Social innovation in Austria

Jörg Mirtl, Claudia Sorger, Barbara Willsberger

With the collaboration of Lucas Meyer

European Commission
EaSI

Bundesministerium
Arbeit

EUROPÄISCHE UNION
Europäischer Sozialfonds

L&R Sozialforschung GmbH
A-1060 Vienna, Liniengasse 2A/1
tel +43 (1) 595 40 40 - 0

IMPRINT

Authors: This report was produced by L&R Social Research

Media owner:

L&R Sozialforschung GmbH, Liniengasse 2A/1, 1060 Vienna

Vienna, June 2022

www.lrsocialresearch.at

Content

1   Introduction

As part of the ESF+ (2021–27), social innovation has a relevant role; for example, the Austrian ESF+ programme dedicates a separate priority to the topic in order to specifically promote and further develop socially innovative projects. To accompany this process, the European Commission is funding the establishment of national competence centres for social innovation. In Austria, L&R Sozialforschung ('social research') and arbeit plus ('labour plus') were commissioned by the ESF Managing Authority to set up the competence centre 'Social Innovation plus' (SI plus). It is to become a central contact point for all Austrian ESF stakeholders as well as for all other relevant actors around the topic of social innovation.

SI plus is not only an Austrian but also a European project and the project consortium includes administrative authorities or institutions commissioned by them from the partner countries Hungary, Slovakia and Bulgaria as well as associated partners from Slovenia, Croatia and Baden-Württemberg and the European Network of Social Enterprises (ENSIE). The exchange with them and other competence centres for social innovation in Europe is an essential part of building expertise and creating a vibrant network.

The goals of SI plus are:

☐ Know-how building and knowledge transfer for ESF stakeholders, particularly administrative authorities, intermediary bodies and project promoters,

☐ Identify the needs of stakeholders in the regions

☐ Develop strategies and tools to develop, promote and scale social innovations,

☐ Further develop cooperation between authorities, project promoters, civil society and all citizens affected by structural change,

☐ Develop and establish regional innovation labs and

☐ Create a central contact point for all concerns around social innovation.

The first step of the work of SI plus was to appropriately define the term 'social innovation' for the work within the framework of ESF+, develop common criteria for operationalisation, and describe the existing eco-system on social innovation in Austria. The results of these first important steps are summarised in the following report, whereby it should be noted that both focal points will (have to) be continuously adapted and expanded due to new findings during the implementation of the project and that close coordination will also take place with the ESF Managing Authority and the intermediary bodies involved in order to be able to provide a sound basis for the first calls within the framework of ESF+.

After an overview of the methodological part, this report is divided into two central parts: A chapter on the definition of social innovation and the criteria developed to operationalise it and a second chapter on the first results of the mapping of social innovation in Austria.

2 Methodical design

In addition to a comprehensive literature analysis on the topic of 'social innovation' and an online research on socially innovative projects, a central focus of the methodical design was on an online survey.

Online survey

The online survey, which was carried out from 25 August to 25 October 2021, aimed to capture a mood on social innovation and identify existing socially innovative projects in Austria.

For this purpose, an online questionnaire was created in consultation with all project partners and the managing authority, which was distributed as widely as possible via the ESF Managing Authority, the networks of arbeit plus and L&R Sozialforschung as well as relevant actors of other structural funds, such as the ÖAR-GmbH (LEADER) or the ÖROK or ERDF funding agencies. At this point: Many thanks to all the organisations involved for their support!

Within the framework of the survey, the assessments of central aspects of social innovation were asked, specifically the following questions:

☐ What are the characteristics of social innovation? What criteria must a project fulfil in order to contribute to social innovation?

☐ What kind of target group involvement should be used to fulfil the claim of social innovation?

☐ Which current or completed projects on social innovation are known from a professional or personal context? What features of the project(s) are considered socially innovative?

☐ For which social challenges is there currently a need for action?

☐ Which actors provide the most important impulses for social innovation?

☐ How important would support be to implement social innovation in different areas?

Sample at a glance

A total of 346 completed questionnaires were included in the evaluation. With regard to the structure of the sample, it can be seen that almost two thirds of the respondents (63%) are female and 37% male. More than half are aged between 46 and 60 (53%), just over a third are aged between 20 and 45, around 10% are over 60 and only a small proportion (2%) are under 30. The majority of the respondents have a tertiary education (86%), another 9% have a Matura degree and only about 4% have an apprenticeship degree. Accordingly, the majority of the sample is made up of women between 46 and 60 years of age with a tertiary education.

Slightly more than half had already been involved with the ESF in a professional context, 15% of them in the context of work within a funding agency and 38% as implementers. Of the respondents, 81% are professionally and 9% privately involved in social innovation, while 10% stated that this topic is new to them. If social innovation is related to professional activity, the professional context often refers to the management and execution of projects (13%) and the design and implementation of projects (16%).

A further 10% of the respondents work on the topic as part of their academic and teaching activities and 8% advise or coach on the topic. Around 9% of the respondents are social enterprises. In terms of content, the most frequently mentioned topics are education (13%), the labour market (9%), youth and social affairs (7%) and health (5%).

In this context, it is also interesting to note the organisational forms in which the social innovation actors surveyed are active: Here, unsurprisingly, non-profit associations and organisations are named most frequently (44%), followed by companies made up of social enterprises (11%), for-profit companies (6%) as well as sole proprietorships (2%). Furthermore, 17% work in administration. In addition, research and advisory institutions (8%), NGOs (7%) and isolated interest groups are represented in the sample. In general, when the results are interpreted, it should be taken into account that the online survey mainly reached representatives of non-profit associations and organisations, administration and social enterprises. Only a small percentage of representatives of for-profit companies participated in the survey.

Figure 1:   **Organisational form**
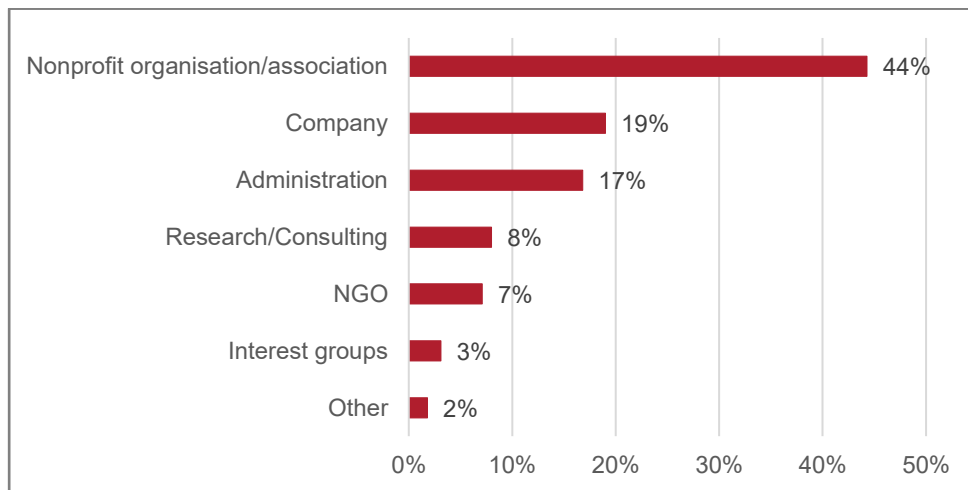
Source: L&R Datafile 'Survey: Social Innovation in Austria', 2021 n=346, miss=115

Regarding the geographical scope[1] of the respondents, 169 of the 346 respondents are active at regional level, 96 at national level and 69 at local level. 48 respondents are also active on a transnational level.

The evaluation by province shows that the majority of respondents work in Vienna (43%), followed by Styria (15%), Upper Austria (9%) and Lower Austria (8%). Evaluation by province is impossible because the response rate of individual provinces was too low.

---

[1] multiple answers possible

4

Figure 2: **Distribution according to provinces**

Province	Percentage
Vienna	43%
Styria	15%
Upper Austria	9%
Salzburg	8%
Lower Austria	8%
Carinthia	5%
Vorarlberg	4%
Tyrol	4%
Burgenland	4%
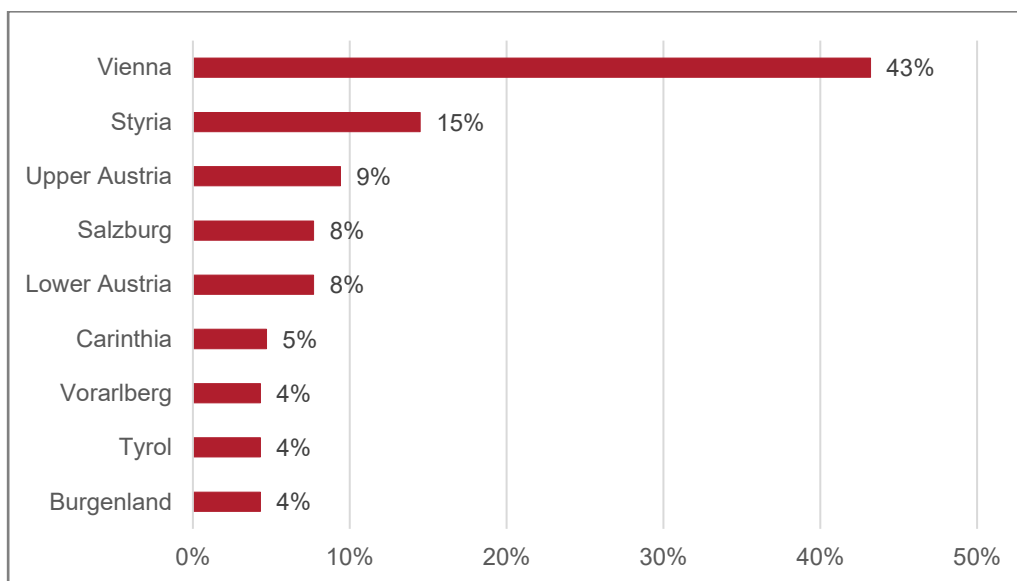
Source: L&R Datafile 'Survey: Social Innovation in Austria', 2021 2021 n=346, miss=112

3 Social innovation – What does it mean?

Central to social innovation are, among other things, developing new ideas, models, measures and processes that contribute to solving societal problems, whereby creativity and participation/cooperation can also be considered essential (European Commission 2011).

