



Scaling-up social innovation

Seven steps for using ESF+

ESF Transnational Cooperation Platform
Community of Practice on Social Innovation





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Foreword

We live in a rapidly changing world. The transition to a low carbon and more digital economy, demographic changes, the COVID-19 crisis and migration issues are examples of trends and events which are currently transforming and challenging the world of work, education and training and social services.

In responding to these challenges we need new ways of doing, which put citizens in the centre of the action. We need social innovations: solutions which are social in their ends and in their means.

The European Union is playing its part in promoting social innovation. What is a common practice in one territory can be new and innovative and bring about social change in another. This is why the EU supports mutual learning and cooperation between social innovation stakeholders across Member States. In the field of employment and social affairs, this cooperation has now resulted in two pragmatic and useful guides:

- **Social Experimentations: A practical guide for project promoters**

This guide supports future EaSI project promoters preparing social experimentation proposals during the 2021-2027 programming period. It can also be useful for other stakeholders, notably those responding to ESF+ national and regional calls on social innovation.

- **Scaling up Social Innovations: Seven steps for using ESF+**

This guide looks at the social innovation from the perspective of scaling-up. It helps ESF Managing Authorities to design calls for proposals and other initiatives which aim at making a good use of already existing social innovations. This can ultimately help to reform and modernise policies and practices.

These guides complement each other and will walk you through the whole process of social innovation: from identifying social challenges to developing innovative solutions, to demonstrating their potential and finally helping to roll out the most convincing models on a larger scale.

Delivering on the potential of social innovation is something that no organisation can do alone. On the ground, it will take a concerted, collective effort of national, regional and local authorities, of cities, of civil society, academia, social economy, business and social partners. Together, they have the finger on the pulse of our communities.

We believe the two guides will help the whole range of stakeholders to engage together for a society and economy that work for people.

European Commission,
Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

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Jargon buster

For those new to European Social Fund (ESF), we provide an explanation of the key terms and acronyms used in the toolkit. Specialist social innovation terms are explained in the text as they arise.

Term	Explanation
BENEFICIARIES	This has a dual meaning: it may refer to people intended to benefit from a social innovation or to an organisation having received ESF funding. In this toolkit, it refers to the latter.
CALL FOR PROPOSALS	When an ESF fund be it a managing authority (MA) or an intermediate body (IB) invites applications for funding within certain parameters.
CO-FINANCING	the 'co-financing' is the share of project cost covered by another source such as the Member State or a project beneficiary.
COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATION	A policy-related recommendation issued to a Member State as part of the EU's process of economic policy coordination.
EaSI	EU programme for Employment and Social Innovation 2014-2020. For the period 2021-2027 it continues as the "EaSI strand" of the ESF+.
ECOSYSTEM	The whole number of the stakeholders and how they interact with each other: the social innovation ecosystem includes stakeholders from civil society, social economy, public authorities, funders, academia and private sector.
ESF TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PLATFORM	The support structure which brings together ESF managing authorities, intermediate bodies and ESF stakeholders at EU level and provides training, networking and capacity-building.
EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS	A set of twenty principles, agreed by EU Member States and EU institutions, that each European can expect of their participation in society.
INTERMEDIATE BODIES	A government body or other organisation to which a managing authority delegates specific ESF responsibilities.
MANAGING AUTHORITIES	A government body which programs ESF programme, selects projects for funding and monitors implementation.
PROGRAMMING	The process of deciding on a Member State's priorities and processes for deploying its national ESF allocation.
PROJECT PROMOTERS	Organisation seeking to apply for and applying for ESF project funding.

Introduction

This toolkit recommends seven strategic steps to follow in support of scaling-up of social innovations. The seven steps are inspired by a range of European and other research projects, practical experiences, European Union (EU) policy acquis, and dialogue about research, practice and policy. This toolkit is primarily meant to serve ESF managing authorities and intermediate bodies, as well as meriting the attention of stakeholders more widely. The toolkit was developed for and with the [Community of Practice on Social Innovation, under the ESF Transnational Cooperation Platform](#).

The aim is to help Member States to make strategic use of their national ESF resources for scaling-up social innovation. Therefore, the toolkit is complementary to the [guide for social experimentation](#) (European Commission, 2022), designed to support stakeholders in building transnational projects under the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+).

The [ESF+ Regulation for the 2021-2027 programming period](#) (ESF+ Regulation) provides a new impetus for social innovation by promoting early-stage innovation and scaling-up (European Union, 2021a):

*‘Member States shall support actions of social innovation and social experimentation [...]’
(Article 14(1));*

*‘Member States may support the scaling-up of innovative approaches tested on a small scale and developed under the EaSI [Employment and Social Innovation] strand and other Union programmes’
(Article 14(2)).*

Article 14(4) creates an obligation for Member States to dedicate at least one priority, within their ESF+ programme(s), to social innovation. This is linked with a financial incentive for Member States, who can claim 95% EU co-financing for this priority, up to a maximum of 5% of national ESF+ resources under shared management. Social innovation can also be promoted beyond the 5% ceiling without the higher co-financing rate. This toolkit provides guidance on maximising the potential of Article 14. In contrast to much guidance, which has been on scaling-up social innovations or social enterprises into the market, our focus here is on scaling-up social innovation from any sector into the policy sphere.

The new provisions of Article 14 and those of [the ESF Social Innovation+ initiative](#) were informed by a review of ESF 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2018). That review observed that ‘ESF support to social innovation can be seen as a “lab” of new policies at the national or the regional level’. A review of the EaSI Programme subsequently recommended strengthening the transition from EaSI small-scale testing into ESF-funded projects (European Commission, 2019).

The beginning of the programming period is a good time to renew efforts to promote social innovations that work, and to make a strong commitment to strategic evidence-based approaches in ESF+ and public policy-making generally. We take you through these seven steps one at a time, but it is unlikely in reality that each step can be taken discretely in the order suggested. We have tried to signal where insight from a later step is relevant to an earlier one and vice-versa.

Style note: Throughout the toolkit, ‘you’ addresses the intended readers in national contexts, who will use ESF+ resources to achieve policy goals, notably officials in managing authorities, intermediate bodies and line ministries relevant to the ESF objectives. ‘We’ are the Community of Practice on Social Innovation whose members include ESF policy-makers, funders and beneficiaries and whose experiences and exchanges have shaped this toolkit.

The scale-up staircase: seven strategic steps and their tools

"We are good in promoting projects but we have a problem with scaling and mainstreaming so the later steps are most important for us".
(ESF funder – MA/IB).

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TOOLS

- A. Identify 'wicked' challenges through foresight
- B. Understand the European context

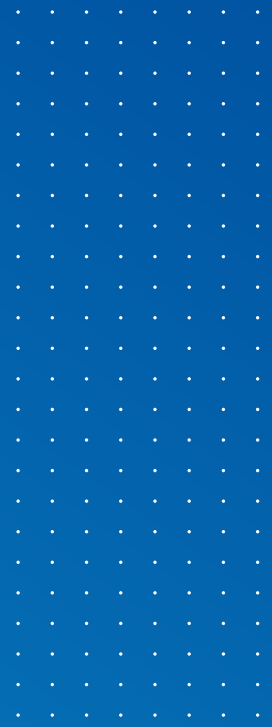
STEP 01 YOU BUILD A SHARED UNDERSTANDING PAGE 09

TOOLS

- A. Build understanding across government
- B. Open dialogue with potential beneficiaries

"It feels like we are on step 1 or even -1 because we have an active ecosystem of social innovators without any government engagement so far".
(ESF stakeholder)





Step 1

Build a shared understanding



1 Build a shared understanding

This first step is most important in our country: these exercises will be good for building understanding between government and the social innovators. (ESF stakeholder)

We don't yet really understand what social innovation is so what we do is talk a lot with NGOs, business and others and listen to them really well so we can support them better. (ESF funder – MA/IB)

On the first step on the staircase, you are building a shared understanding of social innovation and scaling-up across government and the wider ecosystem.

Tool 1A. Build understanding across government

Tool 1B. Open a dialogue with beneficiaries

Academics, policy makers and practitioners often debate the nature of the social innovation concept, but rather than entering into this debate we simply turn to Article 2(8) of the ESF+ Regulation. This provides a definition that is a useful basis for building a shared understanding, summarised as an activity that social both in its ends and means. We consider this understanding of social innovation in theory and practice to be a necessary prelude to explaining scaling-up. Here, we break down the detailed definition to shine a spotlight on each of its constituent elements:

"Social innovation" means an activity that (...)

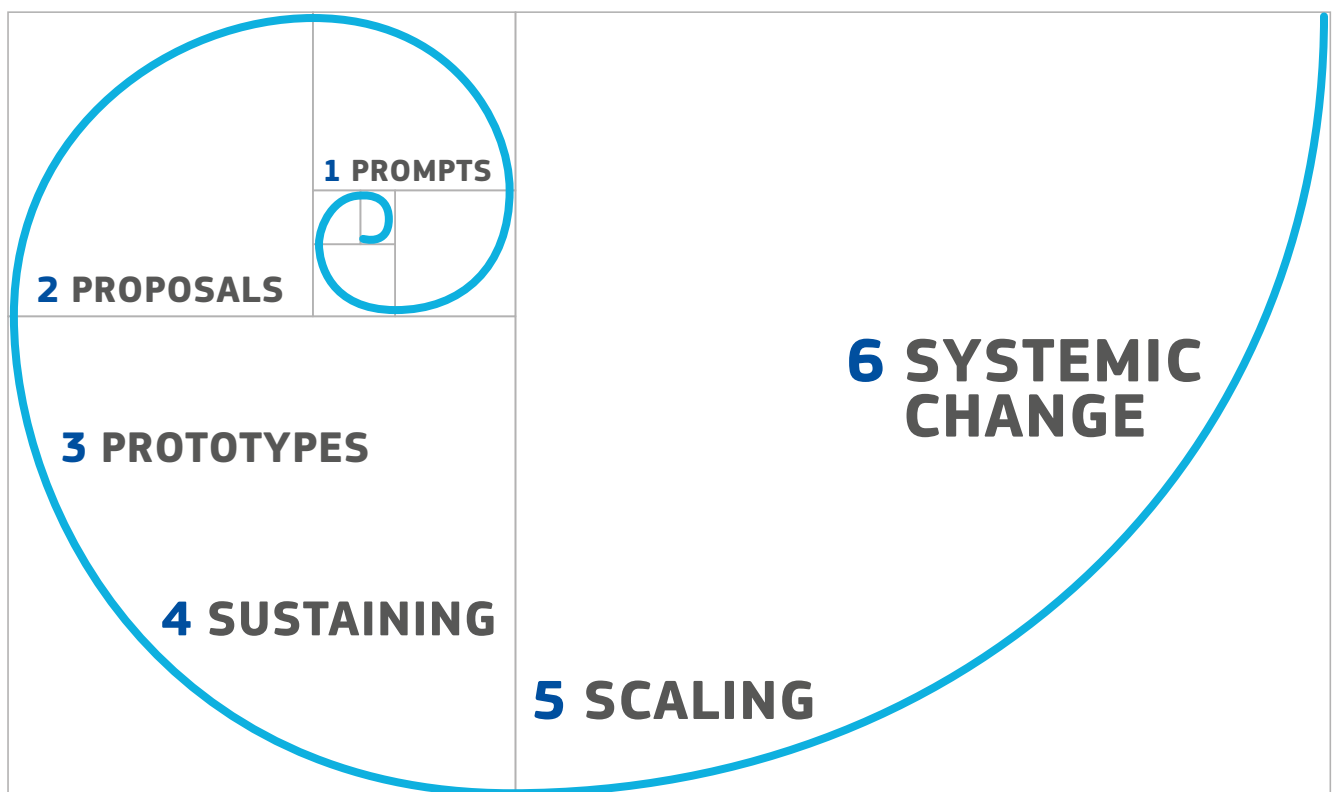
- A.** relates to the development and implementation of new ... products, services, practices and models
- B.** meets social needs
- C.** creates new social relationships or collaborations between public, civil society or private organisations
- D.** thereby benefiting society and boosting its capacity to act'

(European Union, 2021a).

One real-world example from the Community of Practice on Social Innovation could help to illustrate the nature of social innovation. In 2015, the volunteer founder-director of the non-profit association *Digital Inclusion* in Luxembourg observed that refugees were arriving in the country with digital skills but without digital equipment. The association was established to refurbish computers for refugees to use to access public services and the internet. Having started on a voluntary basis, two employees joined in 2016, increasing to 17 employees in 2021, half of whom have a refugee background. The activities have expanded beyond equipment provision to digital skills acquisition and computer-assisted language learning. The social end of this innovation is the social and labour market inclusion of refugees and the social means are refurbishing technology, building digital skills and supporting community links.

