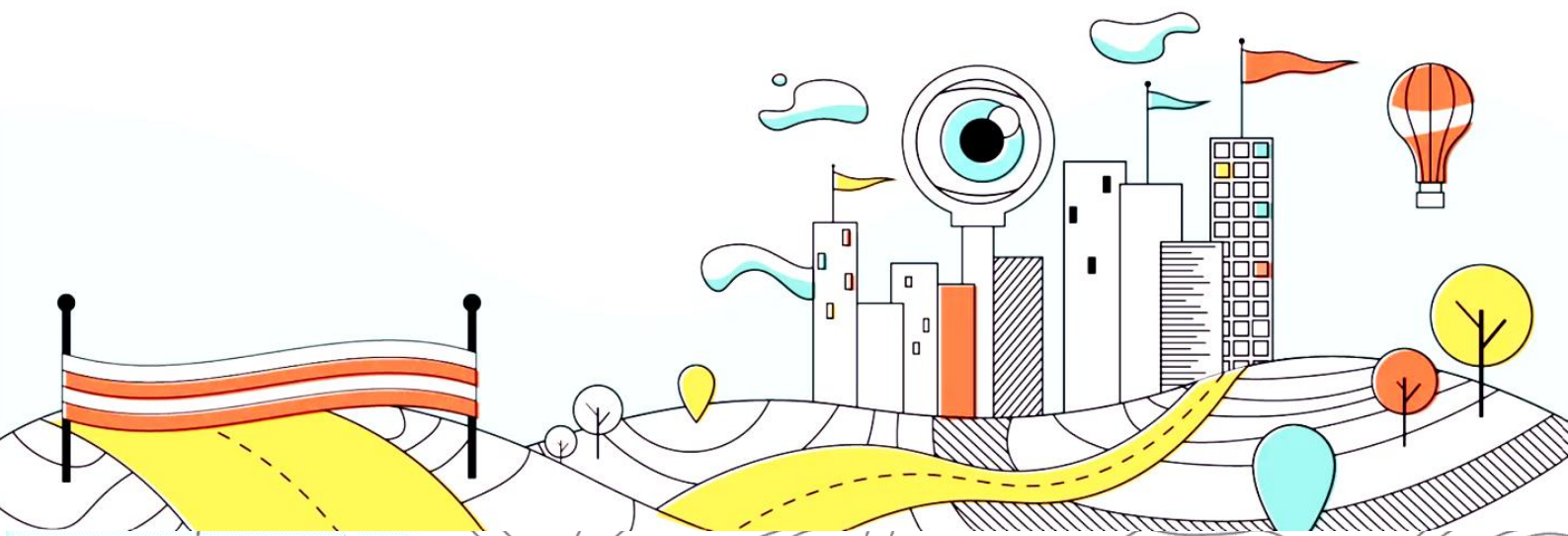




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# Social Entrepreneurship Guide for Municipalities



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## Background

The economic and financial crisis of a decade ago, along with other negative events and the recent Covid-19 pandemic, has left behind significant socio-economic and demographic challenges. The persistent threat of unemployment, leading to poverty and social exclusion, urgently requires sustainable solutions. Unqualified young women and men are particularly vulnerable. Many current strategies, especially those implemented by the public and third sectors, are inadequate, inflexible, or not fully sustainable.

Social entrepreneurship, where private individuals and organizations take the initiative to address social challenges within their communities, offers a promising avenue to tackle these issues. This approach may involve developing new products and services that address public health, safety, environmental protection, education, labor conditions, human rights, and more.

Despite its growing importance, social entrepreneurship has yet to reach its full potential. It faces challenges related to policy-making and legal frameworks, institutional and operational support, and low levels of social, educational, and cultural awareness within the field and its ecosystem, including the motivation to become a social entrepreneur.

Local governments, as central hubs for information and networking, are key players in addressing these challenges. However, many municipalities lack practical knowledge about establishing, supporting, or running social enterprises and the benefits they offer. Nonetheless, municipalities can play a crucial role in promoting social entrepreneurship by providing information (publicity, tailored assistance, consultations), engaging the broader ecosystem (public, private, education, non-profit sectors), coordinating efforts, offering financial support (through public budgets and procurement), providing non-financial support (such as rent-free spaces), and acting as catalysts for policy changes at local, regional, and national levels.

Project ActSEnt (Active Social Entrepreneurs) responds to this situation and challenges and provides practical methodology and tools to foster social entrepreneurship especially among young people, with special focus on local-level policy makers' actions.

