

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

# **‘Using Impact Measurement to Scale What Works in Social Innovation and Social Inclusion: Impact Measurement as a Lever to Enhance Effectiveness, Support Scaling-up and Inform ESF Operations’**

## **Summary Report**

5-6 March 2026, Brussels



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## 1. Background information

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### 1.1. Objectives

The study visit 'Using Impact Measurement to Scale What Works in Social Innovation and Social Inclusion: Impact Measurement as a Lever to Enhance Effectiveness, Support Scaling-up and Inform ESF Operations' was organised by the Communities of Practice (CoPs) on Social Innovation and on Social Inclusion.

Building on the joint online workshop '[Sharing Visions, Challenges and Practices in Impact Measurement](#)' held on 18 November 2025 this study visit aimed to deepen the shared understanding of social impact measurement as a strategic tool. While the online workshop focused on identifying challenges, concepts and emerging practices, the on-site visit was designed to translate reflection into concrete learning by bringing together Managing Authorities (MAs), National Competence Centres (NCCs), project promoters, evaluators and beneficiaries around real-life cases already being implemented.

### 1.2. Target group

The event was intended for the members of both CoPs, including ESF+ Bodies (ESF+ Managing Authorities and Implementing Bodies), National Competence Centres, project promoters and beneficiaries.

### 1.3. Number of participants

A total of 96 participants attended the event.

### 1.4. Geographical spread

Participants from the following 21 Member States (MS) attended the event: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

## 2. Main findings

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### 2.1. Key outcomes

The opening keynote was delivered by **Christoph Nerlich** (Head of Unit, EMPL G.1 – European Social Fund +, Directorate-General for Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission) who started by thanking participants and welcoming members of the Communities of Practice on Social Innovation and Social Inclusion, emphasising their shared commitment to strengthening Europe's social fabric. He highlighted that social innovation, and particularly the measurement of social impact, is essential not only to improve effectiveness but also to demonstrate results and scale successful approaches. He underscored the central role of the ESF+ in supporting social inclusion, with significant investments targeting disadvantaged groups (such as persons with disabilities and children at risk of poverty) and a continued strong focus in the next MFF despite growing social challenges. Stressing that social inclusion is key to Europe's economic resilience and cohesion, he pointed to planned funding and priorities such as tackling child poverty. He also called for continued collaboration to advance social innovation, highlighting the role of the EU Facility under the future Multiannual Financial Framework, National Competence Centres, and Communities of Practice in fostering experimentation and exchanging best practices.

**Benedict Wauters** (Director, European Social Fund Department in the Flemish Ministry of Labour, Economy, Science, Innovation and Social Economy) presented different methods, levels of impact measurement and visions. He explained the role of evaluation in improving action, deployed through various methods including counterfactual evaluation, participatory research or theory of change (ToC)-based case studies. These methods do not follow a hierarchy but serve as learning tools to improve and adapt policies, while presenting a low predictably and with interventions remaining volatile in their effectiveness across time and groups. His presentation established the framework for the event by distinguishing three roles for ESF+ funding (enhancers, innovators and system innovators) and arguing that evaluation methodology must be proportionate to the type of intervention.

Lead Expert of the CoP on Social Inclusion **Luk Zelderloo** explained how the event builds on the outcomes of the 18 November 2025 online event '[Sharing Visions, Challenges and Practices in Impact Measurement](#)'. He called participants' attention to going beyond countable data and accountability, and to using impact measurement as a driver of change and innovation.

Lead Expert of the CoP on Social Innovation **Sofia Lai Amândio** used the 'Evaluation under ESF+' timeline (refer to Annex B) to illustrate the evolution from a focus on financial absorption in 1957, to rigid sanctions, and later to more flexible, 'living' programmes in 2021–2027, providing room for social innovation and making counterfactual evaluation optional. She advocated for evaluation approaches that are proportionate, learning-oriented and tailored to the nature of the intervention.

Keynote presentation by **Giulio Pasi** (Policy Officer, EMPL G.3 – Social and Inclusive Entrepreneurship, European Commission) highlighted the importance of moving beyond impact measurement towards impact management, as a way to enhance the strategic contribution of social innovation and social inclusion. In the past decade, learning how to measure impact stood centrally; in the coming period, the new focus will be on learning how to manage it. This shift is driven by a legitimacy crisis societies face, with weakening links between institutions and communities. He posed a key question when examining interventions: does the intervention contribute to restoring the sense of purpose, trust and direction, or is it merely about discussing indicators? If impact assessment becomes a ritual, interventions may undermine trust. Impact management is about getting directional clarity from the generated knowledge. He encouraged participants to shift from a corrective to a generative understanding of evaluation, by integrating it during the process and not only at the end. The presentation introduced the joint European Commission and OECD report '[Measuring, Managing, and Maximising Impact for the Social Economy](#)', which proposes three fundamental shifts: from proving to improving, from isolated projects to ecosystems, and from fragmented language to shared conceptual foundations.

