

National Social Innovation Consultative Advisory Group

Call for Expressions of Interest – Academic Institutions working in the Social Innovation Field

Background

In July 2020 the Call VP/2020/010 Competence centres for social innovation (European Social Fund and European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation) was published. This in turn led to the publication of a Call by Ireland's ESF Managing Authority in the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) in coordination with the Department of Rural and Community Development, to endorse the most suitable and competent national organisation(s) which, if selected by the European Commission, would act as a national competence centre for social innovation in Ireland. As a result, in September 2020, Rethink Ireland and Genio were endorsed by the ESF Managing Authority (MA) to lead the development of a National Competence Centre on Social Innovation (NCCSI) for Ireland in consultation with other interested organisations. Ireland joined with Portugal, Bulgaria and Cyprus to develop a proposal to respond to the EU Call VP/2020/010. A proposal was developed in collaboration with a consortium of organisations in the four countries involved and has been successful. The activities to be undertaken to achieve the expected outputs of the Call are being co-funded by the EU through the ESF and the Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) and the Irish government through the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). A Steering Group has been established comprising representation from the ESF Managing Authority (ESF MA), the Department of Community and Rural Development (DRCD), Rethink Ireland and Genio.

The expected outputs of this initiative will be achieved using an inclusive and participatory approach. With this approach, the Irish NCCSI will enhance real stakeholder ownership, exploring options for institutional and financial sustainability of the project outputs beyond the project timeframe.

Expected Outputs

Over a 24-month period the following outputs are expected:

- 1. A competence centre for social innovation is established which is able to perform the following types of activities:**
 - “Drawing a comprehensive overview of the social innovation ecosystem synthesising the visions, needs, opportunities and priorities of relevant social innovation stakeholders and promoters, in order to produce a joint blueprint for a strategy and action plan for boosting social innovation in a Member State, including under the ESF+.
 - Collecting, validating, mapping, and communicating suitable and successful tools and methods, approaches and models, practices, and inspiring examples, through social media, web platforms, conferences, and seminars.
 - Organising awareness and inspirational actions for social innovation promoters.

- Providing guidance, coaching, mentoring, and training in applying/ adapting suitable tools and methods and practices to social innovation promoters.
- Creating and facilitating (thematic) networks of social innovation promoters, academics, and local bodies to speed up mutual learning and exchanging good practices.
- Facilitating and assisting the development of (new forms/new combinations) of community-led/citizen-controlled finance for pursuing social innovations.
- Continuously monitoring and assessing public support towards social innovation, and drafting recommendations for improving the responsiveness, effectiveness, and governance of public policy towards social innovation.
- Providing guidance, coaching, mentoring, and training to less experienced competence centres, and assist them in mutual learning and exchanging good practices.
- Sharing suitable and successful tools and methods, approaches and models, examples and practices and inspiring examples with other competence centres.”

The competence centre for social innovation should be “recognised as a professional resource by social innovation promoters and stakeholders, academia, local social and economic development organisations.”

- 2. An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses regarding social innovation and identification of areas or approaches which could serve as a source of inspiration for other territories** (Policy areas/approaches could include for example, social inclusion, access to services, housing, skills, social approaches to energy management, community management of resources, persons-centred care, outreach and partnerships, etc.)
- 3. A joint blueprint by stakeholders for a strategy and action plan** to support social innovation in the country, including support under ESF+.
- 4. An established system to pursue ongoing improvements and adaptations of their tools and methodologies, resources, and practices for each competence centre**, to achieve a high level of quality through collaboration and networking with the other competence centres.
- 5. A collection of social innovation initiatives initiated or scaled-up/replicated.**

Each consortium is also expected to prepare and test the replication or **up-scaling of 1-2 social innovation projects.**

Role of the National Consultative Advisory Group

The National Consultative Advisory Group will support the aim of bringing on board relevant stakeholders and raising awareness about the role of the National Competence Centre for Social Innovation and the potential of ESF+ to support the social innovation sector. In particular, the National Consultative Advisory Group will provide advice and suggestions regarding:

1. The development of a blueprint for a strategy and action plan to support the whole spectrum of social innovation activities from ideation and creation through to implementation, scaling and systemic adoption focused on meeting the priority challenges facing Irish society.
2. Contribute to a National Social Innovation Ecosystem Initial Research Mapping exercise to be undertaken
3. Provide advice on the various activities to be undertaken to achieve outputs outlined in the Call VP/2020/010.
4. Participate actively in the key events and meetings organised under the Call VP/2020/010

Participation will be via meetings/calls and/or email contributions. Meetings of the National Consultative Advisory Group will be held at six-monthly intervals during the course of the project which is due to end in May 2023. It is envisaged that the first meeting of the Consultative Advisory Group will take place in Quarter 4 of 2021.

