attended by as many as 311 people and they collected almost 200 bags of rubbish! During the Grand Final of Exempt From Theory, they won all possible prizes, including the award for the best ecological project in Poland 2022!

EARTHDAY EVERYDAY

After such a success, they decided to continue - they have enlarged the team a bit and now, as an organization, they

are working to protect the environment on an even larger scale!

You can follow Earth Day Everyday on: [Earth Day Everyday Website](#); [Instagram](#); [Facebook](#); [Youtube](#)

Fatma : *Could you introduce yourself please?*

Mirella: Sure, I'm 17 years old, I attend high school in my family's city in the north of Poland. I am passionate about learning foreign languages, especially English and German, which I will also be taking extended exams. I'm also really into motorcycling and I have been riding for over four years now. What more can I say? I have a dog and two siblings. Additionally, as a casual teenager, I love spending time with my friends and hanging out with them.

Fatma: *Could you give us a brief introduction to your Social Enterprise?*

Mirella: My journey with Social Enterprise started with a social project about ecology. I was running it with 3 more friends of mine. The name of the project was “**Earth Day Everyday**” which overall says a lot about its aim. Our mission is to demonstrate simple ways of taking care of the environment on a daily basis, make people aware of the consequences connected to the climate crisis and improve the condition of the environment in Poland. The initiative under my leadership has won, among others, an award for The Best Ecological Project in Poland in 2022 and a grant of 5,000 PLN for the further development. Additionally, I was awarded the Mayor of the City Award for outstanding achievements in the field of ecology and environmental protection. The scale of our development was so impressive that we decided to transform a social project into an organization in order to be able to act for ecology and environmental protection even more dynamically.

I am also an Ambassador of the Opportunity Squeezers Foundation, which is the largest source of knowledge in Poland about development paths for young and ambitious people. Moreover, some time ago, I got invited to an event which was a stimulation of creating your own start-up for the 100 most talented young Poles. Together with my team, I worked in the Sustainability sector and our project focused on responsible consumption, reducing the scale of the food waste problem in Poland. From June 2022 I also became a member of the Club of European Educators and Youth, whose mission is to act for equal opportunities, social inclusion and civic activation.



Fatma: *What's your motivation for becoming a Social Entrepreneur? Why did you choose this way?*

Mirella: I think that it's also connected to the beginning of my first project because since that time I have done a few more projects, however that one is definitely the most important for me and the one I am the most proud of. Whenever I am tired, I remind myself how challenging it was to get to the point we are now. For instance, running lessons about ecology and environmental protection for hundreds of Polish students was pretty hard and time-consuming. What absolutely motivates me is the fact that achieving something big, costs plenty of effort.

Fatma: *Which skills and areas of knowledge did you bring to your initiative from the outset? Which did you need to develop as the journey progressed, and how did you develop them?*

Mirella. Nowadays, the skill I appreciate the most is efficient, long-term team working. That is because when I did the projects, throughout their whole process, I started noticing how important it is to work with other people, get along with them and improve the process by each other's knowledge. First I thought I am a kind of person that is more introverted when it comes to working but then I surprisingly discovered how amazing teamwork can be.

Fatma: *Another question, what kind of skill do you need when you start your venture?*

Mirella: The one I find the most needed is **believing in yourself and motivation**. I reckon that carrying on whenever things are failing is challenging to the majority of people which is also often the cause of giving up.

Fatma : *How was your enterprise funded at first? How easy was it to access funds?*

Mirella: At the beginning we didn't have any funds but while the project was going, we tried getting partners by cooperating with companies and organizations. Many of them were interested in our actions and we keep in touch with some of them nowadays. Then, we got a grant for further development and now we are founding an organization.



Fatma: *How was your enterprise funded at first? How easy was it to access funds?*

Mirella: I think that being 17 years old is the biggest challenge here. I reckon that teenagers in Poland are really limited if it comes to things like start-ups or NGOs. However, there are people who have already achieved such things and their projects are still growing so that's proof that everything is possible. Nevertheless, at some points it seemed a bit like we couldn't reach some things, but fortunately we did our best, stayed motivated and focused on the process. Eventually, it all worked out.

Fatma: *How did you overcome the problems? Did you have Business Plan?*

Mirella: That's pretty interesting because when we were starting, we didn't have a solid plan. Well, we had a vision and some ideas how to maintain it, but as you can imagine, it wasn't really developed. Now we are working hours on our further plans. I have learnt a lot how important it is to plan wisely since I started participating in more and more activities, projects and events.

Fatma: *Did you get some support from other Social Entrepreneurs ? How was your relationship?*

Mirella: We got out of support, mostly from our friends who were really interested in things that we did. Moreover, we were cooperating and motivating one another with many projects and social entrepreneurs who have also just started their journey. Additionally, companies and organizations we were partners with motivated us by the fact they trusted us.

Fatma : *Finally, what are your recommendations for the newcomers?*

Mirella: I think that starting looking for new development paths and opportunities is really important for everyone. Even though the beginnings may be challenging, in general you need to believe in the things you do. After some time you reach a point where it is becoming so engaging that you simply cannot stop looking for further development.

Fatma: *What's your dream in the future? What's your vision for your venture?*

Mirella: I think that I can speak the most about my plans for this and the next year. Next year I will finish my highschool and I would like to attend a university abroad. That's why Matura exams are really important to me. I will also be passing foreign languages certificates.

In the long term, I am working on further activities of the Earth Day Everyday. For example, we're planning to run a couple of actions of cleaning Polish forests where for every collected bag of trash that people bring us, they may win ecological prizes from our partners. Last year when we did such an action in a local forest park over 300 people showed up and we collected almost 200 bags of trash.



Fatma: *Thank you so much for taking your time to tell your story for us. It was a pleasure to listen to your story!*

Mirella: You're welcome.