The keynote presentation by **Caroline Godts** and **Tomas De Groote** (Thematic Experts, Sociale InnovatieFabriek) dived into the social innovation and social inclusion landscape in Belgium through the lens of impact measurement. They introduced the context of Belgium/Flanders, providing an overview of the social innovation ecosystem, governance frameworks, and current approaches to social impact measurement within ESF+ and related policies, including the role of the NCC. The presenters explained the work of the Sociale InnovatieFabriek, which has more than 500 initiatives in its community, where members mainly join to avoid the start-up trap, to grow and scale-up nationally and internationally, and to receive intensive shared learning. Impact measurement takes place on two levels: micro (i.e. SI support level) and meso (i.e. ecosystem level), as a way to build partnerships, create learning loops and initiate adaptation paths. Besides the Sociale InnovatieFabriek, there are about 100 community living and social innovation spaces in Belgium. Sociale InnovatieFabriek helps SI and local spaces to co-create ideas, to define their Theory of Change (ToC) and to develop impact measurement strategies. The speakers highlighted the importance of building bridges, and of developing a shared understanding and shared language to measure impact and create common indicators where possible.

The **round table discussion** explored cross-sectoral perspectives and challenges in impact measurement and effectiveness, with input from **Benedict Wauters**, **Lydia Fenner** (Manager, Impacts Team, AVISE), **Catherine Noughton** (Director, the European Disability Forum), **Daniel Krüger** (Research Associate, Social Research Centre, TU Dortmund University) and **Thomas Bignal** (Secretary General, European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities). Key takeaways from the discussion included:

- Methodological diversity is essential, as no single evaluation approach fits all social inclusion contexts. For example, neo-positivist methods (RCTs, counterfactuals) work for simple interventions but fail to capture complex systemic challenges. If counterfactual evaluation is mandated, it risks creating a bias that excludes participatory, qualitative and emancipatory approaches needed for social innovation.
- Growing demands to prove impact may overwhelm small projects lacking resources for sophisticated evaluation and they may create a compliance burden rather than a learning opportunity, unless accompanied by appropriate capacity support.
- Instead of being used only as data sources, people facing exclusion need to be involved in shaping outcomes and interpreting findings alongside researchers, evaluators, and other institutions involved.
- Ecosystem collaboration is non-negotiable, as no actor can scale alone: practitioners need intermediaries, funders need evidence translators, and policymakers need practice-grounded case studies.
- Impact unfolds through context, power dynamics and relationships, and understanding 'how and why' impact emerges matters more than simply confirming that it happened.
- Participation of Civil Society organisations in monitoring committees is unequal throughout Member States. There should be dedicated support provided to them to contribute to the development of meaningful indicators and consequently impact assessment.
- Concerns as regards the 'performance-based framework' proposed by the European Commission for the next MFF, notably on the output and result indicators.

The presentation by **Tomas De Groote** and **Caroline Godts** brought to participants their expertise on scaling-up impact: from practice to policy based on what, how, and why to scale. This session linked the 18 November 2025 online workshop to the study visit by revisiting key challenges in impact measurement and focusing on how impact can be sustained and scaled beyond individual projects. The speakers explained how Belgian social innovation initiatives are scaled and replicated, guiding participants from defining interventions ('what'), through implementation ('how'), to understanding underlying rationales given the societal challenges that they try to tackle ('why'). They pointed out the differences between scaling up, scaling out, scaling deep and scaling down, and encouraged to diversify pathways to policy mainstreaming. Growth finance, capacity building and socially responsible procurement are important levers, as are a clear ToC and impact measurement. As they observed in the Belgian ecosystem, the main challenges of impact measurement are the limited capacity to implement and sustain it, given lack of access to data and constrains in time and budget.

In the second half of the day, a **Promising Practices Lab** took place as an interactive learning space to feature promising practices from Flanders, Brussels, and across the EU, addressing three social inclusion priorities: children growing up in poverty, and those living in segregated or institutional care. Participants engaged directly with practitioners in a 'market-style' setting to explore how initiatives measure, manage, and adapt their impact through real-time dialogue and community feedback. Nine selected cases were presented (see description in Annex B).

On the second day, **Szilvia Simon** (Thematic Expert, Community of Practice on Social Innovation) opened the event with her practitioner's perspective on impact measurement. Her recommendation was to keep integrating different perspectives, so that practical, scientific and policy-oriented evaluations can strengthen each other towards the same purpose.

Designed as peer-learning spaces, **the thematic workshops** (see Annex B) addressed themes such as impact definitions, methodologies and indicators, cross-sector alignment, ToC coherence and long-term impact measurement.

The **summary of the event** brought about an interactive exchange of impressions and findings. Participants expressed a need for long-term tracking of outcomes and for more qualitative data. More generally, participants highlighted the lack of policy indicators, which makes it challenging to inform policy with relevant information and results. Capacity building remains a key feature of ESF+, and CoPs members appreciate the learning opportunities.

In his closing remarks, **Aurélien Mornon Afonso** (Policy Assistant, EMPL G.1 – European Social Fund +, Directorate-General for Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission) underlined that social innovation is central to social inclusion. He also stressed the importance of empowering local actors, empowering people (especially those most in need) and building meaningful partnerships between different actors working on social innovation and inclusion at European, national, regional and local levels.

## 2.2 Participant feedback

Overall, participants feedback during the event was highly positive. The collaborative atmosphere, the sense of community, and the smooth interaction among participants, speakers and facilitators were widely appreciated and perceived as welcoming and conducive to open exchange.

Participants expressed strong appreciation for the contributions delivered by the keynote speakers and panel members, which were considered insightful and stimulating for discussion.