## ActSEnt introduction

ActSEnt project drives from the potential and challenges described above with following main objectives:

### ActSEnt Objectives:

1. To promote social entrepreneurship among young people and local governments' structures and foster connections within the ecosystem
2. To increase social entrepreneurship skills among young people through tailored trainings
3. To improve readiness and response of municipalities towards social entrepreneurship initiatives
4. To achieve sustainability of project and its outputs through provision of replicable methodology and possible local and regional policy reforms

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### Project partners:

ActSEnt partnership was comprised of 5 partners:



**MEPCO** (International Advisory Centre of Municipalities) supports local and regional authorities to implement innovative solutions to enhance their services to citizens.



**ipcenter** is one of the leading private training and education providers in Austria. provides vocational education and professional training for adults and youth (around 300 apprentices), within the scope of public labor market policies as well as for the public sector



**Pannon Novum West-Transdanubian Regional Innovation** Non-profit Ltd, with main competences in training, coaching, and mentoring, preparation of development strategy, concept, study, organization of study tours, conferences, workshops, innovation project development consulting, business plan, feasibility study development, innovation marketing



**Institute of Public Service Development (IPSD)** is an NGO, supporting public activities with a special aim at bodies of state administration, self-government and schools.



**LOITE S.r.l.** is a consulting company specializing in providing support to the training and consulting needs of businesses, internationalization processes, local development, support for innovation.

## Social Entrepreneurship Guide for Municipalities- general overview

The ActSEnt Social Entrepreneurship Guide for Municipalities serves as a comprehensive blueprint, providing a strong rationale for supporting social entrepreneurship at the local and regional levels. The Guide offers a detailed, step-by-step approach on how to successfully implement social entrepreneurship capacity-building activities for citizens and how to support social entrepreneurship in a broader sense. It is particularly useful for local and regional representatives and employees who aim to promote or enhance social entrepreneurship initiatives as part of efforts to increase public participation and improve the quality of community relations.

ActSEnt Social Entrepreneurship Guide for Municipalities provides an introduction to social entrepreneurship, covering its definition, scope, benefits, challenges, and potential. The Guide includes a step-by-step approach to preparing and implementing social entrepreneurship capacity-building activities, particularly tailored for municipalities. The information on capacity building is reinforced by lessons learned from the implementation of the ActSEnt Social Entrepreneurship Training course delivered by the partnership in 2023/2024, adding to the validity and practicality of the content.

The Guide was developed collaboratively by all ActSEnt project partners. In order to provide relevant information, Regional analysis of 5 partnership regions in Czech Republic, Austria, Italy, Slovakia and Hungary was developed, including resulting Common framework to identify crossing points. This led to development of the Social Entrepreneurship Guide for Municipalities and provided valuable input for other documents as well. The social entrepreneurship training course described within this Guide was tested with over 100 participants across the countries.

The Social Entrepreneurship Guide for Municipalities is available in Czech, German, Hungarian, Italian, and Slovak languages.

The available complimentary documents to the ActSEnt Social Entrepreneurship Guide for Municipalities are:

- ActSEnt Regional analysis
- ActSEnt Common framework
- ActSEnt Social Entrepreneurship Training Toolkit
- ActSEnt Policy Recommendation and Action Plan for selected municipalities/regions

## 1. Introduction to Social Entrepreneurship

### Definition and Scope

Social entrepreneurship is the process of identifying, developing, and scaling solutions to social, cultural, and environmental issues through innovative and entrepreneurial approaches. Unlike traditional entrepreneurship, which focuses primarily on profit generation, social entrepreneurship seeks a dual objective: achieving a social or environmental mission while ensuring financial sustainability. Social enterprises can take various forms, including non-profit organizations that implement income-generating activities, cooperatives, for-profit entities with social missions, or hybrid models that blend both non-profit and for-profit structures. Understanding this scope is crucial for municipalities to tailor their support mechanisms to the specific needs and types of social enterprises they aim to promote. In a municipal context, understanding the diverse forms and scopes of social entrepreneurship allows local governments to support a broad range of initiatives, from small cooperatives to larger organizations with scalable solutions.

### The Role of Social Enterprises in Society

Social enterprises act as catalysts for positive social change. They fill gaps left by government and private sectors, often addressing issues in education, healthcare, environment, and economic inequality. Their role is particularly crucial in areas where traditional market mechanisms fail to provide adequate services or products. Social enterprises not only provide goods and services that improve quality of life but also create opportunities for marginalized communities to participate in economic activities. By leveraging business strategies to address social issues, they introduce a new dimension to problem-solving that is both innovative and sustainable.

### Differences Between Social Entrepreneurship and Traditional Entrepreneurship

While traditional entrepreneurship focuses on profit maximization, social entrepreneurship centers on creating social value. The fundamental difference lies in the "bottom line"—traditional businesses aim for financial returns, while social enterprises strive for a "triple bottom line" that includes social, environmental, and financial returns. This distinction affects everything from the business model, marketing strategies, to stakeholder engagement.