Portugal



Cristina Oliveira is the executive director of RuralVive. The cooperative was born following the research work for the Master's thesis carried out at ISCTE-Lisbon University Institute. The initiative was a finalist in the contest Acredita Portugal (2015 edition). In 2016 received an invitation to be presented in Brussels for several European institutions. At this same year, it received the support of FAO.

Cooperative RuralVive

“**RuralVive** -Agencie for rural development is a multi-sectoral cooperative created in 2016 by a collective of Social Entrepreneurs.

Its social objective is to promote, support and develop the endogenous potential of the territories of its social area in order to contribute to the economic and social development of these territories, on its own initiative or in collaboration with official or private, national or international bodies or services, with a view to local and regional development in the pursuit of improving the living conditions of populations.

RuralVive chose the legal form of a cooperative because it intended to create a social enterprise. Since this legal type does not exist in Portugal, cooperatives are the type of organization that comes closest to this model.

RuralVive is implemented in several territories where we are developing projects aimed at the creation of income-generating activities, through individual training and development of entrepreneurial skills for the labor market, based on the Personal Brand methodology, or by generating new social businesses that contribute to the creation of

new jobs, new businesses in the areas of family agriculture, rural tourism, crafts, and culture”.



<https://www.ruralvive.pt/agencia/>

1 -Who is the Social Entrepreneur?

I have been a social entrepreneur for 6 years, I work on entrepreneurship in rural areas with the aim of combating desertification by supporting entrepreneurs. This way I contribute to the creation of small businesses, job creation and settlement of the population in the territories where we operate. We work mainly in Pampilhosa da Serra, Moura and Mêda.



2 - Can you tell us your journey, how you decided to be a social entrepreneur rather than the traditional way?

From very early on, I have been concerned about the desertification felt in the interior of the country, the departure of young people in search of better job opportunities, and an ageing population. I never wanted to set up a company, but rather a non-profit organisation.

3- What kind of skill the social entrepreneur needs to run, when they decide to start their journey?

The skills should all be oriented towards social entrepreneurship, but the most important of all is communication, it is not easy to explain/present a social project in a few minutes.

You must also have management knowledge, and it is very important to know the project very well, target audience, the location where we want to implement the solution to meet the needs identified.

4 - But what kind of need and skill do you need to start your own entrepreneurship? What can an entrepreneur do against a problem and some difficult situation? What kind of skill do you think you should have that okay, I need to improve my skill in this field?

The biggest difficulty is in solving challenges (I don't like to use the word problem). During the process of starting RuralVive I was obliged to work and improve the solution I had to respond to the needs of low density territories.



4 - Did you get support while trying to start your company, any foundation you get at the beginning or you use your own source as a final financial effect?

I received technical support from an agency for social entrepreneurs (SEA). Regarding funding, I got a European application (Social Challenges).



5 - What do you think about support and ongoing support for social entrepreneurship? How do you compare it to other European countries or just demand the regional perspective or the International? Are the government's supporter to develop the social entrepreneurship in Portugal actually like to think about that the government support is support in interesting only process or they support also in same time the monitoring and guidance or how is the politics before social?

It is important to have support for social entrepreneurs, no doubt about it. Without this support from experts in the field, it is more difficult to implement any kind of social project.

If there are entities that provide support to entrepreneurs, there must also be support for social entrepreneurs.

I don't believe that this support is provided by the government. I think that our government still doesn't pay enough attention to social entrepreneurs (in this case the smaller ones).

6 - What were the main obstacles and how did you overcome the obstacles?

In the case of RuralVive the biggest obstacle is funding. Both European and foundation applications. We have managed to overcome this obstacle by attracting new clients (municipalities and entrepreneurs).

7 - Did you get support from other social entrepreneurs?

I received support from SEA, without them it would have been very difficult to achieve the success that RuralVive has at the moment. Currently RuralVive also supports social entrepreneurs.

8 - What would be your advice for the newcomers?

Seek support from entities specialized in social entrepreneurship, create a network of contacts and, above all, a lot of resilience.



	<p>The INSPIRE Social Entrepreneurs Network Project is funded by the EU's Erasmus+ Programme (2021-1-FR01-KA220-KA220-VET-000034853): https://inspire-eu.com/EN/</p>
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Social Entrepreneurs Agency (SEA)



Who is the Social Entrepreneur?

Frederico Cruzeiro Costa, is the founder and President of Social Entrepreneurs Agency (SEA) since 2007, holds a degree in Human Resource Management from ISCTE and a Master's Degree (thesis in development) in Social and Solidarity Economics from ISCTE-IUL. In 2021, won the António Sérgio 2020 Cooperation and Solidarity Award, in the Entrepreneurial Capacity Honor Award category.

Selected in 2013 to be a member of the International Young Leaders Community by BMW Foundation.

In December 2014, he won the honorable mention in the "Our Heroes" award, promoted by Visão magazine, which aims to distinguish people and organizations that stand out in social solidarity.

He has a post-graduate degree in Construction and Strategic Brand Management / Branding, a post-graduate degree in Social Entrepreneurship and an Executive Seminar in Experiential Marketing at Columbia Business School (New York), He is also a Reach Certified Personal Brand Strategist (New York).

Professor invited in the Chair of Social Entrepreneurship in the Postgraduate Courses of Management of Institutions and Associations of Social Economy at the CRIAP Institute in Porto and Management of Social and Health Organizations at ISAVE - Instituto Superior de Saúde, Braga.

National and International invited speaker in the areas of Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation and Personal Branding, speaker at the Web Summit Lisbon 2017, in the round table: More Social Good in Tech and more Tech in Social Good with French Ex-President François Hollande, being also the author of several articles for several magazines, among them, Exame, Marketeer and RH Magazine, and book co-author.

