

# consolid8

## **WP 3 - Building capacities for the integration of social innovation actors in 5 pioneering ecosystems**

D3.1 Assessment of National Ecosystems - Repertory of relevant stakeholders & challenges.

July 2023

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## 1 Introduction

This report was written in the context of Consolid8, a Horizon-funded project dedicated to supporting the developing of social innovation in Italy, Romania, Slovenia, Greece and Ireland, as well as in 10 European other ecosystems. Its main objectives are (i) to reinforce the links between social innovation actors and other innovation ecosystems, (ii) to widen access to alternative means of financing for social innovators, and (iii) to test social innovation models with the potential of scaling up and replicability, using the quadruple helix collaboration (industry, academia, civil society, and public authorities).

The core of the project is structured in three phases. The first phase is dedicated to research and capacity-building. It aims to assess the current state of the innovation ecosystem in the 5 aforementioned countries, to identify the main challenges in each country and to develop capacity-building programmes for actors from both the social and traditional innovation ecosystems. In the second phase, the results from these programmes will be showcased during the Consolid8 festival, a European social innovation festival held each year in September in Braşov, Romania. Finally, in the third phase, the lessons learned from the first two phases will be harnessed to develop a European accelerator programme targeted ten additional innovation ecosystems.

This report shares the conclusions from the phase one research on the current state of the innovation ecosystem in Italy, Romania, Slovenia, Greece and Ireland. The aim of this research was to understand to what extent social innovation is already implemented in these countries and how it is perceived, what are the main social challenges it should aim to address, how it relates to the traditional innovation ecosystem, and what are the main obstacles to the development of social innovation.

The body of the report is structured as follows. After presenting the methodology behind the research, we detail the results for each country and draw some common conclusions.

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For additional information, please access the site: <https://www.consolid8.ro/ecosystem/deep-inclusive-social-innovation-ecosystems>.

## 2 Methodology

This report shares the conclusions from the phase one research on the current state of the innovation ecosystem in Italy, Romania, Slovenia, Greece and Ireland. The aim of this research was to understand to what extent social innovation is already implemented in these countries and how it is perceived, what are the main social challenges it should aim to address, how it relates to the traditional innovation ecosystem, and what are the main obstacles to the development of social innovation.

The first step was to map out a series of actors from the traditional and social innovation sectors: social enterprises, incubators/accelerators, universities, startups, public authorities, startups with social mission/impact, and cultural organisations. This research was developed through desk research, reviewing previous contacts from partners' networks, and consulting databases from previous projects and events in these countries. From this preliminary list of 370 stakeholders, 29 organisations from both the traditional and social innovation sectors were selected in each country for in-depth interviews. An online questionnaire was also used to collect further data. The result of this analytical process of 29 interviews and 76 questionnaires comprises the core data of this report.

The data was analysed following an explanatory stance (Miles et al., 2014), using analytic progression. From the respondents' raw data, we extracted the most relevant concepts. We then grouped these concepts into the following categories: (i) General overview of the country's social innovation ecosystem, (ii) Respondents' understanding of social innovation, (iii) Countries' Social Challenges (iv) Respondents' understanding of the level of integration between the social innovation and traditional innovation ecosystems and finally (v) Challenges in the Social Innovation sector.

## 3 Country analysis

### 3.1 Romania

#### 3.1.1 General overview of the country's social innovation ecosystem

As shown in the SEED - Ecosystem framework Country report for Romania, the social innovation ecosystem in this country is still in a nascent state.

The concept of "social innovation" is still widely unknown for both the private and public sectors. We notice an acute need for knowledge transfer in this field at all societal levels – from general awareness to building actual innovative solutions. Social innovation is mainly driven by private social innovators that are implementing locally based initiatives, contributing to solving social problems usually identified in a local community. Such innovators usually do not identify themselves as social innovators.

The social innovation ecosystems in Romania are still very fragmented, with the most prominent actors being the civil society sector, social entrepreneurs and support organizations. Some individual initiatives to support social innovation have emerged over the past years (Ashoka opening an office in Romania, the development of the National Competence Center for Social Innovation and the delivery of capacity building programs), but support is still needed at all levels.

#### 3.1.2 Respondents' understanding of social innovation

From the interviews, there are a series of elements that characterise social innovation. These can be clustered around two main ideas: the aim of social innovation and its way of working.

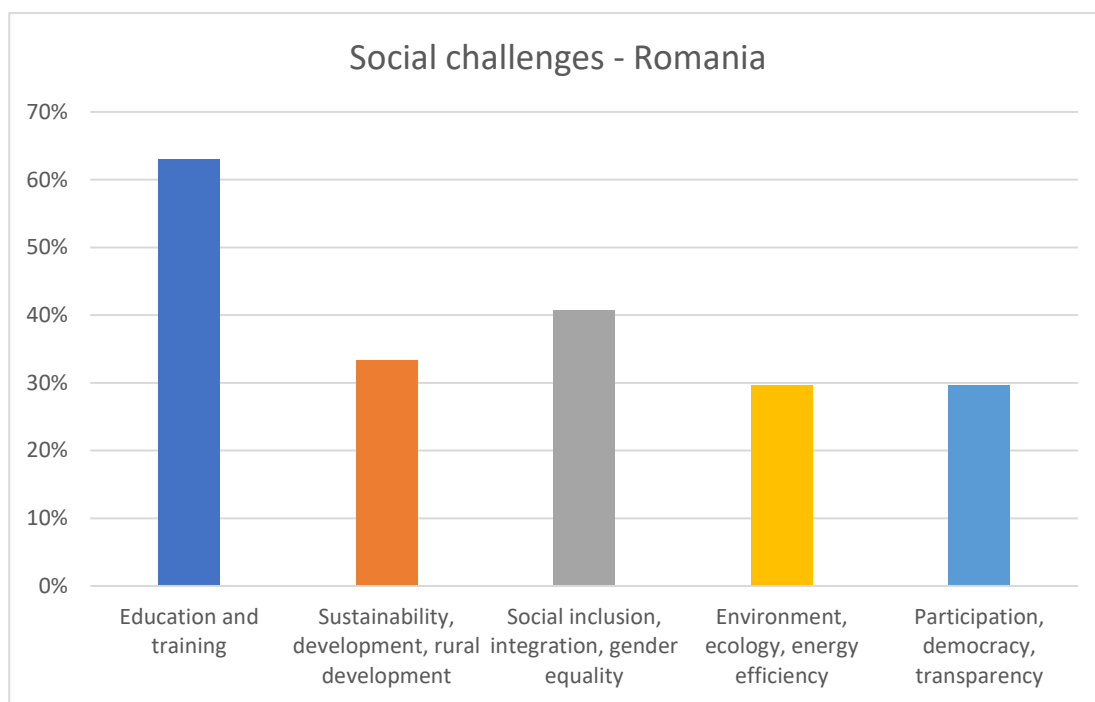
The first important idea is that impact is the main objective of social innovation, and impact on the environment and on people should be included as integral parts of the economic process. Social innovation is thus defined as actions aiming to solve the real problems of the community, as distinguished from those of individuals or of public authorities. To do so, it is important that each action or project has a true impact, beyond the results of the project itself. This can be difficult to gauge, however, and can often only be achieved over time. The healthcare sector or the green transition are mentioned as two areas that are highly relevant for social innovation.

The second crucial idea is that social innovation uses an intersectional, participative approach, bringing together actors from different areas to co-design processes and thus ensure sustainability. This starts by assessing community needs before pinpointing main priorities and designing concrete actions to solve them.

Respondents also mentioned that for social innovation to reach its aimed impact, a large market is needed in order to have enough beneficiaries of innovative solutions. Being simply locally oriented is therefore not enough. It is nonetheless important to bear in mind that every project, no matter how small, be it a failure or a success, can be used as something to learn from.

#### 3.1.3 Social Challenges

As can be seen in the following graph, the main challenges identified in the survey are **Education and training**, followed by **Social inclusion, integration, and gender equality**. To a lesser extent, **Environment, ecology and energy efficiency**, as well as **Participation, democracy and transparency**, are mentioned as important challenges.



Following the results of the questionnaire, the main social challenge in Romania concerns **Education and training**. The country is described as “in an educational crisis”, with a curriculum from the 1970s, outdated teaching methods, and over 50% of 8-15 year-olds suffering from functional illiteracy. Most youngsters are disillusioned by the traditional educational system, leading to high dropout rates and low educational attainment levels, especially among disadvantaged groups. This lack of proper education in turn leads to a workforce that is lacking in qualifications and is not aligned with the evolving needs of the job market. Another challenge in this regard concerns the limited availability and accessibility of digital education tools and resources, as well as the inadequate training and professional development opportunities for teachers. There are also regional disparities in access to quality education, particularly in rural and marginalised communities, and a lack of emphasis on nurturing individual skills and talents.

The second most important challenge in the country regards **social inclusion, integration and gender equality**. There is high unemployment in the country, particularly amongst vulnerable groups. When combined with the aforementioned difficulties surrounding the education system, this creates a situation where people’s main priority is to meet fundamental economic needs, leaving little room for innovation and environmental concerns. There are also issues regarding equality in access to health care and prevention, with reports of discrimination against minorities and a lack of awareness-building on discrimination.

The third challenge is **sustainability, development, rural development**. Agriculture is described as almost exclusively conventional. There is a need to revalue rural areas in a more sustainable way and to promote local production and green jobs in ecological agriculture. Respondents also mention the need to promote micro-communities and low-tech solutions based on natural systems, natural circularity, and permaculture solutions.

A fourth challenge is **Environment, ecology, energy efficiency**. Waste management is considered deficient, with false solutions given by the high-tech community, giving the impression that people can consume whatever they want with no impact or a public or private entity taking care of their waste. Recycling is poor, with many materials ending in landfill or incinerators due to poor sorting. In the same vein, there is a lack of information, education, and data on the true impact of Romanian society on the environment. Respondents feel that the current environmental policies do not sufficiently address the nature of the challenge ahead, and call for stronger approaches based on energy saving and reducing consumption and waste.