We would like to break this definition down into its constituent elements to reveal the importance of each one. Those supported were actively involved in meeting social needs working with national volunteers and staff (element B) – this is the new idea that is beginning to be developed and implemented (element A). There are many new collaborations emerging from this model: between the social enterprise and the employment services helping to fund the wages of some employees; between refugees, who could not previously access public services and now can; between the social enterprise and private employers; between a national civil society organisation supporting refugees and the social enterprise as part of its scale-up phase (element C). Enabling people to use their already existing digital skills and providing new digital skills and equipment should boost society’s capacity to act in an ever more digital world and people’s involvement in this social innovation should boost their capacity to innovate in future when new challenges emerge (element D).

Researchers have emphasised the interactive nature of social innovation, noting that it often features a range of actors from public, private and non-profit sectors, and thus ‘necessitates the reconciliation of various interests and cooperation over organisational and administrative borders’ (Jalonen, et al., 2019, p. 7). Social innovation is not implemented by a single type of actor; rather, it is co-created and co-owned. Shared understanding across sectors therefore has an importance that is inherent in the definition. It is useful at this point to consider scaling-up in the context of the social innovation curve, each stage of which we go on to explain (Murray, et al., 2010).



Source: Murray, et al., *The Open Book of Social Innovation*, 2010, London: Nesta and the Young Foundation, p. 11.

The prompts are societal demands or trends evident in statistics or news coverage. Proposals are written plans that describe how to tackle the problems identified. Prototypes are the pilots where an innovator first tries to tackle the problem, implementing the proposals. Article 2(10) of the ESF+ Regulation uses the equivalent term ‘social experimentation’ and defines it as ‘policy interventions that aim to provide an innovative response to social needs, implemented on a small scale and in conditions that enable its impact to be measured’ (European Union, 2021a). If you want to go deeper into social experimentation, you can consult the new practical guide (European Commission, 2022). Sustaining is where a social innovation has been in place for several years in a given location to tackle a problem. The *Digital Inclusion* project, for example, has gone through the stages of prompts, proposals and pilots, and is now ‘sustaining’ itself and on the verge of the next step.

Social Experimentations: [A practical guide for project promoters](#)

This new guide is a companion to the Scaling-Up Social Innovation Toolkit and contains sections on:

- 1.** Unsatisfied or badly satisfied social needs
- 2.** The social experimentation innovative response
- 3.** Assessment of outcomes and social impact
- 4.** Scaling and transfer

The potential next step is **scaling-up**¹, the central focus of our toolkit, although this does not have to happen with every social innovation. The ESF+ Regulation refers to scaling-up, but does not formally define it. The European Commission offers a broad working explanation for the concept elsewhere:

‘Scaling-up means a process of transferring proven social innovations to other actors or contexts thus creating a wider impact’ (European Commission, 2021b).

Two things should be noted here: firstly, the assumption is **growing impact**, not **growing an organisation**; secondly, the social **innovation has to be proven**.

The last stage of the social innovation cycle is **systemic change**, which typically involves the ‘interaction of many elements [...] over long periods of time’ (Murray, et al., 2010, p. 13). Building a shared internal understanding of social innovation is a crucial starting point. Such a shared understanding should encompass the civil society organisations, local authorities and social enterprises that implement ESF+ projects on the ground, as well as the European Commission, which approves the ESF+ programmes. Ultimately, systemic change requires that decision makers in charge of related policies and systems become convinced of the advantages of the social innovation over the current approach.

¹ ESF stakeholders are not social innovation specialists and prefer terms like ‘roll-out’, ‘policy transfer’ or ‘reform’, as better suited to government demand for innovative policies and programmes.

The [ESF Flanders Toolkit](#) provides a useful overview of the roles of the actors within the whole social innovation ecosystem, based on the A-F model of ‘Winning at Innovation’ (Trias de Bes & Kotler, 2011) in (ESF Agency Flanders, 2015).

- **A**ctivator: initiates social innovation process or movement
- **B**rowser: conducts research and gathers knowledge
- **C**reator: has the innovative idea
- **D**eveloper: turns the idea into a product or service
- **E**xecutor: puts the innovation into practice
- **F**acilitator: identifies and resolves problems and approves funding allocations

Organisations may have different roles, depending on the maturity of the social innovation ecosystem within and beyond ESF+. Managing Authorities in the Community of Practice reported occupying both the **activator** and **facilitator** roles. Some also reported being the **browser** and the **creator**, as the national and regional managing authorities understand the context and needs on the ground. More generally, they can create bridges between stakeholders and provide the framework in which to carry out projects. The key question is whether all the actors in your ecosystem **share a common understanding** of social innovation.

By their nature, ESF+ projects involve at least the interaction between the managing authority and the project beneficiary, and perhaps an intermediate body and project partners. A managing authority which wants to promote social innovation and scaling-up in the new programming period 2021-2027 needs a pipeline of potential applicants who share the same understanding of social innovation in practice.

ESF IN PRACTICE

Box 1. Engaging Intermediate Bodies in programming ESF+ in Austria

The Austrian Managing Authority plans to apply bottom-up approaches to ESF+ to incentivise innovative projects supporting ‘active inclusion’. It will entrust greater responsibility to the regions to implement social innovation under Article 14 of the ESF+ Regulation. The Austrian Managing Authority met with the Intermediate Bodies to discuss the concept of social innovation and their planned activities. The Intermediate Bodies provided constructive feedback and shared their concerns. In a subsequent meeting the Managing Authority presented an update on the ESF+ Programme, including the selected indicators for social innovation. A workflow describing the lifecycle of calls for proposals and funded projects under this priority helped Intermediate Bodies to understand their upcoming tasks. The Austrian project partners establishing the national competence centre on social innovation presented their planned activities, which are expected to be an essential support.

TOOL 1A. BUILD UNDERSTANDING ACROSS GOVERNMENT

The first step is to bring together the team responsible for the social innovation priority in the new ESF+ programme. This tool offers an agenda for a small team already familiar with one another, together with some resources that can be adapted as needed. The time to build internal understanding will vary and you will need to follow-up with colleagues outside your specialist area. You may wish to involve now or later colleagues in intermediate bodies or line ministries setting policy direction relating to ESF objectives.

TIMING	ACTIVITY	RESOURCES
±20 mins	Everyone presents a project they prepared, explaining why it is a social innovation. Using post-its, one person notes the key social innovation features	Your ESF projects database Social innovation database
±20 mins	Talk through the definition of social innovation in the ESF+ Regulation: how similar is it to your post-its? How does it differ from the other key terms in Article 2?	ESF+ Regulation
±20 mins	Can you refine your post-its to reflect only the most important features? How would the head of the managing authority react? What would the relevant government minister think about your emerging definition in political terms?	
±30 mins	If relevant, invite a representative from an ESF+ managing authority from another Member State and share discussions.	Draw on your connections to the competence centre projects and the Community of Practice
±30 mins	<p>Consider the A to F ecosystem roles.</p> <p>Divide a flipchart sheet into six areas for the six roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who plays which role(s)? • Is there a role that nobody is playing? How could that role be filled? • Does the A to F model omit any important roles? • Can you identify some new organisations in each role, not just the usual suspects? 	

TOOL 1B. OPEN A DIALOGUE WITH POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES

This is a process you could follow over several months to consult potential beneficiaries/project providers for a future call for scaling-up projects.

STAGES	WHAT HAPPENS	RESOURCES
Plan ahead	Bring together a group of past and potential ESF+ beneficiaries that have the potential to implement scaling-up projects. Look beyond the 'usual suspects' to expand the reach of ESF+.	National members of EaSI-funded EU level networks Associate or formal partners in the competence centres for social innovation projects
Webinar 1	Present examples of social innovations within and outside your country, followed by a group exercise to discuss whether these are truly social innovation.	Your project database Social innovation database
Webinar 2	Explain ESF+ definitions for social innovation, scaling-up, social experimentation, followed by group discussion.	ESF+ Regulation
Webinar 3	Outline the A to F ecosystem and discuss who might play each roles.	
Consultation	Put together a stakeholder dialogue on the social innovation priority of the programme and call for scaling-up.	Online survey tool
Stop and reflect	What have you learned from the webinar series and consultation? Do you need to frame or explain scaling-up in different ways? Do you have a pipeline of potential beneficiaries ready to respond to a scaling-up project call?	



Step 2

Identify and frame the challenges

2 Identify and frame the challenges

We need to maintain a balance between long-term foresight strategy and responsiveness to immediate challenges. (ESF funder – MA/IB)

Sometimes, simply bringing actors together in a complicated country is a big step and it helps to have a process hallmarked by the EU. (ESF stakeholder)

On the second step on the scale-up staircase, you are considering the possible ‘ends’ of an ESF+ social innovation priority i.e. which societal challenges should policy-makers address with social innovation².

Tool 2A. Identify wicked challenges through foresight

Tool 2B. Understand the European context

Social innovation is needed because of the persistence of ‘wicked’ challenges that are not automatically resolved by the European social model:

‘Wicked challenges should not be thought of as problems to be solved per se, but conditions to be managed’ (Jalonen, et al., 2019, p. 4).

Governments at all levels want – and indeed are expected – to better manage these wicked challenges. This creates a demand for social innovation, which is especially relevant to scaling-up, where we believe ‘demand matters as much as supply’ (Murray, et al., 2010, p. 13). The extent to which a policy demand exists depends on the degree of consensus around the nature and causes of the wicked challenge: if there is high agreement among policy-makers and stakeholders, this will create good circumstances for the uptake of innovations (Murray, et al., 2010, p. 13). In Luxembourg, for example, there is consensus that social exclusion of refugees is a social challenge to be tackled.

Where a challenge is not recognised politically as needing a response, there may be a need to stimulate demand through ‘advocacy, raising awareness, championing a cause, and campaigning for change’ (Murray, et al., 2010, p. 83). The earlier in the social innovation curve this awareness-raising is begun, the greater is the chance of a proven social innovation becoming a systemic change.

Belgium’s *Duo for a Job* is an example of a social innovation project born of a double need: young people, especially those with a migrant background, have difficulty accessing the labour market, while people over 50 can feel that their skills and experience are undervalued by society. Both *Duo for a Job* and Luxembourg’s *Digital Inclusion* (see step 1) projects are social in their means and in their ends.

² We explore these as framed by EU policy-making. Some of your stakeholders may be more used to framing them in their own way or by referring to other international frameworks, such as the human rights charters or the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

ESF+ provides means for Member States to address their social challenges. However, as a European funding instrument it also reflects their joint understanding of current challenges and needs. Therefore Article 3(1) of the ESF+ Regulation refers to the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) (EPSR), which sets out 20 principles of social rights in three broad categories:

- I. Equal opportunities and access to the labour market (principles 1-4);
- II. Fair working conditions (5-10);
- III. Social protection and inclusion (11-20).

The EPSR was first proclaimed in 2017 jointly by the Council (Member States), the European Parliament and the European Commission. More recently, Member States renewed their commitment to the EPSR in 2021 and welcomed the proposed Action Plan, which proposes three quantitative headline targets for 2030 (see Table 1). While these are by no means the only socio-economic or demographic challenges Europe faces, they constitute a clear priority and their selection highlights the deep need for social innovation. Scaling-up new models that are social in their ends and means can help to achieve these targets and enact EPSR principles.

Table 1. European challenges, the principles in the EPSR, 2030 headline targets and examples of related social innovations

Challenge	Proposed 2030 target	EPSR principles	ESF+ specific objective	Social innovation examples
COVID-19 has halted the six-year trend in positive employment progress, with an employment rate of 72.4% by Q3 2020	Employment rate of at least 78%; implies at least halving the gender employment gap	1. Education training and lifelong learning 2. Gender equality 4. Active support to employment	a) Improve access to employment (c) Gender balance	Duo for a Job, Belgium (see step 3)
In 2016, only 37% of adults were participating in learning activities every year	Promote access to basic digital skills for at least 80% of people aged 16-74	1. Education, training and lifelong learning 4. Active support to employment	(e) Support acquisition of key competences, including digital (g) Lifelong learning	Digital Inclusion, Luxembourg (see step 1 and step 3)
In 2019, around 91 million people (of which 17.9 million were children aged 0-17) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU	Reduce the number of people living in poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million (compared to 2019 figures), including 5 million children	14. Minimum income 19. Housing and assistance to the homeless 20. Access to essential services	(l) Poverty and social exclusion (k) Access to quality services	Housing First, (see step 3)

Source: (European Commission, 2021c)

Not all challenges exist equally everywhere: this much is visible in comparative European statistics. Indeed, the EU Council may adopt a country-specific recommendation (CSR) relating to a wicked challenge which is noteworthy in the context of a particular Member State. Many countries have received CSRs on areas relating to the EPSR principles and the ESF specific objectives. There are differences within every Member State – between cities and rural areas, prosperous and deprived towns, and between neighbourhoods within a given conurbation. You also need to assess the degree of polarisation around the issue in a political context, remembering that greater consensus makes later scaling-up and policy change more likely. The existence of the above EPSR principles and targets is suggestive of a degree of consensus around the issues.