The Practices Lab format was positively received and considered a valuable alternative to traditional field visits, enabling participants to explore concrete practices and experiences.

## 2.3 Impact

The discussions during the event generated several key reflections regarding impact measurement and the broader role of evaluation in social policy and ESF+ programme implementation. The main insights emerging from the exchanges include:

- A need to reconsider current approaches to impact measurement, with greater emphasis on **learning and improvement** rather than solely on compliance.
- The involvement of all relevant actors, including **final beneficiaries**, should be considered a core principle of programme design and implementation. In this context, NCCs can play an important role as **neutral facilitators and mediators for co-creation processes**.
- Many stakeholders experience difficulties in developing indicators capable of capturing **real changes in people's lives** (e.g. assessing the development of 'soft' skills). Excessive focus on formal data reporting ('data washing') risks undermining meaningful evaluation processes.

- Establishing strong connections with the people directly concerned is essential to ensure that interventions address real needs. This requires ongoing capacity building across the wider ecosystem of stakeholders.
- Impact assessment should incorporate **multiple perspectives**, including those of beneficiaries, and the participation of affected groups should be adequately supported and financed.
- Emphasis should be placed on **the quality rather than the quantity** of indicators. Proactively defining what 'impact' means is essential. Qualitative approaches such as storytelling, focus groups and participatory methodologies can complement quantitative monitoring.
- While impact measurement is a formal ESF+ requirement, it also contributes to **democratic accountability**, helps identify effective approaches and supports understanding of what generates sustainable change.
- Impact assessment can also support policymakers and practitioners in navigating **complex social inclusion challenges**.

The longer-term impact of the event will depend on the follow-up actions undertaken.

### 3. Lessons learned

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#### 3.1 What worked well

Several elements of the event were identified as particularly successful:

- The strong interaction among participants, speakers and panellists created an empowering and collaborative learning environment.
- The keynote speeches were considered inspiring and thought-provoking, stimulating debate among participants.
- The event structure, combining keynote inputs, panel discussions, exchange of practices and thematic workshops, proved to be an effective and productive format for peer learning.

#### 3.2 Areas for improvement

Participants and organisers also identified several aspects that could be improved in future events:

- During the workshops, participants generated a number of valuable insights and key messages. Introducing dedicated rapporteurs in future sessions could help ensure that all contributions are fully captured and effectively shared with the plenary.
- The two CoPs operate within distinct ecosystems, terminology, and working cultures. Clarifying these differences at the beginning of the event could facilitate mutual understanding and collaboration.

#### 3.3 Recommendations

Based on the experience of this event, the following recommendations can be considered for future initiatives:

- While participants expressed high levels of satisfaction, placing greater emphasis on producing a concrete final output could further enhance the added value of similar events.
- The keynote presentations introduced challenging and innovative perspectives. Allowing additional time for deeper discussion and reflection could help participants further explore and operationalise these ideas.

### 4. Next steps

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#### 4.1 Follow-up actions

Both CoPs will review the outcomes of the event and the feedback received from participants.

#### 4.2 Upcoming events

CoP on Social Innovation events:

- The Action Learning Set (ALS) for the representatives of the Managing Authorities (Online, 22 April)
- Study visit to Poland under the CoP priority No 3: Facilitating and accelerating the upscaling of proven social innovations (Onsite, 16-17 June)

CoP on Social Inclusion events:

- Effective Interventions Require Blending of Funds (Online, May)
- Event on the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy and strengthening of the European Child Guarantee (Online, September)
- Preventing the Social Exclusion of Disadvantaged Groups Through Innovative ESF-Funded Activities (Onsite, joint event with the CoP on Migrant Integration, Greece).

## Annexes

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- A. Agenda of the event
- B. 'Evaluation under ESF+' timeline
- C. Description of Promising Practices and Thematic Workshops
- D. Presentations

## ANNEX A

### European Competence Centre for Social Innovation

# Joint event: 'Using Impact Measurement to Scale What Works in Social Innovation and Social Inclusion'

## Key information

Date: 5-6 March 2026

Location: Onsite

## Agenda

Time (CET)	5 March
09:00 - 09:30	<b>Registration</b>
09:30 - 09:50	<b>Opening and Welcome</b> Christoph Nerlich, Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Social Affairs and Inclusion, the European Commission Benedict Wauters, Director, European Social Fund Department in the Flemish Ministry of Labour, Economy, Science, Innovation and Social Economy (Belgium)
09:50 - 10:00	<b>Introduction to the Event</b> The Lead Experts of the Communities of Practice on Social Innovation and Social Inclusion will present the objectives, structure, and working approach of the study visit, explain how it builds on the outcomes of the 18 November online workshop, and clarify participants' active role as well as the expected outputs and outcomes of the two-day programme. Luk Zelderloo, Lead Expert, Community of Practice on Social Inclusion Sofia Lai Amândio, Lead Expert, Community of Practice on Social Innovation
10:00 - 10:30	<b>Beyond Impact Measurement: Managing Impact to Enhance the Strategic Contribution of Social Innovation and Social Inclusion</b> Giulio Pasi, Policy Officer, the European Commission