Unassigned seats on the National Consultative Advisory Group

The Group will comprise representation from relevant Government Departments, public bodies, social innovation, and social enterprise stakeholders (civil society, academia, social enterprises, impact investors, impact entrepreneurs, business supports organisations and intermediaries) with a view to achieving a good regional and gender balance. Seats have been assigned following responses to the Call by Ireland's ESF Managing Authority in the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) in coordination with the Department of Rural and Community Development in September 2020. Seats have also been assigned to those who participated during the phase of the development of the proposal to the Call VP/2020/010 Competence centres for social innovation (European Social Fund and European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation) during September-November 2020. Two additional seats are being reserved for representation from academic institutions working in the field of social innovation. These seats will be assigned on the basis of this open call for expressions of interest. The Steering Group will review applications on the basis of the indicative criteria outlined below.

Indicative Criteria

1. Actively undertaking research or related activities focused on social innovation in Ireland or internationally
2. Demonstrable track record of interest in the social innovation field including an awareness of the challenges and opportunities associated with the development of social innovation in the Irish context
3. Strong motivation to contribute to the development of the broader social innovation ecosystem in Ireland and Europe

Note: Factors such as gender balance, geographic spread as well as the spectrum of social innovation forms will also be taken into consideration in allocating the seats. Attendance at meeting/calls is unremunerated.

How to apply?

Expressions of Interest must be submitted by email to clare.bergin@genio.ie by close of business on Friday, 8th October 2021.

The terms of reference for the National Consultative Advisory Group are available at Appendix 1.

Appendix 1

Terms of Reference of the National Social Innovation Consultative Advisory Group, Republic of Ireland

Context

The Call VP/2020/010 Competence centres for social innovation (European Social Fund and European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation), was published in July 2020. This in turn led to the publication of a Call by Ireland's ESF Managing Authority in the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) in coordination with the Department of Rural and Community Development, to endorse the most suitable and competent national organisation(s) which, if selected by the European Commission, would act as a national competence centre for social innovation in Ireland. As a result, in September 2020, Rethink Ireland and Genio were endorsed by the ESF Managing Authority (MA) to lead the development of a National Competence Centre on Social Innovation (NCCSI) for Ireland in consultation with other interested organisations.

Ireland joined with Portugal, Bulgaria and Cyprus to develop a proposal to respond to the EU Call VP/2020/010. A proposal was developed in collaboration with a consortium of organisations in the four countries involved and has been successful. The agreement was signed in June 2021. The activities to be undertaken to achieve the expected outputs of the Call are being co-funded by the EU through the ESF and the Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) and the Irish government through the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). A Steering Group has been established comprising representation from the ESF Managing Authority (ESF MA), the Department of Community and Rural Development (DRCD), Rethink Ireland and Genio.

Expected Outputs

Over a 24-month period (between May 2021 and May 2023), the following outputs are expected as a minimum for every Member State covered by consortia:

- 1. A competence centre for social innovation is established which should be “recognised as a professional resource by social innovation promoters and stakeholders, academia, local social and economic development organisations” and is able to perform the following types of activities:**
 - “Drawing a comprehensive overview of the social innovation ecosystem synthesising the visions, needs, opportunities and priorities of relevant social innovation stakeholders and promoters, in order to produce a joint blueprint for a strategy and action plan for boosting social innovation in a Member State, including under the ESF+.
 - Collecting, validating, mapping, and communicating suitable and successful tools and methods, approaches and models, practices, and inspiring examples, through social media, web platforms, conferences, and seminars.
 - Organising awareness and inspirational actions for social innovation promoters.