Social innovation can be intrinsically motivated (by experience, for example), but also by external factors (social or other changes such as climate change or migration). It combines theory and practice, is characterised by openness, internationality and participation, and pursues transdisciplinary approaches both in the academic and practical fields as well as in the policy area (e.g. linking inclusion and climate change). Social innovation refers to different social aspects, such as the transformation of society as a whole or a model of organisational management. Furthermore, it applies to the development of new services, products and programmes. It can also be a model for governance, self-determination or capacity building (cf. The Young Foundation 2012, 6). In view of the multitude of definitions of social innovation, it can be assumed that the term is fundamentally open, although it can be seen as a catalyst for developments, initiatives and efforts in areas of social and labour market policy.

As a basis for the cooperation with the project partners and for the further work steps within the SI plus project, the first step was to create a **common understanding of the term 'social innovation'**. The definition of social innovation in the **ESF+ regulation** for the period 2021–27 is the starting point and the basis for our activities. In Article 2 (Definitions) of the ESF+ Regulation, **social innovation** is defined as

'... an activity which is social in both its objectives and its means, in particular an activity which relates to the development and implementation of new ideas for products, services, processes and models, which at the same time meets a social need and creates new social relations or cooperation between public

organisations, civil society organisations or private organisations, thereby benefiting society and giving a new dynamism to its potential for action.' (European Commission (2021).

This definition is very broad according to the understanding of social innovation and at first glance seems difficult to apply in practice. The European Commission has therefore also produced a toolkit on the topic, and to better understand the above definition, it has been broken down to its key elements (European Commission 2022):

- ☐ Development and implementation of new ideas for products, services, processes and models
- ☐ Meeting social needs
- ☐ Creating new relationships and cooperation between public organisations, civil society organisations and/or private organisations
- ☐ Benefits for society

Within the SI plus project consortium as well, one of the first essential steps was dedicated to the focus on operationalising social innovation. Based on a comprehensive literature review on the topic and in joint coordination workshops on the Austrian side as well as with the transnational partners, four dimensions were defined in 2021 that essentially coincide with the above-mentioned central elements of the definition:

Table 1: Dimensions of Social Innovation

| SI plus	Toolkit 'Scaling-up Social Innovation'
Novelty	Development and implementation of new ideas for products, services, processes and models
Social needs and social challenges	Meeting social needs
Approaches and methods	Creating new relationships and cooperation between public organisations, civil society organisations and/or private organisations
Goals/Benefits	Benefits for society

These developed dimensions were also the basis for a question focus in the online survey in order to query their relevance regarding their contribution to social innovation. The evaluation results show that improved participation of disadvantaged groups (keyword empowerment) is very or somewhat important to 91% of the respondents in connection with social innovation.

The promotion of cooperation between civil society actors and administrative authorities is seen by 77% of respondents as an important characteristic of social innovation – an aspect that is emphasised in many definitions of social innovation but was rated slightly less important than the two points mentioned above in the course of the survey.

With regard to the initiation of socially innovative projects from the people concerned themselves (bottom-up approach) or from the authorities (top-down), the answers are more or less balanced and in many cases both approaches are relevant for driving social innovation.

Furthermore, the survey included a question on regionality, and here the results show that the local anchoring of socially innovative projects was agreed with (84% very much

and 15% somewhat) – an indication that social innovation at the regional level is of great importance.

Figure 3:   Relevance of selected dimensions of social innovation
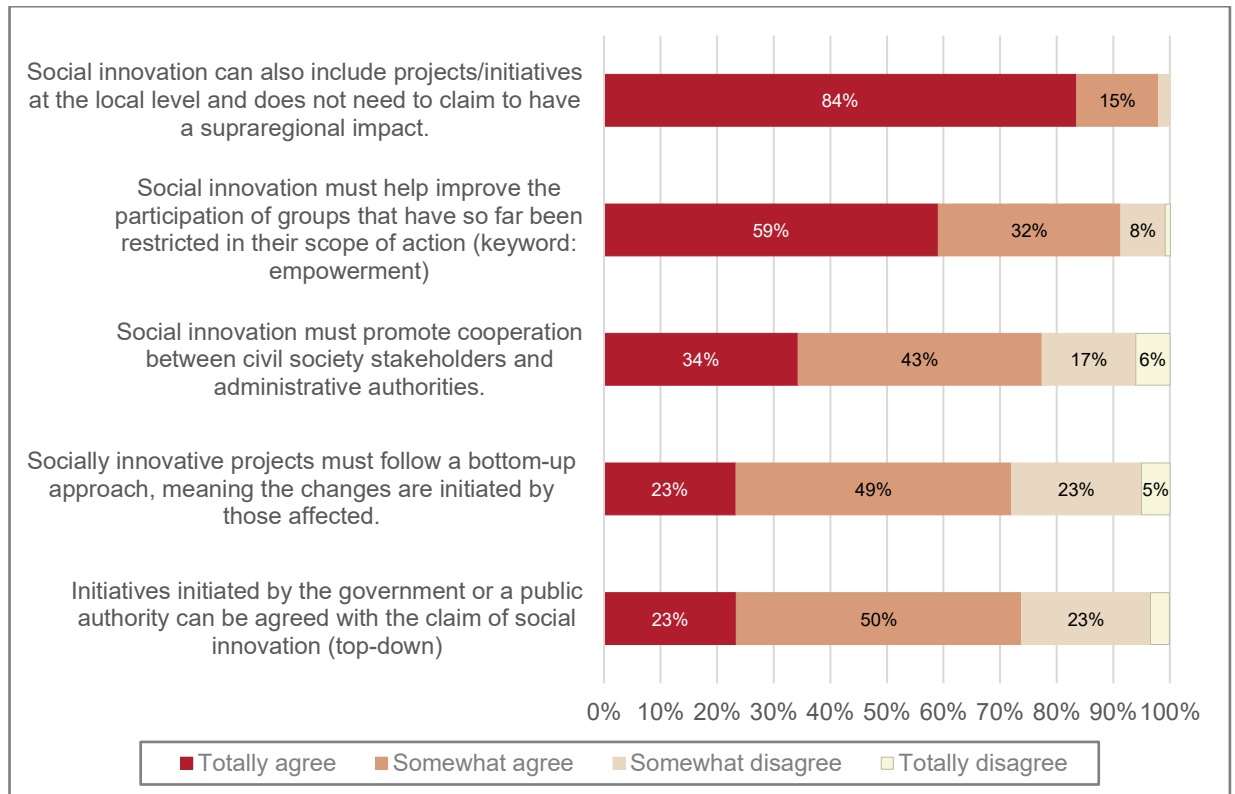
Source: L&R Datafile 'Survey: Social Innovation in Austria', 2021, n=346 miss= between 1 and 14

In addition to these response options, there was an option to indicate further characteristics of social innovation. The evaluation results show that scalability and the roll-out of successful projects are particularly important (17% of the open responses). In addition, social innovation should lead to more participation, inclusion and networking (15%), use new, unprecedented methods and approaches (13%) and improve the quality of life of the target groups (12%).

The dimension of the **target group** was given its own set of questions regarding the extent to which target groups should be involved in the design of socially innovative projects. 64% of respondents strongly agree that they should be actively involved in the implementation although the initiative for the project does not have to come from them – 46% disagree somewhat and 22% totally disagree. However, it seems important to the respondents that the target group be already actively involved in the concept phase (41% fully agreed and 44% somewhat agreed (see also chapter 4.3.2).

In summary, these results show that social innovation, according to the interviewees, has a strong regional reference and that the improved participation of disadvantaged groups and the involvement of target groups are of central importance. In addition, new contents and/or methods are mentioned as important features of socially innovative projects. The criterion of networking, on the other hand, is given less importance by the interviewees.

Based on the results of these first steps, the following criteria for classifying the dimensions of social innovation were developed together with the project partners, which will now be discussed and further developed in workshops with the relevant stakeholders:

Table 2:   Criteria

| Dimensions	Criteria
Novelty	- New or adapted offers/services or target groups in the region
Social needs and social challenges	Description of the challenges: - Challenges affecting disadvantaged groups - Inequality between groups - Regional disadvantages - Current challenges (e.g. the coronavirus, war, refugee movements, climate crisis)
Approaches and methods	- Participatory approach: Active involvement of the project's target group (in development, implementation) - Cooperation and/or networking of relevant stakeholders (public organisations, civil society organisations, research institutions and/or private organisations)
Goals/Benefits	Description of the intended objectives and the resulting benefits for society (according to the specific objective): - Empowerment of civil society stakeholders / individual target groups, stimulation of social capacities for action - Solutions to sustainably reduce social inequalities and unequally distributed material resources and opportunities - Restructuring of social power relations in favour of those who have so far had fewer opportunities for influence - Solutions for current social challenges - Contribution to reduction of regional differences

4   Mapping the Social Innovation Ecosystem

Mapping has become a common method for gaining insights into social innovation practices. Numerous approaches are used (cf. Pelka/Terstriep 2016):

- Most mapping projects (for example: SIMPACT, CrESSI, SI-DRIVE, BENISI) use societal challenges as a mapping dimension: Unemployment, demographic change and education are the main issues mentioned as selection criteria.

- Most common is the desire to relate social innovation to a local or regional context. The role of the local context is strongly linked to the debate on promoting social innovation.

- Rare alignment of existing mappings to the dimension of target groups or users of social innovations: Mapping approaches do not actively involve them in mapping activities. Future mappings should more widely use approaches where the target groups/users of social innovations are an integral part of the research.

- Rarely do mapping activities include reflections on the impact of social innovations.

- Case studies and qualitative research are the predominant approach: Few projects use quantitative data, while these data are usually complemented by qualitative data mostly obtained from case studies.