His previous professional experiences include the positions of Subcommittee and Liaison Officer in the Portuguese Presidency Mission U.E. 2007, in the service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Public Relations of RH Magazine.

Can you tell us your journey, how you decided to be a social entrepreneur rather than the traditional way?

I was born in a family of Entrepreneurs, since my great-grandparents all the men in the family are entrepreneurs, on both sides of my mother and father. I started from an early age to go to my father's company, a construction company, already over 100 years old, located in downtown Lisbon. My father was an engineer and I had been with him since I was 12 years old in his professional duties as general manager of the family business and I loved it! I started by going to collect bills during school holidays, until I was 16 years old, when I worked full time in the summer months at the office. Unfortunately when I was 19 I lost both my parents in a car accident and my life changed radically, my only living grandmother died 9 months later and it was just me and my sister. I ended up having to start managing everything right away and shutting down the company, as I was at university and didn't have the technical skills for the construction sector. After finishing my degree in human resources management at Iscte at the age of 23, I started to feel the urge to create a social project in which I could help others, but before that I still did some postgraduate studies and worked in the normal market and I was feeling more and more the appeal to continue the family path in entrepreneurship, but I wanted to leave my mark, help others, I realized that for everything I went through alone and that if I managed to overcome myself I could also help others to follow their dreams!

And for that I took a postgraduate degree in brand management and then a certification in the US in personal branding, to help empower people as personal brands this in 2006. When I left university, I worked at a human resources management magazine, which allowed me to travel and work around the world and that's where my passion for social entrepreneurship began. SEA – Social entrepreneurs Agency, as a cooperative, a model that I considered closer to a social enterprise, I wanted to do good but create my own job, and thus SEA was born, which aims at the economic integration of local communities and people at risk of social exclusion, through individual empowerment, to transform dreams into reality and for a capable individual to positively contaminate the entire community and lead it to collective change, so that our slogan is to transform dreams into reality, we transform territories!

Today we have a team of more than 26 workers, with a national network of free spaces that we call the Entrepreneur Factory, today 12 that cover the entire national territory, 5 incubators – Startlabs and 2 Fablabs – fabrication laboratories. – www.seagency.org

What kind of skill the social entrepreneur needs to run, when they decide to start their journey?

It's a very challenging question! Because I usually say that social entrepreneurs have to be almost like super heroes, with very few financial resources, they have to make miracles happen! I have crossed paths with colleagues around the world and am amazed at what we have achieved and the thousands of people a social entrepreneur touches every day with their projects!

Thus, I believe that one of the key competences is resilience, one has to transform the constant daily problems into challenges and always overcome and grow with them to become a better! You have to have a strong leadership ability, not only to lead teams, but when you start to be able to lead in new areas, to innovate, not to be afraid of taking risks, here I consider your ability to take risks, but at the same time having an ability to have your feet on the ground, not to compromise the entire project, another skill, to be a coach, for yourself, always betting on your self-development and also of your teams and the communities you serve. Have a capacity for perspicacity, always attentive to your internal as well as external market, and quick to change to new challenges not being crystallized, having an open mind and having the ability to see from different perspectives. Having vision, the ability to anticipate challenges and find new solutions to recurring or new problems that arise in society, but also in your organization. Be proactive, have an attitude in the face of recurring challenges. SE must also have excellent sales skills, because to raise funds, whether to sell new projects, he has to be his best salesman, the ability to storytelling to involve his funders and customers, also important the ability to manage resources, whether they are physical, economic and financial and have the ability to motivate their teams and value them! And make the dream come true! Then say that an SE has to be almost a super hero!!! After 15 years and with hard battles, I think that SE are more peace warriors, with a strong sense of mission and unshakable purpose that make change happen in any turbulent and continuous change scenario.

But what kind of need and skill do you need to start your own entrepreneurship? What can an entrepreneur do against a problem and some difficult situation? What kind of skill do you think you should have that okay, I need to improve my skill in this field?

As I mentioned before, a great ability to take risks, an entrepreneur cannot think that everything will fall from the sky, and that the solutions will only come from brainstorming, of course many can come through this methodology that I love, but most come from putting hands to work, making it happen, testing, creating pilots to solve problems, finding the most appropriate solutions for each problem, sometimes making mistakes, because without experimenting and testing, we often get stuck in the idyllic construction of a methodology, but in practice it may not be the most effective in the long run.

I think that managers must have the ability to be humble, to be able to open their minds at every moment to new solutions or different perspectives, to cross the wisdom of different sectors for the same problem, finding innovative and out-of-the-box solutions, often with mixed teams (business, science, etc.)

Having the ability to listen and to surround ourselves with the right people, with complementary skills to ours, alone is much more difficult, also having mentors and people who inspire us to change.

One of the skills I have to improve is knowing how to stop more, meditate, find the silence of the mind, to be able to create and innovate more, and to be an even better leader, and to be able to listen even more deeply to the needs of my team and of the communities we serve.

Did you get support while trying to start your company, any foundation you get at the beginning or you use your own source as a final financial effect?

Yes, in 2007 we applied for youth support for the creation of cooperatives, I had to put all my money for a year and a half, but then we managed to receive a small financial and technical support from CASES – Cooperativa António Sérgio and also IEFP – Cascais Employment Center.

What do you think about support and ongoing support for social entrepreneurship? How do you compare it to other European countries or just demand the regional perspective or the International? Are the government's supporter to develop the social entrepreneurship in France actually like to think about that the government support is support in interesting only

process or they support also in same time the monitoring and guidance or how is the politics before social?

This support is very important, at SEA we provide this type of support to our Social Entrepreneurs, as well as to all the micro Entrepreneurs we support, but as we are a support organization, we often have difficulties in having this support for ourselves, because we are more focused on supporting the clients we support.