There is also a lack of proper regulation on issues related to deforestation. Added to the country’s reliance on fossil fuels and its insufficient renewable energy infrastructure, this situation is leading to deforestation,

loss of biodiversity, threatened ecosystems and wildlife habitats, as well as environmental degradation that disproportionately affects vulnerable communities.

Participants in the online survey also mentioned **Participation, democracy, transparency** as an important issue. People seem to have little trust in the democratic system and find the investment ecosystem lacking in transparency. Some even describe the nation as “damaged”, due to a lack of understanding of civic involvement and critical thinking in education. This, in turn, is affecting how Romanians consolidate their efforts, maintain coalitions, or devise nation-wide movements. In this regard, citizens need to be educated in the area of their rights and responsibilities in order to improve participation and accountability.

### 3.1.4 Respondents’ understanding of the level of integration between the social innovation and traditional innovation ecosystems

Low connection between the social innovation and traditional innovation ecosystems is highlighted as an issue by 67% of the respondents to the online survey.

The social innovation ecosystem appears as an area that is poorly known in Romania, with one respondent even qualifying it as “non-existent”. As a new concept, social innovation is struggling to integrate the traditional ecosystem, which remains dominated by two preconceptions: if you are an NGO, you can’t make money, and if you are a business, money should be your main objective. The traditional ecosystem is qualified as having a low appetite for risk, translating into low funding for innovation.

In the same vein, there is no mapping of the sector of social innovators by the state. Therefore, there are no accurate data from the sector and no programmes to address this topic. Social innovation is often associated with social services or philanthropic involvement. There is no direct link, for example, in public policies, between the social economy and social innovation.

The concept of social innovation thus appears as something that is rather abstract, difficult to measure and not immediately monetized (for example to increase the rate of return/profitability of a company or to increase the GDP of a country). The volumes required by traditional innovation ecosystem actors are described as unrealistic for a support organisation for social innovation. Larger funding schemes often require a robust organisational track record, which makes it very difficult for small, agile, innovating teams to access capital.

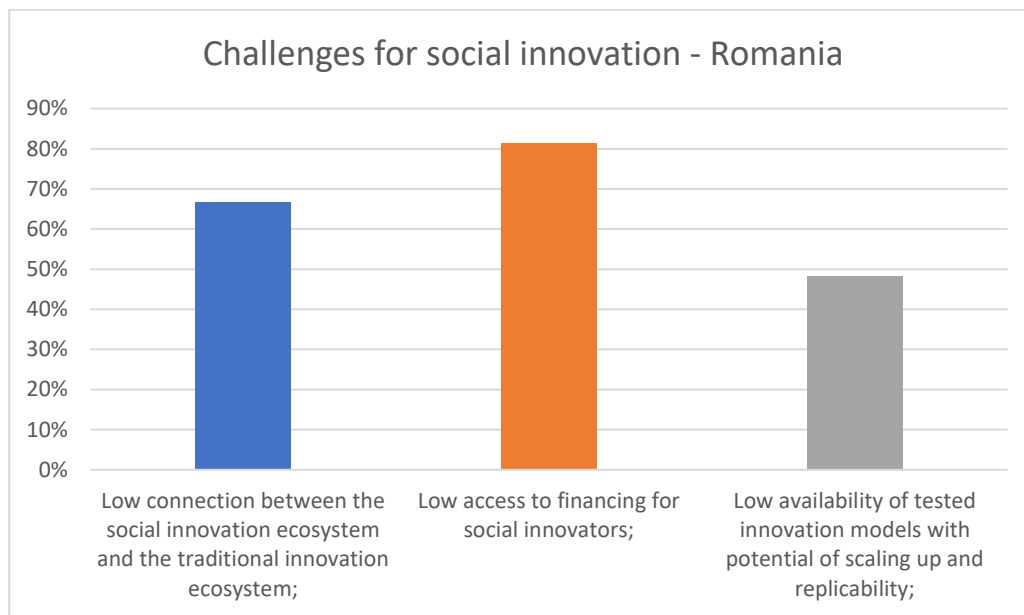
In some cases, there are collaborations and consultations with traditional investors. These often seem interested in investments with impact, but this rarely translates into effective investment. The social impact dimension thus seems peripheral. Social impact is an objective that is considered, but not systematically followed. In order to be attractive, a project must be at the intersection between social innovation and commercial viability.

In order to improve this situation, respondents identified several ideas. The first of these is to create further spaces for dialogue and communication, for all actors in the economic sphere to align their vision and understanding of social innovation. Universities, banks, and companies with a social interest could offer spaces for meetings and support facilitation as part of their ESG reporting. In a similar perspective, there is a need to foster discussion in the public sphere to understand what social impact means, what climate emergency refers to and how these can be translated into concrete processes that are mainstreamed through innovation. The public sector should also offer co-investment opportunities with a shared burden of risk to boost the interest of private investors. Another important point is to redefine the understanding of impact when talking about social innovation. From the perspective of investors, social impact can seem negligible, whereas for the community small changes can be life-changing.

Interviewees also mentioned the idea that social innovation should be studied in the educational environment. Further training is thus needed on this subject. Some feel that social innovation is not sufficiently associated with increasing inclusion and job quality, and is only rarely integrated into business models beyond a fairly superficial desire to create social impact. Another interesting idea is that, instead of considering traditional innovation and social innovation as separate spheres, we should focus on updating the design of traditional businesses to make them more participatory, greener, and to add social principles

in their design phase. As the traditional sector is better known, it may be easier to intervene in the pre-existing market rather than having to develop new concepts.

### 3.1.5 Challenges in the Social Innovation sector



In the context of Romania, all three challenges are significant. Low access to financing comes first (over 80%), followed by the low connection between the social innovation ecosystem and the traditional ecosystem. To a lesser extent, the low availability of tested innovation models is considered a substantial issue.

Though all three challenges seem important, they seem to stem from a common issue: the lack of funding. Many start-ups find it difficult to access capital to finance pilot projects or to scale up successful projects. There is typically more funding available for traditional small companies than for social entrepreneurs. In the rural development section, there are few investors who fund untested methodologies for intervention, which translates into the same type of solutions being funded over and over again, even if their success turns out to be modest at best. Projects therefore tend to be short-term, due to a lack of financing and possibilities to offer longer-term employment opportunities. The NGO sector especially struggles to find long-term funding, with many relying on grants or similar types of financial resources.

Social innovation initiatives often require initial investment and ongoing funding to develop and scale their solutions. Without sufficient access to financing, social innovators in Romania are struggling to implement their ideas. This hinders their growth potential and limits their ability to create a sustainable and long-lasting impact.

Traditional funding sources are often not tailored to the specific needs and outcomes of social innovation projects. Introducing and expanding alternative financing models, such as impact investment, social impact bonds, or dedicated funds for social innovation, would be an interesting way of providing the necessary financial resources and supporting the growth of social innovation in Romania.

By improving access to financing, more individuals, organisations, and investors may also be incentivised to engage with social innovation initiatives in Romania. This increased involvement can lead to the creation of a vibrant ecosystem, fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, and the development of scalable and replicable solutions to address pressing societal challenges.

While addressing the other challenges (low connection between ecosystems and availability of tested models) is also important, improving access to financing for social innovators can therefore serve as a catalyst for overall ecosystem development. By providing the necessary financial support, it enables social innovators to thrive, develop innovative solutions, and contribute to positive social change in Romania.



Another challenge that was mentioned in the questionnaire regards current regulations around the social economy. The definition of social enterprise, for example, prevents scaling. In Romanian law, social enterprises must reinvest at least 90% of their profit in their social mission. This is a highly restrictive definition that does not include social impact. One suggestion made by an interviewee would be to follow the model of international organisations such as the EIB, that take into account impact indicators – ex. problems solved, number of beneficiaries – leaving the use of the profit to the discretion of the company.

## 3.2 Slovenia

### 3.2.1 General overview of the country's social innovation ecosystem

Currently, Slovenia boasts a dynamic innovation ecosystem, marked by the presence of numerous startups, research institutions, and established companies pushing the boundaries of technological advancement. Public and private sector collaborations have laid the groundwork for fostering innovation, leading to encouraging breakthroughs in sectors like technology, healthcare, and sustainable practices. Furthermore, the country's commitment to social innovation has seen the emergence of impactful initiatives addressing societal challenges such as inclusivity, unemployment, and environmental sustainability. Social entrepreneurs and NGOs play a crucial role in driving these innovative solutions, displaying a strong sense of social responsibility.

Despite the progress made, challenges to the integration of innovation and social innovation ecosystems persist. One of the primary obstacles is limited access to funding and financial resources for social innovation projects. Traditional investors often prioritise profit-driven ventures, making it difficult for social innovators to secure necessary capital to scale their solutions. Additionally, there is a need for better coordination and collaboration between various stakeholders within the ecosystem. Bringing together government agencies, businesses, academia, and civil society can be challenging, requiring effective communication channels and shared goals.