For the mapping of the ecosystem of social innovation in Austria, the dimensions of social innovation by Eckhard et al. (2017) are used for orientation, the level of functions having been integrated into the other levels:

Figure 4:   Context of Social Innovation
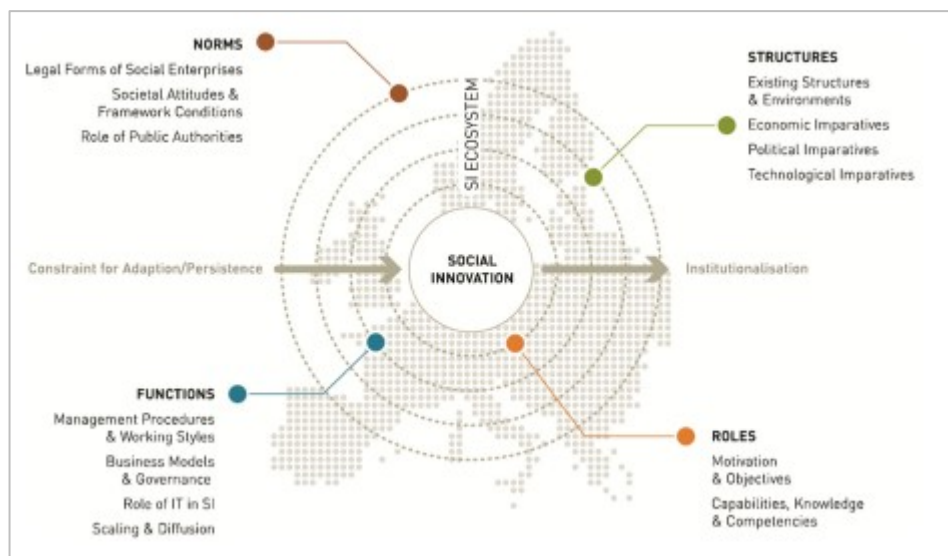
Source: Eckhardt et al. (2017)

4.1 Social values and norms

This chapter primarily covers the norms and values that are relevant with regard to social innovation. This is expressed in concrete terms, for example, in the political and legal framework in which social innovations (can) operate. For this report, the national political agenda and the relevant contents of the respective funding programmes (see chapter **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.**) were analysed.

In the following, we will examine the extent to which political statements address social innovations. Most recent documents in Austria do not refer to social innovation directly. Under the title 'Social Entrepreneurship', the Austrian government programme 2020–24 is committed to promoting social innovations in terms of tax benefits.

In addition, 'target group–specific public financing instruments' are being considered; existing financing programmes are to be opened up and expanded for social entrepreneurs. In the chapter 'Social security, justice & poverty reduction', social innovation is not dealt with centrally. Reference is made to the 'promotion of innovation projects in the field of community service and participation' (p. 171) and a general aim is to improve the recognition of voluntary work.

The government programmes of the provinces mostly refer to the topic indirectly. The provinces of Vienna and Carinthia explicitly refer to social innovation in their government programmes and coalition agreements, but neither has a direct link to social policy (such as inclusion measures or an active labour market policy). An analysis of the policy objectives shows that the main aim is to fine-tune existing systems.

Goals in Austria at the social level	
Federal	'The federal government has therefore set itself the goal of thinking together about the environment, the economy and the world of work in the face of these challenges and of ensuring that the challenges are met in a socially acceptable way (Just Transition). This implies that earned income will also protect against poverty. Increased efforts in the areas of education, further training, sustainable qualification and professional reorientation are to ensure that sufficient well-trained and motivated skilled workers will also be available in the future. Industries and businesses in which digitalisation or the climate crisis plays a special role should be actively supported in becoming fit for the future.' (Republic of Austria 2020, 180)
Burgenland	'Digitalisation is to be promoted in this context. New social interventions for affected sectors should ensure that climate change does not happen on the backs of the workforce ('Just Transition'). Potential new fields of work and industries for purposes of the European Green Deal should be defined and supported as future markets.' (Province of Burgenland 2020, 26)
Carinthia	'Because technological and social innovation is necessary to survive in international competition, to improve working conditions, to produce in a more environmentally friendly way, to achieve medical progress, to facilitate access to and the exchange of information or to deepen the understanding of societies and cultures.' (Province of Carinthia, 2018, 47)
Upper Austria	'Digital and industrial transformation poses huge challenges for all of us. The future of working and producing will undergo profound changes in the next few years: decisive years that we want to make safe for Upper Austrians together. Keeping jobs in Upper Austria or creating new ones and thus securing prosperity and quality of life is our core concern. Upper Austria has always developed positively in past eras due to its innovative spirit and creative power.' (Province of Upper Austria 2020, 7)

Goals in Austria at the social level	
Lower Austria	'A flexible response to changes and new problems in the labour market should be possible at any time through new projects in the Employment Pact.' (Province of Lower Austria 2018a, 2018b, 2 (identical wording in both programmes))
Salzburg	'In order to best shape a jointly supported further development of work and the economy, we will continue the initiatives "Action Plan Labour Market Integration" and "Alliance for Growth and Employment" with the involvement of the social partners.' (Province of Salzburg 2018, 30)
Styria	'Labour foundations are one of the most effective instruments on the labour market in terms of target groups, sectors and companies. The participants are trained at or for a specific workplace in a Styrian company. Therefore, targeted qualification and implacement foundations help not only Styrian jobseekers but also the domestic economy in various sectors (from the automotive industry to environmental technology to care institutions).' (Province of Styria 2019, 26)
Tyrol	The coalition agrees on '[a] commitment to long-term support and safeguarding of the valuable work of socio-economic enterprises and non-profit employment projects.' (Province of Tyrol 2018, 12)
Vorarlberg	'Valuing the socio-economic sector. The state government is aware of the importance of this sector, especially in the areas of social work, education, care, and the quality of life in our state, and pays attention to sound training as well as to the sufficient provision of labour in these areas.' (Province of Vorarlberg 2019, 16)
Vienna	'A prerequisite for innovative capacity is that we consistently develop and promote the competences and potentials at the location. Vienna faces many challenges in the coming years, and we are working to find solutions. It is therefore particularly important to invest in the willingness to innovate. This is not only about technical and ecological innovations, but increasingly about social innovations as well. Vienna has the potential to be one of the great innovation centres. The development of innovative solutions for sustainable cities can become a strength of Vienna as a location in the future. For example, when new technologies are linked with social innovations and urban infrastructures and services are further developed together with forms of participation and reconciliation of interests.' (City of Vienna 2020, 137)

Generally speaking, a reference to social innovation is expressed in the government programmes or working agreements in the areas of the labour market and inclusion, although the concept of SI is not explicitly defined as an objective or content. Aspects such as 'experimentalist governance'[2] (see Sabel and Zeitlin 2011) are mostly summarised in chapters dealing with participation, active citizenship and democratisation. Those sections dealing with labour market policy are mainly reactive in character, tending to be market-oriented (such as responding to skill shortages, etc.). In general, the preservation character of the measures described predominates – especially in the areas of inclusion and social affairs – while innovation is mostly attributed to the areas of research, technology and sometimes culture.

---

[2] Far-reaching transformations in the nature of contemporary governance are underway, within and beyond the nation-state. They can be observed across multiple levels and locations, from the reform of local public services such as education and child welfare to the regulation of global trade in food and forest products. At the heart of these transformations is the emergence of what may be called 'experimentalist governance', based on framework rule-making and revision through recursive review of implementation experience in different local contexts (see Sabel and Zeitlin 2011, p. 3)

In two ministries, explicitly the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research together with the Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, a comprehensive innovation strategy was already formulated in 2016, which is valid until 2025 and has already been evaluated (see the publication of the above ministries from 2021). Measure 4 of the strategy, 'Establish and operate an open innovation platform for social/societal innovation and as a contribution to solving global challenges', also refers to the potential in the area of social entrepreneurship. Measure 1, 'Establish spaces for open innovation and experimentation', and 3, 'Further develop public administration through open innovation and greater involvement of citizens', are also mentioned. The 2021 Implementation Report emphasises that measures related to social innovation (Measure 4) have not been implemented in the strict sense (p. 21); the intensity is described as 'moderate'. The Social Entrepreneurship Network Austria (SENA) is mentioned as an example of implementation. The role of crowdsourcing is emphasised when it comes to creating interfaces between social innovation and open innovation (see also chapter 4.2.2).

A look at the European level shows a comparatively stronger anchoring of social innovation. In 2009, the European Parliament adopted a resolution for the creation of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, which was launched in the framework of the EU2020 Strategy. This already saw the need for social innovation in the area of poverty reduction in 2011 (European Commission 2011, 25). In this process, an 'innovation and modernisation process' was envisaged, with 'social experimentation' at its core, in order to gain evidence-based insights for a reform agenda of EU member states, which resulted, among other things, in a reform agenda for social enterprises (2011b). Following a resolution of the European Parliament, EU Member States adopted Council conclusions on the role of the social economy (Council of the EU 2015), which clearly state that the role of social innovation needs to be strengthened in the context of EU multi-level policies, strategically and in terms of an 'ecosystem' conducive to social innovation. With the creation of National Centres for Social Innovation, funded through the EaSI programme, a decisive step towards institutionalising social innovation has been created. In the objectives pursued at EU level, the close interweaving of social innovation with social entrepreneurship dominates, generally speaking, in the context of social innovation, as in the European Pillar of Social Rights (European Commission 2021).