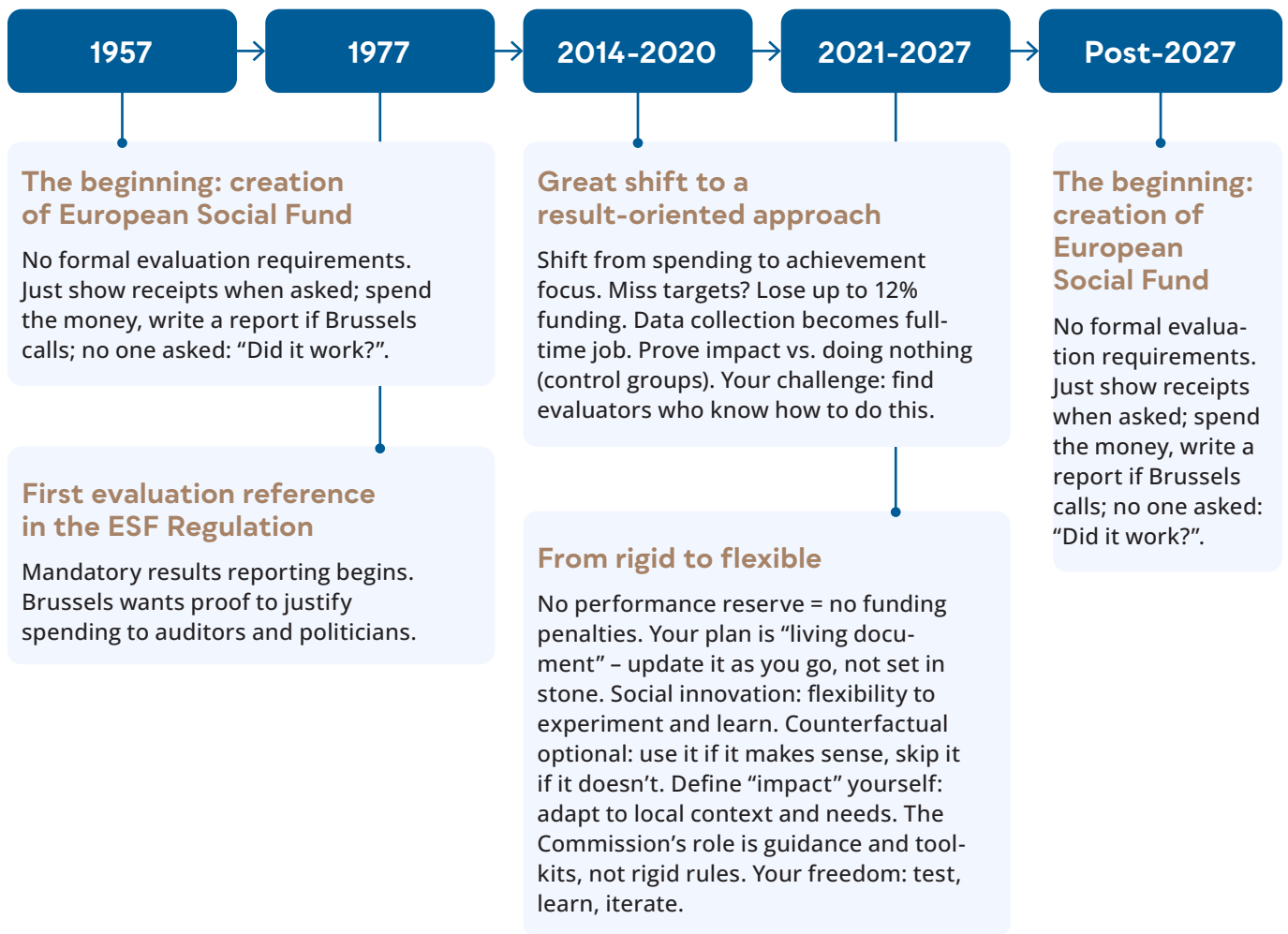
10:30 - 11:00	<p><b>Keynote presentation. The Social Innovation and Social Inclusion Landscape in Belgium through the lens of Impact Measurement</b></p> <p>Introduction to the host context (Belgium/Flanders), providing an overview of the social innovation ecosystem, governance frameworks, and current approaches to social impact measurement within ESF+ and related policies, including the role of the National Competence Centre. The session also sets a practical reference point for the study visit.</p> <p>Caroline Godts, Thematic Expert, Sociale Innovatie Fabriek (Belgium) Tomas De Groote, Thematic Expert, Sociale Innovatie Fabriek (Belgium)</p>
11:00 - 11:30	<p><b>Coffee Break</b></p>
11:30 - 12:30	<p><b>Roundtable: Cross Sectoral Perspectives and Challenges on Impact Measurement and Effectiveness</b></p> <p>Facilitated by Sofia Lai Amândio and Luk Zelderloo, Lead Experts of the Communities of Practice on Social Innovation and Social Inclusion</p> <p>Benedict Wauters, Director, European Social Fund Department in the Flemish Ministry of Labour, Economy, Science, Innovation and Social Economy (Belgium) Lydia Fenner, Manager, Impacts Team, AVISE Catherine Noughton, Director, the European Disability Forum Daniel Krüger, Research Associate, Social Research Center, TU Dortmund University Thomas Bignal, Secretary General, European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities</p>
12:30 - 13:00	<p><b>Scaling-up Impact: From Practice to Policy (What, How, and Why?)</b></p> <p>This session links the 18 November online workshop to the study visit by revisiting key challenges in impact measurement and focusing on how impact can be sustained and scaled beyond individual projects. Building on the keynote, it explores how Belgian social innovation initiatives are scaled and replicated, guiding participants from defining interventions (“what”), through implementation (“how”), to understanding underlying rationales (“why”).</p> <p>Tomas De Groote, Thematic Expert, Sociale Innovatie Fabriek (Belgium) Caroline Godts, Thematic Expert, Sociale Innovatie Fabriek (Belgium)</p>
13:00 - 14:15	<p><b>Lunch</b></p>
14:15 - 14:30	<p><b>Introduction to the Promising Practices Lab</b></p> <p>Tomas De Groote, Thematic Expert, Sociale Innovatie Fabriek (Belgium)</p>