ESF+ programmes are well-placed to identify wicked challenges relevant to local circumstances as well as the wider European context, because they are built in partnership with relevant stakeholders in Member States and in a close dialogue between member States and the European Commission.

ESF IN PRACTICE

Box 2. Demand-led ESF programming in Finland

Finland presented an early draft of its ESF+ Programme for 2021-2027 to the Community of Practice in June 2021³. Within the social innovation priority, Finland has chosen to focus on child welfare, following a series of child protection failures (including child deaths) that were widely covered by its national media. The number of child protection notifications (reports of concern for a child's welfare) doubled between 2009 and 2019. Children's rights are protected in the Finnish Constitution and in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and a new National Child Strategy was launched in early 2021. Finland sees the new ESF+ as a timely opportunity to pursue social innovation in this field.

Finland undertook significant stakeholder consultation, which has helped to build a shared understanding of the challenge. The national managing group comprises representatives from different ministries, institutions, education, child protection organisations, and experts. It discusses needs and priorities, and shares the legal, qualitative, and ethical knowledge that will guide the implementation stage. The intermediate bodies will select and oversee the various projects within the priority. One intermediate body will then coordinate the projects, while three others oversee the work of the beneficiaries. With this approach, Finland will benefit from the enhanced EU co-financing rate of 95% for social innovation.

³ Subject to further discussion and European Commission agreement.

TOOL 2A. IDENTIFY WICKED CHALLENGES THROUGH FORESIGHT

Challenges that involve multiple drivers and cannot be solved, only better managed, are called wicked challenges. Foresight methodology is useful here and involves setting up a number of future scenarios, according to current trends. However, it is quite a time-intensive process, so this shortened version might be a helpful start.

- 1.** Identify colleagues who like to think openly about the future and are happy to try something a bit different; you may want to involve some beneficiaries and academics too.
- 2.** Set up an online whiteboard and invite colleagues to start gathering 'signals' (web links) of wicked challenges. Tag the signals with keywords.
- 3.** Look for these signals in newspapers, TV reports, trending hashtags, social statistics, country-specific recommendations, political speeches, debates in parliament. Ask your colleagues to think beyond their usual sources.
- 4.** Allow at least one month, ensuring that some signals are found and the task is not forgotten.
- 5.** Bring the colleagues together to review: is there a pattern of wicked challenges here? Are they related or disparate?
- 6.** Has there been a social innovation attempt to manage them better? How do they relate to ESF+ specific objectives?
- 7.** How are these wicked challenges perceived politically?

This exercise is a simplified version of foresight activities conducted by the Horizon 2020 research project, [InnoSI: Innovative Social Investment](#).

TOOL 2B. UNDERSTAND THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Bring together several colleagues for this exercise. Set up a flipchart (or virtual whiteboard, if working online) and post-its of the EPSR principles and the ESF+ specific objectives. Everyone should come prepared with a wicked societal challenge with which they are familiar. After presenting their challenge, you work together to consider how the challenge is understood in the local political context, the policy demand for change, then the EU dimensions of the EPSR, CSRs, ESF specific objectives and linked EU initiatives.

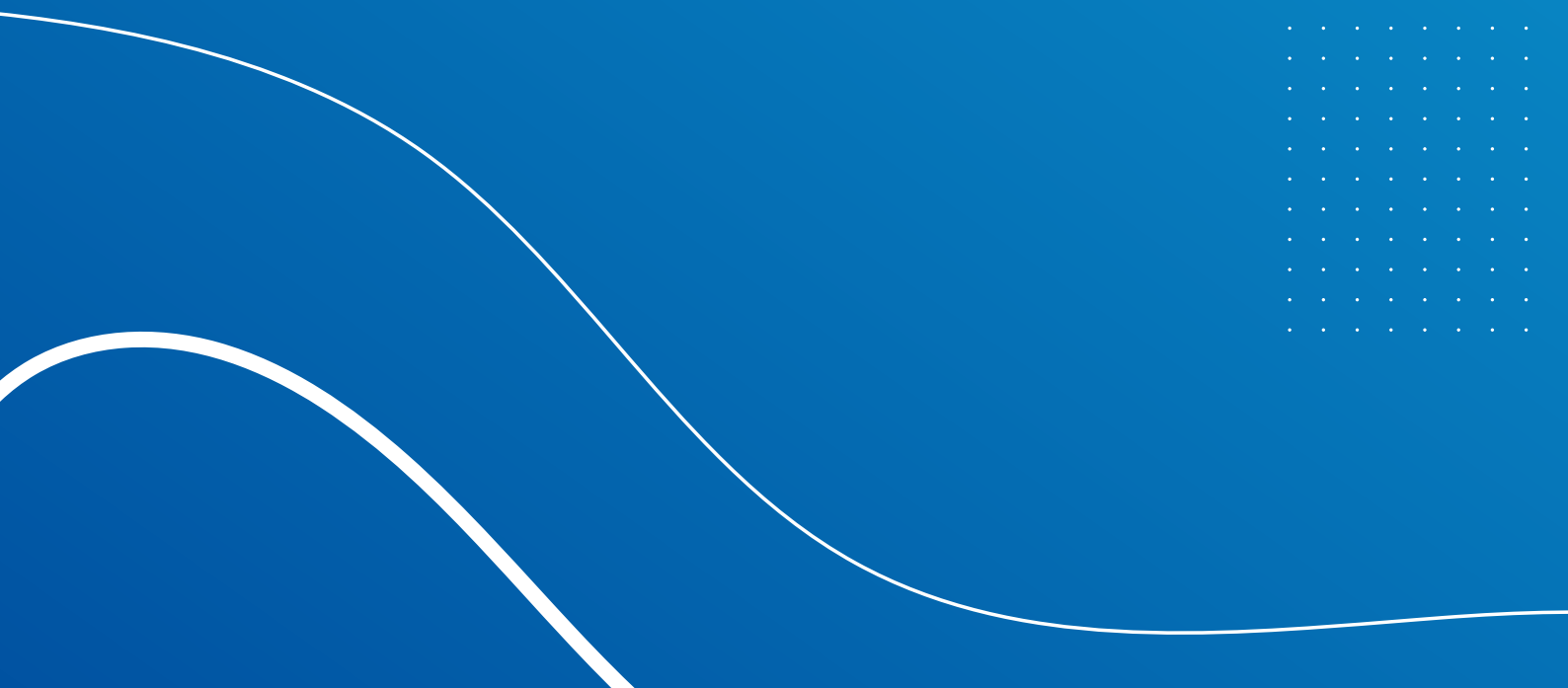
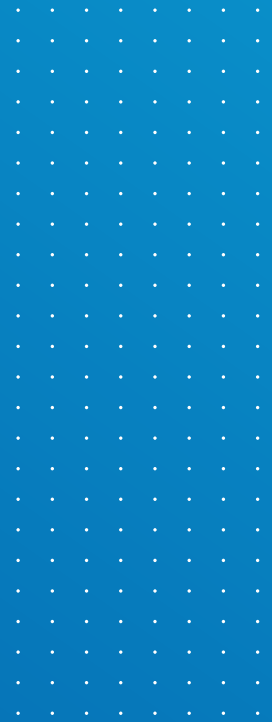
SOCIETAL CHALLENGE	POLICYMAKER/ FUNDER DEMAND	EPSR PRINCIPLES	CSR	ESF+ SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	LINKED EU INITIATIVES

You may find it useful to do a version of this exercise with beneficiaries to help them to understand the EU policy context for their innovations and thus improve the quality of their applications and reporting. Over time, this could boost their potential to scale-up beyond borders (see step 5). Understanding the policymaker demand is covered fully in step 7, on systemic change and mainstreaming.



Step 3

Search for innovations with potential



3 Search for innovations with potential

Our social innovation ecosystem is not very evolved so maybe we are on step 3 reviewing existing practices and seeing which are relevant for our wicked challenges. (ESF funder – MA/IB)

For each social innovation and context, some scale-up factors will be more important than others. Every social innovation and context is different. (ESF stakeholder)

By the third step, you are ready to begin the search for social innovations that have scale-up potential to address your policy challenges so it's time to think about what to look for.

Tool 3. Refine and test selection criteria for a scaling-up call

As a Community of Practice, we have identified eight key factors in scaling-up – the behaviours, features or competences that are common to successful scaling-up. We undertook desk research (see Annex I), examined case studies (*Digital Inclusion, Duo for a Job and Neighbourhood Mothers*⁴) and reflected on our own experience of ESF programming and project delivery to identify the most important behaviours driving success.

This leads us to recommend that a social innovation scale-up project receiving ESF+ funding should:

- 1.** Demonstrate a clear **societal need and policy demand** for the scaling-up in the new location or target group. It is not enough to show that there was a need when/where the social innovation was first implemented.
- 2.** Be clear about the **scale-up pathway** chosen and have co-designed that pathway with key stakeholders⁵.
- 3.** Be led by people who show **leadership competences**⁶ and **personal enthusiasm** for the social innovation, as well as long-term commitment.
- 4.** Be aware of how various stakeholders assess the **legitimacy and reputation** of the social innovation and steps that could be taken to enhance them.

⁴ See step 5.

⁵ See step 4 for a categorisation of the different scaling-up strategies or routes.

⁶ For a framework of leadership competences in civil society and social enterprises, see the EU3Leader framework developed under Erasmus Plus and modelled on the EntreComp framework. We found no such European framework for public services leadership.

5. Be able to demonstrate that its **design is viable** in terms of impact⁷, i.e. it works better than existing solutions.
6. Be able to demonstrate that its design is **financially viable**⁸, i.e. it is more efficient than existing solutions.
7. Show that the social innovation has ongoing **capacity to generate new resources**⁹, including co-financing and post-project funding to support its sustainability.
8. Assess its potential to **lead to systemic change** and become the typical means of managing that societal challenge in a certain political context¹⁰.

Now we turn to three social innovations in practice to consider how these factors apply in the real world, first with one we presented at step 1, then a new one. When presented to the Community of Practice, we considered the strengths of *Digital Inclusion* in Luxembourg to be:

- Knowledge of the population served (meets factor 1)
- COVID-19 pandemic sped up digitalisation and demand for the services (meets factor 1)
- Building relationships with other civil society stakeholders (meets factor 2)
- Willingness to professionalise a volunteer-led initiative (contributes to factor 5 and 6)

Young people, especially those with a migrant background, have difficulty accessing the labour market. Equally, people over 50 years of age can feel that their skills and experience are undervalued by society. *Duo for a Job* brings the two together, so that an over-50-year-old mentors a younger person. The project was launched in Brussels in 2013 and aided by a small-scale social impact bond. It was then picked up in five other Belgian cities in a branching route to scaling-up. In 2019, it was transferred to Paris. In the first year, there were 50 duos for a job, now there are 3 400. This activity is co-funded by the ESF. When presented to the Community of Practice, we considered its strengths to be:

- Meeting policy demand for solutions to migrant labour market exclusion (factor 1)
- Use of strong independent evidence of social impact (meets factor 5)
- Focus on methodology, process and quality monitoring (meets factor 3)
- Supported by IT, finance and HR systems (meets factor 3 and 6)

We think it would be useful to consider *Housing First* because it has spread quite rapidly in Europe in part through EaSI-funding (the FEANTSA network of homelessness NGOs and a social experimentation pilot in the early 2010s) and through using national ESF funding, for example recently in Czechia¹¹.

7 See step 5 for guidance on assessing evidence of impact. These may be combined into a single factor or separated into two equal steps.

8 An in-depth look at financial management is beyond the scope of this toolkit and other resources and expertise should be used here.

9 This is also an element of the EU3Leader framework in the case of civil society organisations.

10 See step 7.

11 The Czech ESF approach to Housing First was presented to the Community of Practice on Social Inclusion but was not part of the initial selection of case studies which contributed to the eight success factors here presented.

Housing First is a service model piloted in New York City in the 1990s, which targets homeless people with high needs, but replaces the standard ‘staircase’ service model, in which a homeless person has to show progress in a drug/alcohol treatment before being offered a home of their own. In Housing First, the person is offered intensive treatment and support for any addiction or mental illness whilst in a new home of their own. Some of the scale-up success factors we propose above are also to be found in the spread of Housing First from the U.S. to Europe and within Europe (Padgett, et al., 2016):

- Presence of key leaders in the Housing First innovation, including its originator Dr. Sam Tsemberis who set up a separate NGO specifically to offer training and consultancy, and a number of early adopters in different European cities (meets factor 3).
- The early adopters’ understanding of the societal and policy needs in their cities, in which homelessness was recognised as problematic not only for the homeless individuals but for the wider community (meets factor 1).
- The high level of evidence that Housing First is more impactful and efficient than standard approaches, especially randomised control trials from France and Canada (success factor 5 and 6).
- The strong reputation of Housing First as an evidence-based approach that has spread through policy, practice and research networks and conferences in the U.S. and Europe (success factor 4).