From the goals pursued at the various levels (supranational, intergovernmental, national, regional, local), one can derive, on the one hand, the aspiration for social renewal and, on the other hand, the desire for a renewal of the methodology in achieving the goals. A fundamental challenge emerges in the context of the basic constellation, in that social innovation is described on the one hand as a participatory process that addresses the main contemporary challenges (such as climate change), and on the other hand top-down structures such as strategies, programmes, etc. are supposed to help it unfold. However, as these structures in feedback processes also take into account the experiences on the project level as well as academic trends and research results, it cannot be assumed that there is a contradiction between top-down and bottom-up approaches: instead, their interconnectedness points to a normative power of the factual in the field of social innovation, where the latter primarily serves as a pragmatic, experiential and action-oriented framework that embeds renewal in a strategic and theoretical setting. This is also shown by the results of the online survey conducted by L&R Sozialforschung. Here, most answers refer to the local character of social in-

novation (i.e. related to a specific place), while questions as to whether social innovation takes place top-down or bottom-up are not considered to be of primary importance by the stakeholders. However, the results also show that social innovation is mainly found in non-profit organisations and social enterprises, but not in public administrative structures.

The values that emerge from the survey show that social innovation is particularly associated with openness, willingness to engage in personal and organisational networking, and participatory processes (especially the involvement of target groups). The reference to current problems is also clearly evident. The answers also allow conclusions to be drawn about the legal framework, since, as mentioned, social innovation is primarily located in social enterprises and non-profit organisations, i.e. in specific institutional legal forms. In addition, the financeability/funding of socially innovative projects is crucial for the implementation of social innovation – funding that also requires a legal framework. For example, in 2016 the Federal Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection issued a special directive to support social innovation in the field of labour market integration in small-scale projects of *social businesses*. The Federal Finance Act for 2022 also lists social innovations as sample projects in the area of 'LEADER regions' (BFG 2022: 505).

4.2 Structural framework

The following chapter focuses on the existing structures for social innovation in Austria. The existing funding structures are a central element for anchoring social innovation more firmly in Austria and for developing and implementing socially innovative projects. The funding programmes at regional and EU level play a particularly important role here, as on the one hand they significantly shape the landscape of social innovation in the respective regions through the funding they provide, and on the other hand the funding programmes themselves show the normative boundaries within which socially innovative projects can operate.

The results of the research and online survey show that there is not <u>one</u> ecosystem of social innovation in Austria, but rather micro-systems that exist parallel to each other, which primarily result from the existing structures of funding, and only individual stakeholders (see chapter 4.3) can be found in more than one of these micro-systems. The following chapters outline the most important funds and institutions that promote social innovation in Austria.

4.2.1 Funding instruments of the European Commission

The European Social Fund (ESF)

The European Social Fund has long been a driving force of social innovation, albeit to varying degrees across funding periods. In this context, reference is often made to the EQUAL Community Initiative, which was funded by the ESF until 2007. Numerous socially innovative projects have been developed and tested under EQUAL. The aim was to test new ways of combating discrimination and inequalities of workers and jobseekers on the labour market; what was particularly new here was the required cooperation of different institutions/project promoters as well as the cross-border exchange.

Under the ESF 2007–13, innovation was formulated as a cross-cutting issue and anchored at the systemic and structural level through the inclusion of the Territorial Employment Pacts. This improved systematic cooperation in the field of labour market policy and brought together the various responsibilities at regional and institutional levels (Pühringer S. / Stelzer-Orthofer, C. 2014). Under the Operational Programme (OP), innovation was interpreted broadly and defined as follows: 'The basic goal is to improve the support and integration of the target groups and to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of measures, projects and support approaches.' (BMASK 2009:53)

In the ESF 2014–20, the criterion of a continuous innovation cycle was used to explain the term social innovation; this includes project development, project implementation, review and reflection, and adaptation of the project concept (European Commission – Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, 2013). It was also explicitly stated that existing support systems should be supplemented by innovative modules and that new target groups should be reached. Another new aspect was that the Operational Programme already stipulated that the target group must be involved in the development and implementation of the projects. The evaluation results of the ESF 2014–20 show that a large number of innovative projects have been implemented, especially under the priorities of gender equality and active inclusion and on lifelong learning (see Lutz et al. 2022).

In the ESF+, the topic of social innovation is once again to be given a higher priority, including in accordance with the ESF+ Regulation. The Austrian programme therefore plans to implement social innovation both as a cross-cutting issue and as a separate priority axis. This focus is intended to significantly increase the innovation content of the ESF+ programme and support the development of novel approaches and measures in the field of education and work:

'In the framework of the ESF+ Programme Employment Austria 2021–27, social innovation is understood as a concept for addressing societal challenges and strengthening social cohesion based on partnerships between public authorities, the private sector and civil society. Thus, in ESF+, the basic principles of social innovation can include bottom-linked approaches (i.e. those involving local stakeholders who are familiar with the social needs of the local population yet also seek to network at a higher, governmental level), participatory processes, and citizen involvement. At the same time, social innovation thrives on knowledge exchange and networks, and it is precisely here that activities are to be set up within the framework of the ESF+.' (ESF+ Programme Employment Austria 2021–27)

To that end, socially innovative projects are to be implemented either as radical innovation (new concepts to tackle social challenges) or as incremental innovation (by adapting already tested projects from other EU funding programmes to local conditions).

Institutions of the ESF+

The **ESF Managing Authority in the Federal Ministry of Labour** is the central body in Austria for the implementation of the ESF. Furthermore, measures for gender equality, active inclusion and social innovation are tendered/called and supported by the

intermediate bodies ('Zwischengeschalteten Stellen', ZwiSten) of **all provincial governments** and in Vienna by the **waff**.

Other intermediate bodies are the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research.

In the ESF 2014–20, a monitoring committee was established in which the social partners and selected NGOs are represented in addition to the managing authority and the intermediate bodies. This body will also be established for the ESF+ 2021–27.

EAFRD/LEADER

With its priorities and many strategic measures, the LE 14–20 programme aims to develop rural areas with their many functional interdependencies.[3]

In connection with the topic of social innovation, the **European Innovation Partnerships**, which represent an EU concept for promoting innovation in agriculture, appear interesting. The operational objectives of the EIP include successfully bridging the gap between modern research and technology and interest groups (see www.bmlrt.gv.at). For the first time in Austria, 'operational groups' are being funded, in which practitioners (such as farmers, advisors, and associations) work together with scientists to solve challenges from the immediate environment through new products, services or technologies. Since 2016, stakeholders have also been supported by an innovation broker in setting up these groups. Although the projects focus on technological innovations, the approach of targeted promotion of partnerships to solve common challenges in an innovative way and with the support of innovation experts seems to be promising.

Central to the implementation of socially innovative measures under the EAFRD is the **LEADER** priority – a successful model of regional development. With the 2014–20 programme, more importance was attached to bottom-up decisions than in previous periods, as well as through the establishment of so-called Local Action Groups (LAGs) – of which there are currently 77 in Austria – which have drawn up local development strategies. These LAGs are also responsible for the implementation of the projects (see Participatory Regional Development with LEADER (bmlrt.gv.at)).

The LEADER method consists of seven elements (see www.bmlrt.gv.at):

☐ **The territorial approach:** Area-based local development strategies intended for precisely delineated rural areas. Regional features form the basis for long-term development work.

☐ **The partnership approach:** Local public-private partnerships (so-called 'local action groups') serve as a platform and motor for development.

☐ **The bottom-up approach:** Bottom-up means that the strategies and projects are developed in the regions and not set up by external planning bodies and organisations.

☐ **The multisectoral approach:** A cross-sectoral design and implementation of the strategy based on the interaction of stakeholders with projects from the different sectors of the local economy.

☐ **The innovative approach:** Try something new – leave the beaten track. With creativity, imagination and a willingness to take risks, new ideas and projects are to be taken up, developed and realised for the region.

---

[3] Selected programme content (bmlrt.gv.at)

- **Cooperation:** Development and implementation of national and transnational co-operation projects.
- **Networking:** National and European networking and exchange of experience.

The objectives of LEADER include the following points:

- Increasing value creation (in agriculture, forestry, tourism, business, SMEs, EPUs and energy production)
- Strengthening and development of natural resources and cultural heritage (In the field of natural and ecosystems, culture and handicraft
- Establishment and expansion of important functions and structures for the common good (in the area of services, local supply, regional learning and culture of participation)

In 2019, the BMLRT commissioned a study to analyse the potential of social innovation. According to the results of that evaluation, the share of socially innovative projects in LEADER is likely to be between one sixth and one third of all projects (Ecker et al. 2019).

The competent managing authority for LEADER is the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism, which also carries out the selection procedures for the local action groups and local development strategies. The implementation of the strategies as well as the realisation of projects is subsequently the responsibility of the local action groups, which are composed of representatives of local public institutions (e.g. municipalities, associations, and authorities), private groups (such as associations and companies) and private individuals, whereby neither authorities nor individual interest groups may hold more than 49% of the voting rights (cf. LEADER in Österreich - Netzwerk Zukunftsraum Land).

ERDF/INTERREG

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) aims to promote economic and social cohesion in Europe and reduce disparities between regions. To that end, two goals are supported in Austria:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs objective
- European Territorial Cooperation objective

The operational programme 'Investing in Growth and Jobs 2014–20' supports smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Research & Innovation, CO_2 reduction, strengthening the competitiveness of domestic SMEs and new concepts for regional development are among the other substantive priorities of the funding programme (see www.efre.gv.at). However, a keyword search for the term social innovation shows that it is only mentioned twice in the OP, one of which is in the main body in relation to territorial issues and the reference to the fact that the partnership agreement states that special attention should be paid to social innovation in this context. The second mention is in the annex as a category within major projects. Even within the framework of the evaluation reports already available, this topic is not given a separate status.

In the framework of territorial cooperation, Austria participates in seven cross-border programmes (Interreg A), three transnational cooperation programmes (Alpine Space, Central Europe, and Danube Transnational) and four interregional programmes (Interreg Europe, Urbact, ESPON 2020, and Interact). Experience from Interreg projects, for

example, shows that innovation should be a major focus of concept development, even if it is not explicitly defined as social innovation in all programmes. Nevertheless, the topic of social innovation is taken up in many of the operational programmes; for example, in the Danube Transnational Programme, a separate priority axis is dedicated to the topic of '*Innovative and Socially Responsible Danube Region'* with a focus on *'increase competence for business and social innovation'*.