14:30 - 15:30	<p><b>The Promising Practices Lab</b></p> <p>The Promising Practices Lab is an interactive learning space featuring up to promising practices from Flanders, Brussels, and across the EU, addressing three social inclusion priorities. Participants engage directly with practitioners in a “market-style” setting to explore how initiatives measure, manage, and adapt their impact through real-time dialogue and community feedback. The Lab showcases the iterative reality of scaling social innovation and serves as a menu for Day 2 workshops, where selected cases will be explored in greater depth. List of Promising Practices: 1. Konekt - Thematic area: Deinstitutionalisation 2. FIX - Thematic area: Child poverty, poverty 3. Community oriented entrepreneurship - Thematic area: Deinstitutionalisation, community living 4. Circularium and Makett - Thematic area: Circularity, social inclusion/homelessness 5. Kanzo - Thematic area: Child poverty 6. Brooddoosnodig by Enchante vzw - Thematic area: Child poverty 7. Homaar - Thematic area: Child poverty 8. Homie - Thematic area: Deinstitutionalisation, homelessness, child poverty 9. Gezondheidskiosk - Thematic area: Child poverty, Homelessness</p>
15:30 - 16:00	<b>Coffee Break</b>
16:00 - 17:00	<b>The Promising Practices Lab</b>
17:00 - 17:30	<p><b>Feedback and Reflection from Day One</b></p> <p>Participants will share insights from the day's learning, highlighting takeaways, questions, and connections to their national contexts. This reflective session bridges Day 1 content with Day 2 workshops.</p>
17:30 - 18:00	<b>Registration to the Thematic Workshops of Day 2</b>
19:00 - 21:00	<b>Dinner</b>

Time (CET)	6 March
09:00 - 09:15	<p><b>Introduction to the Workshops</b></p> <p>Szilvia Simon, Thematic Expert of the Community of Practice on Social Innovation</p>
09:15 - 10:15	<p><b>Thematic Workshops</b></p> <p>1. A Minimal Viable Common Approach for Social Impact 2. Stakeholder-Designed Indicators for Impact Measurement 3. Barriers to Effective Impact Measurement 4. Collective Impact Lab – a Collective Impact Measurement Approach in the Brussels Capital Region 5. Collective Impact Management – Best Practices Based on Concrete Case Studies 6. The co-creation and validation of a Theory of Change for local incubators for social innovation in Flanders 7. Advocacy Through Impact Assessment Results 8. Impact Assessment. Using Artificial Intelligence</p>
10:15 - 10:45	<b>Coffee Break</b>
10:45 - 11:30	<p><b>Thematic Workshops</b></p> <p>A second round of workshops allows participants to either deepen their engagement with the same case or explore a different practice.</p>
11:30 - 11:50	<b>Feedback from Workshops</b>

11:50 - 12:00	<b>Closing Remarks</b> Luk Zelderloo, Lead Expert, Community of Practice on Social Inclusion Sofia Lai Amândio, Lead Expert, Community of Practice on Social Innovation Tomas De Groote, Thematic Expert, Sociale Innovatie Fabriek Aurélien Mornon Afonso, DG EMPL, European Commission
12:00 - 13:00	<b>Lunch and Departure</b>

# Evaluation under ESF +



## ANNEX C

### The Promising Practices Lab. Project Descriptions

5 March, 14.30-17.00

#### 1. Konekt

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**Thematic area(s):** Deinstitutionalisation

##### Description

Konekt works towards an inclusive society where people with and without disabilities can live, learn and work together. Its goal is to reduce barriers and normalise inclusion in everyday settings across Flanders and Brussels.

The organisation supports employers, schools and service providers through training, coaching and practical tools. It also convenes partners and campaigns to build shared understanding and coordinated action in the ecosystem.

Konekt's innovative approach lies in its combination of awareness-raising with hands on implementation support, helping organisations turn their inclusion intentions into concrete changes in recruitment, learning environments and daily practice.

##### Key people

**Koen Deweer:** Founder and Managing Director of Konekt. He is known for long term work on disability inclusion, combining partnership-building with practical support for organisations to create inclusive education and employment pathways.

**Jef Dolfyn** is a connector and inclusion ambassador at Konekt, bringing people together and supporting young people to develop their talents. He actively champions a more inclusive society through initiatives such as Konekt's Inclusion Hubs and youth participation work.