We return to the spread of Housing First in step 5, looking at how Czechia is deploying ESF for this purpose.

Now that you are familiar with the qualities to look for in social innovation, how do you find them?

A useful starting point is to map social innovations already developed in your own country/region and analyse their potential for being scaled-up. However, you might also want to look for inspiration from other countries and regions in Europe. For that, EU provides several sources of information.

European awards such as [the European Social Innovation Competition](#) and the [European Investment Bank’s Social Innovation Tournament](#) are among the initiatives that recognise social innovations with potential for larger use. The [EaSI Programme](#) (2014-2020) and the current EaSI strand of the ESF+ fund a number of social experimentations with the aim of developing models that can server at larger scale. They also fund European networks for social inclusion, social entrepreneurship and microfinance, which have a large number of member organisations, whose activities help to make social innovation visible. Under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the [urban innovative actions](#) and [Interreg](#) also produce a pipeline of innovation and mutual learning projects. (European Commission, 2022)

The Commission also helps the Member States to create of more systematic approach regarding social innovation. To this end, six projects involving 25 countries began in 2021, to develop competence centres for social innovation. Furthermore, a European [Competence Centre for social innovation](#) will be established within the [ESF Social Innovation+ initiative](#).

Transnational projects building social innovation competence centres

Six projects are investigating national ecosystems for social innovation to provide a better understanding of the starting point in each of 25 countries and so work towards the establishment of a competence centre that is adapted to the national context and needs. The network of competences centres is intended to catalyse social innovation within Member States and across borders.

<p>Pan-European Social Innovation Lab (PEncIL)</p> <p>National competence centres for social innovation in Belgium, Czechia, Finland and Lithuania.</p>	<p>Social Innovation Plus (SI PLUS)</p> <p>National competence centres for social innovation in Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia.</p>
<p>European Social Innovation Alliance (ESIA)</p> <p>National competence centres for social innovation in Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Poland and UK.</p>	<p>Building Capacity for a Sustainable Society (BuiCaSuS)</p> <p>National competence centres for social innovation in France, Latvia, Spain and Sweden.</p>
<p>Facilitating United Approached to Social Innovation in Europe (FUSE)</p> <p>National competence centres for social innovation in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland and Portugal.</p>	<p>Social Innovation Ecosystem Development (SEED)</p> <p>National competence centres for social innovation in Greece, Italy, Romania and Slovenia.</p>

The European Commission recently launched [a social innovation database](#). The database includes examples of social innovations (case studies) as well as organisations active in this field (partners). It is searchable by country, type of initiative, theme and governance level. You can propose successful social innovation initiatives in your country/region for inclusion in the database and also post your organisation if you are interested to cooperate with other partners in the future.

ESF IN PRACTICE

Box 3. Funding social innovation stages in Poland, 2014-2020

The Polish Managing Authority separated social experimentation (micro innovation) from scaling-up and systemic change (macro innovation). It also launched an ecosystem-building project to support and connect stakeholders.

<p>Micro innovations</p> <p>New solutions developed and tested on a small scale (a network of incubators). 600 innovations in different areas.</p>	<p>Macro innovations</p> <p>Policy innovations, e.g. reform of young people's mental health services (see box 7), social impact bonds.</p>
<p>Scaling-up</p> <p>Calls for proposals aiming at implementation of social innovations on a larger scale.</p>	<p>Building the ecosystem</p> <p>Social Innovation Catalyst project launched in December 2020.</p>

TOOL 3. REFINE AND TEST SELECTION CRITERIA FOR A SCALING-UP CALL

Bring together your social innovation team and select a small number of ESF projects from your portfolio or from the social innovation database.

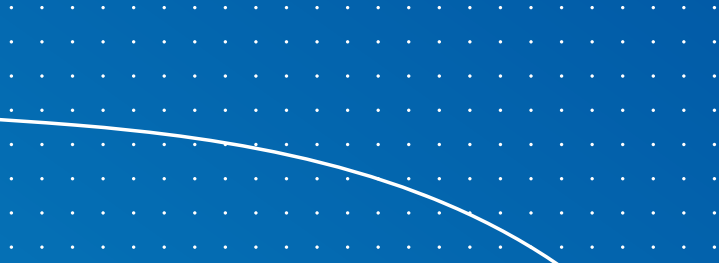
1. Split your team into pairs and ask each person to complete this table independently, then compare notes and create a composite score. At first, use our simplistic scoring method: **0 Absent / 1 Basic / 2 Acceptable / 3 Strong**. Each pair reports to the rest of the team.

SUCCESS FACTOR	EVALUATOR 1	EVALUATOR 2	COMPOSITE	COMMENT
Demonstrates societal need				
Has a clear scaling-up strategy				
Shows leadership and enthusiasm				
Awareness of reputation				
Viable impact design ¹²				
Viable financial design				
Capacity to generate new resources				
Systemic change potential				
TOTAL OUT OF 48				

12 Note the split between impact and financial viability scoring.

2. Put the eight factors on a flipchart or whiteboard. Give everyone a limited number of coloured sticky dots to vote for the factors they think most important. When all dots are used, ask each person to say something about their voting. Is there consensus or disagreement? Could this help you to create a weighted set of criteria for a future call for projects?
3. The scoring system used here was simplistic. Could your team create a sophisticated scoring system? Ask individuals or pairs to take one of the success criteria and write a descriptor for each score from 0 to 3 that would help evaluators to score a project proposal. This could be done during a breakout session or brought back to a future meeting.
4. When the group comes back together (whether after a breakout or at the next meeting), you can go back to step 1 with the same or different projects and build in the weighting from step 2 and the scoring descriptors from step 3. Now consider:
 - Does any criterion require a minimum score to proceed?
 - Who can write this up formally as an ESF+ call for proposals?

You could go through Tool 3 again with an innovation that is new to you and/or from a different country, leveraging the network of national competence centres and the European competence centre.



Step 4

Assess the evidence



4 Assess the evidence

We do a lot of work with research institutes on the evidence base for social innovations and it's not only about what has been proved but what has been improved. (ESF stakeholder)

The lower evidence thresholds may be acceptable in some contexts – it's better to start slowly and build interest and capacity in managing social impact. (ESF stakeholder)

On the fourth step, you are assessing how much confidence you can have in the evidence available for the social innovations identified as having scale-up potential.

Tool 4. Review your approach to evidence

In theory, producing evidence is the purpose of the social experimentation stage of social innovation (see the explanation of Figure 1). Scaling-up is only warranted for social experimentation pilots that actually work well, i.e. those that are more effective and efficient than the standard approach. Those that do not work should be scaled down and closed, leaving lessons for future innovation and creating space for new pilots. In practice, there are varying levels of commitment to the evaluation of impact at early stages, so you need the tools to assess the quality of the evidence.

The European Commission's Expert Group on Social Entrepreneurship (GECES)¹³ offers a definition of social effect, which we find useful in understanding social impact:

'the social effect (change), both long-term and short-term, achieved for its target population¹⁴ as a result of activity undertaken' (European Commission, 2014, p. 13).

¹³ Established by and reports to the European Commission.

¹⁴ Doing things 'for the target population' may not be in the spirit of social innovation, which is interested in engaging people to create social impact.

The difficulties in measuring social impact have been acknowledged by the GECES among others, when it was asked to provide guidance on social impact measurement for implementing the social enterprise finance instruments in the EaSI Programme and the European Social Enterprise Fund (EUSEF). The GECES says in its guide, it is not possible to “devise a rigid set of indicators [...] to measure social impact” in all contexts (European Commission, 2014, p. 6). Based on a Social Return on Investment¹⁵, the GECES proposes a five-stage process for impact measurement (European Commission, 2014). We have based the questions below on that approach so that you know as an ESF managing authority or intermediate body what to ask of project promoters. Has the proposed project already:

- 1.** Identified the objectives of the social innovation and of impact measurement?
- 2.** Involved likely recipients in designing the impact measurement plan and asked which kinds of impact they value most highly?
- 3.** Developed a theory of change¹⁶ that describes how the resources invested in the innovation lead to the outcomes intended?
- 4.** Measured progress towards the outcomes based on indicators, fully involving recipients?
- 5.** Involved and reported findings to stakeholders and identified changes to the innovation model?

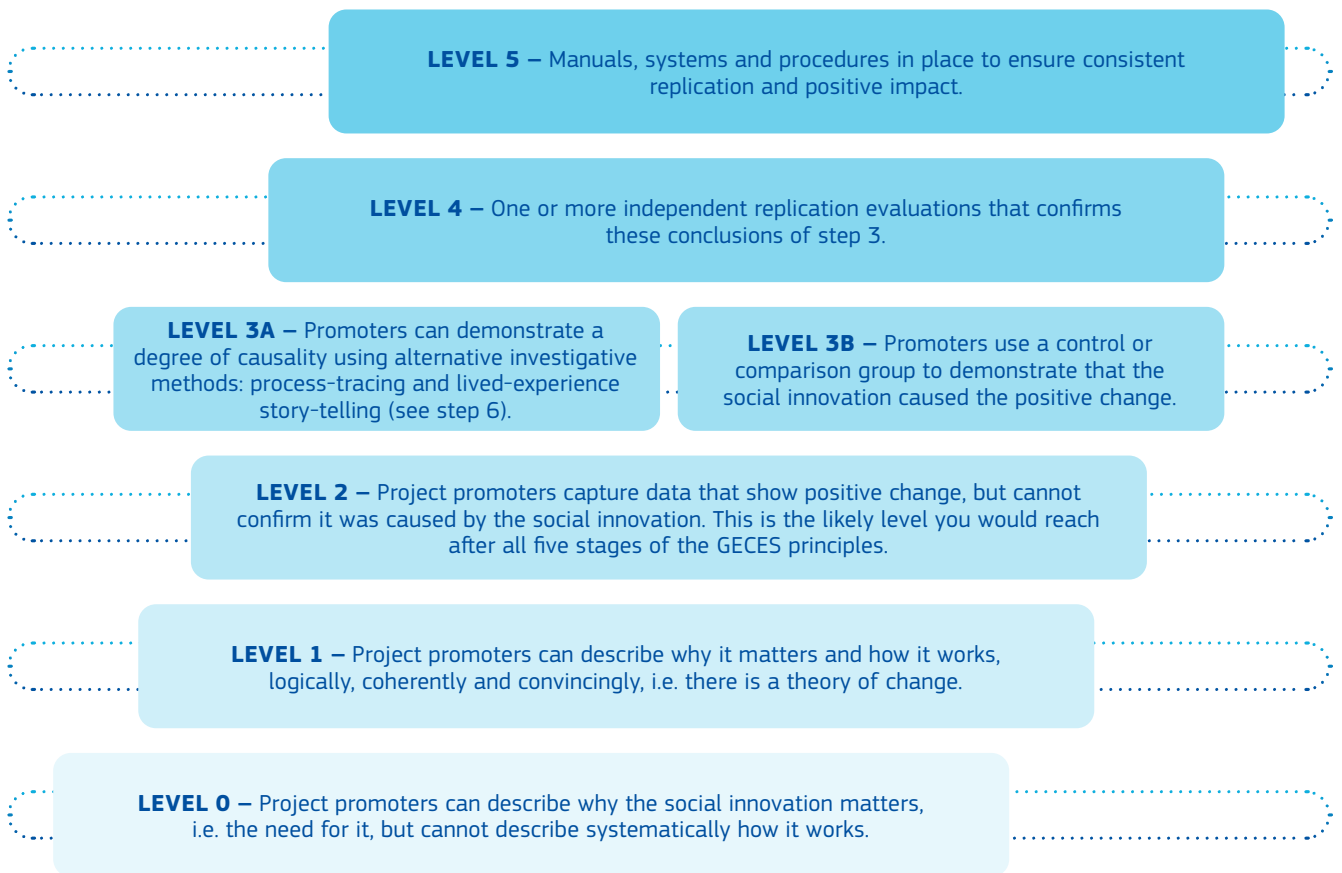
Those questions could be re-phrased to ask whether a project plans to take these steps. These are the stages that ESF+ beneficiaries should try to follow in their social innovation and in their scaling-up proposals. A beneficiary who follows these stages is clearly committed to impact measurement, providing a useful example for other beneficiaries to follow.

At this point, you need to consider the degree of confidence you can attach to social innovation evidence. Nesta, the UK innovation agency, developed a framework of levels of evidence (Puttick & Ludlow, 2013). We have adapted their framework for the ESF context in Figure 2.

15 While we are not recommending the full social return on investment methodology, the principles provide a thorough grounding in impact measurement.

16 Describing the means by which activities achieve outcomes and use resources.

Figure 2. Levels of evidence for social innovation



Source: Puttick, R. & Ludlow, J., 2013. *Standards of Evidence*, London: Nesta, p. 2, [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Changes have been made on the wording of each level and two levels have been added. The modified work is licensed under the same licence.