Other EU funding programmes

Socially innovative projects, including the SI plus project, are funded under the [Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)](#) funded. This is a financial instrument at EU level to promote quality and sustainable employment, the reduction of poverty and social exclusion and the improvement of working conditions. In the funding period from 2021 onwards, this programme will be a component of the ESF+ and directly managed by the European Commission.

Social innovation also plays a relevant role within Horizon2020 (already completed) and the EU's [Horizon Europe](#) (the EU's funding programme for research and innovation). Social innovation has been identified as a cross-cutting theme that affects all programme priorities, and calls on social innovation are also included.

4.2.2   National examples of public sector strategies and funding opportunities

Below are selected examples of strategies and funding opportunities aimed at strengthening the theme of social innovation and implementing projects.

Open Innovation Strategy for Austria

The Open Innovation Strategy for Austria, which was published in 2016, was already mentioned in chapter 4.1. An Open Innovation Strategy for Austria was developed during a broad participation process involving not only stakeholders from research, science and business, but the civilian population as well. This includes an analysis of the national and international status quo on the topic of open innovation, a vision for 2025 and concrete measures for implementation. The strategy also explicitly states the topic of social innovation within the framework of Measure 4, 'Establishment and operation of an open innovation platform for social innovation in society and as a contribution to solving global challenges'. A recent evaluation that aimed to assess the implementation status so far concluded that this specific measure has not yet been implemented and there is no need for a central platform, since different organisations have started corresponding initiatives. These include the Innovation Lab of the FFG, Space4mobility Hackathon of the BMK, Social Entrepreneurship Network Austria (SENA), Open Innovation in Science Center of the Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft or the European Institute of Innovation Climate-Knowledge and Innovation Community (EIT Climate-KIC). The evaluation results also show that it is primarily the research scene that is addressed within the framework of the Open Innovation Strategy and that there is still a need to catch up with regard to the involvement of other stakeholders (Rohrhofer et al. 2021).

Social innovation in the Ministry of Social Affairs

Within the Ministry of Social Affairs, the theme of 'social innovation' is addressed through the ongoing development of socially innovative projects to complement the network of social services in Austria and to test new ways of meet existing challenges. Thus, a separate department 'Social Innovation' (BMSGPK – Department V/B/5) was established, whose responsibilities include the following: innovative social and employment policies and projects, poverty prevention and social economy projects, Social Impact Bond, Social Business Call, social sustainability and climate policy–social policy interface, ESF+ Managing Authority for the specific objective 'combating material deprivation' for the programming period 2021 to 2027 and the implementation of EU projects (e.g. within the framework of EaSI).

Two currently completed initiatives are worth highlighting here ([Social innovation (sozialministerium.at)](https://www.sozialministerium.at)):

□ The **Social Impact Bond (SIB)** is a financing instrument for projects in the social sector and aims to contribute to the economic and social empowerment of selected target groups. The Social Impact Bond consists of a partnership of different shareholders initiated and led by the public sector. The basis for an SIB is an agreement on the desired success (pay-for-success agreement), i.e. the payment of the project from public funds is dependent on the attainment of objectives, which are contractually recorded in advance on the basis of key figures. Charitable foundations or private investors then take over the financing of the project. An external, independent evaluation (e.g. an auditing company) decides whether objectives have been attained. If the target is not attained, there is no repayment by the public sector. In 2015, with the project [Perspective:Work](https://www.sozialministerium.at), the first SIB of the Ministry of Social Affairs was launched and implemented until the end of August 2018.

□ In 2016, the Ministry of Social Affairs, together with the National Foundation for Research, Technology and Development, and Wirtschaftsservice (aws), the promotional bank of the Austrian federal government, issued a call for Austrian social entrepreneurs/social businesses for the first time. The '**aws Social Business Call**' was designed to promote the development of new, innovative ideas, projects, services and products that have contributed to the labour market integration of people furthest from the labour market. The target groups included social entrepreneurs (founders of social businesses), existing socioeconomic enterprises (SÖB) that want to implement innovative ideas for labour market integration outside the scope of the AMS guidelines, and social businesses that expand demonstrably successful business models. The funding expired at the end of July 2019.

Climate Fund of the Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK)

As part of the funding priority 'Energy Transition 2050', the Climate Fund placed a funding priority on the topic of 'social innovation', and three baseline studies were implemented in 2019 to address the questions of how social innovation can be used for the energy transition, what framework conditions are necessary for this, and methods and tools for social innovation. In 2021, one funding focus was again on findings and processes of transition research in fields such as social innovation, community and participation.

(https://www.klimafonds.gv.at/dossier/soziale-innovationen/neue-loesungen-fuer-neue-rahmenbedingungen/)

The funding consultations for this are handled by the FFG.

Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG)

The owner representatives of the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) are the Federal Ministry for Digitisation and Business Location and the Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology. The objective of the FFG is to promote business-related research and development (The FFG | FFG). Within the framework of the FFG's activities, the topic of social innovation is also taken into account; here are three selected examples:

Impact Innovation Programme

The FFG funding programme 'Impact Innovation' enables the funding of projects/ideas regardless of topic or sector. Impact innovation promotes the use of innovation methods to solve a problem. Central to this is a process that involves all stakeholders to find new ideas and develop an effective solution. The FFG funds half of the costs up to a maximum of €75,000. (Impact Innovation – Funding, Conditions | FFG)

Social Crowd Funding

Projects focussed on social innovation could apply for the remaining funding via crowd funding until the end of August 2021. The explicit aim of the project must be to solve a social problem. The following thematic areas are funded (Social Crowdfunding | FFG):

- ☐ Social services (such as care of the elderly or homeless)
- ☐ Educational concepts and services outside the state education system
- ☐ Solutions for initiating and supporting networks and communities
- ☐ Solutions for social participation processes
- ☐ Services and concepts in social housing
- ☐ Support for disadvantaged groups of people
- ☐ Solutions to reduce poverty
- ☐ Solutions to ensure fair working conditions
- ☐ Solutions to integrate disadvantaged people into the labour market
- ☐ Health services
- ☐ Care and social inclusion of socially vulnerable population groups

- ☐ Child care and supervision
- ☐ Long-term care
- ☐ Measures within the framework of social welfare
- ☐ Gender equality measures
- ☐ Media and transparency
- ☐ Measures to promote democracy
- ☐ Measures for environmental protection
- ☐ Consumer protection measures

Innovation spaces

Innovations.Räume is a low-threshold pilot initiative of the Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Regions and Tourism (BMLRT) and the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) to support regions in establishing or deepening a culture of innovation – and thus to support the establishment of an innovation network in the sense of an innovation ecosystem in the longer term. The concept of innovation used is deliberately broad and includes both social and technical-entrepreneurial innovations ([Innovations.Räume | FFG](#)).

4.2.3   Examples of awards on the theme of social innovation

A desktop was used to search for awards for social innovation in Austria, and found the following examples:

SozialMarie / Sinnstifter Association

The 'SozialMarie' prize was awarded for the first time in 2005 to socially innovative projects in Central Europe, making it the first prize in this field in Europe. Every year, 15 outstanding projects are awarded and thus receive a public platform in addition to financial recognition. The prize is financed by the Sinnstifter Association, which was founded by six Austrian foundations (ESSL Foundation, ERSTE Foundation, HUMER Private Foundation, KATHARINA TURNAUER Private Foundation, SCHWEIGHOFER Private Foundation and UNRUHE Private Foundation). The following members have subsequently joined: ANDRA Private Foundation, DREYER Charity Fund, HIL Foundation, PEOPLESHARE Private Foundation, SCHEUCH Family Foundation, GRILLER Family Foundation, WILLENDORFF YOUTH FOUNDATION Private Foundation, VALLEAN Private Foundation.

The association aims to support social innovation both with the existing know-how as well as the members' personal networks. *'These projects must offer something innovative and be scalable. They should also encourage other people and organisations to join in. Our goal is also to promote and develop projects to the point where it becomes interesting for the public sector to take them on. The public sector is responsible for managing the resources made available to it safely and over the long-term. But it also has the opportunity to take more risk and bring good ideas to the point where they can be adopted. We do not see the private and public sectors as opposing or competing with each other, but as cooperating for the good of society.'* ([Sinnstifter » About us (sinn-stifter.org)](#))

dieziwi.21 - The Upper Austrian State Prize for Social Innovation

The tender of the Social Department of the Upper Austrian Government in 2021 was related to social innovation through civil society engagement. Project ideas were sought that had to fulfil criteria such as innovation potential, participation possibilities, feasibility, degree of implementation and relevance to Upper Austria. The aim is to strengthen social cohesion, promote social contacts, enable participation, bring together different population groups and encourage others to become active themselves. In addition to financial recognition, the winners benefit from free application measures and further training opportunities. (Upper Austrian State Prize dieziwi.21 – dieziwi.)

Social Innovation Vienna

In 2019, the City of Vienna funded innovative social projects with a thematic focus on neighbourhoods with the project funding pool **Social Innovation Vienna**. The following points were defined as guiding questions:

- Can different population groups participate or help in the project?
- Does the project support major projects of the City of Vienna? For example, the Smart Cities initiative, which strives for a modern and ecological city.
- Does the project motivate others to try something new themselves?

A total of 260 project applications were received and 52 projects were funded. The funding bodies were the Dachverband Wiener Sozialeinrichtungen and the Fonds Soziales Wien (Neighbourhood funding & Project funding Vienna | Social Innovation Vienna (soziale-innovation-wien.at).

Social Impact Award

The Social Impact Award (SIA) was founded in 2009 by Peter Vandor and the WU Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (E&I). Then Impact Hub Vienna took over the organisation of the Social Impact Award in 2013, and it has been implemented by the non-profit GmbH Social Impact Award since 2018.

The aim is to support young people in innovative projects, initiatives and social enterprises with a systemic impact. Every year, interested parties can submit their ideas and receive information and coaching within the framework of events and workshops. A screening team selects the 10 best ideas from the submissions each year and these are intensively supported during implementation and have access to mentors and experts. The best ventures are selected by the audience and the jury and win the Social Impact Award in autumn.

