



Social Innovation Factory: accelerating societal impact

<p>Vision and Aims</p>	<p>Our societies are increasingly confronted with so-called ‘wicked problems’. Challenges such as climate change, mobility, solitude and poverty are complex and multidimensional. It seems they cannot be solved by the existing approaches or by the traditional actors only. To tackle these wicked problems, we need to think differently and experiment with new solutions.</p> <p>The long-term goal of Social Innovation Factory (SIF) is to shape a society in which all kinds of stakeholders, including social organisations, companies, researchers, individuals and government actors, can contribute to the wellbeing of society. To reach this long-term goal, SIF sets a mission to raise awareness about social innovation and social entrepreneurship, and to enable actors to tackle societal challenges in a socially innovative and entrepreneurial way.</p> <p>The Social Innovation Factory was founded in 2013 by a mix of profit and non-profit actors supporting the movement of exploring a broad range of solutions for societal challenges. From the onset it was decided to focus on both social innovation and social entrepreneurship. Whereas social innovation refers to the broader logic of providing new solutions to new or existing societal problems (which can occur through or independent of business ventures), social entrepreneurship refers to tackling societal issues in an entrepreneurial way.</p>
<p>Target Audience</p>	<p>Social Innovation Factory targets the entire quintuple helix: academia, citizens, SMEs, private investors and public authorities.</p> <p>SIF welcomes people working on any relevant societal issue such as sustainability, green energy, healthy food, poverty alleviation, well-being, education, ageing or a combination of different issues. SIF strongly believes in the power of cross-fertilisation between civil society organisations, enterprises, government actors and academia.</p>

Key Features

Key to the approach is that the network, knowledge and services of the Social Innovation Factory are open to everyone. **Social innovation and social entrepreneurship can be found within civil society organisations, government actors, individual citizens and entrepreneurs alike.** This openness avoids getting stuck in narrow-minded preconceptions about where good initiatives (should) originate.

SIF does not solely believe in a linear innovation model in which innovations are expected to flow exclusively from researchers through entrepreneurs towards end users. There is a growing understanding of the value of joint learning processes as the instigators of innovative and sustainable solutions. The lively interactions that make up these joint learning processes do not occur spontaneously, especially not under competitive market conditions. They require deliberate effort and need space, to allow for mutual trust to grow and for actors to start innovating together.

The services and actions SIF develops evolve continuously, along with the insights in the needs of the target audience and along with newly emerging knowledge and trends. The examples of services and actions relate to three important needs of social innovators and social entrepreneurs : the need to access people, knowledge and funding.

- **Access to people:** SIF developed a range of formats that help people to get in touch with people who can help. Although it is invisible perhaps to the public, there is a lot of matchmaking and engineering going on behind the scenes, to make sure people get what they need. The whole team gathers on a structural basis to discuss every single innovator's specific needs. Collective intelligence, creativity and networks are brought together to offer the best possible advice, matches and referral. The format of acceleration days f.i. is an important lever: 10 different cases are given stage and brought together with at least 30 so called enablers.
- **Access to knowledge:** Building knowledge on social innovation and social entrepreneurship is a crucial supportive activity. SIF collaborates with various universities and other knowledge centers to provide input to enrich their curricula in these fields. SIF also runs R&D projects to develop tools to support innovators and entrepreneurs. For example, SIF carried out an action-research on societal impact measurement, through which organisations and coaches developed knowledge and expertise on measuring and evaluating impact. And in 2023, SIF released a free accessible online tool for all actors willing to explore the set up of a social innovation: <https://www.socialeinnovatieatelier.be/>
- **Access to funding:** SIF continuously broadens the network of actors who can support innovators and entrepreneurs financially, and is

	<p>always on the lookout for additional money for starting or scaling social enterprises, be it government money, private investors, corporate funds or other sources.</p>
Achievements & Learnings	<p>To realise the full extent of the mission, SIF found out that it is important to target innovators, enablers, ‘potentials’, and the public at large.</p> <p>Innovators: The main impact and strength lies in informing and getting people starting their socially innovative projects, without necessarily having to accompany actors all along their trajectory until launch of product or service.</p> <p>Enablers: in the course of the years SIF built up extensive contacts with funders and experts, ready to enable social innovators and social entrepreneurs.</p> <p>Potentials: The Factory wants to inspire people to take the plunge and look at the world through the lens of social innovation and social entrepreneurship. These people work in all kinds of sectors, such as health care, technology, sports, education, and so on. The aim is to plant seeds, to offer these people some inspirational insights, to get them to innovate.</p> <p>Public at large: Communication is key to realize the mission of the Social Innovation Factory, as it can help to build up support as broadly as possible. SIF brings social innovation and social entrepreneurship to the public at large through a varied communication strategy and an array of public events. An example of the efforts to inform a broad range of formerly unattended people about social innovation and social entrepreneurship is the Radical Innovators campaign which SIF runs every two years. It is a large scale search – with broad media coverage – to identify radical innovations for a better world.</p>
Launch Date	<p>Social Innovation Factory was established in 2013 as a non-profit association.</p>
Partners/Sponsors	<p>Important partners for Social Innovation Factory are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - VLAIO - Cera - Europa WSE - Nationale Loterij
Further Information	<p>https://www.socialeinnovatiefabriek.be/ https://www.socialeinnovatieatelier.be/ https://impacttrack.org/nl/ https://www.radicalevernieuwers.be/</p>
Contact	<p>Kaat Peeters, manager info@socialeinnovatiefabriek.be</p>