Duo for a Job has probably reached a level in which they have confidence in the causality of their intervention thanks to a randomised control trial (level 3B). The impact of Housing First has been demonstrated by multiple randomised control trials and its principles and methods have been codified into manuals by Pathways National in the U.S. and Housing First Europe (level 5).

At level 3B, randomised control trials are considered the gold standard of evidence for social interventions – they have been used in some EaSI projects and are recommended for the ESF¹⁷. However, they may not always be appropriate to the nature or scale of the intervention, nor realistic given available resources. Here, level 3A may be more useful, being less rigorous and resource-intensive while still providing actionable measurement of social impact that can be used to improve intervention design dynamically. Level 3 is the highest level you can expect for a sustained social innovation that has yet to scale-up. Our view here is pragmatic: you should not let the reputed gold standard of randomised control trials stop you from applying a standard that is good enough.

17 European Commission (2021). *Design and commissioning of counterfactual impact evaluations – A practical guide for ESF managing authorities*.

TOOL 4. REVIEW YOUR APPROACH TO EVIDENCE

Bring together the team responsible for the social innovation priority in the new ESF+ programme to review attitudes to evidence. This sample agenda is useful for a small, familiar team, while the resources can be adapted to your own context. Again, it may take longer to build internal understanding and you will need to follow-up with colleagues outside your specialist area.

Tool 4 can be considered in conjunction with Tool 6, a stakeholder engagement exercise on impact measurement and learning.

TIMING	ACTIVITY	RESOURCES
±20 mins	<p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your attitudes to impact measurement? • What are beneficiaries' attitudes? 	
±20 mins	<p>Think back to the last ESF programming period or to a specific call for projects. For both proposal and reporting stage, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of the five stages of impact measurement did the projects need to go through? • What level of evidence (0-5) did you require or encourage? 	Previous call for projects
±30 mins	<p>Break into pairs and have each person bring a completed ESF project. What evidence level (0-5) was available at proposal stage? What evidence level was available at reporting stage? What share of the project budget was allocated to evaluation?</p> <p>Ask each pair to share their reflections.</p>	Your own project portfolio
±20 mins	<p>How could you support each project to get to the next level of evidence?</p>	

Our progress is not universal: on some themes we are now working on step 5 but on others we are on step 2 framing the challenges.
(ESF funder – MA/IB).

STEP	07 YOU WORK TOWARDS MAINSTREAMING
TOOLS	<p>A. Re-consider the role of an ESF managing authority</p> <p>B. Mobilise your knowledge for mainstreaming.</p>

STEP	06 YOU PROMOTE CONTINUOUS LEARNING
TOOLS	Continuous learning and impact measurement

STEP	05 YOU GUIDE THE CHOICE OF SCALE-UP PATHWAY
TOOLS	Bring together the building blocks for the scale-up call

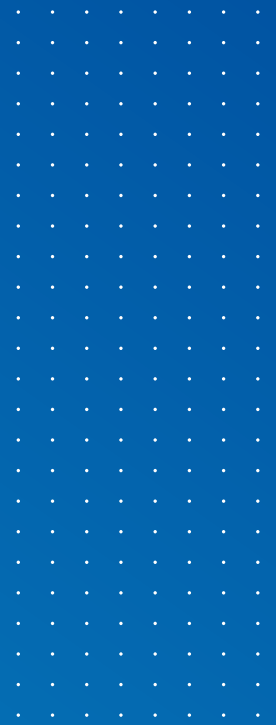
STEP	04 YOU'VE ASSESSED THE EVIDENCE FOR THEM.
TOOLS	Consider your attitudes to evidence

STEP	03 YOU'VE FOUND INNOVATIONS WITH POTENTIAL
TOOLS	Refine your selection criteria for a call for scale-up projects

STEP	02 YOU'VE IDENTIFIED AND FRAMED THE CHALLENGES
TOOLS	<p>A. Identify 'wicked' challenges through foresight</p> <p>B. Understand the European context</p>

STEP	01 YOU HAVE BUILT SHARED UNDERSTANDING
TOOLS	<p>A. Build understanding across government</p> <p>B. Open dialogue with potential beneficiaries</p>

We don't think any of the steps should be jumped. The entire process is important even if some steps will be harder than others, especially mainstreaming beyond ESF: we have to plan ahead from day one
(ESF funder – MA/IB).



Step 5

Guide the scaling-up pathway



5 Guide the scaling-up pathway

The most important thing for us is to spread the scale-up calls to the regions and localities, building capacity and community and as well as supporting individual projects. (ESF funder – MA/IB)

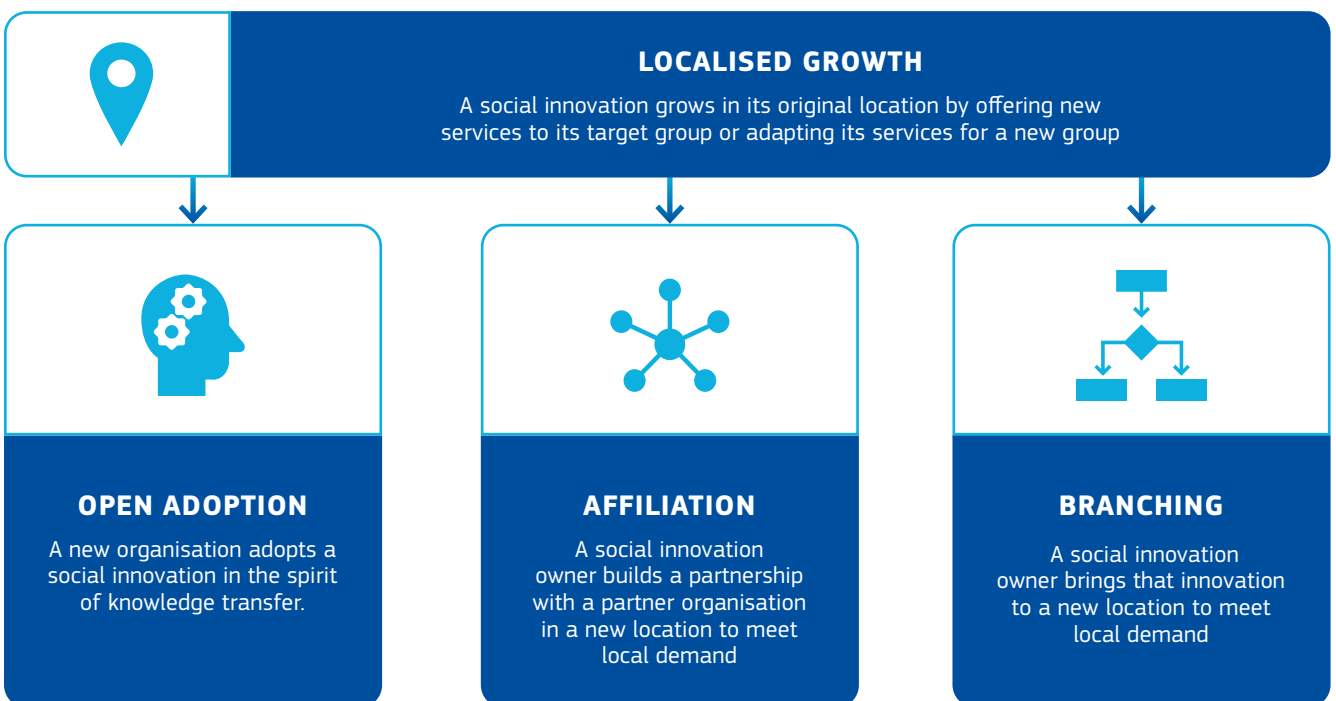
Some social innovators do not use this kind of language around scaling-up, so whoever uses these tools has to translate them into their own context with sensitivity. (ESF stakeholder)

On this step, you and potential beneficiaries consider how to roll out or adopt the ‘scalable’ social innovations both at the call design and project selection stages.

Tool 5. Building blocks for a call for scaling-up projects

Researchers have characterised scaling-up of social innovation as ‘spreading, sometimes chaotically, along multiple paths’ and taking many different forms over time (Murray, et al., 2010, p. 82). Indeed, ‘recent studies ... [characterise] the diffusion process as a non-linear dynamic system’ (Nutley, et al., 2003, p. 22). We recommend that you seek out opportunities to harness this uncertainty and bring a structured approach to scaling-up within ESF+.

Figure 3. Pathways for scaling-up after localised growth



Source: Adapted from the categorisation by the EU-funded research projects BENISI and TRANSITION (Devalli, et al., 2017) which drew on a study of social enterprises (Weber, et al., 2015).

Figure 3 shows a typology of three scaling-up strategies that will be useful in developing a systematic approach to funding and project design after the stage which can be described as **localised growth**¹⁸. All of the innovations we have presented in the toolkit went through localised growth first, *Duo for a Job* in Brussels; *Neighbourhood Mothers* growing city-wide from one district in Berlin; even *Housing First* in New York in the early 1990s, then spreading far and wide. Digital Inclusion is at that stage now, having extended its original offer (refurbishing technology items) to other related needs among recently arrived refugees, such as language training: the demand in this case came from both the government and individual needs.

Several of these strategies are likely to be applied at various times in the evolution and diffusion of a social innovation, while the design of the innovation may also change over time and adapt to different circumstances.

Considering the scale-up process from the perspective of the social innovator, **branching** and **affiliation** are logical continuations of localised growth. In **branching**, the social innovation operator itself grows, i.e. employs more people, grows its income, recruits more volunteers, helps more people. In **affiliation**, the operator sells its knowledge to a different organisation in a new location, thereby receiving an income associated with the growth of another organisation. Social franchising is a specific way of doing this. *Duo for a Job* is an example of **branching**, first from Brussels, where it had achieved localised growth, to Antwerp and Ghent, then to Paris, and with a further planned extension to the Netherlands. It achieved this by working with city employment services, where the demand for a new kind of labour market integration was most evident.

Considering the scaling-up process from the perspective of organisations seeking a social innovation that could meet a policy demand, the key is **open adoption**. From the innovator perspective, this has been called 'knowledge dissemination' or 'knowledge transfer'. We believe this is the best-fit route for ESF+ programming and for the ethos of many social innovation operators.

This is how [Neighbourhood Mothers](#) spread between European cities. This innovation recognises that it is difficult for public officials to reach new migrant communities. Instead, it recruits, trains and employs migrant women as intermediaries between the authorities and new communities. It scaled up quite informally through **open adoption**: policy-makers from Berlin first encountered a similar project in Rotterdam through EURO CITIES, an EaSI-funded network, then adapted the idea to their context. Nordic cities then encountered the innovation as adopted in Berlin when looking for solutions to the integration of new migrants and refugees in the 2010s. Stockholm, for example, adopted the model with support from an EU mutual learning project under the EaSI Programme. It is evident here that the 'knowledge transfer' element was funded through the external sources of EU funding.

There is a key distinction between innovations in the for-profit sector and those in the public and non-profit spheres, which is relevant to scaling-up strategies:

'The private economy is structured to reserve the benefits of an innovation to its own organisation or to those licensees or franchisees willing to pay for it' (Murray, et al., 2010, p. 82).

18 BENISI and TRANSITION refer to this as 'capacity-building', but that term is replaced here to avoid confusion with training.

By contrast, in the non-profit and indeed in the public sector:

‘Scaling is defined as the most effective and efficient way to increase a social enterprise’s social impact [...] rather than the relative growth of the social enterprise itself’ (Weber, et al., 2015, p. 12).

This does not mean that profit-making companies cannot originate or scale-up social innovations, rather that they are more likely to use branching or affiliation to do so. Public authorities could use knowledge dissemination for scaling-up beyond their geographical area. Non-profits can use any of the scaling-up strategies but probably lean more towards knowledge dissemination¹⁹. Public authorities and non-profit might be more comfortable reframing ‘scaling-up’ as ‘good practice exchange’ or ‘mutual learning’.

The [Ashoka Globalizer programme](#) found that social enterprises have tended to rush into scaling-up and focused on quick wins. The programme encourages participants to aim for a tipping point at which ‘widespread adoption happens and implementation no longer depends on the initiating organisation’ (Ashoka Globalizer, 2016, p.7). Participants come to the Globalizer programme thinking about scaling-up through branching and by the end ‘80% of fellows [...] have more flexible and decentralised scaling models to maximise [...] indirect impact’ (ibid., p.25). Czechia’s multiplier approach (see Box 5) encapsulates the knowledge dissemination approach to scaling-up in ESF. This takes us back to our starting point: that **we should aim to scale up impact rather than organisations**, which supports our case that the best-fit route for scaling in the ESF+ is what we have called **open adoption**.

Social innovations might benefit from several experimentations which may happen in parallel and help to capture and codify the key elements of the innovation as it spreads through **open adoption**. We noted in step 3 that one vital element in the diffusion of Housing First is the presence of a key leadership figure, who is able to offer training and consultancy to facilitate **open adoption**. Once the key elements have been identified based on a solid evidence, new entities can more confidently embrace the social innovation and adapt it to their local needs.