SIA is now active in Europe, Africa and Central Asia, with more than 8,000 people participating each year. So far, more than 1,000 initiatives have been founded. Partners in Austria include the Social Entrepreneurship Center of the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, the Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (E&I) of WU Vienna, Erste Stiftung, Austria Wirtschaftsservice GmbH, Berndorf Privatstiftung, Impact Hub Vienna, Hil-Foundation, Vienna Business Agency, SAP and Microsoft. (Social Impact Award Austria – Empowering youth to make a difference)

4.3　Stakeholders and roles of social innovation

A role context identifies sociodemographic factors and roles of social innovation stakeholders and target groups (cf. Eckhardt et al. 2017). These include political and social attitudes of these stakeholders, motivations, self-image, image or skills. At this level, answers are to be found to the questions about the roles of the stakeholders involved:

- ☐ Who has what influence?
- ☐ Which stakeholders usually have the leading role in the development of SI projects?
- ☐ What are the power relations and spheres of influence?
- ☐ Who dominates the discourse on social innovation?
- ☐ What interactions between stakeholders promote a common understanding and practice of SI (such as knowledge sharing, co-creation, and public procurement)?
- ☐ How is cooperation between the stakeholders supported?
- ☐ How can stakeholders from certain fields find each other, such as via platforms or competitions?

Social innovations are developed and implemented by different stakeholders from different sectors and spheres. Rameder et al. (2016) show that stakeholders from the public sector (such as public hospitals), the private sector (such as private medical facilities) or the non-profit sector (such as non-profit care facilities) are active in the health sector. This shows that the non-profit sector is one of the most important fields for social innovation.

> *'This pattern arises in large part from the importance attached to the social purpose (intention) of the innovation. This is particularly strongly anchored in organisational objectives in the non-profit sector. This is also visible in the empirical part of this study, as the vast majority of the identifiable examples come from the non-profit sector' (ibid.: 31).*

In other sectors, other actors may dominate, such as individuals, social movements, for-profit companies, social entrepreneurs and social businesses or administrations.

The survey on social innovation in Austria asked about the five most important stakeholders who provide pertinent ideas for social innovation. The evaluations show that non-profit organisations or associations/companies most frequently provide this inspiration (280 mentions), followed by social enterprises (221 mentions). Furthermore, social and political movements, individuals, and research institutions play an important role. The federal and state administrations are attributed a comparatively low impact (31 and 26 mentions respectively) (Figure 5). In addition, funding bodies (such as EU project calls) or interest groups were also named as part of an open response option.

Illustration 5: In your experience, which shareholders provide the most important impulses for social innovation?
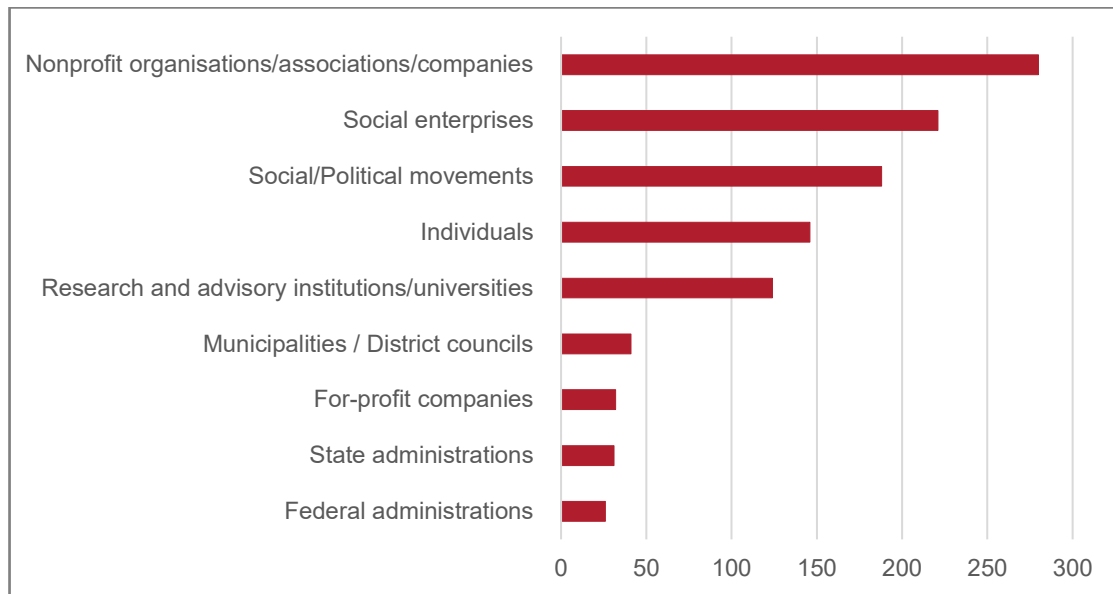
Source: L&R Datafile 'Survey: Social Innovation in Austria', 2021 n=346 nmiss= 66 and 320

As stated in the introduction, when interpreting these results, it must be taken into account that the online survey primarily reached representatives of non-profit associations and organisations, administration and social enterprises. Only a small percentage of representatives of for-profit companies participated in the survey.

4.3.1   Social Entrepreneurship

In addition to non-profit organisations, associations and social enterprises, which play a central role in the ESF with regard to project development and implementation, social entrepreneurs have emerged as relevant stakeholders in the course of the research work carried out, although they have hardly appeared in the framework of the ESF so far. This makes a strengthened network, and a brief overview at this point, seem all the more important.

Social entrepreneurship is generally understood as combining an entrepreneurial approach with entrepreneurial action to solve social challenges through innovative methods. Social entrepreneurship can – so the idea goes – advance necessary innovations in society by combining efficiency and an orientation towards the common good as an alternative to the state and the market.

> *'Clearly social entrepreneurship has come into its own, recognized as a model that combines the financial disciplines of market capitalism with the passion and compassion required to create a more fair and just world (Schwab & Milligan, 2015)[4].'*

Both in the general understanding of the term and in academic discourse, there is a consensus that the central constructs of social entrepreneurship are entrepreneurial action, social mission and innovative approach. The extent to which the profit motive plays a role for social entrepreneurs depends on the legal form and the respective sector in which the organisation operates. The spectrum ranges from profit-oriented

---

[4] https://soziale-innovation.sachsen-anhalt.de/wissen/social-entrepreneurship/definition/

companies, where profit is the primary concern, to companies where achieving social impact and financial profit are of equal importance[5], to non-profit organisations.

In the last decade, a broad social entrepreneurial start-up scene has established itself both globally and in Austria. Areas in which social entrepreneurs are active are education, environmental protection, the creation of socially inclusive jobs, combatting poverty, and human rights.

There are now a number of platforms for networking social entrepreneurs in Austria:

- **Social Entrepreneurship Network Austria – SENA**

  The association Social Entrepreneurship Network Austria – SENA is an interest group for social businesses. Here, personal counselling, workshops and networking opportunities with investors are offered. There are also monthly community events for networking with other social entrepreneurs.

  https://sena.or.at/

- **Social City Vienna – Platform for Social Innovation**

  Networking platform for innovative projects looking for a co-working space, advice or a suitable professional network.

  https://www.socialcity.at/

- **Social Impact Award**

  SIA is a competition for student social entrepreneurs and has existed since 2009. Aspiring social entrepreneurs are supported in the development and implementation of their innovative ideas.

  https://austria.socialimpactaward.net/

- **Impact Hub Vienna**

  Networking events, pitches or events where you can meet co-founders.
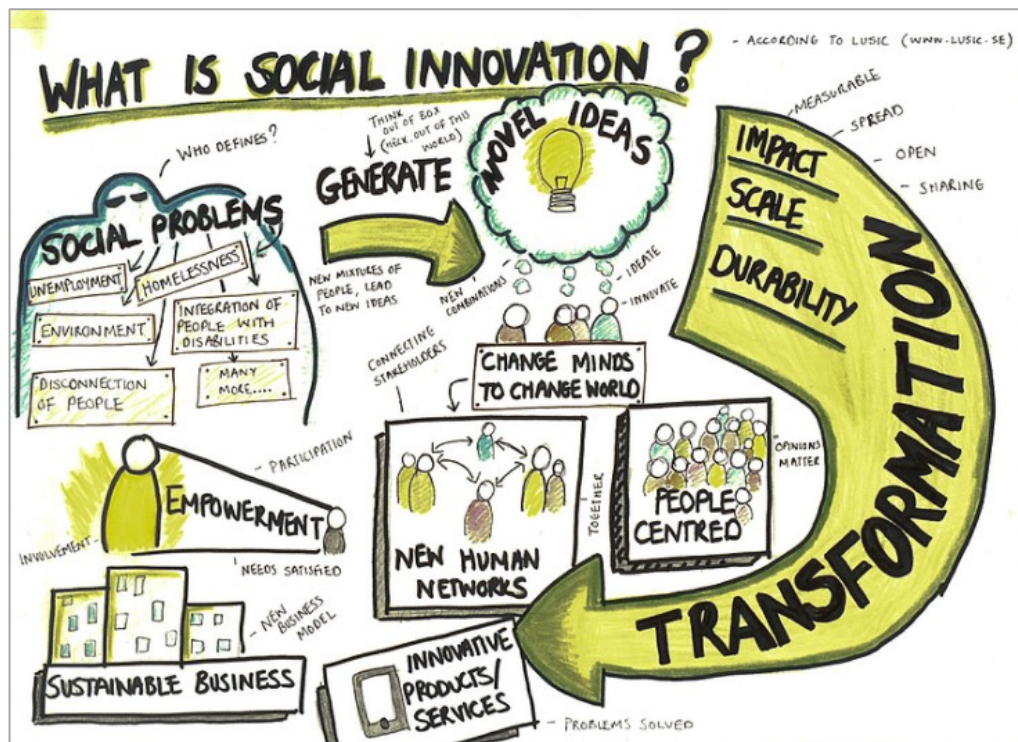
  https://vienna.impacthub.net/

- **ASHOKA**

  Ashoka identifies and supports social entrepreneurs worldwide and connects them to a global network ('everyone a changemaker world').

  https://www.ashoka.org/de-de

  Ashoka in Austria: https://ashoka-cee.org/austria/ueber-uns/

---

[5] https://socialbusinesshub.at/themen/social-entrepreneurship/

Figure 6: Social innovations and enterprises

4.3.2   Role of the target groups

A central question in the ecosystem of social innovation is that of the role of target groups:

☐ How can the involvement of the target groups (participatory approaches) be ensured?