### Global and Local Trends in Social Entrepreneurship

Globally, there is an increasing recognition of the importance of social entrepreneurship in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs). Governments, international organizations, and private investors are increasingly channeling resources toward social enterprises that promise innovative solutions to global challenges. Locally, trends often mirror these global movements but are shaped by specific cultural, economic, and regulatory contexts. In Europe, for example, the European Union has developed policies and funding programs to support

social enterprises under the "Social Business Initiative," encouraging member states to develop national frameworks.

Municipalities can learn from these trends by adopting international best practices and adapting them to local contexts. A case in point is the city of Barcelona, which has created a Social and Solidarity Economy Plan to promote social entrepreneurship through grants, training, and networking opportunities. This trend-setting approach has positioned the city as a hub for social innovation.

## 2. Benefits of Social Entrepreneurship for the Municipality and Community

Local and regional bodies, especially municipalities, can gain several benefits by incorporating social entrepreneurship elements into their policy frameworks and activities:

### Economic Benefits

Social enterprises contribute significantly to local economies by creating jobs, fostering innovation, and increasing local income. By employing marginalized groups, such as the disabled, refugees, or long-term unemployed, social enterprises help reduce welfare dependency and stimulate economic activity. Moreover, they often operate in sectors that traditional businesses overlook, such as sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and affordable housing, thus diversifying the local economy.

### Social and Environmental Impact

Social enterprises often operate in areas that generate significant social and environmental benefits, such as renewable energy, recycling, education, and health care. By prioritizing social and environmental goals, they help municipalities achieve broader societal objectives, such as reducing carbon footprints, promoting inclusivity, and enhancing public health.

### Community Empowerment

One of the most significant impacts of social entrepreneurship is community empowerment. Social enterprises often work closely with local communities, building capacity, fostering a sense of ownership, and encouraging self-reliance. By involving communities in decision-making processes, social enterprises help develop local leadership and civic engagement. Municipalities can support this empowerment by facilitating community-driven social entrepreneurship programs that address specific local needs.

### Enhancing Municipal Services

Social enterprises can complement municipal services by delivering innovative and efficient solutions in areas like waste management, social care, and public health. They often provide more flexible, responsive, and cost-effective services compared to traditional government programs, filling gaps and reaching underserved populations. By collaborating with social enterprises, municipalities can improve service delivery and achieve greater impact.

## **Strengthening Civic Engagement and Local Governance**

Social entrepreneurship encourages civic engagement by involving residents in local decision-making and community development. This engagement promotes transparency, accountability, and trust in local governance. Municipalities can foster this by supporting platforms where social enterprises and citizens co-create solutions to local challenges, strengthening the social contract between the government and its citizens.

### **3. Challenges Identification**

There are several challenges, while incorporating social entrepreneurship elements into municipal policy frameworks and activities:

#### **Common Challenges Faced by Social Entrepreneurs**

Despite their potential, social entrepreneurs face several challenges that can hinder their growth and sustainability. These challenges range from limited access to funding, insufficient business skills, difficulties in scaling, to regulatory hurdles. Understanding these challenges is critical for municipalities that seek to create a conducive environment for social enterprises.

Many social enterprises struggle to attract investment because they prioritize social impact over financial returns. This makes traditional investors hesitant, as they perceive such ventures as high-risk. To mitigate this, municipalities can establish specialized funds or provide guarantees to encourage investment in social enterprises.

#### **Barriers to Entry in the Municipality**

For social entrepreneurs, entering a new market or municipality can be daunting due to bureaucratic red tape, complex licensing processes, and lack of supportive infrastructure. Municipalities can lower these barriers by streamlining regulations, simplifying licensing processes, and providing one-stop support centers for social enterprises.

#### **Financial Constraints**

Access to capital is one of the most significant barriers for social enterprises. Traditional financial institutions often view social enterprises as risky investments due to their dual bottom-line objectives. To overcome this, municipalities can create social investment funds, offer grants, or provide low-interest loans specifically targeted at social enterprises.

#### **Policy and Regulatory Challenges**

A lack of clear policies and regulatory frameworks that recognize and support social enterprises can hinder their growth. Municipalities should advocate for national legislation that defines social enterprises, provides tax incentives, and simplifies procurement processes to include social criteria.

#### **Lack of Awareness and Education**



Many potential social entrepreneurs, as well as municipal officials, lack awareness of what social entrepreneurship entails, its benefits, and how to support it. To address this, municipalities should invest in educational programs, awareness campaigns, and capacity-building workshops to foster a culture of social entrepreneurship.

### **Addressing Cultural and Social Resistance**

Introducing new concepts such as social entrepreneurship can meet with cultural and social resistance, especially in communities with established business norms. Overcoming this resistance requires targeted communication strategies, community engagement, and showcasing successful social enterprises as role models.