ESF IN PRACTICE

Box 5. Scaling-up Housing First in Czechia

Czechia used the ESF to pilot and then scale-up its Housing First projects, of which the first pilot was implemented in Brno in 2016/2017. It re-housed 50 families and was managed by the local Roma-support NGO IQ Roma Servis. An independent evaluation found a success rate of 96% in the first year after re-housing, and 80% after the second year.

Building on these positive results, the second ESF Housing First call in 2018 had a budget allocation of EUR 6 million, with 13 projects funded. The next Housing First call under the ESF+ is planned for spring 2022, with an allocation of about EUR 17.5 million ESF+ and EUR 17.5 million national funds, drawing on experiences and lessons from [‘Housing First’ pilot project](#).

The Czech Managing Authority is seeking beneficiaries implementing projects which are willing to learn, test and adapt, and, ultimately, save public money. Two types of calls for projects are planned under the ESF+ Employment Programme:

- Incubation projects, where the beneficiary, e.g. an NGO, rapidly tests what works best for a particular target group. The results are implemented in a longer, higher-funded implementation phase where the beneficiary develops the new working method with potential users of the service.
- Multiplier projects, where the beneficiary e.g. a university is familiar with an innovation that is relevant for other organisations. Beneficiaries are expected to evaluate solutions in various settings and share lessons with other entities across Czechia so boosting their capacity to deliver the innovation locally.

The main selection criterion is that the project fulfils the Housing First principles. Close cooperation and shared values are key to the success of housing first in Czechia. The main stakeholders involved in scaling-up are the Platform for Social Housing, which involves associations, NGOs, and experts, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as the Managing Authority.

TOOL 5. BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A CALL FOR SCALING-UP PROJECTS

CONSIDERATIONS	YOUR FIRST SCALE-UP CALL UNDER ESF+
<p>Which societal challenges could the scale-up call tackle? Build on your work from Tool 2A</p>	
<p>Which scaling-up strategies will be most relevant?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localised growth • Affiliation • Branching • Knowledge dissemination • Any and all of the above with suitable justification • How would you have to change a scaling-up call to accommodate each strategy or to direct promoters to one strategy alone? 	
<p>What is to be the geographical eligibility, i.e. will you be able to fund a transnational element of the project if a social innovation is to be scaled-up from another Member State?</p>	
<p>What kinds of organisation will be targeted by the call?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sector • For-profit sector • Non-profit sector • Other 	
<p>What level of evidence will you require to fund scaling-up?²⁰</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 0. Description of why it matters 1. Theory of change or logic model 2. Data showing positive change 3. (A) Alternative methods of investigating cause and effect (B) One counterfactual impact evaluation 4. Multiple replications with independent counterfactual evaluations 5. Manuals to ensure consistent replication <p>Build on your work from Tool 4.</p>	
<p>Your selection criteria: integrate your work from Tool 3.</p>	
<p>What is the budget overall and per project?</p>	
<p>What is the expected duration of the project?</p>	
<p>What are the reporting requirements and budget for evaluation?</p>	
<p>Before you consider this, you will want to look at step 6, on continuous evaluation, and possibly step 7, on systemic change.</p>	

20 If you are funding early-stage pilots or social experimentation projects, you can use those to build up a preferred level of evidence that can be taken forward into the scaling-up stage.



Step 6

Promote continuous learning



6 Promote continuous learning

Measuring social impact has too often been about proving impact instead of improving impact – so this step is very important. (ESF stakeholder)

This step can be extra challenging as social innovators have to adopt a ‘growth mindset’ so they learn from their own experiences and failures as well as learning from outside. (ESF stakeholder)

Having considered at step 4 how to assess the level of evidence available for scaling-up, now we propose ways to generate new evidence for the future by embedding continuous learning in scaling-up projects you are funding.

Tool 6. Continuous learning and impact measurement

Impact evidence has so far not been consistently built into project selection procedures in ESF and managing authorities have experienced difficulties in its design and implementation (European Commission, 2021d). The Commission recommends a pragmatic move towards measuring and managing impact, as part of a responsible approach to social innovation, which as we’ve outlined in this scaling-up staircase, supports engagement of policy makers further down the road:

‘Proper evaluation of [social innovation] allows to show the advantages of innovation, which is key to engage stakeholders, particularly private investors and public policy makers. Successful [social innovation] initiatives are those that can demonstrate the effects of the innovation, can disseminate its impact and scale it up’ (European Commission, 2018).

We support this move, while fully recognising that it has substantial challenges and that there is no single evaluation method that will answer all questions. It is likely that you need to combine different research methods in order to fully understand why some social innovations work and why and how they scale up. Without a systematic approach, you may inadvertently scale-up a social experimentation (pilot) that is not actually effective, undermining your social innovation strategy.

We want to invite ESF managing authorities and beneficiaries to move beyond the traditional summative evaluation²¹ at the end of a project. Rather, much like financial management, leaders and other stakeholders (e.g. investors) should also take decisions based on impact information that emerges throughout the project. The ESF mid-term evaluation highlighted the experimental nature of social innovation:

‘The experimental nature of [social innovation], with an inherent failure risk, is a challenge within the ESF framework, designed to base its evaluation on results. It is therefore crucial that MA and [social innovation] promoters address this failure risk to minimise its potential negative impact. This should not be incompatible with ESF result orientation, if the risk is properly assessed when designing performance indicators and when setting target values’ (European Commission, 2017).

21 An evaluation completed after the end of a project that brings together all of the lessons learned through implementation.

We propose to accommodate the experimental nature of social innovation by supporting beneficiaries' learning during a scale-up journey, irrespective of the route followed or the type of organisation or partnership. Our approach is largely based on the [Learning As You Scale](#) guide commissioned by Genio as part of the Horizon 2020-funded [European Social Catalyst Fund](#) (Trowbridge, et al., 2021). Rather than advocating one particular methodology, we hope that this step will encourage ESF managing authorities to embed a learning culture in their funding practice.

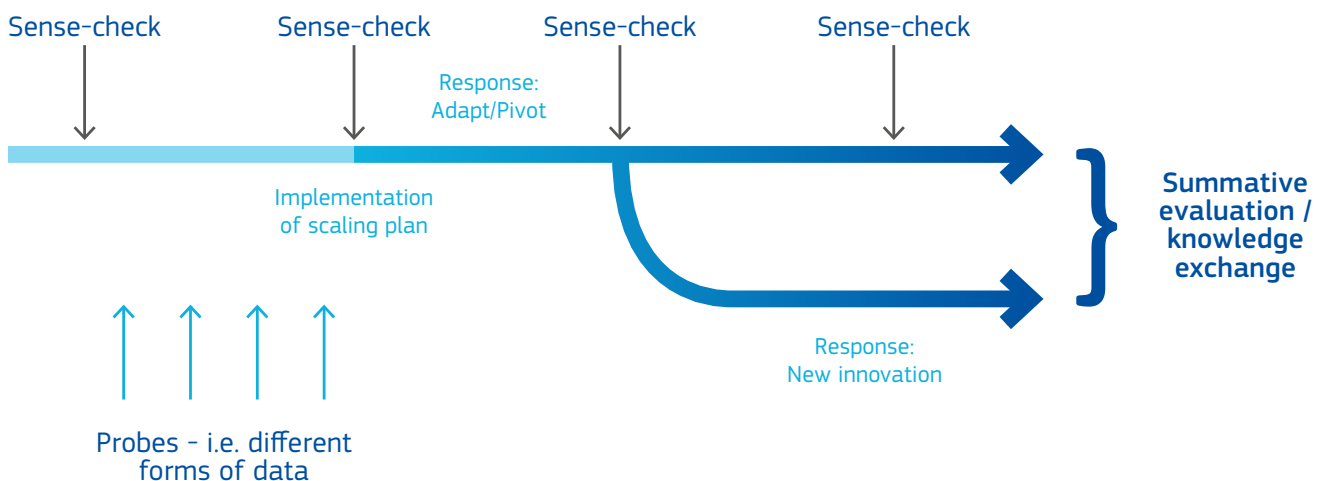
The [Learning As You Scale](#) approach was designed to have three main strengths (Trowbridge, et al., 2021):

- It establishes relationships and cultivates a sense of ownership among decision-makers and allies, with a view to spreading the innovation in future (see step 7).
- Rather than waiting until the end of the project, this approach allows social innovations to learn and adapt as they go.
- Incorporating various probes (types of data) into the learning process enables social innovation to build a multifaceted picture of scale-up progress.

You should be supportive of beneficiaries which seek to build a learning culture by making their own strategic choices about evaluation methods. Continuous learning may mean that the innovation itself adapts in response to challenges and evolves into a more effective social innovation (Trowbridge, et al., 2021). Calls for projects and grant agreements should be designed to facilitate and incorporate such learning.

We suggest a framework that assists scale-up projects to define, plan and navigate a learning process. The framework guides social innovation on applying methodologies and tools that are relevant to the needs and context of their scaling-up plans. This 'sense-checking' framework can be used in line with regular periodic reporting by a cohort of scale-up projects funded under one call.

Figure 5. Sense-checking through the life of a social innovation project



Source: Trowbridge, et al. (2022), [Learning As You Scale](#), Genio and People's Voice Media, p. 21.

At various stages within the scaling-up project, the beneficiaries and managing authority or intermediate body should organise sense-checks, where different stakeholders come together to review the data their probing has gathered (see Table 4). This helps beneficiaries to check progress and obtain different perspectives on the data (Trowbridge, et al., 2021). This group acts as a project-level community of practice that can help you to navigate the implementation of a scaling-up strategy. You may also find it useful to promote peer-to-peer learning within a group of projects funded under the same call. However, it is important to adequately fund the continuous learning process rather than risk it distracting project leaders from implementation.

Understanding exactly what is happening in the scale-up process means that project leaders are in a position to respond. This may mean adapting their scale-up plans slightly or pivoting completely. ESF+ managing authorities and/or intermediate bodies should cultivate a positive attitude towards change in response to continuous learning, including in project agreements. Probing and sense-checking can generate new ideas and innovations, which could apply for new pilot stage funding under a different ESF+ call for proposals.

The Learning As You Scale guide offers resources and templates for social innovation project beneficiaries rather than funders – but funders can promote their adoption. The methods are the sources of data then inform sense-checks along the way (see Figure 5).

Table 4. Probing methods suitable for continuous learning

PROBING METHOD	EXPLANATION
Value and Impact Mapping Tool	Template for innovators to map the different impacts of social innovation and create a Venn diagram of social, political, economic, environmental and cultural 'values'
Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) framework	Assesses the data/insights you are currently gathering, including collection method, what data/insights are useful for, and any gaps
Participant, Intervention, Comparator, Outcomes (PICO) framework	Helps social innovators to think about their participants, intervention (innovation), comparator and outcomes
Lived experience storytelling	Guides social innovators to obtain and interpret qualitative data about the lives of supported people or organisations, their experience of social innovation, and standard services
Process tracing	Establishes causality without a control group through probing questions that aid understanding of complex and messy change

Source: Trowbridge, et al. (2021). *Learning As You Scale*

As the managing authority or intermediate body, you can organise practical training and sign-posting to build capacity among project promoters that are new to impact measurement.

Continuous learning also works towards a summative evaluation, which you can use as a basis for the next phase of the social innovation cycle – systems change (see step 7). You can also use evidence as you scale beyond the project. We suggest the following categorisation, adapted and simplified from (Fox, et al., 2017, pp. 246-47):

- Instrumental use of evidence: research feeds directly into policy, leading to changes in behaviour and practice.
- Conceptual use of evidence: minds are changed but not policies; other factors hinder policy change.
- Persuasive use of evidence: evidence is used in support of a fixed policy or to support a pre-existing political position or ideology.
- Influential use of evidence: practice change without policy change because there is sufficient margin within legislation.

This categorisation was first set out by (Nutley, et al., 2003) who also note: ‘While the aim of evidence-based practice is generally to effect changes in behaviour, instrumental use of research is actually quite rare’. The continuous learning process however seeks to build ownership, which is a useful factor in systems change (step 7).

ESF IN PRACTICE

Box 6. Measuring social impact in ESF: piloting a low-entry approach

Portugal has developed five questions about the impact of a given social innovation project on the life of an individual in the areas of personal autonomy, well-being; social relations; personal development; and that individual’s potential to positively impact other people’s lives. The last one of these is significant for underlining the importance of service users not only being recipients but active citizens. For each of those five questions, participants would have three answers: no change; a small positive change; substantial positive change. This is part of a wider evaluation model to be introduced to ESF social innovation projects in 2022, which includes measures of efficiency, scalability, policy change potential and sustainability.