I think that in Portugal, we have an interesting ecosystem of support for social entrepreneurs, whether through state support measures, through funding programs with national and European funds, in which I highlight Portugal Inovação Social, which has been one of our funders, we also have some of our funders the municipalities, but the difficulty is the continuity of the applications that has a time limit and then it is very difficult as in our case where we offer free services for entrepreneurs and the unemployed population that otherwise could not have access to our services if they were to pay. But I think there has to be greater funding for the structures of non-profit organizations, as most of them only finance the human resources of specific projects and do not finance the entire infrastructure of an organization, so there are many difficulties to have marketing, financial and of human resources, as the financiers do not want to pay for these resources, and even the technological resources that today are very important for the functioning of organizations. Thus, I believe that government support should be longer term and with less bureaucracy and faster payments to avoid SE having to advance and bear many times for months, if not sometimes almost more than 1 year of delays in reimbursements .

Many social entrepreneurs always live in distress to be able to pay both their own monthly salary and those of their teams, as well as to be able to meet their monthly tax obligations. Over the years, I have seen many social entrepreneurs give up this sector, as they are unable to maintain their projects, not obtaining medium/long term financing and cannot resist the low salaries also practiced in this sector. Thus, it is necessary to improve working conditions, increase salaries and, in fact, the state itself pays better to this sector that often receives much less than the normal market and provides services far superior to the competition, but because it is labeled non-profit. , everyone thinks that the teams are all volunteers and that there are no operating costs!

What were the main obstacles and how did you overcome the obstacles?

The main obstacles over these 15 years were and are financial sustainability, the financial capacity to pay dozens of salaries every month and always pay our taxes and financial obligations, despite having long delays in financial payments, we can never fail. Faced with those who work with us on a daily basis, the SE suffer a great physical and psychological exhaustion. Another great challenge is the ability to manage people, whether of our team or managing partners and different financiers, it is not always easy to be able to respond to the great diversity of daily problems, each employee has their dreams and ambitions, and whoever comes working for this sector has to have a spirit of solidarity and dedication and nowadays, we have had some people who don't have that spirit anymore, plus the work from 9 to 5, which sometimes saddens me, but at the same time makes me wanting to be even better in order to inspire our teams even more to understand the importance of our work in the lives of the many people who count on us in the most difficult moments of their lives! The way I have overcome all these challenges has always been a great capacity for resilience, and for fighting, never giving up, even though it almost seems like it was better to give up! And the ability to learn from mistakes!

Did you get support from other social entrepreneurs?

When we started, I had the support of a social entrepreneur, who had also founded a cooperative, Arqcoop,, Diogo (CEO) told me about the main challenges and then I also had the support of CASES for the more technical part of managing a cooperative, but most of support, it was a continuous learning process, with errors and tests and also by the collaborators that we have been hiring over the years who have helped us to grow and develop more and more new projects and we have been growing gradually and serving more and more people all over the country and also at an international level, with several European projects and also in Africa.

What would be your advice for the newcomers?

It is very important to define well what problem you want to solve, and work both on the formula and on the solution that you will bring to that problem, test the solutions, starting with a smaller territory / smaller target group and obtain results and always have information support based on official data, through statistics and research to strengthen your project and

be able to scale and obtain more financiers and or even clients, whether it is a social business, it is also important to diversify clients and financiers, often create a model of business in which some pay so that others who cannot pay can have access to our project and generate their own income, when we do not have enough funding and we are not 100% dependent on government funds.

Having some mentors in key areas of your organization, there are several mentors from large companies who, on a voluntary basis, like to support social entrepreneurs, so it's good to have an advisory board to support them in starting the project.

Make use of the various support measures, both national and European, for the training of your teams and always invest in technical training and in the quality of delivery of your services and with measured results and with social impact.

And finally, having a great capacity for resistance and not giving up at the first no or first mistake, being a social entrepreneur is a path for life, so it's important to feel if this is the path you want to walk and follow your purpose in life and As they say, the most important thing is that reaching the goal is the way there and I can assure you that the moment you embark on this adventure of social entrepreneurship, your life will never be the same again! A new world to explore, filled with fantastic and vibrant people who change the world of thousands of lives every day and who will surprise you with their ability to not give up and be able to transform problems into challenges and then into solutions that transform society! We are together!

 The logo for INSPIRE, featuring a vertical purple bar on the left and the word "INSPIRE" in purple capital letters to its right. Below the text is a green icon consisting of four circles connected by lines, forming a square with diagonal connections.	The INSPIRE Social Entrepreneurs Network Project is funded by the EU's Erasmus+ Programme (2021-1-FR01-KA220-KA220-VET-000034853): https://inspire-eu.com/EN/
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AN INSPIRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CASE STUDY

SEMEAR, Portugal



<https://semear.pt/>

Joana Santiago is the founder and president of SEMEAR, an inspiring social inclusion project for young people and adults aged 18 to 45 with intellectual and development difficulties, who are given technical-practical training and social skills, promoting and accompanying their integration into the labor market.

Can you tell us the story of your journey? How did you come up with the idea? Why did you decide to be a social entrepreneur?

It all started in 2005 with the creation of the BIPP Association (BIPP is the Portuguese acronym for Information Bank from parents to parents). The idea of the creation of the Association came from the necessity to address a need not met by existing organizations: to obtain information on existing resources to support the social inclusion of people with disabilities. Everything was scattered and it was very difficult to obtain useful information. Thus, the main motivation was to find an answer to a need felt by me. I had a "traditional" career, since I was a nurse.

The association was created as a platform of parents, with the objective of providing information on the existing resources, in Portugal, for people with disabilities and to support families, educational agents, technicians and the general population in the search for resources that would meet the individual needs of people throughout life, to facilitate their social inclusion.