Municipalities should invest in awareness campaigns and community dialogues to build acceptance and support for social entrepreneurship. Highlighting local success stories and aligning social enterprise goals with community values can significantly reduce resistance.

### **Infrastructure and Technological Challenges**

Many social enterprises, especially in less developed municipalities, face challenges related to infrastructure and technology. They may lack access to digital tools, reliable internet, or affordable workspaces. Municipalities should identify these gaps and work with stakeholders to provide necessary support.

## **4. Attracting Potential Social Entrepreneurs to the Municipality**

Attracting potential social entrepreneurs to a municipality offers a unique opportunity to drive social innovation, economic growth, and community development. By fostering a supportive ecosystem for social entrepreneurship, municipalities can encourage individuals and organizations to address local challenges through creative, sustainable solutions. There are several approaches to be taken in order to reach the goal:

### **Developing a Social Entrepreneurship-Friendly Policy Framework**

A supportive policy framework is essential for fostering social entrepreneurship within a municipality. This involves creating policies that recognize social enterprises as a distinct category, offering them specific benefits such as tax breaks, grants, and simplified legal requirements. Municipalities can collaborate with national and regional governments to advocate for favorable laws that provide clarity and legal recognition to social enterprises.

### **Offering Incentives and Support Programs**

To attract social entrepreneurs, municipalities should consider offering various incentives such as grants, subsidies, and low-interest loans. Additionally, support programs like business incubation, mentoring, and capacity-building workshops can be highly effective. By providing targeted financial and non-financial support, municipalities can lower the barriers to entry and reduce the risks associated with starting and scaling social enterprises.

## **Building a Local Brand for Social Entrepreneurship**

Creating a strong local brand that positions the municipality as a hub for social innovation is crucial for attracting talent and investment. This involves strategic marketing efforts, such as developing a dedicated online portal, hosting conferences and workshops, and engaging in public relations campaigns that highlight the municipality's commitment to social entrepreneurship.

The city of Barcelona, for example, has successfully branded itself as a leader in social and solidarity economy initiatives. The municipality's efforts to market itself as a social entrepreneurship-friendly destination have attracted numerous social enterprises and startups, thereby boosting the local economy and social capital.

## **Engaging the Community and Raising Awareness**

Community engagement is a key factor in the success of social entrepreneurship initiatives. Municipalities should involve local communities in the co-creation of policies, programs, and initiatives aimed at supporting social entrepreneurship. This can be achieved through public consultations, town hall meetings, and community workshops where residents can voice their needs and preferences.

## **Hosting Events and Competitions to Attract Talent**

Organizing events such as hackathons, pitch competitions, and social enterprise expos can stimulate interest and attract new talent to the municipality. These events provide a platform for aspiring social entrepreneurs to showcase their ideas, network with potential investors and mentors, and gain visibility.

## **Facilitating Access to Markets and Networks**

Access to markets and networks is crucial for the growth of social enterprises. Municipalities can play a vital role by connecting social enterprises with local businesses, non-profit organizations, and government procurement opportunities. Establishing partnerships with chambers of commerce, industry associations, and academic institutions can further enhance these networks.

# **5. Assessing the Potential for Social Entrepreneurship in the Municipality**

Assessing the potential for social entrepreneurship within a municipality is a crucial step toward fostering a vibrant and innovative community. By evaluating local needs, resources, and opportunities, municipalities can identify key areas where social enterprises can make a meaningful impact. There are several approaches to be taken in order to reach the goal:

## **Conducting a Needs Assessment**

Before implementing support measures, it is crucial for municipalities to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify the most pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges that social enterprises could address. This assessment should involve

collecting data from various sources, including community surveys, focus groups, and consultations with local stakeholders.

### **Identifying Local Resources and Assets**

Mapping local resources and assets is essential for understanding the potential of social entrepreneurship in a municipality. This includes identifying available funding sources, existing infrastructure, human capital, and local expertise that could support social enterprises. Municipalities can use asset mapping to pinpoint gaps and areas where strategic investment is needed.

### **Engaging Stakeholders in the Analysis Process**

Involving a broad range of stakeholders—such as local businesses, non-profits, academic institutions, and community leaders—in the assessment process ensures a holistic understanding of the local context and builds buy-in for future initiatives. Collaborative approaches can lead to more accurate assessments and more effective action plans.

### **Using Data to Identify Opportunities**

Data-driven decision-making is critical for identifying opportunities for social entrepreneurship. Municipalities should leverage data analytics to assess social needs, market trends, and potential impacts of various social enterprise models. Open data platforms can also be utilized to encourage transparency and innovation.