☐ Which groups have the opportunity to participate?

☐ Which groups do not have the opportunity to participate, and why?

☐ How can a long-term commitment be ensured?

Ideally, social innovation is implemented in a bottom-up process, whereby the change process starts at the lowest hierarchical level (meaning, with the people/citizens directly affected) and is then gradually continued upwards. The public sector enables implementation through financial support and provides the common conceptual framework for social innovation.[6]

In reality, the implementation of social innovation looks different in many cases and the target group is usually involved only in individual implementation steps.

Governance processes often take place through the involvement of advocacy groups such as NGOs. Forms of governance are also used at the national or regional level

---

[6] https://innovators-guide.ch/innovationsmanagement/social-innovation-akteure-metho-den/#:~:text=Ge-sellschaftliche%20Innovatoren%20k%C3%B6nnen%20ganz%20unterschiedliche,Busi-nesses%2C%20NGO%27s%20oder%20staatliche%20Institutionen.

(through advisory councils or consultation processes, for example). However, the involvement here is also judged ambivalently in some cases from the perspective of democratic policy.

> *'This organised and systematic involvement of civil society actors in decision-making processes and in the elaboration of innovations to solve social problems is ambivalent from a democratic policy perspective. While this can promote dialogue and increase participation, it can also result in token participation that only serves to legitimise political decisions'* (Pausch 2018: 49).

Particularly in the case of conflictive issues where the interests of different social groups clash with different power hierarchies, participatory processes are perceived ambivalently. NGOs or experts, for example, can take on a 'fig leaf' function in order to legitimise from the outside the results that are intended from the outset.

In any case, the question of including the interests of target groups within participatory approaches or at least elements should always be a crucial issue when evaluating the implementation of social innovation.

As could be seen in the question about the characteristics of social innovation in the online survey, the target groups or groups involved in projects that are classified as socially innovative are generally given an important status. The dimension of the target group was given its own set of questions concerning the extent to which target groups should be involved in designing such projects. 64% of respondents strongly agree that they should be actively involved in the implementation although the initiative for the project does not have to come from them – 46% disagree somewhat and 22% totally disagree. However, it seems important to the respondents that the target group be already actively involved in the concept phase (41% fully agreed and 44% somewhat agreed (see figure **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.**).

Illustration 7: In your opinion, what kind of target group involvement should be used to fulfil the claim of social innovation?
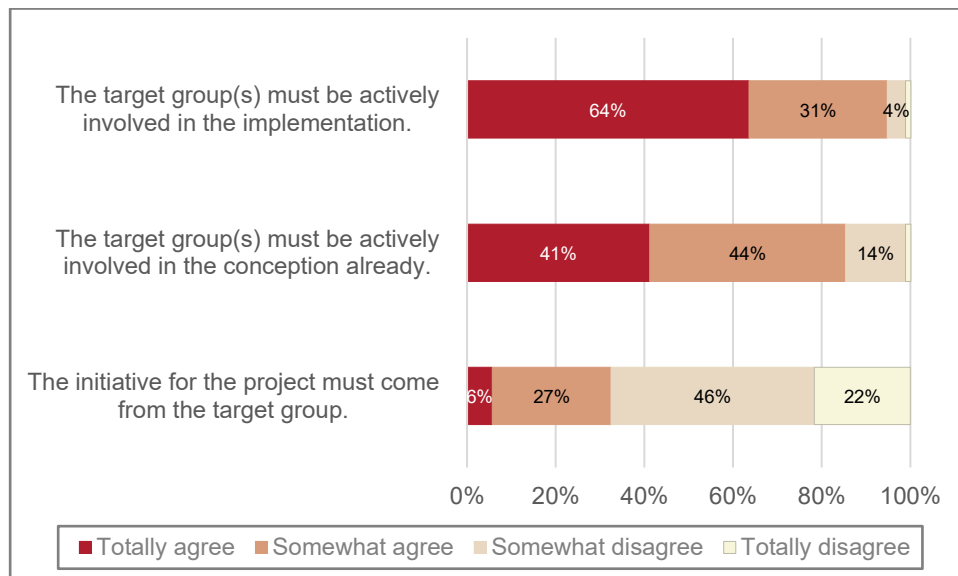
Source: L&R Datafile 'Survey: Social Innovation in Austria', 2021 n=346 miss= between 1 and 7

In the context of the open responses, it was emphasised here that this aspect varies greatly depending on the project and the target group, and that communication with the respective target groups must be carried out strongly according to their needs. Just

as often (23%) it was emphasised that the target group – in its role as an expert for existing needs – should be offered opportunities to participate both in development and implementation as well as in evaluations. A first step in this direction would be to inform the relevant target groups about the opportunities for participation and to use appropriate methods to enable needs-based participation ('encourage, but do not overburden within the framework of communication at eye level').

In the field of participation, various methods are available that enable the involvement of the target group. In the SINNergyTRANS project, for example, different methods of participation in the context of the energy transition were demonstrated[7]:

- ☐ Activating survey
- ☐ Citizens' Council
- ☐ Citizens' meeting / Informational event
- ☐ Community Organizing
- ☐ Community of Practice
- ☐ Design Thinking
- ☐ Dragon Dreaming
- ☐ Focus group
- ☐ Open Space
- ☐ Pilot project
- ☐ Planning for Real
- ☐ Pro Action Café
- ☐ Field test
- ☐ World Café
- ☐ Future workshop

---

[7] https://www.oegut.at/downloads/pdf/sinnergytrans-methodensteckbriefe.pdf

4.3.3 Role of science and teaching

The social sciences have been researching social innovation as a solution model for central socio-political questions since the 1980s and have been dealing with questions about the definition of social innovation, what goals can be pursued with it, and what it plays or can play. Social transformation processes are researched and science takes on the role of the stakeholders in supporting, initiating or implementing innovative processes.

> *'In addition to research into concrete transformation processes and their preconditions, more and more approaches are becoming the focus of interest in which science itself is seen as an active shaper and driver of such processes. In concepts such as transformation design or transformative research, science supports transformation processes in concrete ways by developing or supporting social innovations with approaches such as social experiments and purposefully initiated learning processes' (Howaldt et al. 2017: 54)*

In the meantime, training programmes on social innovation have also been established at various Austrian universities:

- **Master's degree in Social Innovation at the FH Salzburg:**

  The degree programme at the Salzburg University of Applied Sciences provides comprehensive skills for innovative planning and responsible management of the social sector. Contents: Critical analysis and reflection of professional strategies for social change processes on the topics of ageing society: new forms of health promotion; increasing globalisation: migration movements, growing social diversity, social inequality: empowering disadvantaged groups, ensuring social stability.

  https://www.fh-salzburg.ac.at/studium/sowi/soziale-innovation-master

- **Professional Master Social Innovation & Management at WU Vienna:**

  Topics in the curriculum include social innovation and strategy, social entrepreneurship, marketing psychology, social innovation in a digital environment (digital citizenship, impact measurement and reporting), funding strategies, social finance and impact investing, social policy, and writing grant proposals in the European framework.

  https://www.wu.ac.at/universitaet/news-und-events/news/details-news/detail/soziale-innovation-managen-neuer-professional-master

- **Studies in Business Administration and Social Innovation at Bertha von Suttner Private University**

  'Bertha von Suttner Private University is responding to social change in society with its Business Administration and Social Innovation degree programme. It is becoming increasingly important for managers to expand business know-how with social skills and knowledge about social innovations. Holistic and inclusive leadership approaches with meaning and values are becoming increasingly important. For this reason, Bertha von Suttner Private University offers the university course Weltanschauliches Wirtschaften ("ideological economies"), which looks at economic systems from an ethical, humanistic and philosophical perspective.'

  https://www.st-poelten.at/news/13101-bertha-von-suttner-privatuniversitaet-entfaltet-ihr-studienangebot-4939

- **Master's Course Management of Social Innovations at the FH Upper Austria**

The on-the-job master's programme 'Management of Social Innovations' (60 ECTS) is the second stage of a two-part study programme of which the first is the course "Management of Social Enterprises" (60 ECTS).

https://www.fh-ooe.at/campus-linz/studiengaenge/lehrgaenge/management-sozialer-innovationen/

4.3.4 Project level

The online survey asked about current or completed projects that are categorised as 'social innovation' and that the respondents are or were either involved in implementing or are familiar with professionally or personally. ESF projects and non-ESF projects were named.

In total, 282 projects were registered, which the project team supplemented with nine projects presented during SozialMarie 2022. The projects were then assigned to thematic priorities based on the descriptions in the survey and additional internet research. This revealed that 69 projects (24%) were named in the area of vocational orientation/qualification/coaching. The second most frequent thematic classification was in the field of counselling and support with 60 projects or 21% of the mentions, followed by 39 projects (13%) that can be classified as employment projects. The other projects were assigned to the priority areas of inclusion/nondiscrimination, sustainability/CO2 reduction, communication/participation/housing, neighbourhood and citizen participation, health, digital skills, social entrepreneurship and development/research (see figure 8).