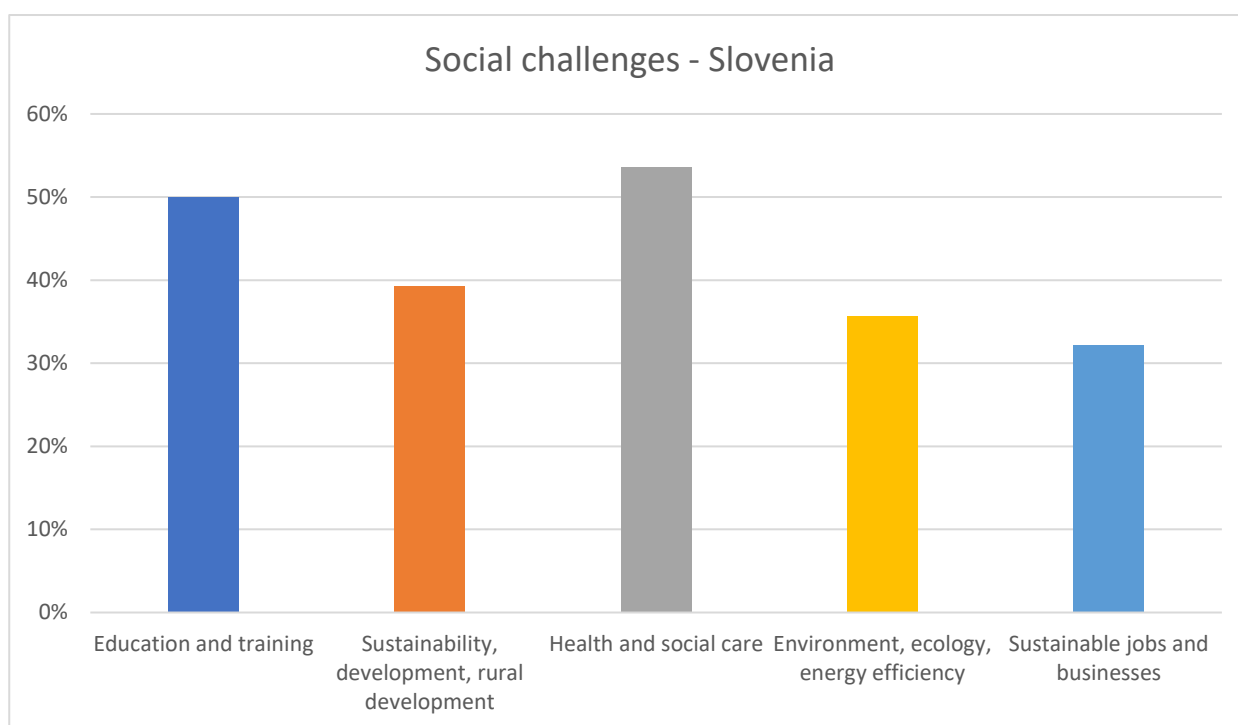
### 3.2.2 Respondents' understanding of social innovation

Social innovation is described by the respondents in several different ways. Most broadly, it is defined as the introduction of new practices, perspectives, and ideas to solve social issues, challenge the status quo, and meet social needs of all kinds – from education and health care to community development and sustainability – in an innovative way. In a similar way, it is understood as the development of new solutions, products and services that preserve sustainable jobs, a persistent change in society towards an inclusive and earth-friendly society, or simply as any solution to a social challenge that has a “large or powerful effect”. An important aspect of social innovation is that, beyond solving social issues, it also contributes to creating new social relationships and increasing the capacity of communities to act on their own through new forms of collaboration.

Social innovation is described as having a key role to play in solving social challenges such as poverty, discrimination, climate change and other social inequalities, and having the power to contribute to sustainable development and other SDGs.

### 3.2.3 Social Challenges

As can be seen in the following graph, the main challenges identified in the survey are **Health and social care**, as well as **Education and training**. To a lesser extent, **Sustainability, development and rural development** is mentioned, along with **Environment, ecology and energy efficiency**, and **Sustainable jobs and businesses**.



A number of various challenges are noted by the respondents in relation to **education and training**. In general, the picture painted by the survey is that the school system needs to be renovated and tailored to the needs of the modern society and the economic system. There are inconsistencies between supply and demand on the labour market due to a disconnection between the economy and the education system, and a lack of collaboration between the education system and practical work. In addition, Slovenia is behind in digital skills, and there are challenges in identifying individual competences and promoting the development of the individual and their specific competences.

In particular, respondents call for a change in teaching methods and curricula. More non-formal education methodologies are thus needed in formal education. Curricula are described as “outdated” and oversaturated with material that is no longer relevant to modern times, due to a tendency to continuously add material without removing less relevant content. Instead, curricula should focus more on critical thinking, and programmes involving new technologies need to be developed in primary and secondary school.

Respondents also frequently mention that the education system needs to drive a change in social culture, including a change in attitude towards sustainable jobs and companies, which is necessary for the preservation of nature and a decent life for individuals. Education and training are thus considered the basis of new generations. In this regard, there is a need for educational institutions that also teach students values and how to think for themselves.

**Health care and social care** are also considered major challenges in Slovenia, with a chronic lack of high-quality personnel in health and social care activities due to poor working conditions and insufficient wages. There are high costs for various types of care and long waiting times for health services. A major problem here is the **ageing population**, an issue that is expected to deepen in the coming years. There is a lack of flexible, adaptable, and affordable elderly care. Health and social care in Slovenia are traditionally managed by the state. However, due to population, structural and socio-economic changes, the state cannot provide adequate services in that field, hence great opportunities for social economy emerge.

As regards **sustainability, development, rural development**, there is a need to foster entrepreneurship in rural areas and to develop them in order to show young people that there is a future outside cities. There is scope in this regard to improve cooperation with local government and agencies, to build coworking communities, and to provide further funding opportunities. This would help to contribute to the goals of sustainable development.

In terms of **environment, ecology, and energy efficiency**, there is too much focus on the consequences and none on the causes of environmental degradation. Public discourse on social and environmental responsibilities are well intentioned, but respondents report low actual awareness among companies regarding environmental sustainability and a dearth of truly sustainable solutions, including a lack of systemic schemes for dealing with textile, furniture, and other waste. Some respondents also express their doubts as to the possibility of structural change, as the biggest polluters are also the biggest economic actors in the country and therefore have considerable influence.

Finally, many factors in Slovenian society are currently obstacles to developing **sustainable jobs and businesses**. In terms of work and investment culture, there is a domination of short-term returns on investments, which hinders investment in long-term social ventures. Employers also tend to prefer traditional workplace models such as the eight-hour workday and permanent presence at the workplace over more flexible models such as remote work. The bureaucracy is also mentioned as an obstacle, with lengthy and complicated procedures and insufficient paperless models in both the economy and public administration. In all this, there are limited possibilities for young people to get employed in sustainable (ethical) businesses, if they don't start them themselves.

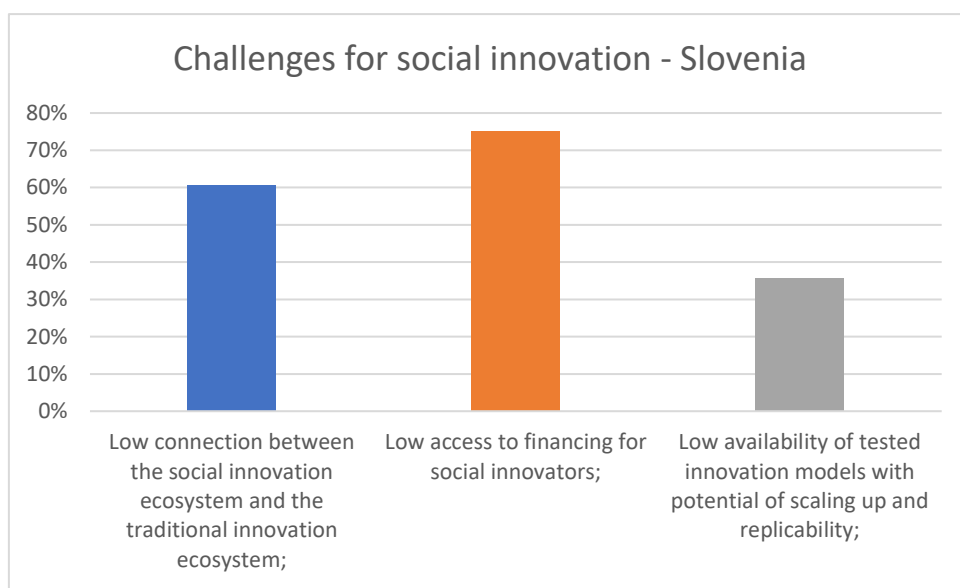
### 3.2.4 Respondents' understanding of the level of integration between the social innovation and traditional innovation ecosystems

The interviewees had different experiences of the level of integration between the social innovation and traditional innovation ecosystems. Most of them considered that there is some level of integration between the two, be it through EU projects, by financing incubators such as Kovačnica or Zavod Meta, or through short-term co-operations and coworking spaces. The SocioLab ecosystem in particular is mentioned as an initiative through which much collaboration took place with stakeholders from the traditional entrepreneurship and innovation sector. Unfortunately, this initiative did not gain further support from the state and an opportunity was missed to mainstream good practices gained from the experience.

However, as will be seen in the following section, almost 60% of the respondents to the survey consider the lack of integration between the two ecosystems as a challenge for the country. This lack of integration is seen somewhat as a side-effect of the relatively immature development of social innovation in Slovenia. Integration is developing organically, and once social innovation ventures mature, it can be expected that further interaction will take place naturally. Local policy is therefore not considered to be the issue, except for the pervasive lack of funding.

This view is somewhat tempered by an interviewee who calls for the introduction of a national strategy for developing social entrepreneurship, and a programme of measures taking local accessibility into account. This interviewee believes that clear commitments from the state are needed to promote the social economy sector, to establish a supporting ecosystem and to provide sufficient funding, taking into account the existing experience of the sector. Other initiatives to foster further integration would be to develop partnerships with universities, NGOs, companies, startups and the government. Further work is also needed with educational institutions to develop training programmes that would promote social innovation.

### 3.2.5 Challenges in the Social Innovation sector



In general, the social innovation ecosystem seems to reflect the wider perspective of the entrepreneurial support system in Slovenia, which is considered to be poor by the respondents. Social innovation remains in a developmental stage and is lacking in solidity and in structure. According to the respondents, there is a need for a national strategy to support social innovation, with further dedicated calls and more capacity building. Social businesses seem to cover needs that are traditionally the responsibility of the government, therefore the market is not ready to pay for these services.

The main issue mentioned by the respondents, with over 70% of the results, is the lack of funding. There is very little public funding available for social innovation in Slovenia. The funds are scarce and irregular. It is considered impossible to count on public financial support as a relevant source to finance innovation and organisational development and growth. This leads to unstable work processes and insecure jobs in social enterprises and cooperatives. Respondents also call for more support from governmental institutions involved in supporting social innovation. Public authorities remain responsible for many social issues, but NGOs and the social economy are not seen as partners in solving problems. This leaves good innovative products or services hard to get financing and incubation.