#### 2. FIX

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**Thematic area(s):** Child poverty, poverty

##### Description

FIX is a Brussels work experience project that improves learning environments in Dutch speaking schools and other public buildings while creating pathways to employment in the construction sector. It aims to strengthen quality of life through work and skills development.

FIX delivers renovation works and related services while running a practice-based training programme for jobseekers who are still finding their place in the labour market. Participants gain experience on real worksites, receive coaching from instructors, and build job readiness alongside technical skills.

The innovative aspect is the dual value model: public infrastructure is improved while people who face labour market barriers build a credible skills profile through real assignments and workplace learning, supported by structured guidance.

##### Key people

**Eva De Smedt** (Director) and **Hilde Van Wassenhove** (HR Responsible).

### 3. Community oriented entrepreneurship

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**Thematic area(s):** Deinstitutionalisation, community living

#### Description

Dorpspunt ('village point') in Beveren-aan-de-IJzer is a community meeting place run by people with intellectual and multiple disabilities, supported by De Lovie (NPO). It helps residents reconnect and access practical services that have gradually disappeared from the village.

Dorpspunt combines a welcoming public space with everyday functions such as a meeting corner, small-scale services, and local connections. The model creates meaningful roles for people with a disability and strengthens community cohesion through regular interaction with neighbours and visitors. At the moment, De Lovie vzw supports six village points located in the western corner (Westhoek) of Flanders.

Its innovation lies in turning a support service into a visible community asset: people with a disability are not only recipients of care, but hosts and connectors in village life, while the village regains accessible services and a shared place to meet. Kwaito cv, based on the hands-on experience of ten cooperative partners such as De Lovie vzw, across Flanders and Brussels, develops this experience into a new societal model called 'Community-oriented entrepreneurship'.

#### Key people

**De Lovie (NPO), Geert Vannieuwenhuyze, Staff member Training and Development:** Dorpspunten (village points) are local initiatives supported by De Lovie vzw and part of an ESF+ project learning ecosystems.

**University College VIVES, Alexia Sabbe La Velle, Researcher Inclusive Society | HR & Organization:** helps with S-ROI impact measurement, impact methods and tools supported by VIVES

**Kwaito (cooperative), Sofie Stoop, Coordinator** develops sustainable entrepreneurship and indirect care across Flanders and Brussels, based on the hands-on experience of ten cooperative partners such as De Lovie.

### 4. Circularium and Makettt

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**Thematic area(s):** Circularity, social inclusion/homelessness

#### Description

Circularium is a Brussels site of around 20,000 square metres that has been transformed into a centre for local innovation and circular production with a strong social impact orientation. It provides space and support for makers and organisations working on circular solutions.

The site hosts a community of circular production actors and offers shared infrastructure that enables prototyping, production and collaboration. Makettt coordinates the place-based approach, curates the ecosystem and connects entrepreneurs with partners, programmes and opportunities.

The innovative aspect is the combination of place-making and economic transition: Circularium links circular production with social impact objectives, lowering barriers for mission-driven entrepreneurs and creating local value in a dense urban context.

#### Founders and key people

**Gerd De Wilde:** founder of Makettt. He focuses on building collaborative ecosystems and translating sustainability ambitions into practical, locally anchored production and community development.

**Pascal Youssa:** Community manager, impact assessment

## 5. Kanzo

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**Thematic area(s):** Child poverty

### Description

Kanzo is a social impact organisation in Antwerp that aims to structurally break intergenerational poverty. It builds on a decade of practice and research to strengthen future opportunities for children and young people in vulnerable family situations.

Kanzo develops and scales approaches with families, volunteers and societal partners. A core element is connecting people across social divides and strengthening families through empowerment-oriented support, combined with alliances that translate field insights into improved practice and policy.

Its innovation is bridging proven relational support and system change: Kanzo combines a scalable method that strengthens confidence and participation with a deliberate strategy to influence how institutions and partners work with families.

### Key people

**Mathias Crab** leads Kanzo, overseeing general management and partnerships from Antwerp. He works to help break intergenerational poverty with and for young people and families by connecting actors and building support for structural solutions.

## 6. Brooddoosnodig by Enchante vzw

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**Thematic area(s):** Child poverty

### Description

Brooddoosnodig mobilises citizens, organisations and companies so schools can provide nutritious food support to pupils, adapted to local needs. It aims to reduce the impact of poverty on learning, wellbeing and participation at school.

The initiative supports schools to organise food support such as breakfast cupboards, snacks, soup or sandwiches, and it activates a local network of supporters to make this feasible and sustainable. The approach is designed to be practical for schools and respectful for pupils.

Its innovation lies in normalising support without stigma: schools can quickly set up a solution that fits their context, while a broad community shares responsibility for ensuring children start the school day with the basics in place.

### Key people

Cradle organisation is Enchante NPO, that was founded by a broader group of citizens. **Kim Swyngedouw** is Coordinator at Enchanté NPO, supporting the team and setting the direction for the organisation's work on connected, caring communities.

## 7. Homaar

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**Thematic area(s): Child poverty**

### Description

Homaar is a place of growth for young people aged 15 to 23. It offers a warm and accessible setting where young people can pause, regain stability, and take the next steps in education, wellbeing and daily life.

Homaar works with small groups and combines everyday activities with creative and therapeutic methods that help young people express themselves, build resilience and reconnect with supportive networks. It aims to respond quickly when young people struggle, reducing the risk of longer residential trajectories.