- Providing guidance, coaching, mentoring, and training in applying/ adapting suitable tools and methods and practices to social innovation promoters.
 - Creating and facilitating (thematic) networks of social innovation promoters, academics, and local bodies to speed up mutual learning and exchanging good practices.
 - Facilitating and assisting the development of (new forms/new combinations) of community-led/citizen-controlled finance for pursuing social innovations.
 - Continuously monitoring and assessing public support towards social innovation, and drafting recommendations for improving the responsiveness, effectiveness, and governance of public policy towards social innovation.
 - Providing guidance, coaching, mentoring, and training to less experienced competence centres, and assist them in mutual learning and exchanging good practices.
 - Sharing suitable and successful tools and methods, approaches and models, examples and practices and inspiring examples with other competence centres.”
2. **Undertake an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of social innovation and identify areas or approaches which could serve as a source of inspiration for other territories** (Policy areas/approaches could include for example, social inclusion, access to services, housing, skills, social approaches to energy management, community management of resources, persons-centred care, outreach and partnerships, etc.)
 3. **Development of a joint blueprint for a strategy and action plan** to support social innovation in the country, including support under ESF+.
 4. **An established system to pursue ongoing improvements and adaptations of their tools and methodologies, resources, and practices for each competence centre**, to achieve a high level of quality through collaboration and networking with the other competence centres.
 5. **A collection of social innovation initiatives initiated or scaled-up/replicated.**

Each consortium is also expected to prepare and test the replication or **up-scaling of 1-2 social innovation projects**.

In line with guidance from the ESF MA and the DCRD, these expected outputs will be achieved using an inclusive and participatory approach. The Irish NCCSI will enhance real stakeholder ownership, exploring options for institutional and financial sustainability of the project outputs beyond the project timeframe. To this end, the NCCSI is establishing a National Consultative Advisory Group. Membership of the group will be drawn from a cross-section of key social innovation sector players (civil society, academia, social enterprises, impact investors, impact entrepreneurs, business supports organisations and intermediaries, government departments and relevant statutory agencies) and will ensure representation across the regions.

Terms of Reference for the National Consultative Advisory Group

The National Consultative Advisory Group's involvement will support the aim of bringing on-board relevant stakeholders in order to achieve the expected outputs of the call for Ireland (described above) and to raise awareness about:

- The importance and relevance of establishing the National Competence Centre for Social Innovation (NCCSI) and the goal to develop a strategy and action plan to support the whole spectrum of social innovation activities from ideation and creation through to implementation, scaling and systemic adoption focused on meeting the priority challenges facing Irish society.
- The high potential of using ESF+ to build and grow the social innovation sector, raising awareness and building the capacities public leaders and officials (at the national and regional level).

In particular, the National Consultative Advisory Group will contribute by providing advice and suggestions regarding:

1. The development of a blueprint for a strategy and action plan to support the whole spectrum of social innovation activities from ideation and creation through to implementation, scaling and systemic adoption focused on meeting the priority challenges facing Irish society.
2. A National Social Innovation Ecosystem Initial Research Mapping exercise will be undertaken. A user-lead/ participatory research approach will be taken to understanding the visions, needs, opportunities and priorities of relevant social innovation stakeholders. The research framework will:
 - Enable identification of social innovation activity at different stages.
 - Take a challenge-focussed/mission-oriented approach to strengthening relationships between social innovation activity and the
 - social and environmental challenges facing Ireland (as determined in National policy objectives and the Programme for Government, and with input from the National Consultative Advisory Group)
 - EU-wide objectives relating to the creation of a digital and sustainable economy, and development of the social economy
 - Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Porto Declaration and EU Child Guarantee
 - Identify synergies that can be established between ESF+ (especially shared management level) and EaSI
 - Identify capacity-building and financial support opportunities in the wider field of innovation in Ireland (for instance by finding opportunities to engage with Enterprise Ireland, National Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, Irish Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF), LDNs and LEOs Local Authorities) and at the European level (e.g., EIB and EIF).
 - Identify opportunities to enhance the relevant policy and regulatory environment for social innovation policy in Ireland.

3. Provide advice on the various activities to be undertaken to achieve the five outputs outlined in the Call VP/2020/010. Members of the National Consultative Advisory Group will be invited to describe how they could contribute to the achievement of the outputs and to work collaboratively with others to enhance social innovation in Ireland in a manner that seeks to develop a resilient society capable of thriving for all its members in the face of current and evolving challenges.
4. Participate actively in the key events and meetings organised under the Call VP/2020/010

Participation will be via meetings/calls and/or email contributions. In particular, comments and suggestions will be welcome on issues that might be covered in developing a blueprint for a strategy and action plan for the development of a social innovation in Ireland. Meetings of the National Consultative Advisory Group will be held on a six-monthly basis.