### **Analyzing Local Economic and Social Challenges**

A thorough analysis of local economic and social challenges provides insights into the potential areas where social enterprises can make a significant impact. This involves identifying issues such as unemployment, poverty, education, and healthcare gaps, and understanding their root causes.

### **SWOT Analysis for Social Entrepreneurship Potential**

Conducting a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis helps municipalities understand their position and potential in fostering social entrepreneurship. This involves assessing internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats, to develop targeted strategies that leverage strengths and mitigate weaknesses.

## **5. Ecosystem Mapping**

Social entrepreneurship ecosystem mapping is a vital process for understanding the landscape of support, resources, and opportunities available to social enterprises within a municipality. By identifying key stakeholders, including local government bodies, non-profits, educational institutions, financial institutions, and community organizations, municipalities can build a comprehensive picture of the existing network that fosters social innovation. There are several approaches to be taken in order to reach the goal:

## Understanding the Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

A robust social entrepreneurship ecosystem consists of various components, including policy frameworks, financial institutions, educational entities, support networks, and market access. Municipalities should develop a comprehensive understanding of their ecosystem to identify gaps and opportunities for strengthening it.

### Identifying Key Players: NGOs, Government Agencies, and Private Sector

Mapping key players, including NGOs, government agencies, private sector partners, and social investors, is crucial for understanding the dynamics of the local social entrepreneurship ecosystem. These players provide essential support services such as funding, capacity building, mentorship, and market access.

### Mapping Existing Social Enterprises

Identifying and mapping existing social enterprises is vital for understanding the current landscape and identifying opportunities for collaboration, scaling, and capacity building. This mapping can provide insights into the types of social enterprises that thrive in the municipality and the support structures they need.

### Collaborating with Educational Institutions

Educational institutions play a critical role in fostering social entrepreneurship by providing research, training, and innovation support. Municipalities should collaborate with universities and vocational schools to develop programs that encourage social entrepreneurship and provide practical skills to aspiring social entrepreneurs.

### Analyzing Support Structures: Incubators, Accelerators, and Funding Opportunities

Incubators and accelerators provide essential support to social enterprises in their early stages by offering mentorship, networking, funding, and capacity-building opportunities. Municipalities should identify existing support structures and assess their effectiveness in supporting social entrepreneurship.

### Building Networks and Partnerships

Creating networks and partnerships among social enterprises, government bodies, financial institutions, and community organizations is crucial for building a vibrant social entrepreneurship ecosystem. These networks facilitate knowledge exchange, collaboration, and collective

## 7. Preparing and Implementing a Social Entrepreneurship Training Course in a Municipality

The following part of the document outlines a step-by-step guide for municipalities to prepare and implement Social Entrepreneurship training course, covering the essential elements of understanding social entrepreneurship, defining course objectives, identifying target audiences,

developing curriculum, planning resources, implementing the program, and evaluating its success. The guide was prepared within international ActSEnt project consortium, involving partners from Czech Republic, Austria, Italy, Slovakia and Hungary, while each project partner has implemented a Social Entrepreneurship Training within the region. Therefore, the step-by-step guide contains also practical and validated information about the implementation process based on partners' experience.

Municipalities interested in implementation of Social Entrepreneurship course are provided with specific ActSEnt Social Entrepreneurship Training Toolkit, which provides practical ready to use resources for successful course delivery.

## 7.1 Objectives of the Training Course

To cultivate an understanding of social entrepreneurship, the training course development should begin with a thorough introduction to its core concepts, principles, and objectives. This foundation will help participants differentiate between various forms of entrepreneurship and recognize the unique role that social enterprises play in addressing community challenges. Understanding these distinctions will empower participants to develop innovative solutions that align with both social impact and financial viability, ultimately creating a more sustainable and inclusive local economy.

The primary objectives of a social entrepreneurship training course should be aligned with both the needs of the community and the strategic goals of the municipality. Firstly, building awareness about the concept and importance of social entrepreneurship is crucial. Many individuals may not be familiar with the potential of social enterprises to solve local issues while creating economic opportunities. Therefore, an introductory module focused on awareness-raising is essential. Secondly, skill development is a key objective. Participants should acquire practical skills in identifying social problems, developing innovative solutions, building sustainable business models, and managing social enterprises. This could be achieved through a mix of theoretical knowledge, practical exercises, and case studies.

Networking is another critical objective. The course provides a potential opportunities for participants to connect with mentors, investors, community leaders, and other stakeholders who can offer guidance, resources, and support. Moreover, the course should guide participants on accessing resources such as grants, seed funding, and incubation programs. Finally, the course should be designed to drive local impact by encouraging participants to work on projects that address specific social issues within their communities. By fostering a sense of local ownership and relevance, the course can ensure that participants are motivated to apply their learnings in **practical, impactful ways**.