The innovative aspect is the blend of intensity and accessibility: Homaar creates a non-stigmatising environment that feels ordinary and safe, while offering structured support that bridges the gaps between youth work and specialised mental health care.

### Key people

**Marieke Degryse:** Music therapist and co-founder of Homaar, with a coordination role in the organisation. She co-developed the model that uses creative media and daily life activities as entry points for growth and support.

**Sarah Fontaine** is a clinical psychologist at Homaar Brussels

## 8. Homie

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**Thematic area(s): Deinstitutionalisation, homelessness, child poverty**

### Description

Homie is a citizen initiative supporting homeless young adults, typically aged 18 to 25. Its goal is simple and urgent: to ensure that no young person has to sleep on the street against their will, while building longer term stability across life domains.

Homie combines rapid access to safe housing with tailored support on areas such as income, work, wellbeing, administration and social networks. A distinctive element is the match with a "homie", a volunteer trusted person who strengthens connection and continuity alongside professional partners.

The innovative aspect is the community-based housing and support model: it mobilises citizens and local partners as part of the solution, reduces reliance on scarce institutional places, and strengthens social belonging as a core condition for sustainable reintegration.

### Key people

**Musti Onlen:** Founder and chair of Homie. He is a social worker and community organiser who built Homie as a citizen driven response to youth homelessness, combining immediate shelter solutions with advocacy and partnership building.

## 9. Gezondheidskiosk

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**Thematic area(s):** Child poverty, Homelessness

### Description

The Gezondheidskiosk is a low-threshold way to bring health promotion and prevention closer to people in vulnerable situations. It brings information and guidance into public spaces, where people can walk in without an appointment and ask questions about health and wellbeing.

In Antwerp, the kiosk model has been used as an outreach point to connect neighbourhood residents with preventive health support, in collaboration with local partners. In Brussels, initiatives are developing a mobile kiosk concept to bring wellbeing and health support into public spaces in areas such as Kuregem and Biestebroek.

The innovative aspect is the shift from services to proximity: instead of expecting people to navigate complex systems, the kiosk meets them in daily life, supports early detection and prevention, and strengthens trust through repeated, informal contact in the neighbourhood.

### Key people

**Initiating organisations:** The Antwerp model was initiated by a collaboration involving Lokaal Gezondheidsoverleg Antwerpen and University of Antwerp, together with neighbourhood partners. Co-Founder is [Patricia Van Pelt](#).

The project scaled out to Brussels in collaboration with NPO Goujonissimo. [Sofie Vermeulen](#) works in administration at Goujonissimo, a bilingual integrated social welfare and health centre in Anderlecht (Brussels).

## Thematic Workshops

6 March, 9.15-11.30

Participants explore selected cases from the market in depth, focusing on how impact measurement is designed and used, stakeholder involvement, and implications for scaling and policy learning. Designed as peer-learning spaces, the workshops, co-facilitated by experts, address themes such as impact definitions, methodologies and indicators, including different approaches, cross-sector alignment, and Theory of Change coherence and long-term impact measurement.

### 1. A Minimal Viable Common Approach for Social Impact

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**Facilitator: Sofia Lai Amandio, Lead Thematic Expert of the Community of Practice on Social Innovation, and Lydia Fenner, Manager Impacts Team, Avise, France**

Do we want a harmonised framework for social impact measurement? Is it possible to settle on a group of impact indicators that can be applied and collected across the 27 Member States? Is it desirable? How do we go from the set of indicators regulated by ESF+ to the KPIs that the European ecosystem of social innovation uses across sectors to measure impact? Does this cut creativity and innovation? Does this minimise the diverse nature of social innovation? This workshop explores the tension between standardisation and context-specificity in measuring social impact across Europe. Drawing on recent ESF+ Community of Practice discussions and the OECD's proportional measurement framework, we examine whether a "minimum viable" framework of indicators can balance comparability with innovation. The session aims to identify a shared measurement language that preserves local relevance while enabling cross-border learning, replication, and informs evidence-based policymaking.

### 2. Stakeholder-Designed Indicators for Impact Measurement

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**Facilitator: Luk Zelderloo, Lead Thematic Expert Community of Practice on Social Inclusion**

Within the ESF and ESF+ framework, developing meaningful and operational indicators requires a shared understanding of how interventions contribute to social inclusion and equal opportunities. Managing authorities, intermediate bodies, service providers, social partners, civil society organisations and beneficiaries often hold different views on what constitutes progress or success. These divergences can complicate the design of reliable indicators, weaken the evidence base for monitoring and evaluation, and limit the programme's capacity to demonstrate its contribution to EU policy objectives. The workshop will guide participants through a structured co-creation process in 3 stages: 1. Identify and map the expectations, information needs and regulatory requirements; 2. Analyse the coherence and potential tensions between stakeholder requirements; and 3. Formulate a consolidated set of indicators that reflect shared priorities and strengthen the programme's ability to demonstrate results and impacts at both project and programme level.