TOOL 6. CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPACT MEASUREMENT

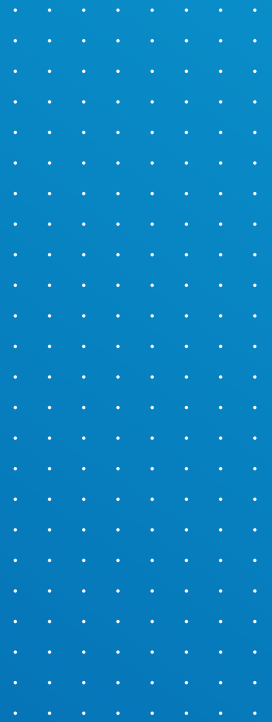
Here we propose an indicative series of webinars or workshops where you begin to draw on more resources from your own context (other parts of government, academic community, etc.) and beneficiaries implementing projects.

STAGES	WHAT HAPPENS	RESOURCES
Starting out	Consider again your attitude to evidence and impact (Tool 4). Make a plan for the webinar/workshop and invite suitable speakers and experts from your context.	Your networks Results of Tool 4
Webinar/ workshop 1	Adapt Tool 4 for use with stakeholders, asking them to present projects with different kinds of evidence from ESF and beyond. If your organisation or government has an evaluation unit or similar, invite it to present different methods, their pros/cons, and resource implications.	Your project database Government evaluation unit
Webinar/ Workshop 2	Invite your team, together with a group of beneficiaries, to consider the alternative evaluation methods in Learning as You Scale : which have they used? Which would they find easiest to apply? What other methods could be helpful? What are the resource implications for beneficiaries? Invite an academic to present experimental trial/control approaches in social policy: what are the pros and cons? What are the resource implications?	Learning As You Scale Academic expert
Stop and reflect	How could you support each project to get to the next level of evidence?	



Step 7

Work towards mainstreaming



7 Work towards mainstreaming

Many projects come up with different solutions, so how to decide which ones to support: the ones that have a very good evaluation. (ESF stakeholder)

This is our big challenge: securing inter-ministerial co-operation and political support for adopting innovations more widely that we have funded within our ESF bubble. (ESF funder – MA/IB)

The seventh and final step on our scaling-up journey is to remodel a system or service on the basis of social innovation that is performing well (steps 5 and 6) framing it as far as possible within policy-maker demand to address a ‘wicked’ challenge.

Tool 7A. Re-consider the role of the MA/IB

Tool 7B. Template for a mainstreaming plan

Arriving at the step of considering mainstreaming, there are various scenarios for a scaled-up social innovation operating in several locations, which will depend on the evidence gathered in steps 4 and 6. [The EQUAL programme](#) in the 2000-2006 programming period offered this definition of mainstreaming:

‘integrating tried and tested innovations into the core of local, regional, national and European [...] policies, delivery systems and practice’ (European Commission, 2005, p. 7).

The [EQUAL guide](#) distinguished between **horizontal** mainstreaming (practice at local and regional level changes through replication) and **vertical** mainstreaming (policy changes at regional or national level), which is our focus on this step. Vertical mainstreaming requires a meeting of supply and demand for innovation: on the demand side, policymakers take an interest if there is a fit with current policy priorities around tackling a wicked societal challenge; on the supply side, an innovation is sufficiently proven to warrant mainstreaming (European Commission, 2005).

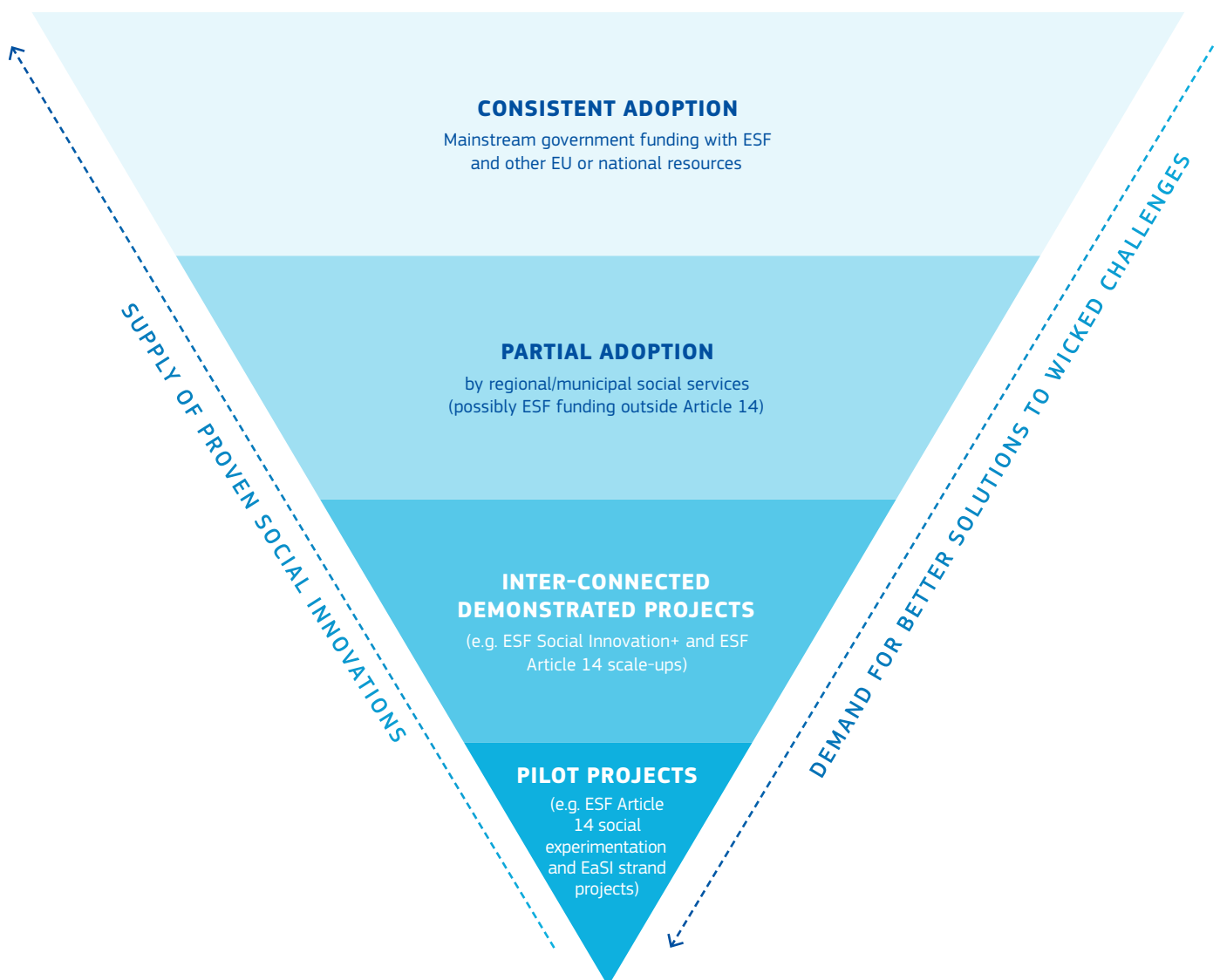
There is an emphasis on innovating or renovating a system, which policymakers and citizens recognise is no longer responding to a given wicked societal challenge. This means changing its organising principles, power dynamics and economic flows, which usually happens gradually (Murray, et al., 2010, p. 107). Household waste treatment and recycling is a good example which has ‘required new laws, regulations, business models, habits in the home (separating waste), collection systems, and new ways of reusing and recycling materials’ (Murray, et al., 2010, p. 108). This involves elements of conceptual, instrumental and influential use of knowledge about recycling discussed in step 6.

Whether a wicked social challenge is converted into a policy demand depends on the degree of understanding between stakeholders and policymakers about the nature of the challenge and of the need to look for systemic changes, as we saw at step 2. Where a challenge is not recognised politically as needing a response, there may be a need to stimulate demand through ‘advocacy, raising awareness, championing a cause, and campaigning for change’ (Murray, et al., 2010, p. 83). This should be begun well in advance of proposing a social innovation to address a challenge.

As noted above, instrumental use of research evidence is rare, i.e. knowledge alone does not tend to bring about policy or system change. It may be that in an environment where ‘consistent adoption’ cannot be achieved in a pre-determined timeframe, advocates can aim for conceptual use of social innovation evidence, i.e. changing minds and attitudes, along with some influential use in which practice changes without new forms of policy or legislation: the ESF seems well-suited to this kind of use of knowledge as it provides resources outside the main system in which to try out and scale up new approaches.

Genio, a Dublin-based non-profit working across Europe, illustrates the degree of adoption of a social service model, moving from ‘pilots external to mainstream social services’ and broadening to ‘consistent adoption’ at the top of this inverted pyramid (see Figure 6). In this model, there would be many small-budget pilots, some of which would prove effective and lead to inter-connected projects trying out innovations in different locations with a growing budget. From there, the models would be adopted by an increasing number of public authorities locally and regionally, eventually taking hold as the dominant approach across an entire country and commanding substantial public funds. Scaling-up a discrete social innovation that has existed outside of a main system into that main system is not straightforward and is likely to take many years to achieve.

Figure 6. Degree of adoption of an innovation by a system



Source: Adapted from the original diagram by Genio, 2019 in Trowbridge, et al. (2022), *Learning As You Scale*, Genio and People’s Voice Media, p. 11.

As a funder and based on the provisions of Article 14, an ESF+ managing authority can mobilise resources helping to mainstream a scaled-up social innovation within the ESF policy field in response to policy-maker demand. Vertical mainstreaming ('consistent adoption') would require that ESF+ managing authority works in partnership with beneficiaries and relevant policy makers. In turn, the beneficiaries have to accept that mainstreaming is more likely to involve their model moving out of their sphere of control, assuming open adoption route to scale.

The factors for achieving consistent adoption in a policy context are a little different to the success factors for scaling-up that goes from pilots to inter-connected projects and to partial adoption. We talked about contextual factors at step 2 which affect the recognition of the wicked challenge and at step 6 we outlined different types of evidence utilisation in a policy context. Here we outline specific behaviours drawn from (Fox, et al., 2017), which ESF+ scale-up projects could integrate into their plans for 'mainstreaming':

- Mapping policy-makers: knowing which people have decision-making power at what stages and how to influence them strategically.
- Encouraging ownership: reaching out to policymakers at an early stage to ask what challenges they want to better manage or solve, by when and how they need it presented.
- Offering timely support: presenting evidence at a time in the policy cycle when it can realistically be used, e.g. before legislation is passed or budgets decided.
- Translating evidence into policy proposals/options: working with academics who may have studied the challenge and evaluated innovations present findings and converting them into practical policy options.
- Working with (other) societal intermediaries and academics: working with civil society groups representing citizens affected and with service providers to make them a part of shaping innovations and system change.
- Offering ongoing support throughout the legislative and implementation process, from piloting to system change.

Different stakeholders can adapt these behaviours in line with their specific role in a political system. For example, a social enterprise could reach out to an academic institution for support in measuring its impact, or an ESF+ managing authority could support advocacy efforts for systemic change based on a social innovation it funded. Interestingly, this set of indicators is predicated on having independent impact evidence, i.e. having met our proposed prerequisites for scaling-up at step 4 and shown a commitment to continuous learning at step 6.

Evidence-based policy-making requires you to advocate towards other parts of government for funding or legislative models to change in response to their demand for solutions to policy problems. The more this has been done in advance at step 2 to align social innovations funded under ESF with societal challenges to which policy-makers want a solution, the greater is the probability of successful mainstreaming.

ESF IN PRACTICE

Box 7. Reform of young people’s mental health services in Poland

WHAT IS THE SOCIAL INNOVATION?	WHAT IS YOUR SCALING-UP JOURNEY?	WHAT WERE THE FACTORS IN YOUR SUCCESS?
<p>Launching a new type of a local Centre which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides de-institutionalised and integrated mental health services; • coordinates community services for young patients and their families by all local public services: social welfare centres, pedagogical and psychological counselling centres, general practitioners, schools; • provides mental health promotion actions 	<p>2015: Polish ESF Managing Authority launched a call for small projects aiming at developing new models of community-based care for people with mental illness. Several projects were launched, all of which aimed at improving services at the local level.</p> <p>2017-2018: 2nd call only for entities who had developed a model and obtained the positive recommendation of the steering group. All models were tested, most of them targeted services for adults struggling with various mental disorders, and one targeted children: ‘The Community Mental Health Centre for Children and Adolescents in Warsaw. (EUR 5,000,000). This first project for children was a success proving that the new standards of care are effective.</p> <p>2018: Ministry of Health started work on complex reform of the mental health care system for children and adolescents.</p> <p>2020: In cooperation with the Ministry of Health, the Polish Managing Authority announced the call for scaling-up model for ‘The Community Mental Health Centres for Children and Adolescents - Model of Care’. The seven new Centres, were opened in larger cities and two in mid-sized cities with an average value of EUR 3,100,000 per project.</p> <p>2021: According to the Polish Government, the solutions developed in the first pilot project were used as part of the national reform of child and adolescent psychiatry. It inspired changes in the law and new organisation of public services in the field of psychiatric and psychological care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agile model of work on development and testing of the innovative model. It was first tested in Warsaw on a small scale, with later scaling-up in smaller municipalities and cities in across Poland. • Involvement of governmental stakeholders (steering group) in assessment of the models, advising beneficiaries at implementation stage and recommending changes, e.g. combining developed concepts. • Urgency of the social problem acknowledged by the Polish Government and later parallel work on reforms. • Additional funding supporting implementation of the model and the reform financed by ESF and national funds. • Synergy between EU funds and national funds; good cooperation between the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy (ESF Managing Authority) and the Ministry of Health. • The COVID-19 pandemic that highlighted the need for increased mental support.