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## ActSEnt best practice and lessons learned:

The ActSEnt partnership set a primary objective for the course to offer an entry-level, short, yet comprehensive Social Entrepreneurship program for motivated young participants under the age of 30. Another key objective was to ensure that the course resulted in a specific and practical outcome: each participant was required to develop a simple social business plan during the course that addressed challenges within their municipality. The course structure was designed to meet these goals—participants were introduced to the concept of social entrepreneurship, received practical workshops on developing social business plans using the Business Model Canvas, and attended a workshop on presentation skills that culminated in delivering a 3-minute pitch of their idea.

ActSEnt courses provided participants with the opportunity to work with experienced mentors who shared insights on social entrepreneurship with a particular emphasis on local and regional impact. Participants were encouraged to present and discuss their ideas with peers, facilitating an exchange of ideas under the guidance of mentors. Mentors were also instructed to focus course discussions on addressing specific social, environmental, and local challenges within communities.

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## 7.2 Identifying the Target Audience

Identifying the right target audience is essential for maximizing the impact of the training course. The course should cater to a diverse group of individuals who are passionate about creating social change. Aspiring entrepreneurs who wish to start a social enterprise are the primary target group. These individuals often possess innovative ideas but may lack the knowledge or skills to translate those ideas into viable business models. Including them in the training course can help bridge this gap. Another crucial audience is nonprofit leaders. Many nonprofits are looking to integrate social entrepreneurship into their operations to enhance sustainability and reduce dependency on donations. This course can equip them with the tools to pivot towards more sustainable and innovative models.

Youth and students are also a vital demographic to target. With their creativity, energy, and fresh perspectives, young people can drive social innovation in their communities. Providing them with the right skills and exposure can ignite their passion for social entrepreneurship. Local business owners who are interested in incorporating social responsibility into their existing businesses can also benefit from this course. Finally, community leaders and municipal employees can be valuable participants as they can advocate for social entrepreneurship and

facilitate collaboration between various stakeholders. A diverse audience ensures cross-learning, networking, and a more holistic approach to problem-solving within the community.



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## ActSEnt Best Practices and Lessons Learned:

The ActSEnt courses were designed for motivated youth and students under 30 years of age who were interested in learning and driving change through social entrepreneurship. The ActSEnt partnership established basic standards for participant eligibility to ensure that anyone with an interest could join the course. The course requirements, structure, and delivery were kept flexible and adaptable to accommodate as many participants from the target audience as possible. Each partner organization was tasked with training a minimum of 20 participants across two cohorts, leading to more than 100 participants completing the ActSEnt course across the entire partnership of five project partners.

The flexible common framework and requirements allowed individual partners to tailor their approach to their local context and target groups:


- **MEPCO (Czech Republic)** focused primarily on young people from the non-profit sector, particularly volunteers and those involved in non-profit activities.
- **Pannon Novum West-Transdanubian Regional Innovation (Hungary)** targeted university students, collaborating with Széchenyi István University to enroll students.
- **Institute of Public Service Development (Slovakia)** focused mainly on secondary school students by partnering with the Business Academy of Imrich Karvaš in Bratislava.
- **LOITE S.r.l. (Italy) and Ipcenter (Austria)** worked mainly with secondary and university students by leveraging their network of stakeholders.

This diverse range of approaches allowed the ActSEnt partnership to validate its outputs and results from different perspectives, enhancing the overall effectiveness and impact of the program.

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## 7.3 Curriculum Development

Developing a comprehensive curriculum is perhaps the most critical component of preparing for a social entrepreneurship training course. A well-structured curriculum should cover both theoretical knowledge and practical applications to equip participants with the skills they need to create and manage a social enterprise. The course should start with an **Introduction to Social Entrepreneurship**, which will provide participants with a foundational understanding of what social entrepreneurship entails. This module can include definitions, key concepts, and a



comparison between traditional entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship. Providing examples of successful social enterprises at local, national, and global levels can inspire participants and offer real-world insights.

Next, **Identifying Social Problems and Opportunities** is essential. This aspect should train participants to conduct needs assessments, stakeholder analysis, and gap analysis to identify social problems in their communities that need addressing. Emphasis should be placed on understanding the scope, impact, and root causes of these issues. **Business Model Development** is another crucial component. Participants should learn about different types of social business models, including non-profits with revenue-generating activities, for-profit businesses with a social mission, and hybrid models. They should be equipped with tools like the Business Model Canvas, or Lean Canvas to help them design, test, and refine their business ideas.