In the last three years, only one call has been published for NGOs in the area of social innovation. The NGO sector is rarely seen as a relevant actor in social innovations on the national level, thus innovation is still largely connected to the business sector. At the same time, social enterprises are 100% non-profit, which hinders their capacity to find investors as they cannot divide any profits.

As mentioned above, there is little connection between the social and traditional innovation ecosystems. There appears to be no institutionalised support for connection and integration between the two, leaving any interactions to happen through individual initiatives. In general, the term and content of social innovation are not well-known. Social innovation seems to be perceived mainly as developing “sustainable” and “socially nice” products, but its capacity to empower communities and change society for the better remains underappreciated. There also appears to be some stigma around the word “social” remaining from the socialist era. The term remains associated with a difficult financial and social position or is seen as synonymous with “non-profit”, and social enterprises are often seen as only employing socially disadvantaged people or replicating the work of public institutions. This creates a situation where there is little interest in social innovation, be it from the public or from investors, translating into low investment, low access to financing, and low interest in developing social innovation.

As a result, there are few social enterprises in Slovenia and they are poorly recognised in the community. Most of them operate with very limited resources, as the supportive environment for financing social enterprises is weak. Many of them rely on grants, which are difficult to access. In order to survive, social enterprises in Slovenia are forced to perform activities in the same way as traditional enterprises and to

follow the same legal regulations, but at the same time, due to their status, they are marked as "something less" in accordance with the previously mentioned misconception.

Some ways of addressing these issues are mentioned in the stakeholder interviews. Encouraging collaboration across sectors, for example, can promote the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and resources, leading to innovative social solutions. Creating incubators and accelerators can also help social innovations thrive by providing them with the necessary resources to grow and reach their full potential. Partnering with global networks can equally bring new ideas, perspectives, and opportunities for growth, expanding the reach and impact of social innovations beyond the borders of Slovenia. Finally, reviewing and adapting existing legislation to provide a supportive regulatory environment can foster the growth and sustainability of social innovations, allowing them to have a lasting positive impact on society

### 3.3 Italy

The Social Innovation ecosystem in Italy and its connection with the traditional ecosystem

#### 3.3.1 General overview of the country's social innovation ecosystem

Italy's social innovation landscape is witnessing significant growth as a means to address contemporary societal challenges. With a moderately mature ecosystem that encourages collaboration between diverse stakeholders and promotes hybridisation between sectors, social innovation has become a powerful force for positive change.

However, despite this progress, some barriers persist. Social innovation remains a relatively new concept for certain public authorities, private entities, and citizens, necessitating efforts to raise awareness and foster understanding. Adequate funding and financing mechanisms at the national and local levels are lacking, hindering sustained support for social innovation projects. Additionally, building strong networks and collaborations among stakeholders remains a challenge, as does implementing policies that prioritise social innovation and enable participatory decision-making.

To advance, the Italian social innovation ecosystem must be strengthened by promoting its activities to create awareness, securing reliable funding sources, fostering collaborative partnerships, and developing capacity-building programmes. Such measures will empower the country to tackle societal issues more effectively and embrace positive change for the benefit of its citizens and communities.

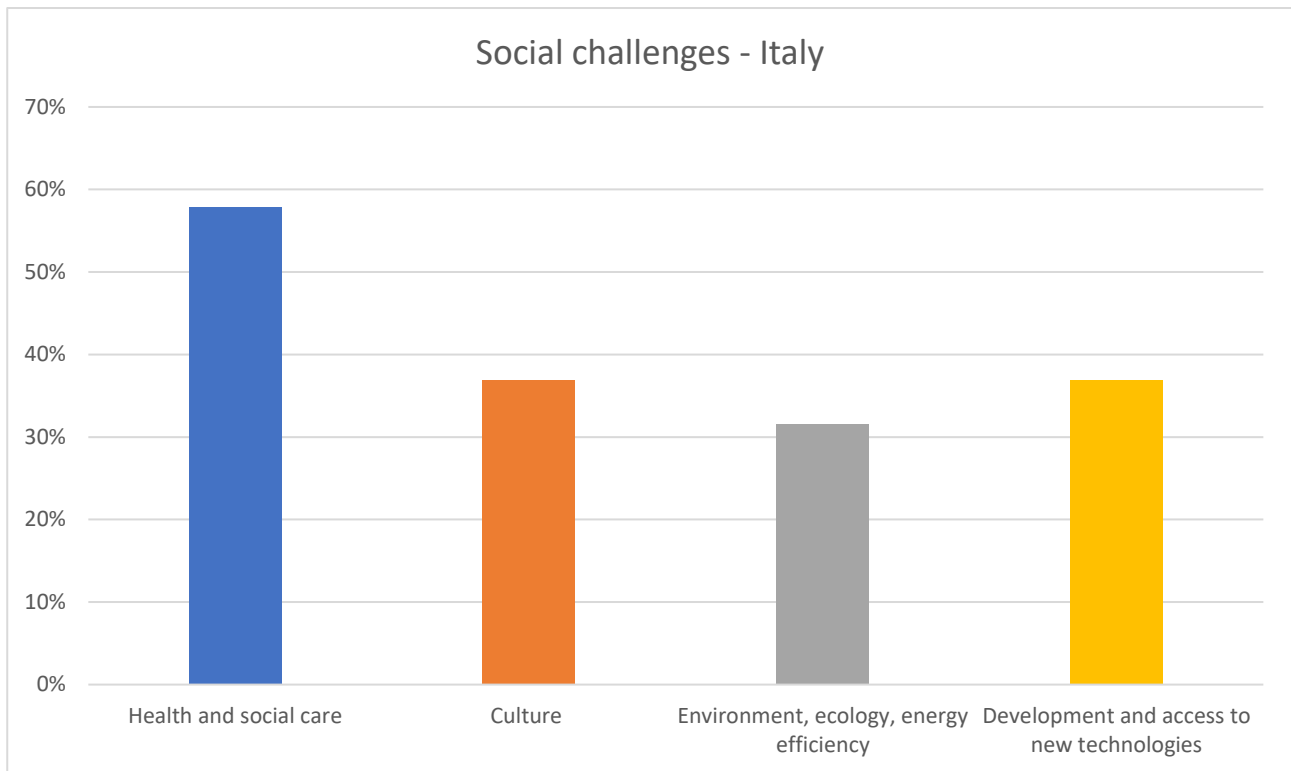
#### 3.3.2 Respondents' understanding of social innovation

In their replies, all respondents highlighted the central element of social innovation as its positive effect on society as a whole, and not just the organisations or individuals that developed the innovation, which sometimes happens in traditional innovation. Some respondents also mention the importance for social innovation to particularly support those people that need it more, such as vulnerable workers struggling to express their full professional potential.

Social innovation is thus described as using the core concepts of innovation – developing new ideas, concepts, services, products, models, etc. – with a clear outward look and with the intent to create positive benefits for a larger group of people. There is a clear focus on social innovation as a means to enhance wellness and quality of life for society as a whole, and the importance for new ideas to respond to social needs. In particular, social innovation should generate new solutions that can fight societal issues such as discrimination, inequality, injustice and climate change. It is also important to highlight the bottom-up approach that social innovation generally follows.

#### 3.3.3 Social Challenges

As can be seen in the following graph, the main social challenges identified in the survey are **Health and social care** and **Development and access to new technologies**. **Culture** and **Environment, ecology and energy efficiency** are also mentioned as challenges of equal and important weight.



In terms of **Health and social care**, an important challenge is the decreasing number of hospitals and care infrastructures, particularly in rural areas, despite an increasingly old population. In the same vein, it is difficult to access care services in an appropriate amount of time – a trend that has been worsened by the pandemic.

As for **environmental issues**, extreme weather conditions have increased, putting local communities in difficult situations and forcing them to deal with disasters and reconstruction on a regular basis. There is also a lack of a coherent and well-funded national policy plan for environmental protection. Respondents also mention increasing pressure on some sectors, particularly manufacturing, to invest into more sustainable production processes, without much external funding to support this transition.

**Culture** was selected as one of the main challenges, but respondents did not add details on what they mean. However, there were many references to a **certain work culture**, or rather to societal culture, particularly in relation to the **inclusion of women** in the labour market. Women still have lower employment rates and face discrimination on the job market, and most respondents link this care work still being seen mostly as a woman's job, undermining women's chances on the labour market. This is in part due to a weak public support system for families with children, undermining work-life balance.

Also linked to the **inclusion of certain groups in society** and in the labour market, the same discrimination faced by women also affects immigrants and people with disabilities. For immigrants, respondents report a generally hostile political discourse, as well as complicated bureaucracy and discriminatory rules regarding citizenship and access to services. The ageing workforce is also mentioned as issue, with not enough turnover particularly in those sectors perceived as unattractive, such as manufacturing.

The **quality of the labour market** is also one of the challenges mentioned by respondents, closely tied to the issues of inequality and discrimination. Italy has one of the highest unemployment rates in Europe, and one of the most rigid and traditional contractual systems. This means a large prevalence of fixed-term contracts, bogus part-time, and other sub-optimal work arrangements that often make jobs barely sustainable for workers. The quality of labour market is also cause of a stable brain drain, driving young talents from rural areas to major cities, or to other countries.

Another challenge is the **difficulty to access digital tools and instruments**, that in turn produces difficulty to access services and knowledge. Respondents also mention the high degree of involvement of the public

sector in the economy, as well as a well-rooted top-down approach in policy development and implementation, that makes it difficult for organisations to influence the process.

Regarding **education and training**, respondents mention an old system of education, where very little space is left to emotional education and the process is based on old models that do not respond to labour market needs. Old infrastructures and scarcity of materials also constitute a limit on the proper functioning of the education system as a way to improve one's wellbeing and labour market outcomes.

### 3.3.4 Respondents' understanding of the level of integration between the social innovation and traditional innovation ecosystems

The majority of respondents reported a good level of integration between their organisations and the traditional innovation ecosystem, to a varying degree. This is achieved either through partnerships with one or more actors, or by being partners or members of mixed networks with shared activities. Only one respondent reported being an integral part of the traditional innovation ecosystem.