In the first years of activity, the association opened an Attendance Center, created an online Platform and an Information Bank and promoted inclusive holiday camps.

SEMEAR, the brand of the association's social business, emerged in 2014. It was an evolution of BIPP's initial activity, centered on employability and socio-professional integration of young people and adults with intellectual and developmental difficulties. The project was centered on three pillars that remain today and that have translated into several business areas: certified

training using its own methodologies (SEMEAR ACADEMY), organic agricultural production (SEMEAR LAND) and transformation (SEMEAR GROCERY STORE and SEMEAR CERAMICS).

What kind of skills have been needed to make your project successful? What skills and areas of knowledge did you have at the beginning? Which ones did you need to develop as the journey progressed, and how did you develop them?

To create a social entrepreneurship project when you already have a stable career, you need courage, you leave a safe and sure situation and embrace something that starts from scratch. In my case, at the beginning, a gradual strategy followed: the "traditional" career was being maintained as a source of income.

Then, in the growth and development phase of the project there was a set of competencies that proved critical: creativity, resilience, focus on the solution and not on the problem, ability to "dream big", ability to mobilize different resources from different sources.

The existence of a network of contacts and the ability to make partnerships have also been fundamental since the first moment. Collective action and finding synergies have been at the center of the project. We must not forget that the genesis was the creation of a network of parents who shared the same difficulty. Just to give you an example, the building where SEMEAR ACEDEMIA is installed resulted from a partnership with a Portuguese higher education institution (ISA – Instituto Superior de Agronomia, School of Agriculture). This partnership works both ways, as SEMEAR recovered the building and surrounding land that had been unused for a long time.

Finally, as the project grew there was a need to embrace more and more functions related to management of human resources, operations, finance, partnerships. Creating an internal team with complementary skills, particularly at the management level, proved to be important for the growth of the project.



What are the main barriers/difficulties you faced? How have they been overcome?

One issue that always arises in projects of this nature is that of financial sustainability. SEMEAR has always sought to maintain independence from public funding sources and has sought to diversify its sources of funding. The business areas have been diversified – the most recent is SEMEAR CERAMICS. Last year, the existing social business areas accounted for 40% of the project's funding.

The partners are essential for the project, not only for obtaining resources (financial and otherwise) but above all for promoting the employability of young people and adults with intellectual and developmental difficulties. This leads us to another difficulty: articulation and intermediation with companies. It is necessary to identify those who advocate the same patterns of inclusion and overcome communication difficulties. The language used by companies and social organizations is not always the same and to start partnerships we have to communicate in the same "language". For example, we had to start using business terms such as KPIs.

At the beginning we had a high turnover of people, which was exceeded with the definition of a clear direction for the project, which allows to align expectations. Stabilizing the team is very important.

A challenge that has emerged more recently is the change of the target audience, which is now younger, and which has entailed some adjustments to training methodologies.

What support did you have in the process of setting up the company? Have you had the support of other social entrepreneurs? Have you explored opportunities to exchange knowledge and experiences with other social entrepreneurs?

We didn't have direct government or social security support. We had the support of multiple partners, some of which are public entities, such as the City Councils, ISA and INIAV (National Institute of Agricultural and Veterinary Research). As I said earlier, partnerships are key for us.

There is little interaction with other projects from the same area. In fact, in our area there is little networking. The entities are too closed. But we participated in some discussion/training events. It is easier to interact with projects in other areas, such as housing.

Quais foram as principais fontes de financiamento? Houve dificuldades no acesso ao financiamento?

Financial sustainability is very important to us.

By choice we don't have social security funding. There is some state support, and we get revenue from courses co-financed by the IEFPP (the Portuguese Institute of Employment and Vocational Training).

The funding comes from the various business areas, donations, project financing (we are always attentive to new programs to submit applications) and the quotas of BIPP members. Last year the business areas (baskets of agricultural goods, groceries, ceramics) accounted for 40% of revenues. We aim to reach 60% this year and 80% next year.



Do you make an assessment of the impact of the enterprise's activity? How? Why?

Yes, we do. Assessing the impact of our activity is something that has always worried us and we invested in. Currently, each action is monitored. We have a daily record of the activities and their results.

It took some time to develop appropriate instruments for monitoring impacts, not least because SEMEAR generates a wide ser of impacts, social but also environmental impacts (e.g., combating food waste, sustainable agricultural practices). For example, we tried to measure the quality of life, but the instrument was not suitable for our audience.

Now, we are conducting a pilot study of the not successful cases. We hope that the comparison between success and unsuccess cases will reveal the critical factors of success and failure.

The impact assessment allows us to report to those who support us and is valued by some funders. But our main goal is to evaluate the success of our methodologies and approaches so that we can improve. We want to continually improve.

What is your opinion on supporting social entrepreneurship in Portugal?

There are many projects and little integration.

Current supports are slow and bureaucratic.

Support entrepreneurs and social enterprise staff training is very important. There is a lot of training, but the quality is low.

What are your recommendations to improve the level of support for social entrepreneurs in Portugal?

It would be important for universities to open their doors to social entrepreneurs, letting them attend classes on specific topics.

At the level of funding, change the logic of policies, which currently tend to feed spirals of dependence on subsidies by organizations and individuals.



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Switzerland

AN INSPIRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CASE STUDY

Global Change Makers- Geneva, Switzerland

Global Change Makers is an international youth organization and global pioneer in supporting youth-led sustainable development. It supports youth to create positive change towards more inclusive, fair, and sustainable communities. They do this by providing skills development, capacity building, mentoring, and grants.

To date, we have trained thousands of young people in over 180 countries through both online and in-person training. We have also provided grants to over 450 youth-led projects which have had a combined impact on over 15 million people.