The curriculum should also cover **Marketing and Communication approaches** specifically tailored to social enterprises. Unlike traditional businesses, social enterprises need to communicate their social mission effectively to stakeholders, customers, and investors. Participants should learn how to build a compelling brand narrative and engage with their audience. **Financial Planning and Sustainability** should be another aspect, focusing on different funding models and financial strategies, including impact investing, grants, and crowdfunding. Lastly, **Legal and Ethical Considerations** and **Practical Workshops** should be incorporated to give a holistic perspective and hands-on experience.



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## ActSEnt Best Practices and Lessons Learned:

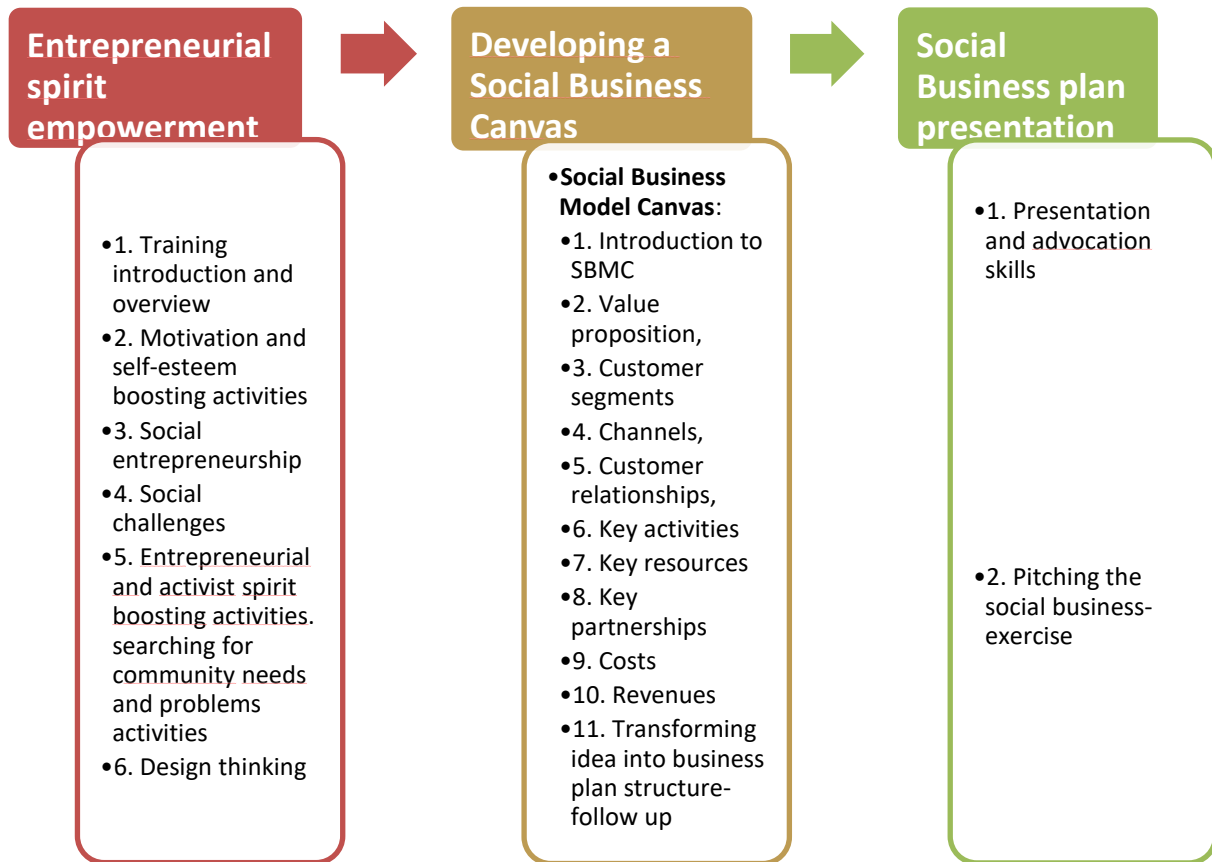
Based on collaborative research and mutual agreement among the partners, a common structure and curriculum for the Social Entrepreneurship course was developed to meet the needs of all partners. This approach allowed the partnership to deliver a similar type of training across different countries while maintaining flexibility for local adjustments. It also facilitated shared learning based on experiences and lessons learned.

The ActSEnt Social Entrepreneurship course focused on three key areas:

1. Empowering Entrepreneurial Spirit
2. Developing a Social Business Canvas
3. Presenting a Social Business Plan

These core areas were further divided into eight modules, which were delivered to participants. A more detailed description can be found in Figure XXX, and the comprehensive course outline is provided in a separate document—the ActSEnt Social Entrepreneurship Training Toolkit.





The course structure covered all the essential components for effective social entrepreneurship training for entry-level participants, while still allowing mentors in each country the flexibility to adopt various approaches and training methods during delivery.