Despite this, respondents underlined that integration could and should be deepened further, to fulfil the potential of social innovation. Two respondents reported many difficulties in finding and accessing tailored funding that would allow them to scale up their activities and to deepen integration with the traditional innovation ecosystem. The main problem reported in this respect is the lack of a dedicated entity focusing on investments in social innovation, adopting funding criteria that are tailored to the scope and size of organisations working in this domain. The role could also be fulfilled by a dedicated nonprofit institution, on the model of what is already done in certain cases for traditional innovation, or by achieving clear government support (tax reductions, public guarantee system) to venture capitalists – still very few – investing in social innovation.

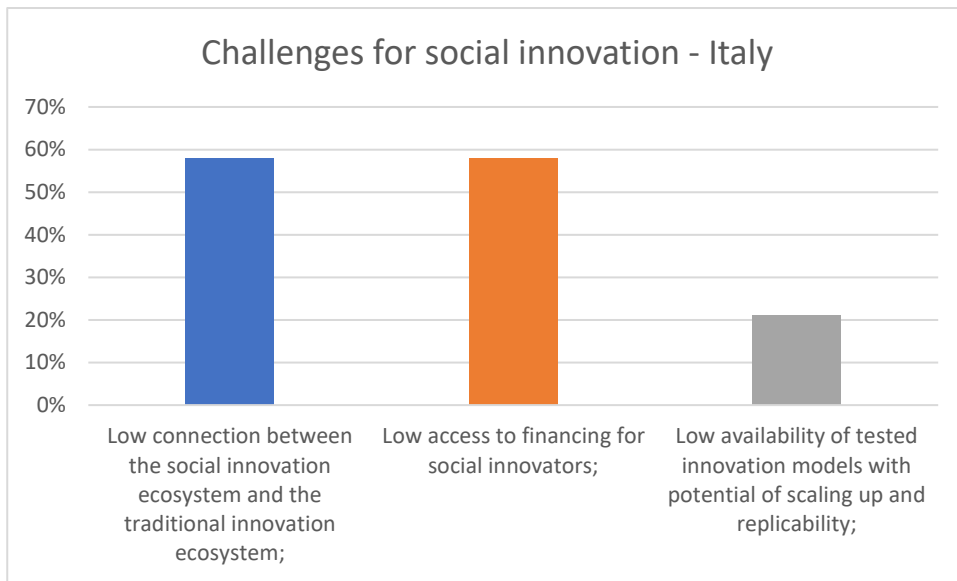
Also linked to the issue of funding, respondents reported that bureaucratic processes take too long, and the definitions and criteria adopted are often not tailored to social innovation activities. Bureaucracy is a generalised issue in Italy, but the burden could be partially eased by having different and easier compliance regulations for social enterprises, especially for small ones.

In parallel, another issue reported is the difficulty in establishing links with other similar organisations. Those that manage to set up strong collaboration networks usually manage to thrive, but the cooperation with the traditional innovation ecosystem could be made easier by creating spaces for cooperation and cross-pollination. The examples given are the Spazi Attivi and the Open Hub network, both in the Lazio region that provide opportunities to meet and connect with other organisations, share knowledge and ideas, and engage in competitions such as hackathons. Particularly, the creation of a national network of innovators would be game-changing, allowing many now regional organisations to meet like-minded organisations and take their activities to the next level.

### 3.3.5 Challenges in the Social Innovation sector

As can be seen in the following graph, the main social challenges identified in the survey are **low access to financing** for social innovators, and the **low connections between the social innovation and traditional innovation ecosystems**, as already described in previous paragraphs.





When detailing their answers, respondents reiterated the difficulties social innovation companies have in navigating complex bureaucracy and funding instruments, making Italy a complex environment for businesses. Funding is particularly complicated for social innovation businesses, for which positive margins tend to come at a later stage compared to traditional companies. When judged according to “traditional” companies’ criteria, social innovation organisations often fail to fulfil these criteria, and are often excluded from funding instruments. At the same time, investors are less prone to fund social innovation initiatives, because of the lower and/or delayed economic returns. To address this, some public guarantee system might win over investors’ doubts.

Access to funding for businesses and particularly startups is also mentioned as a substantial challenge. One respondent reports that the level of investments in startups is lower compared to other European countries, and this means that the already scarce resources tend to go to startups that are able to scale up quickly and make positive turnovers in a short time. This tends to disfavour startups in specific sectors, like social innovation or environmental sustainability, therefore heavily limiting the potential of the for-profit sector in addressing systemic challenges through their activities.

In a context where funding is scarce and/or difficult to achieve, respondents reiterate the importance of supporting the creation of networks where different actors can work together by pooling their resources in more efficient ways and achieve more with the same resources. This is particularly true since most of social innovation activities are carried out by non-profit organisations that are often left out from other support systems available to businesses and startups.

At the same time, some respondents highlight the need for a cultural shift, promoting a new culture of innovation that is always looking towards societal improvement, in a way ensuring that all “traditional” innovation always brings about positive effects for society. One respondent mentioned that the heightened attention towards B-corporations and CSR might help support the convergence between traditional social innovation companies and support their joint activities. The cultural shift should also encourage companies and public administration to look more positively towards all kinds of innovation, and to include innovation in more of their activities.



## 3.4 Ireland

### 3.4.1 General overview of the country's social innovation ecosystem

Ireland has a well-established innovation ecosystem, particularly in the technology and digital sectors. The country's business-friendly environment, skilled workforce, and government support for research and development have contributed to the growth of innovative industries. With social innovation, Ireland has made progress in addressing societal challenges through innovative solutions.

However, despite the positive developments in Ireland's innovation and social innovation ecosystems, several challenges remain that could impact the integration of these ecosystems. These include funding disparities, the regulatory environment, lack of collaboration between sectors, public awareness and impact measurement.

### 3.4.2 Respondents' understanding of social innovation

Responses to this question largely overlapped, highlighting the same key elements. All respondents define the core of social innovation as the successful delivery of new approaches to meet social needs, and often point out the need for these approaches to do so more effectively and sustainably than those currently available.

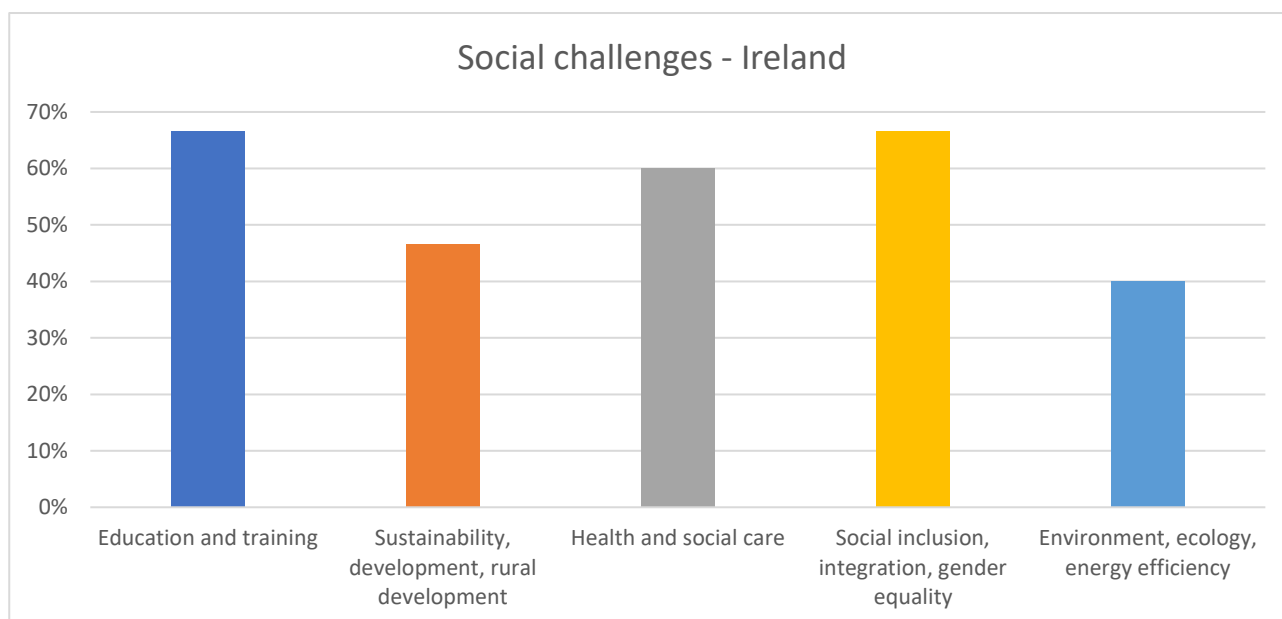
All respondents also highlighted the importance for social innovation to be innovative in its methods to come up with new approaches. Social innovation is thus defined as thinking beyond traditional approaches, identifying root causes, understanding the needs of marginalised groups, and developing innovative strategies to address those needs effectively.

As an outcome, social innovation should not only focus on addressing pressing social challenges in the present, but also creating long-term impact, addressing systemic barriers and fostering sustainable change. In this, respondents consider social innovation to be critical to societal and environmental progress. To achieve this complex task, respondents underline the need to work as a cohesive network: social innovation requires collaboration with stakeholders, including government agencies, nonprofit organisations, and citizens, to maximise the reach and effectiveness of our efforts.

One of the respondents also highlighted some personal values embodied by people wanting to drive social innovation: empathy, adaptability, and a relentless commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of others, challenging the status quo, pushing boundaries, and constantly seeking innovative approaches to create a more inclusive and equitable society.

### 3.4.3 Social Challenges

As can be seen in the following graph, the main challenges identified in the survey are **Education and training**, **Health and social care** and **Social inclusion and equality**. **Sustainability, development and rural development is also an important challenge**, along with **Environment, ecology and energy efficiency**.



In open questions and interviews, respondents detailed their answers and added some more challenges they felt relevant to mention. Many comments were made regarding the Irish education system. Respondents see it as slow to integrate innovation, and lacking focus on some now key labour market skills such as those around environmental sustainability and soft skills. There is also a lack of joined-up thinking to ensure that education and training programmes respond to labour market needs.