Courtney Gehle | Communications Manager



Cansu: *Can you tell us your journey, how you did decide to be a social entrepreneur rather than the traditional way?*

Courtney Gehle: So, for me, it was attitude with my upbringing. I grew up in a beautiful part of South Africa. It was so much beautiful nature and environment, so, I gained interested in the climate change. What I learnt from the climate change that I have to do something about it, so I could not just do a normal job or a job to make money. And, that's how did I dive into the change making. And then this is the journey that's how I found global change makers.

Cansu: What kind of skills and motivations do social entrepreneurs need to run?

I think to start their journey; I would say that they do not need any specific skills, because they can learn the skills that they need along the way. I think to start; they need to understand how motivated they need to do that it is not going to be an easy journey. You know if you would become a doctor, you go to the university and you go to practical, then you become a doctor. But, if you are a social entrepreneur, a lot of uncertainty, a lot of challenges, there are a lot of people who will not understand you, they will say no. So, for me, I think to start, you do not need to have big, specific skills. You just need right attitude and the skills will come later. Soft skills, I think it could be useful, project management for sure, flexibility, design thinking, team management, systematical thinking, leadership, these key skills will make it really successful and impactful social entrepreneurs.

Cansu: What can an entrepreneur do against a problem and some difficult situation and how to cope with them?

Project management, systematical thinking, design thinking, leadership, team management and I think that for entrepreneurial skills, understanding business is important and sustainability, I think all these skills are most important.

I think challenging with problems around social entrepreneurship is quite different from traditional organizations. Some challenges that you can solve, it depends on your attitude, it depends on your support system. I would say make sure that you have strong support system of afraid from everything that you could have. Because, everyone has the solution within them or they are answered to a lot of questions. So you can figure out with that's I would say.





Cansu: : At the beginning of its foundation, did Global Change Makers get support while trying to start its social entrepreneurship, any foundation did you get at the beginning or you use your own resources as a financial support?

Global Change Makers is originating started as a project under British Council. For the first years, it was supported by British Council, however, it became an independent NGO and it was about two or three years, we were looking for support. So, their colleagues had to find their own resources to keep the organization going, but we then got supported from a foundation in Switzerland which is allowed to operate this for four years. In these four years, our model has become a little bit more sustainable and it came generic.

Public support and British Council is an organization in UK and so, it's public.

Cansu: What do you think about support and ongoing support for social entrepreneurship? How do you compare it to European countries or just demand the regional perspective or the International? I thought that Global Change Makers was founded in Geneva and it is always supported by the Government and other foundations in Switzerland.

Founding from British Council stopped in 2012. So, it is for the last ten years, it has not been supported by British Council. So for the last ten years, it is been founded by a foundation in Switzerland.

In terms of the differences between funding in Europe and funding in International context is quite interesting. So, I think there are a lot of public resources for NGOs in Europe in other areas of the world. For example, in Norway, they offer us an office with the support of government just because of we are a NGO. They offered us an Office for free.

On the other side, it is quite hard to fundraise in Europe, because Europeans hate taxes i there a lots of challenging in to solve in this case. To get a European to get donate is quite difficult, because their taxes are going to be used for homelessness, environment etc. Countries like the United States, a lot of people donate to the charity, because the government does not look after the people very well etc.

In South Africa is relatively easy to raise donation that you can make people to convince, because of they have a lot of social issues. But, at the same time, the population does not have a lot of disposable income. So, it is quite difficult to donate.

Cansu: What were the main financial obstacles and how did you overcome the obstacles?

We struggle a lot to get small donations. You know like small donations from supporters. I think the big obstacles, it is very hard to convince people what we do as effective, valuable and less experienced that you.

The second is there is a lot of competition among NGOs for funding. Instead of working together, competing NGOs each other, I think that's very unsustainable. I think another issue, very oppressive issue is due to the corruption in nonprofit sector, a lot of foundations now would say we will give the money which is not allowed to use that money to pay team members. For example, a foundation will give us a million euros and they will take 900.000 euros and pay the salaries and the rest 100.000 euros would get left for the impact. So now, ok, we will give the money, but not allowed to build your team. So, we could not have enough success with small donations. So, we focus on getting bigger partners with companies and foundations. But, it is quite insecure these funding resources.





Cansu: Do you think that there is a kind of rivalry and competition in third sector? Do you think that this is a little bit contrary the mindset of NGOs and nonprofit organizations?

There is absolutely competition for funding, very sadly. In my opinion, it should be much more collaborative. In last two years actually, since CO-VID, we see more collaboration, but it is still very competitive in terms of getting funding. I have seen for **Global Change Makers** for example, we partnered with a lot of NGOs to our programs, so, we are trying to practice this elemental collaboration, just to try to share resources and get back to the idea of collaboration that we would bring together. But, there is definitely competition.

Cansu: What are the strategies, tactics to convince your individual donators, foundations and your volunteers to get involve in Global Change Makers?

The proof of our work. So, showing what the money would do, showing the value of investing in young people for us the strategy on that. But, in terms of how we get the volunteers, we are actually lucky, we do not have the strategy to get volunteers, only we need them to say hi, we are looking for volunteers and involve getting. There are a lot of applications. So, this is not a specific strategy for volunteers.

Cansu: Did you get other supports from social enterprises, NGOs and nonprofit organizations? A kind of business partnership?

Over the years we have done, for sure.





Cansu: What would be your advices and your suggestions for the newcomers who would become a social entrepreneur?

My advice would be firstly, is to understand the system within which the problem exists, understand the different elements, the different players. Who is impacted? Who does get impacting? What are the contributive factors regarding the issue. So, I think deeply understand the system within which are the problems exist. It is the first place to start.