### 3. Barriers to Effective Impact Measurement

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**Facilitator: Zuzana Konradova, Thematic Expert of the Community of Practice on Social Inclusion**

Across ESF and ESF+ interventions, several recurring challenges hinder the design and implementation of effective impact measurement systems. These include financial and time constraints, administrative burden, limited perceived usefulness of collected data, concerns about diverting resources from frontline social inclusion work, and doubts about the relevance of certain indicators. Despite these barriers, robust impact measurement remains essential for fostering social innovation, improving programme effectiveness, and demonstrating the contribution of ESF investments to EU social inclusion priorities. The workshop will: 1. identify barriers and define the desired outcome, leading to a shared definition of the intended purpose of impact measurement; and 2. reverse-design the impact measurement process, starting from the agreed-upon desired outcomes, and working backwards to design an impact measurement process that is proportionate, feasible, and stakeholder-inclusive.

### 4. Collective Impact Lab – a Collective Impact Measurement Approach in the Brussels Capital Region

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**Facilitator: Caroline Godts, Social Innovation Factory, Belgium, showcasing a storytelling methodology of Voices That Count**

Why and how can a collective approach lower the threshold for initiatives to start measuring their impact, together with their colleagues in the field and key stakeholders? What does this enable in terms of learning and collaboration? This workshop introduces the Collective Impact Lab approach in the Brussels-Capital Region (funded by [Innoviris](#)): a structured, collective pathway that helps initiatives start measuring and interpreting impact together with their stakeholders. This collective approach is based on the use of a platform for impact measurement to learn about and share impact logic. Beneficiaries are involved through structured storytelling, and important stakeholders are involved to validate theories of change, indicators, and impact measurement approaches, ensuring measurement becomes useful and feasible rather than a burden. Participants of this session explore the core steps of the process (e.g., shared impact logic, stakeholder alignment, sense-making based on storytelling) and discuss what makes collective measurement feasible in practice, in a highly interactive way. Participants will reflect on the benefits and trade-offs, identify conditions for success, and gain ideas to adapt the approach to their own context.

### 5. Collective Impact Management – Best Practices Based on Concrete Case Studies

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**Facilitator: Isabelle Foucher, Impact Track**

Based on a concrete case of collective impact measurement in the field of child protection, this workshop explores how a collective approach to impact management can be designed and implemented in practice. The case study was funded by ESF+ and illustrates how it can strengthen accountability, learning and evidence-based decision-making in complex social fields. In the session, we share concrete lessons learned and best practices from a real-life collective impact measurement process, explore how such approaches can support learning, alignment and evidence building across diverse actors. Participants will dive into the key steps of the process: from building a shared evaluation framework to deploying it across organisations and using consolidated data for learning and advocacy. The session is highly interactive, combining case insights with participant reflection on how these practices could be adapted to their own ecosystems.

## 6. The co-creation and validation of a Theory of Change for local incubators for social innovation in Flanders

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**Facilitator: Tomas De Groote, Social Innovation Factory, Belgium**

In this workshop, participants work with a first draft of a theory of change model for local social innovation incubators that was co-developed by the support ecosystem of local incubators in the National Competence Center for Social Innovation in Flanders (Belgium). Together, we learn about the process of co-creating, validating, and refining the impact logic (from activities to outcomes and longer-term impact) for local incubators. We will discuss key success factors and explore how to translate the model into practical measurement: what to track in which context, with which indicators, and how to organise data collection in a realistic way. Participants will learn about a shared impact framework for incubators that captures micro-, meso- and macro- outcomes (i.e. on people, the incubator and the local ecosystem) and support shared learning across diverse local contexts. This model strengthens accountability and learning regarding the development and roll-out of local social innovation support spaces, local support ecosystems, and policy embedding.

## 7. Advocacy Through Impact Assessment Results

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**Facilitator: Szilvia Simon, Thematic Expert of the Community of Practice on Social Innovation**

Facing the pressure of scaling the reach and impact of successful interventions and innovations, we might ask ourselves: what is the role of impact assessment in communicating our added value? In the daily routine of social service providers and innovators, data collection and monitoring results are often considered a burden. At the same time, we also realise that showcasing our local, regional or national impact, can support 'selling our services' and our reason of existence. But how do we connect the different forms and levels of data collection to those we want to influence? What are ways to apply the voice of participants, the power of numbers and effectiveness scales? In the workshop 'Advocacy through impact assessment', participants explore the importance of communicating our most significant change and informing policy, industry and society as a whole.

## 8. Impact Assessment. Using Artificial Intelligence

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**Facilitation: John Healy, Thematic Expert of the National Competence Centre Working Group**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become one of the most discussed and debated topics across the social, health, and environmental fields within which we work over recent years. There has been a huge growth in interest to explore how AI could accelerate efforts to develop, evaluate, scale and mainstream solutions to societal challenges. There is a widely held belief that social innovation processes and social inclusion fields need to adapt and draw upon the power of generative AI yet there is little common understanding of specifically how AI can be employed to advance our objectives in ESF+. There are also concerns about GDPR and privacy that have made some cautious about embracing these new technologies. Others are concerned that the hype around the technology is being used to advance solutions that might do more harm than good.

After initial introductions, the workshop will commence with a focused discussion of how people are currently using AI. Participants will have a realistic assessment of the potential of AI to advance our objectives across a range of societal challenges, based on current practices. In addition, we will develop a list of three priority recommendations for the COPs to work towards to draw upon the potential of AI, whilst mitigating risks and "avoiding the hype".