The health care sector, and particularly the public one, is also seen by respondents as very slow at integrating innovation, although the root cause of this is not pointed out. Moreover, respondents report mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and suicide, being a growing concern in Ireland. The strain of modern living, financial pressures, and societal stigma can contribute to mental health challenges, for which access to mental health services, awareness campaigns, and destigmatising discussions around mental health is crucial.

Ireland faces the challenges posed by climate change and the need for sustainable development. Respondents report that efforts are being made to transition to cleaner energy sources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and address environmental concerns, but achieving these goals requires significant changes in energy production, transportation, and agriculture.

While Ireland has experienced economic growth in recent years, many respondents report income inequality as a challenge. Certain regions and groups face higher levels of deprivation, and the distribution of wealth and opportunities is not always equitable. The cost of living, including housing, healthcare, and education, can place a burden on low-income and medium-income individuals and families.

Respondents also report inclusion and integration issues in Ireland, tying up with inequality issues. Challenges around refugee integration, including language training and integration in the labour market, as well as integration in the community, are big issues on the Irish political agenda.

### 3.4.4 Respondents’ understanding of the level of integration between the social innovation and traditional innovation ecosystems

All respondents reported a certain level of integration between the social innovation and the traditional innovation ecosystems. Partnerships seem to be the preferred way to pursue integration, with companies, public actors, academia and other relevant stakeholders. These partnerships also often involve top managers from social innovation organisations being in boards of other social innovation organisations or other organisations promoting networking across social innovation stakeholders. Also, state support was leveraged by some respondents to help startups grow but also create networks of contacts between various actors.

Despite this, respondents point out many areas for improvement. First of all, there is a need to increase awareness of social innovation, including in the ‘traditional’ innovation ecosystems. Specifically, highlighting

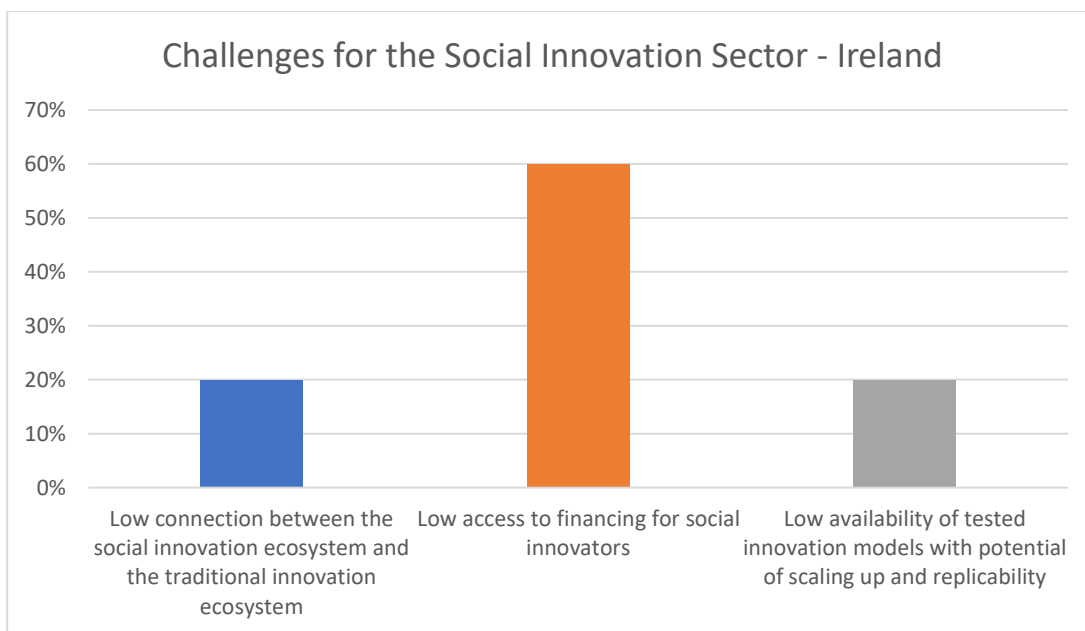
how social innovation can support the whole innovation sector to drive growth in economic and social progress on the key issues Ireland faces.

Secondly, respondents report a need to increase joined-up thinking and collaboration at government level to support to mobilise partnerships between ‘traditional’ and ‘social innovation’ ecosystems. At a government level, there are three key departments responsible for innovation, each with their own responsibilities, but social innovation is not embedded deeply in the ‘Impact 2030: Ireland’s research and innovation strategy. There is a need to drive connection between the three departments to tie social innovation strongly into the wider innovation sector, including national policies.

Finally, the creation of dedicated, cross-sectoral innovation spaces where different actors from different sectors (across social innovation and traditional innovations systems) can work together to enable partnerships working towards impact-driven missions. An example of such a space could be a National Competency Centre for Ireland. This should be part of a broader strategy to support closer working relationships between social enterprise support organisations and organisations traditionally supporting innovation in the for-profit sector, e.g. Local Enterprise Offices, Enterprise Ireland, incubators, IDA, etc.

### 3.4.5 Challenges in the Social Innovation sector

As can be seen in the figure below, the main challenge for the social innovation sector remains the low access to financing for social innovators. The low connection between social innovation and traditional innovation ecosystems, and the low availability of tested innovation models, are both lesser challenges.



When asked to elaborate on their choices, respondents provided many insights into the situation of social innovation organisations in Ireland. Respondents report that most organisations working in the domain of social innovation are often regarded as charities and not as commercial businesses, and therefore lack access to the same opportunities as traditional businesses. This is usually coupled with a lack of awareness and market knowledge on the supply side (policy actors, education), therefore leading to a lack of support in the ecosystem and a generally immature market for social innovators.

Social innovation is also not seen as a particularly profitable business, and is therefore neglected by most investors and funding programmes. Social innovation is often perceived as offering limited returns or being too risky due to the need for high initial investment. According to results, even impact-driven funds naturally focus on profit over impact. This disadvantage follows social innovators when they want to scale up. Although scaling might not be appropriate for all social enterprises, scaling models and funding beyond initial seed funding can be particularly difficult for social enterprises to access.

Deeper cooperation between social innovators and traditional innovators also needs to be supported. Social innovation (and by extension, social impact) is often seen as ‘nice to have’ but not deeply embedded nor necessary for the growth of ‘traditional’ innovation. Collaboration between ecosystem actors is not at the level it should be to fully unlock its potential.

Respondents also mention a need to improve impact measurement and management, since there is scarce available data that shows the impact, outcomes and the contribution of social innovation. In the same vein, there is a need to enhance research evidence and data, particularly the assessment of policy programmes and development of evidence-based policymaking so that measures and funding can be more appropriately tailored to better support social innovation activities.

Some respondents equally mention a needed shift in the culture around innovation. The introduction of innovations (particularly digital ones) usually entails a substantial shift in existing practices and mindsets. These changes can be met with resistance, as they require individuals and institutions to alter their established ways of functioning. This reluctance is natural, given that people tend to gravitate towards familiarity and stability.

Finally, respondents report that governance, compliance and reporting duties often take a disproportionate amount of time for social innovators, and takes away from their capacity to deliver actual change. Better tailored measures could help address this, as well as structures or networks to bridge gaps between the government and stakeholders operating in different sectors. Respondents also advocate for a long-term multiannual investment strategy driven by strategic thinking to support social innovation.

## 3.5 Greece

### 3.5.1 General overview of the country’s social innovation ecosystem

The social innovation ecosystem in Greece is a field of activity that has emerged over the last 8-10 years. Until recently, there was some confusion between social entrepreneurship, social economy and social innovation. Even though these fields are interconnected in many ways, social innovation has started gaining ground as a concept and as a field of practice in its own right in the last 5 years. The policies of the city of Athens in creating a Vice Mayor's Office for Civil Society and Social Innovation from 2014 to 2019 and the Innovation Office in the Region of Central Greece during the same years have been fundamental to this growth in the country.

In Greece, due to the lack of a coherent set of policies by the state to tackle complex social challenges, we have witnessed social innovation practices in various fields such as cultural development, the environmental crisis, unemployment, social inclusion, the refugee crisis, the health-care system etc., primarily from citizens’ groups and bottom-up initiatives that have gradually acquired legal status; most commonly NGOs, NPOs, Social Enterprises and Non-Profit Civil Partnerships. This ecosystem has been gradually developing and raising awareness about the benefits of social innovation, even though it still lacks recognition or acknowledgment by central and local authorities.

Social innovation is still not well received or understood by local policy makers and investors, thus funding is very limited, if not absent. There is no straightforward connection between traditional and social innovators, as there is still hesitation with regards to the economic and social value of social and cultural innovation practices. For the social innovation system to grow, we need to raise awareness of the benefits of social innovation, create financing mechanisms and tools that will support innovative solutions, including funds for R&D, quality education and capacity building, and foster networks and platforms of diverse stakeholders (grassroots NGOs, academia, government agencies, businesses) that will be capable of exchanging expertise and motivating policy makers to contribute to change.

It is also worth noting that in March 2023 the Hellenic Ministry of Labour published the [National Strategy and Updated Action Plan for the Social Economy](#) in which “Social Innovation is an horizontal component of the updated Action Plan”. It remains to be seen how the updated Action Plan will engage with and support the local ecosystem.