Second one is to think about who is the most impacted by the problem and solve to create the solution for the people who are most impacted by the problem and not what you think the solution for the problem is because often I see young social entrepreneurs have nice ideas, but, it is not actually solve for the specific people who are trying to solve the issue. So, those are two biggest advices that I would give.

Third thing is to just start, you can prepare prepare, plan and learn, but you won't never be able to be prepared fully for journey of social entrepreneurship, because so much would come up on the way. Just start and plan, you know you will be able to learn on the goal and create opportunities and will make work.

Even before that, I would encourage all potential social entrepreneurs and change makers; it is the first to look at what has already been done in the area of interested. For example, it would be climate change or circular economy or gender based violence whatever issues that you are working on. First look and see if you can work with them, because that the more NGOs and other social businesses, not more social businesses, but NGOs, they are. The more competitions, it going to be funding. If we work together, I will support existing projects that are defending, actually go to the issues themselves. So, that's I think the first thing before looking the system, design thinking and perseverance.



Global Change Makers, we have online course which teaches all skills that we have talked about today and there are lots of the opportunity to apply for seed funding. One of the hardest things for the especially young entrepreneurs is to access the money for their work. And so, if they complete this online course with Global Change Makers, they will have been access to apply for funding. That's something is just another resource that would be helpful to share with them.

Cansu: Thanks for your time, contributions and remarks.



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Turkey

AN NSPIRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CASE STUDY

İhtiyaç Haritası (Needs Map), Turkey



More than 6 years, Kemal Çelik has been working in the field of development, social entrepreneurship and social finance, especially impact investing and crowdfunding. He is currently responsible for developing strategic partnerships with third partners, preparing proposals and national/international grants, and implementation of the projects.

Launched on October 7th, 2015 at the UNDP Social Good Summit, İhtiyaç Haritası (NeedsMap) is an online platform, where people in need of something can connect with those who can help them around the country. In addition to this, anyone who would like to offer support is able to submit it to the system. The main point of the social initiative is that it is possible to ask for any type of need from veterinary services to school materials and even volunteers for a social project. Direct money demands, personal or food requests are not approved. A map of Turkey pops up on the home page with numbers on different cities, indicating how many need requests have been submitted for that area. It is online, so it reaches every city, every house or every single person with internet access.



Fatma: *Could you give us a brief introduction to your Social Enterprise?*

Kemal: I can explain the needs map under 3 headings. First of all, we do social responsibility projects with companies. Secondly, we make thematic maps for all institutions. Thirdly, İhtiyaç haritası is a social marketplace. Our project took shape with the first Elazığ Earthquake in Turkey. We realized that there were people in great need there, and we conducted our first fieldwork here. There was a lot of material coming in to support the disaster victims, but the information on where more is needed in terms of location was lacking. Warehouse control was required but this was not sufficient. In summary, we observed the problems and developed our project while doing our fieldwork there.

Fatma: *Please describe your motivation for becoming a social entrepreneur. Why did you choose this route rather than a 'conventional' career, and where did the idea for your enterprise come from?*

Kemal: I think this question is the first question in the minds of everyone who is preparing to step into social entrepreneurship. We decided to continue our career as a non-profit organization. You don't have many opportunities for this in Turkey. You have to be either a foundation or an association. Then we started our journey as a cooperative with the aim of social impact.

Fatma: *Did you manage to receive any support like guidelines, mentorship, training for “İhtiyaç Haritası”?*

Kemal: We got a lot of support from various people. We have just organized an online concert and we were selling tickets to participants. The concert took 12 hours and we collected a lot of money and 52 artists joined the event. We got 13 million views on Youtube. Our 85 percent of financial need has been met with the money collected in this event. This was not an activity we did from a development perspective. We received the support of many different groups such as health workers, artists, and students. In addition, the European Delegation gave financial support to this event.



Fatma: *How much support have you had from other [social] entrepreneurs? Has it been useful and/or would you like more opportunities for peer-to-peer exchanges of knowledge and experience?*

Kemal: We try to get a lot of support from other social enterprises, but our own team is a very creative team. Every time we get together, a lot of ideas come up. Peer learning is very important to us, so we follow social initiatives. We follow and cooperate with social enterprises that have similar goals with us.

Fatma: *What kind of support do you get in the software field? Is there a special group on your team that deals with the technical part?*

Kemal: We didn't have a technical team until 2 years ago because we didn't need it. We were using Google Maps and its features, and a partner's friend was handling the technical parts. Later on, we started working with software developers.

Fatma: What kind of economic road did you follow to develop your social enterprise? Is there a certain income system? When you first started this project, did you start with donations or funding?

Kemal: Unfortunately, when you start such projects in Turkey, there is not much support. We could not get funding support because they saw us as a non-governmental organization in Turkey.

Unilever looks at the "İhtiyaç Haritası" every year and meets the needs of all schools that need cleaning supplies. Although it is difficult to find financial support in Turkey, we manage to receive financial support from various institutions.

Fatma: We know that you are a very diversified team with people from different backgrounds. Which skills and areas of knowledge did your team bring to your initiative from the outset? Which did you need to develop as the journey progressed, and how did you develop them?

Kemal: We have seen that creative works are created by different people coming together. To give an example, Ali Ercan Özgür from our team works in local development, is an entrepreneur and knows the field very well. Mert Fırat is an artist and knows the artistic part of the work and always looks at it from the perspective of social benefit. There are some directors among our founders. We also have executives who have another firm.

Fatma: Which alternative sources of funding did you explore, and why did you accept / reject them?

Kemal: We are now seen as a non-profit organization in the international arena. For this reason, we have the opportunity to benefit from the funds of the European Union. We also receive some assistance under the name of "impact investment". In a previous project, Mastercard provided us with financial support under the name of impact investment.

Fatma: Do you have any tool or strategy to measure your social impact?