Figure 8:   Projects according to focus
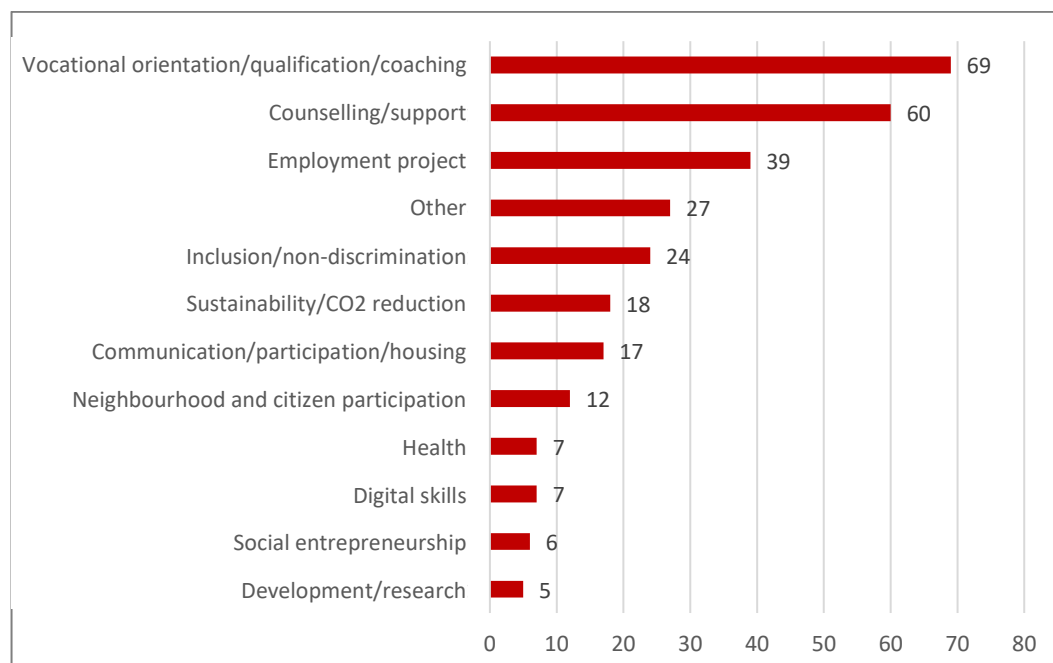
Source: L&R data file 'Survey: Social Innovation in Austria', 2021 n=346, entries on 282 projects, supplemented by 9 projects from SozialMarie 2022

The above-mentioned projects are reviewed based on the criteria developed for social innovation, continuously supplemented, and then prepared in a clear form to make them available to a broad public.

5 Literature used

Aderhold, Jens; Mann, Carsten; Rückert-John, Jana; Schäfer, Martina (2014): Social innovations and conducive forms of governance in the social transformation process. Environmental research plan of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety. Focal point 12: Overarching issues of environmental policy research. Commissioned by the Federal Environment Agency. https://www.bmuv.de/fileadmin/Daten_BMU/Pools/Forschungs-datenbank/fkz_3712_17_100_transformationsprozess_bf.pdf

Barnett, Stephen J. (2022) Scaling-up social innovation. Seven steps for using ESF+. Brussels: European Commission, DG Employment

Bornstein, Nicholas, Pabst, Stefan & Sigrist, Stephan (2014): On the importance of social innovation in science and practice. Zurich

Federal Act on the Approval of the Federal Budget for the Year 2022 (Federal Finance Act 2022 – BFG 2022) including annexes. BGBl. I No. 195/2021. Subdivision 42/Effect Objective 4 of Annex 1 'Federal Budget' to Article I of the BFG 2022.

Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (2016). Special directive 'Social innovation for labour market integration' for the promotion of innovative social businesses. Vienna

Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (2016): Operational Programme Employment ESF 2014–20. Vienna

Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (2021). Interim report on the implementation of the Open Innovation Strategy for Austria. Current implementation status and implementation proposals until 2025. https://openinnovation.gv.at/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/WF063_21-OI-Strate-gie_Zwischenstandsbericht_BF.pdf, retrieved on 18 March 2022.

Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (2022). 'Social Innovation' https://www.sozialministerium.at/Themen/Soziales/Soziale-Themen/Soziale-Innovation.html, accessed 4 March 2022. Last updated: 24 October 2019

Council of the European Union (2015). The promotion of the social economy as a key driver of economic and social development in Europe. 15071/15

Ecker, B., Fidlschuster, L., Fischer, M., Gassler, H., Lukesch, R., Mair, S., Philipp, S. and Said, N. (2019). Analysis of the potential of social innovation as part of LEADER 2014–20. Final report. ÖAR & ZSI, Vienna.

Eckhardt, J., Kaletka, C., Pelka, B. (2017): Inclusion through digital social innovations: modelling an ecosystem of drivers and barriers. In: Antona, M., Stephanidis, C. (eds.) UAHCI 2017. LNCS, vol. 10277, pp. 67–84. Springer, Cham (2017). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58706-6_6

Eckhardt, Jennifer, Kaletka, Christoph & Pelka, Bastian (2018): Copy Here, Paste There? On the Challenges of Scaling Inclusive Social Innovations. In: Universal Access in Human-Computer Interaction. Methods, Technologies, and Users, DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-92049-8_4

European Commission (2011a). European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion.

European Commission (2011b). Social Entrepreneurship Initiative Create an 'ecosystem' to promote social enterprises as key players in the social economy and social innovation. COM(2011/682).

European Commission (2021). European Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights.

European Commission (2021). Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013

European Commission, Bureau of European Policy Advisers, Hubert, A. (2011). Empowering people, driving change : social innovation in the European Union, (A,Therace,editor,I,Dro,editor) Publications Office. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2796/13155

European Commission (Upcoming, 2022): Scaling-up social innovation. Seven strategic steps for ESF managing authorities. ESF Transnational Cooperation Platform. Community of Practice on Social Innovation. Brussels

Howaldt, Jürgen, Kopp, Ralf, Böschen, Stefan, Krings, Bettina-Johanna (2017): Innovations for society. New ways and methods to unleash the potential of social innovations. Karlsruhe, https://www.zsi.at/object/news/4511/attach/Broschuere_Soziale-Innovation_ITAS_2017.pdf

Jürgen Howaldt, Christoph Kaletka, Antonius Schröder, Marthe Zirngiebl (eds.): Atlas of Social Innovation. 2nd Volume: A World of New Practices

Jürgen Howaldt, Christoph Kaletka, Antonius Schröder, Marthe Zirngiebl (eds.): Atlas of Social Innovation. 2nd Volume: A World of New Practices

Kaletka, C., Markmann, M., Pelka, B.: Peeling the onion. An exploration of the layers of social innovation ecosystems. Modelling a context sensitive perspective on driving and hindering factors for social innovation. Eur. Public Soc. Innov. Rev. 1(2), 83–93 (2017)

Kesselring, Alexander & Leitner, Michaela (2008): Social innovation in companies. Study commissioned by the Unruhe Private Foundation. Vienna, https://www.zsi.at/attach/Soziale_Innovation_in_Unternehmen_ENDBERICHT.pdf

Province of Burgenland (2020). Burgenland Plan for the Future. Work programme of the Provincial Government of Burgenland for the XXII. Legislative period

Province of Carinthia (2018). Carinthia Coalition. Government programme 2018–23.

Province of Lower Austria (2018a). Supplement A. Joint work programme of the People's Party of Lower Austria and the Freedom Party of Lower Austria. XIX. Legislative Period of the Lower Austrian Parliament 2018–23.

Province of Lower Austria (2018b): Supplement A. Joint work programme of the People's Party of Lower Austria and the Social Democratic Party of Lower Austria. XIX. Legislative Period of the Lower Austrian Parliament 2018–23.

Province of Upper Austria (2020). Upper Austria. Our future. Our mission. Together. Work.

Province of Salzburg (2018). Coalition agreement 2018. Concluded between ÖVP, Greens and NEOS.

Province of Styria (2019). White-Green agenda. Shaping Styria together.

Province of Tyrol (2018). Govern resolutely. Securing Tyrol's future. Government programme for Tyrol 2018–23.

Land Vorarlberg (2019). Work programme 'Our Vorarlberg – rich in opportunities and sustainable' 2019–24.

McNeill, Joanne (2012). Through Schumpeter: Public policy, social innovation and social entrepreneurship. The International Journal of Sustainability Policy and Practice, 8 (1), 81-94

Pausch, Markus (2018): Social innovation between emancipation and adaptation. Article in momentum quarterly, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324947253_Soziale_Innovation_zwischen_Emanzipation_und_Anpassung/fulltext/5aec6734a6fdcc8508b778dd/Soziale-Innovation-zwischen-Emanzipation-und-Anpassung.pdf

Pelka, Bastian and Terstriep, Judith (2016). MAPPING SOCIAL INNOVATION MAPS The State of Research Practice across Europe. In: European Public & Social Innovation Review, Volume 1, Issue 1, 2016, Creative Commons Attribution 4.0

Rameder, Paul, Millner, Reinhard, Moder, Clara, Christanell, Anja, Vandor, Peter, Meyer, Michael (2016): The social incubator: How social innovations succeed better. Conditions of emergence, implementation and dissemination, using the example of the Austrian health sector. Vienna University of Economics and Business, https://epub.wu.ac.at/5328/1/Rameder_et_al_2016_Soziale_Innovationen.pdf

Republic of Austria (2020). Out of responsibility for Austria. Government programme 2020–24.

Rohrhofer, J. / Leimüller, G. / Benke, S. / Stöger M. (2021): Interim report on the implementation of the Open Innovation Strategy for Austria. Vienna: Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology.

Sabel, Charles F., and Jonathan Zeitlin (2012). 'Experimentalist governance.' The Oxford handbook of governance 1: 2-4.

City of Vienna (2020). The Progressive Coalition for Vienna. Social. Brave. Sustainable. Human. Modern.

Stephan Pühringer, Stephan / Stelzer-Orthofer, Christine (JKU): Accompanying evaluation of the interventions of the European Social Fund Austria 2007–13. Evaluation of the cross-cutting issue of innovation Final report, 1st version September 2014

The Young Foundation (2012) Social Innovation Overview: A deliverable of the project: "The theoretical, empirical and policy foundations for building social innovation in Europe" (TEPSIE), European Commission – 7th Framework Programme, Brussels: European Commission, DG Research