### 3.5.2 Respondents’ understanding of social innovation

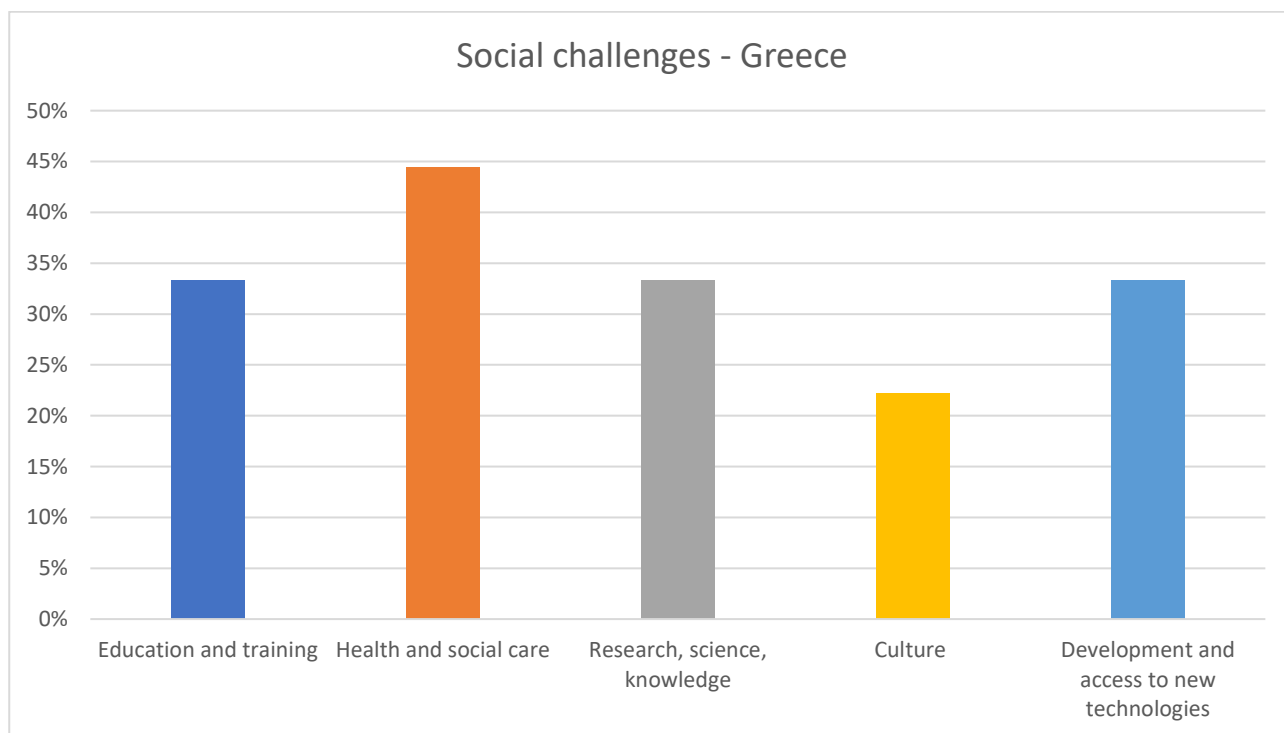
All respondents refer to the core element of social innovation as the definition and implementation of solutions to social problems to improve the quality of life of citizens and communities.

Another important aspect of social innovation is the different and “non-traditional” ways it uses to approach problems, and particularly the bottom-up approach through which communities tend to find a way to address the issues they are faced with. Co-creation is also mentioned by respondents as a core element of social innovation, together with open, inclusive and innovative definition and delivery processes, resulting in culture production. In this, the role of social innovation actors is mainly to support the scale up of solutions and help connect the bottom-up dimension of communities with the top-down processes of politics.

Culture is also a key element of social innovation for Greek respondents. It is mentioned as a driver for social innovation, through engaging with diverse communities, and through programming that is relevant to citizens and members of local communities.

### 3.5.3 Social Challenges

As can be seen in the following graph, the main challenge reported by respondents is **Health and social care**, followed by **Development and access to new technologies**, **Education and training**, and **Research, science and knowledge production**. To a lesser extent, **Culture** is also a challenge for Greece.



Around half of the respondents were organisations from the **cultural sector**, so their selection of challenges heavily focused on what were the main issues affecting the cultural sector. In this respect, the main issues highlighted were the regional inequalities in the cultural infrastructure, as well as access to culture and the funding to cultural initiatives. Respondents also report a silo approach to culture within the policy system, meaning that different stakeholders are not able to come together to draft comprehensive development strategies. In particular, there is a lack of integration (legislation, tailored funding) between public and private institutions, and access to culture is still seen as a class privilege.

Respondents also suggested various solutions to this. For instance, the creation of cross-ministerial innovation teams could help support innovation in culture and promote joint activities from the public authority. Similarly, a “Cultural Credit” scheme could be offered to citizens, stimulating access to culture and allowing for data collection to improve the cultural system and make it more respondent to cultural needs.

Outside culture, respondents highlighted the **lack of sufficient investments in R&D and innovation** to tackle some of the major challenges for Greece: energy efficiency, the fight against energy poverty, and the protection of the most vulnerable communities. This is interconnected with developing new, sustainable and reliable economic paradigms around sustainable development, especially for rural areas which at least in Greece are suffering from mass exploitation from the industries of tourism and construction.

Another challenge mentioned was the inclusion of migrants, who face difficulties in **social inclusion** and in the access to culture and to cultural production. In this, the co-design of cross-cultural programmes and contents can help bring together people from diverse backgrounds through culture and facilitate inclusion and representation. Finally, democracy and participation was also mentioned as a challenge by respondents, reporting a general feeling of detachment from politics and limited participation to elections, calling for an innovative rethinking of democratic participation.

#### 3.5.4 Respondents' understanding of the level of integration between the social innovation and traditional innovation ecosystems

Most respondents focus on social innovation in the domain of culture, and reply with that in mind. Most respondents report little to no integration of their organisation with the traditional innovation ecosystem. Only one respondent reports being involved in some interdisciplinary projects bringing together different actors.

The reasons behind this separation are varied. One explanation is that traditional innovators don't see the value of culture, and this in turn is influenced by the lack of publicly available data on the benefits of culture in the country. One other reason mentioned by respondents is the lack of creative hubs and other similar spaces bringing together social innovators and traditional innovators.

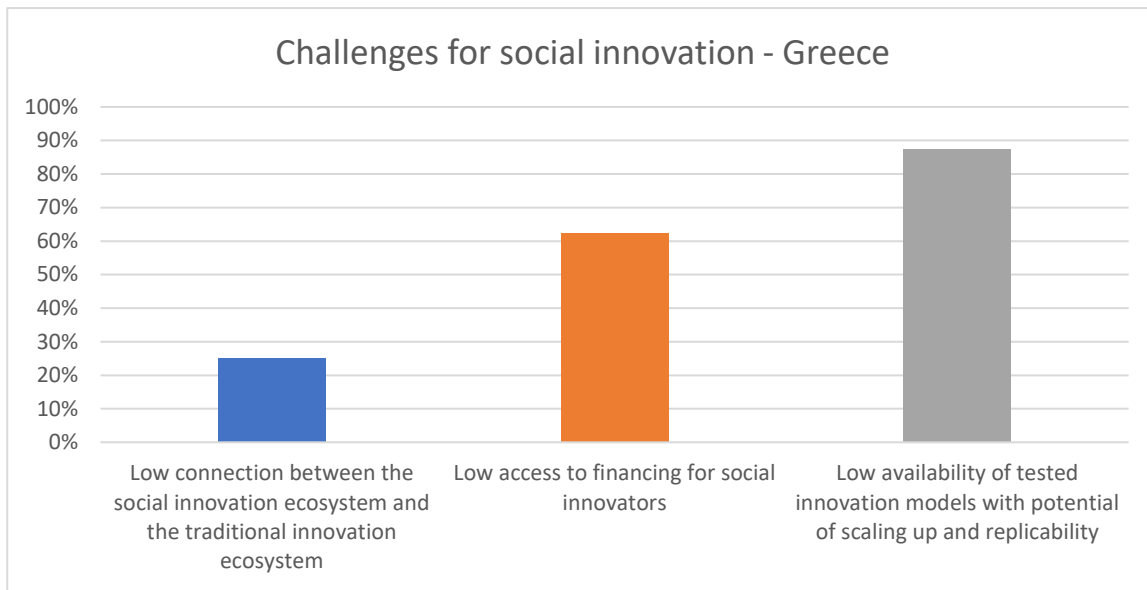
In this respect, there is a pilot project for a creative hub modelled on the Municipal Market of Kypseli, which is the only successful project of this kind and is run by the City of Athens. This will bring together cultural and traditional innovators and will support the creation of a shared understanding on how culture and creativity can add value to the local economy and wellbeing. Following a similar line of thought, respondents also suggest the creation of an interdisciplinary research group including social innovators, cultural practitioners and 'classic' SSH researchers and ICT experts that can design programmes to support social innovation.

This leads us to considerations regarding funding, a topic also mentioned by respondents. As suggested by them, having national capacity programmes run by trusted organisations or national bodies would significantly help the cultural sector to grow. There is no such education or/and capacity building programme for the cultural sector in Greece. In this respect, interdisciplinary research groups could design a funding programme that would support cultural innovation, leading to an open call for relevant proposals.

Finally, other solutions suggest matchmaking programmes between bigger and smaller organisations, aimed at the pooling of resources and at supporting longer-term collaboration. Developing strong HR strategies for the Greek cultural sector and including large-scale CSR training for companies could be a way to recruit more qualified people in the cultural sector and to help companies understand the value of culture and its benefits to society.

#### 3.5.5 Challenges in the Social Innovation sector

As shown in the graph, the low availability of tested innovation models comes on top of the challenges respondents feel are hampering the Greek social innovation sector, followed by the low access to adequate funding for social innovation activities. It is worth mentioning once again that most respondents have replied having the cultural sector as their main focus.