Kemal: We measured our social impact only once. Apart from this, we conducted studies measuring the impact of project-based projects. When we receive a fund and we do a project or event, we measure its social impact. We do not currently have a tool, but we want to move forward by measuring our social impact towards the end of 2022.

Fatma: What are your recommendations for people who are about to become social entrepreneurs?

Kemal: My first suggestion to those who are on this road or thinking of starting out is not to focus a lot on money. You will find the funding at the end. The important thing is to step into the world of social entrepreneurship with a truly dedicated group. The second is to find the right legal status. You need to think carefully about how you will define yourself. Third, your business model should be robust and every step should be developed in detail. When you pitch in front of an investor, the part that we call the "value proposition" that makes you different is very critical. You need to be able to explain yourself and your business model in detail.



Fatma: Thank you so much for taking your time to tell your story for us. It was a pleasure to listen to your story!

Kemal: You're welcome.



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AN INSPIRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CASE STUDY

PinGOin, Turkey



Melike Yüksel graduated from Bilkent University, Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design in 2018. She is currently doing her master's degree at Hacettepe University, Department of Interior Architecture. She works in accessibility and business development at PinGOin.

PinGOin is a social enterprise that produces solutions that will make spaces and society more inclusive in order to reduce the inequalities experienced by people with disabilities and different access criteria in social environments.



The PinGOin team explains PinGOin as a social space, much more than the ambiance of the place and the quality of the service: The social space is a door. As a door to new opportunities, happiness and new experiences... PinGOin wants to make the social life

experience offered to us by places equal for everyone.

Fatma: Could you give us a brief introduction to your Social Enterprise?

Melike: Beyond the feeling of love, compassion and cooperation for 8.5 million disabled people living in Turkey; works on the basis of equality, rights-based understanding and acting together. It prepares non-disabled people to raise awareness about accessibility, take action and be part of change, rather than being handled only by people with disabilities. PinGOin works to remove all barriers between us in order to be able to enter through the door, use the toilet, and communicate with people when deciding to go to a place. For 8.5 million disabled people living in Turkey, not only with love, compassion and enthusiasm for cooperation; it proceeds on the basis of equality, rights-based understanding and acting together.

Fatma: Can you explain your motivation to step into the world of social entrepreneurs? Why did you choose this route instead of a 'traditional' career and how did you come up with your entrepreneurial business idea?

Melike: I benefited from the social benefits of my profession, I wanted to be in this field. The idea for the enterprise was born thanks to a competition about social entrepreneurship. Before that, I did not know about social entrepreneurship.

Fatma: What skills and knowledge areas have you used from the very beginning of your enterprise? What skills did you need to develop as your entrepreneurial journey progressed, and how did you develop them?

Melike: Thanks to my profession, I have used my knowledge and skills in design, human-oriented thinking, and universal design. Later, I received training such as resource development, volunteer management, and institutionalization. I have developed these skills through incubation mentoring and training programs.



Fatma: *How was your enterprise financed in the first place? How easy was it for you to access the funds? What alternative sources of financing did you discover and why did you accept/reject them?*

Melike: It was not funded for a long time, except for the prize we won from the competition. It was not easy for us, as we did not have legal personality and could not create a sustainable income model. Then we found small grants, like NDI and Sivil Düşün. PinGOin stands out with its three main activities; first of all by creating a volunteer community, it acts as a platform that brings together people who want to act together on disability and accessibility issues. On this platform, he pins the venues with his volunteers. Secondly, it informs its users about the accessibility of social spaces by presenting the space data obtained through its volunteers. Finally it offers various architectural and behavioral awareness-raising services to make social spaces more accessible

Fatma: *What were the main obstacles you have encountered in your entrepreneurial journey and how did you overcome them?*

Melike: We have received a lot of criticism that we work in the field of disability, but we are not disabled. Therefore we established a working group consisting of people with disabilities. We could not operate in the pandemic, instead we focused on the institutionalization process. We still find it difficult to express ourselves that what we do is not helping people with disabilities but advocating for their rights.

Fatma: *How much support did you receive from other [social] entrepreneurs? Was this helpful for you and/or would you like to have more opportunities for peer-to-peer exchange of knowledge and experience?*

Melike: At Istasyon TEDU, we received support from social enterprises that we worked with in the same environment through experience transfer. It was very helpful.

Fatma: *How do you measure the impact you have created with your enterprise?*

Melike: We do not have a system for impact measurement yet, but the number of people who pin and use venues on our website is important to us. PinGOin dreams of providing equal experience for everyone in social spaces. For this reason, we aim to provide information on more access criteria among future goals.



Fatma: *Finally, what are your suggestions for improving and improving the level of support for social entrepreneurs in your country?*

Melike: The majority of social enterprises are aware of the significance of measuring social effect, but they do not do so due to a lack of resources (both in terms of time and knowledge). Although there is growing recognition of the significance of social effect, there are still implementation challenges in the field of managing and measuring social impact. It is crucial to educate social entrepreneurs about available support resources and expand current support systems.

The demand for social impact measurement training is significant, and intermediary and support organizations play a crucial part in this process. Supporting the support groups directly in this area will aid in the ecosystem's greater development.

Fatma: *What are your recommendations for people who are about to become social entrepreneurs?*

Melike: My advice for beginners is to talk to anyone about your concept because, in my opinion, it's crucial that people may be incredibly private about their thoughts. Additionally, getting input is

mostly a result of putting ideas out there. Try to enroll in programs that facilitate the speedy introduction of businesspeople to entrepreneurs, whether they are social entrepreneurs or not. Furthermore, because the program is frequently linked to a source of funding, whether it be a foundation or you know, it is crucial to be recognized, and in this ecosystem to be able to find support.

Fatma: Thank you so much for taking your time. It was a pleasure to listen to your story!

Melike: You're welcome.

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