TOOL 7A. SUPPORTING VERTICAL MAINSTREAMING: ROLE OF AN ESF MANAGING AUTHORITY

We featured Poland's reform of youth mental health services and Czechia's adoption of Housing First. Here we ask you to think of your own examples of systemic reform and consider how long it took, how it happened and what were its drivers.

Your own example of system		
WHAT IS THE SOCIAL INNOVATION?	WHAT WAS THE SCALING-UP JOURNEY?	WHAT WERE THE FACTORS IN YOUR SUCCESS?

TOOL 7B. KNOWLEDGE MOBILISATION PLAN TEMPLATE

As an ESF managing authority, you will need a plan if you are to influence other parts of government to adopt/mainstream a scaled-up social innovation. This tool will help you to begin to plan. You may also find it helpful to consult the [Learning As You Scale](#) guide.

OUTLINE KNOWLEDGE MOBILISATION PLAN	
PURPOSE, AUDIENCE, PRODUCT	
What	What key knowledge and/or learning from your ESF scaling-up project do you want to share?
Why	Why are you sharing this knowledge and/or learning (purpose and anticipated results)?
Who	To whom is this knowledge and/or learning relevant, and what audience do you want to reach with it?
Where	Where can you reach your intended audience (online, offline, etc.)?
How	How can you present the knowledge and/or learning so as to reach your intended audience (specific products such as reports, videos, social media posts, etc.)?
When	When would be best to try to connect your products to your intended audience (relevant timeframe, awareness-raising dates to align with, etc.)?

Congratulations

You have now climbed the staircase of seven strategic steps for scaling-up social innovation under ESF+ shared management. Remember that each step builds on the ones before. We hope that you have used the seven steps as a catalyst to mobilise other resources and that you have supported other ESF managing authorities across borders. With some hard work and goodwill, we look forward to featuring your scaling-up projects and mainstreamed social innovation as case studies in the [social innovation database](#).

What I'm thinking about now is how to foresee 'mainstreaming' in our ESF programme and in all our social innovation calls – of course for projects that actually have a strong impact.
(ESF funder – MA/IB).

STEP 07 YOU ARE WORKING TOWARDS MAINSTREAMING

STEP 06 YOU'VE PROMOTED CONTINUOUS LEARNING

STEP 05 YOU'VE CHOSEN THE SCALE-UP STRATEGY

STEP 04 YOU'VE ASSESSED THE EVIDENCE FOR THEM.

STEP 03 YOU'VE FOUND INNOVATIONS WITH POTENTIAL

STEP 02 YOU'VE IDENTIFIED AND FRAMED THE CHALLENGES

STEP 01 YOU HAVE BUILT SHARED UNDERSTANDING

We should remember that the concepts in this staircase are meant not to limit our thinking but to encourage us to think more deeply as strategic funders and policy-makers.
(ESF stakeholder)

QUICK PLANNING TOOL							
	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6	STEP 7
DONE / PARTIAL / TO DO							
WHEN COULD WE DO THIS?							

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Annex I. Literature review: success factors in scaling-up

There is only a modest level of direct evidence on scaling-up social innovation. We can, however, draw on indicators from other areas, even those not framed in terms of scaling-up social innovation. We have drawn indicators from three studies. Weber et al. (2015) conducted a study of social enterprise and identified behaviours that tended to favour scaling-up success. Bacqueriza-Jackson (2020) conducted a study of URBACT knowledge transfer projects in 2020 and identified the factors that project partners considered most important. Contandriopoulos et al. (in Fox, Grimm and Caldeira, 2017) reviewed the use of academic studies in informing policy-making and found certain behaviours more effective in producing policy change.

The evidence from Bacqueriza-Jackson and Contandriopoulos et al. is more obviously relevant to the knowledge dissemination route, but the factors are sufficiently broad that they may apply to other routes and situations. Although the factors identified by Weber were built around research on social enterprise, they are nevertheless relevant to scaling-up from other sectors.

Those engaged in scaling-up should not view these behaviours as a guaranteed route to success. Rather, they should be used as a prompt, a tool for reflection. Many of the factors bridge the supply and demand sides of scaling-up social innovation - the supply side being those advocating for a given social innovation to be adopted/scaled, and the demand side being those considering how to resolve or manage a particular societal challenge in a given area or target population.

Factors for social enterprises engaged in scaling-up their business and impact (Weber, et al., 2015)

This research outlines two pre-conditions, four success factors and two further considerations for scaling-up a social innovation led by a social enterprise. Although not all relevant to scaling-up a public sector-led social innovation, they nevertheless warrant reflection. The two pre-conditions are:

1. Business model viability: both the financial business model and the impact model must be viable.
2. Commitment and readiness: scaling-up becomes a realistic prospect when the social enterprise is mature enough that there is a secure basis on which to consider growth.

If those two pre-conditions are in place, social enterprises can consider next steps, taking account of four success factors:

3. Management competency: a high degree of leadership and management competency across impact and financial areas.
4. Replicability: the impact and financial model have to be sufficiently simple and describable that the innovation can be reproduced.
5. Capacity to generate new resources: the social enterprise has the capacity to continue in its original location at the same quality level and also has the skills, connections and time to bring in new resources to launch in a new place.
6. Legitimacy/reputation: the model, the social enterprise and the leadership team have to be seen as credible in order to gain support for scaling-up to a new location.

Two final considerations require clear choices on the part of the leadership team and potential partners:

7. Degree of control by and dependence on founder: the leadership team has to consider its own role in scaling-up – will it lead the effort itself or empower others to do so?
8. Clarity of internal and external transfer costs: the team has to have clarity in respect of costs of each of the scaling-up routes, both in staff time and outside resources.

Transnational and community-level success factors for replicating/scaling-up social innovation from one location to another (Bacqueriza-Jackson, 2020)

Knowledge dissemination is an important transnational route to scaling-up social innovation. The URBACT programme ran knowledge transfer partnerships in 2019 and 2020, and commissioned an independent study that revealed a number of essential transnational and city-level factors. The sample size is noticeably smaller than the Weber (2015) study and this study does not specify social innovation transfers. Nonetheless, the points are valuable and you will find several similarities.

In the partnerships themselves, participants rated several factors very highly:

- Presence of a highly competent lead partner (originator of the social innovation) to manage the project and process;
- High degree of continuity of leadership in each of the partners in order to build the relationships and commitment underpinning knowledge transfer;
- Strong willingness to learn from all partners, not just from the lead partner;
- Combination of expertise in knowledge transfer and subject matter expertise in social innovation;
- Tailored co-designed learning methodology in which all partners have a stake, not only the lead partner or knowledge transfer expert.

In participating cities, the following factors were seen to favour effective knowledge transfer:

- Pre-existing political support for the social innovation, giving validity and prompting engagement of all city stakeholders;
- Innovation related to a pre-existing plan or widely recognised local societal challenge;
- In-built interdepartmental and stakeholder collaboration from the beginning;
- Engaging local citizens from the start, especially the intended beneficiaries of the social innovation;
- Passion for the initiative and a willingness to undertake the hard work to transfer the practice;
- High degree of engagement in the new locations by the originator of the social innovation.

Factors facilitating utilisation of evidence in policy-making, based on Contandriopoulos et al., 2010 in (Fox, et al., 2017)

In considering knowledge use by policymakers, we selected several behaviours from a longer list compiled by academic advocates of evidence-based policy change:

- Mapping policy-makers: knowing precisely which people to influence and how to do so strategically;
- Encouraging ownership: reaching out to policymakers at an early stage to ask what they would like to know, by when and how they need it presented;
- Offering timely support: presenting evidence at a time in the policy cycle when it can realistically be used, e.g. before legislation is passed;
- Translating evidence into policy proposals/options: when presenting the results of a scientific study, including interpretations of the findings and converting them into practical possibilities;
- Working with societal intermediaries: working with civil society groups and service providers to help them to understand the evidence and advocate for change;
- Offering ongoing support throughout the legislative and implementation process, from piloting to system change.

Different stakeholders can adapt these behaviours in line with their specific role in a political system. For example, a social enterprise could reach out to an academic institution for support in measuring its impact, or an ESF+ managing authority could support advocacy efforts for systemic change based on a social innovation it funded. Interestingly, this set of indicators is predicated on having independent impact evidence, i.e. having met our proposed prerequisites for scaling-up.

Additional factors

The Community of Practice identified several other factors in the course of considering our three companion case studies:

- Timing, coincidences of meeting people and encountering innovations and networks;
- Capacity to adapt to a range of financing forms;
- No need for legislative or regulatory change;
- Same problem (local need) and demand for solutions (experimentation);
- Reinforcing/growing sense of societal need;
- Gap in the market – a niche to fill;
- Loyalty to mission (for adopter);
- Patience/preparedness for slow and steady progress;
- Shadowing across different sectors;
- Join forces with similar civil society actors;
- Group together potential upscalers.

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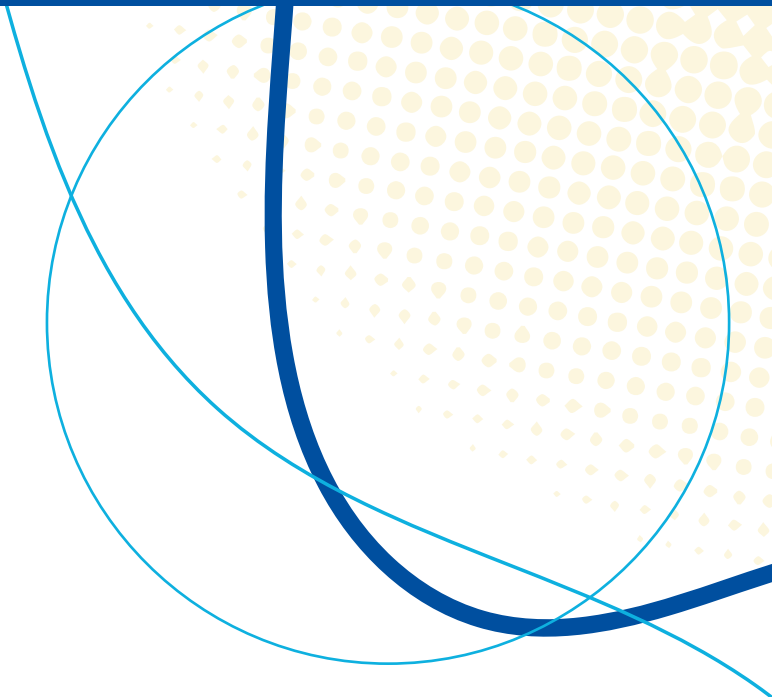
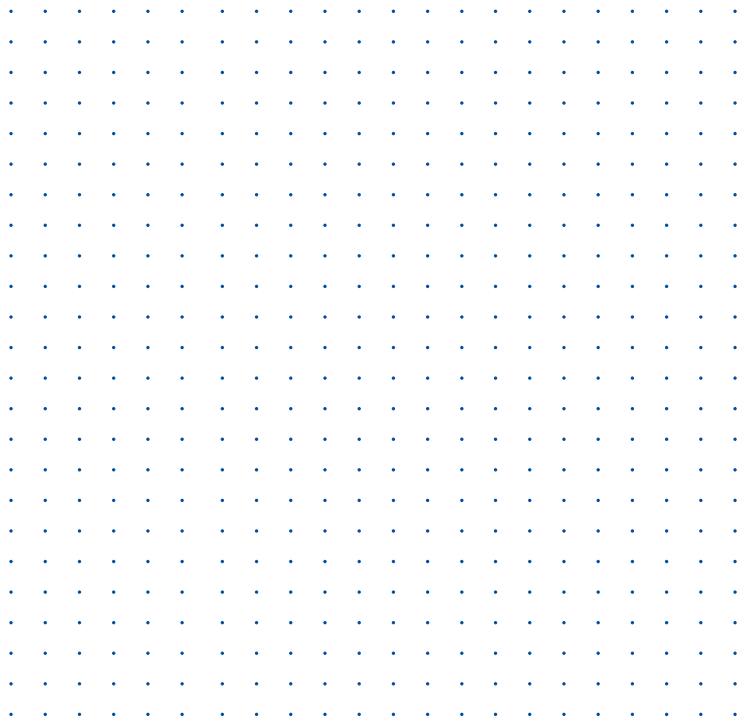
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