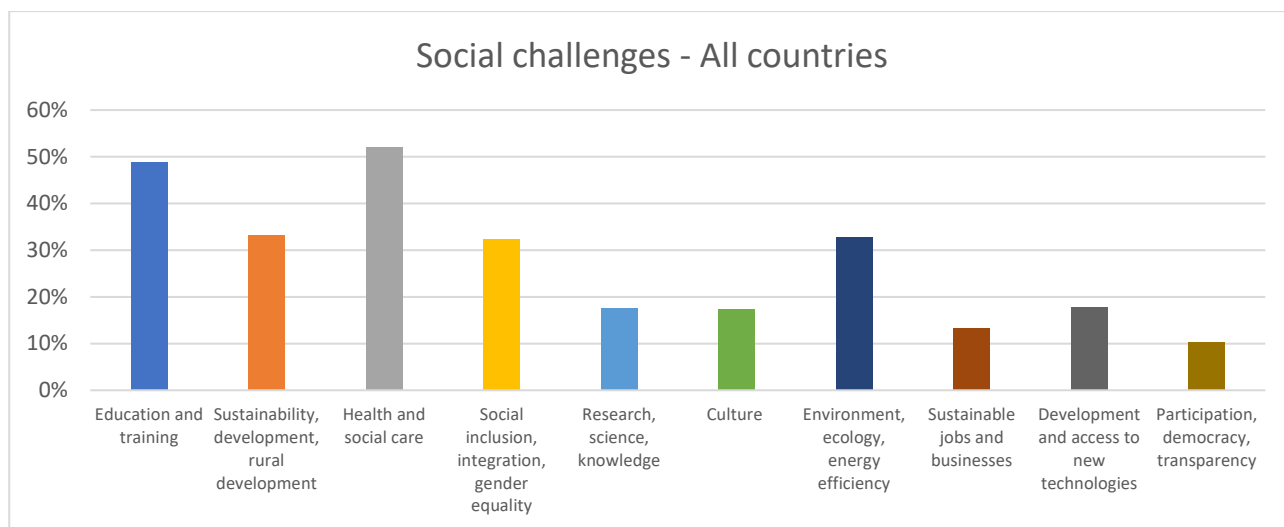
On the side of funding, respondents report that there is no funding for social innovation, as most of the available funds go towards business and product development, with no regard to whether these services or products are actually improving anyone's livelihood. In turn, this lack of funding affects the possibility to experiment on innovation models and is therefore detrimental to the scaling up and replicability of potential good solutions.

The main reason behind this lack of funding seems to be the limited awareness and understanding of the unique characteristics and potential of social innovation projects by financiers. As a result, they may be hesitant to provide financial support, considering them to be risky or unproven ventures. This lack of awareness and understanding can create barriers for social innovators seeking financing. Another issue is that social innovation often involves developing new business models that prioritise social impact over financial sustainability. These hybrid models can be complex and challenging to evaluate from a traditional investment perspective, making it difficult for social innovators to attract funding. Investors may be reluctant to support ventures that do not fit into familiar profit-driven frameworks.

With particular attention to the cultural sector, respondents report that cultural practitioners are not well trained on how to look for sources of funding or/and they find it difficult to establish themselves as legal entities with fiscal integrity and rights to apply for funding. The sector is particularly lacking in tested innovation models, and most cultural organisations are not aware of any successful innovation mechanisms or financial models that can help them grow in the country. As respondents underline, this is because the link between innovation and culture is still weak and not regarding as particularly productive or worth investing in.



## 4 Conclusions



The figure above shows the social challenges that were most common in the country analysis. As we can see, the biggest challenges on average are **Health and social care** and **Education and training**, followed by **Environment, ecology and energy efficiency**, **Sustainability, development and rural development**, and **Social inclusion, integration and gender equality**. Other challenges never enter the top 5 mentioned by respondents, to the exception of **Culture** (Italy and Greece), **Development and access to new technologies** (Italy and Greece), **Sustainable jobs and businesses** (Slovenia), and **Participation, democracy, transparency** (Romania). Some of this variation may be explained by the sample, as in Greece for example where many of the respondents came from the cultural sector. In other cases, such as Romania, it seems to reflect a clear issue regarding a lack of trust in the state.

Nonetheless, throughout this variation, a common trend can be seen regarding the main challenges. **Education and training**, **Health and social care**, and **Environment, ecology and energy efficiency** are mentioned in the top 5 challenges in almost all countries. This reflects the omnipresence of certain challenges in European society.

In terms of **Education and training**, the main issues are skills mismatches and inconsistencies between labour supply and demand due to a disconnection between the economy and the education system, a lack of collaboration between the education system and practical work, the need to further develop digital skills and entrepreneurial education, and in some cases the need to update curricula and methods of teaching in order to make them more relevant for contemporary society.

As regards **Health and social care**, respondents regularly mention the difficulty to provide adequate health care and social care to all, in particular due to the increasing age of the population. This is exacerbated in rural areas where there is a lack of infrastructure. In addition, poor working conditions and low wages for health workers are driving shortages in many countries. A less frequently mentioned issue, that is however no less important, concerns rising mental health concerns.

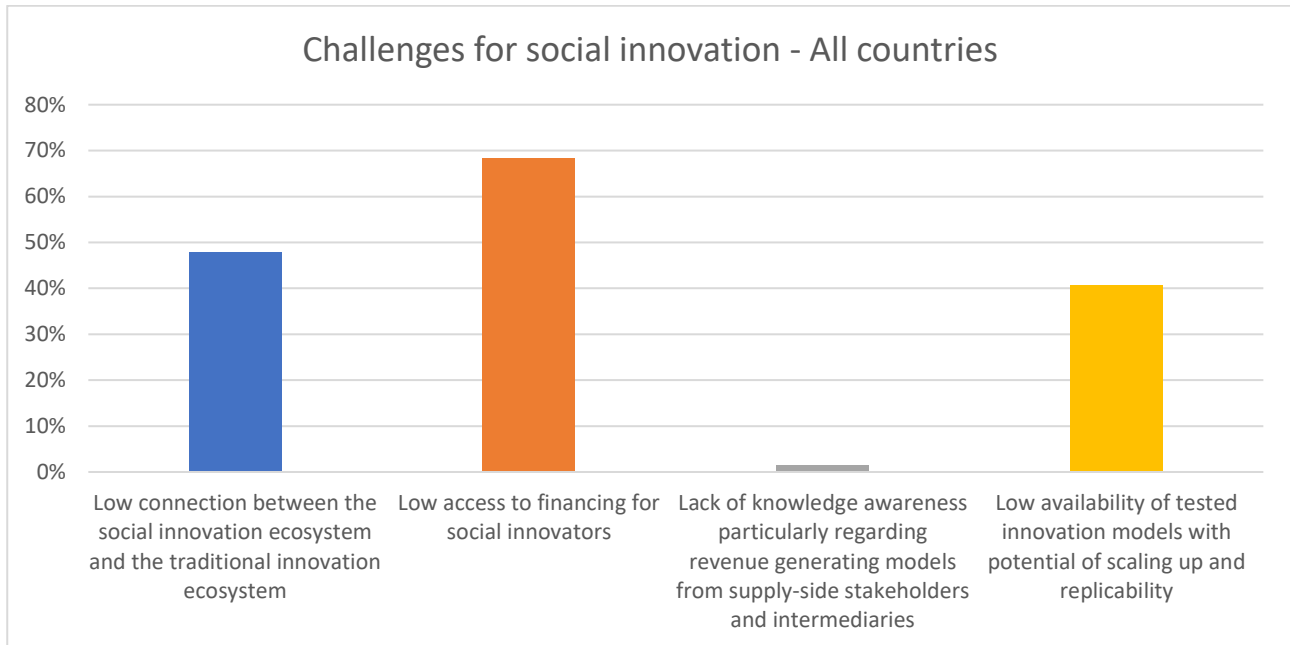
With the increasing frequency of extreme weather conditions and the regular warnings from the scientific community regarding climate change, it is no surprise to see that **Environment, ecology and energy efficiency** is an issue in most countries. While much is already being done, respondents feel that further efforts are needed to address the root causes of climate change and the degradation of the environment, with waste management an ongoing concern.

**Social inclusion and Sustainability, development and rural development** are also in the top 5 challenges in the majority of countries. In many areas, economic growth has left large disparities, and the cost of living crisis is placing a heavy burden on low and medium-income households. In countries such as Romania, there are concerns regarding high unemployment and the prevalence of discrimination against minorities. In terms of rural development, many respondents feel that there is a need to revalue rural areas and to convince



young people that there is a future outside cities. In the same vein, there is a need to foster green jobs and local production in order to build more sustainable economic systems.

In terms of the challenges facing social innovation, there is also a clear trend, with access to financing being the main issue by far (almost 70% of the respondents throughout all countries), with the low connection between social innovation and traditional innovation coming in second, and the low availability of tested innovation models in third. Almost none of the respondents mentioned the lack of awareness regarding revenue-generating models as a challenge in their country.



On a country level, this hierarchy remains constant, the only exceptions being Greece, where the low availability of tested innovation models is regarded as the main issue, and Italy, where the low connection between social innovation and traditional innovation is considered on a par with access to financing.

In terms of funding, respondents frequently mention their difficulty in finding adequate financial resources to support their initiatives. This drives a lack of job security and leaves little room for testing new ideas, leading often to the same types of initiatives being repeated. In this regard, there is a commonly expressed need for further funding opportunities that are dedicated to social impact ventures. There are also calls for introducing and expanding alternative financing models, such as impact investment, social impact bonds, or dedicated funds for social innovation.

In the same vein, the lack of connection between social innovation and traditional innovation sectors remains a recurring issue. Social innovation remains poorly known in traditional sectors in many countries. Further communication and collaboration at all levels are needed to break down barriers and develop links between the two ecosystems. Another interesting idea in this regard is to mainstream social impact throughout traditional innovation instead of considering the two as separate sectors.

Legislation regarding social innovation is also a recurring theme, with several respondents mentioning that “social” entities in their countries are expected to be 100% non-profit, which hinders their capacity to raise funds. Finally, several respondents mention an issue regarding the general perception of social innovation, that is often perceived as “charity” or “NGO” work that is non-profit or at the least not profitable. This in turn makes it difficult to attract investments. Further efforts are therefore needed to change the image of social innovation and develop its potential to create positive social impact.

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## 5 Annex 1 – Repertory of stakeholders for specific activities to be developed within the consolid8 ecosystems

*Within the project we conducted an initial mapping of the ecosystems and developed a repertory of stakeholders that could be engaged in consolid8 activities, for each of the 5 pioneering ecosystems (Romania, Slovenia, Italy, Greece and Ireland). The repertory will be updated throughout the implementation of the project.*