## 7.4 Resource Planning

Resource planning is critical to the successful implementation of the social entrepreneurship training course. **Human Resources** are essential to delivering high-quality content and facilitating an engaging learning environment. The course will require trainers with expertise in various areas of social entrepreneurship, including business development, impact measurement, marketing, and financial management. These trainers should have both academic knowledge and practical experience to offer participants a balanced perspective. Additionally, guest speakers, such as successful social entrepreneurs, impact investors, and community leaders, can provide valuable real-world insights and inspiration. Course coordinators will be needed to handle logistics, administration, and coordination.

**Financial Resources** also need to be carefully planned. A budget should be developed that includes expenses for trainers, guest speakers, venue rental, marketing, materials, and administrative costs. Municipalities may need to explore various funding sources, such as government grants, partnerships with local businesses, sponsorships, and collaborations with academic institutions. Utilizing existing resources like public libraries, community centers, or municipal halls can help reduce costs. **Physical and Digital Resources** are equally important. A suitable venue for in-person sessions or workshops should be identified, equipped with the necessary technology and facilities. Additionally, learning materials, such as textbooks, case studies, and digital resources, should be prepared in advance. For online components, a robust digital platform should be selected to facilitate virtual sessions, discussions, and resource sharing.



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## ActSEnt Best Practices and Lessons Learned:

A key factor in the successful delivery of high-quality training was the careful selection and preparation of ActSEnt mentors and trainers, who were responsible for conducting the training sessions. Mentors were chosen based on a required mix of experience, motivation, and the ability to effectively deliver social entrepreneurship training. Each partner country conducted training sessions with 1-2 mentors who were thoroughly prepared through the ActSEnt "Train the Mentors" program, which covered all essential aspects of the curriculum. The figure below provides an overview of the three-day "Train the Mentors" program.

The program covered several key topics, including:

- Review of the ActSEnt project
- Introduction to the "Train the Mentors" training
- ActSEnt – expectations and tasks
- Learning to think and act like a social entrepreneur – an introduction to social entrepreneurship
- Team training exercises and competitions based on real business scenarios
- Building relationships between ActSEnt and local/regional levels
- The concept and structure of a business model
- The power of storytelling
- Storytelling from different perspectives (cultural and neuroscientific)
- Workshop on design thinking
- Social idea generation using the Business Model Canvas
- Identifying the ActSEnt target group—social entrepreneurs
- ActSEnt mentor approach from both national and project perspectives
- Presentations from partner countries on their approach to social entrepreneurship training

Regarding financial resources, there are several ways to implement the Social Entrepreneurship training, each affecting the financial requirements differently. Some partners implemented the

ActSEnt Social Entrepreneurship course online, resulting in significant cost savings by avoiding the need to rent premises. For in-person training, university facilities or other spaces available to the organization free of charge were utilized. When working with municipalities, it is advisable to use municipal facilities or conduct the training online.

In terms of physical and digital resources, essential requirements include computers, internet access, and online tools for group meetings (e.g., Zoom, MS Teams) and file sharing. Learning materials can be distributed digitally, reducing the need for printed resources.

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## 7.5 Implementation Strategies

Implementing the social entrepreneurship training course requires a strategic approach to ensure its success and sustainability. **Marketing and Outreach** are crucial to attracting the right participants. A publicity campaign should be launched across local media channels, social media platforms, and community networks to create awareness about the course. Information sessions or webinars can provide prospective participants with details about the course content, objectives, and benefits. Building **Partnerships** with local educational institutions, nonprofits, and business organizations can further enhance outreach and credibility.

**Participant Selection** is another vital step. An application process should be designed to select participants who demonstrate a strong commitment to social entrepreneurship and possess the potential to drive social change. Diversity and inclusion should be prioritized to ensure a mix of perspectives, backgrounds, and skills within the cohort. **Course Delivery** should adopt a **Blended Learning Approach** that combines in-person workshops, online lectures, and self-paced learning modules to cater to different learning styles. Interactive sessions, such as group discussions, role-playing, and brainstorming, should be integrated to encourage active participation and peer learning. Providing ongoing **Mentorship and Support** through mentorship programs can help participants navigate challenges and stay motivated throughout the course.

To maintain **Continuous Engagement**, follow-up sessions, networking events, and an alumni network can be established to foster continuous learning and collaboration. Providing participants with ongoing access to resources, such as grants, funding opportunities, and incubation programs, can further support their journey in social entrepreneurship.

The ActSEnt partnership employed a mixed approach to marketing and outreach to attract participants. The ActSEnt website provided comprehensive information about the project, including a simple poster to promote the course. Additionally, partner organizations' websites and social media channels were leveraged to spread awareness. Direct outreach to relevant stakeholders—such as municipalities, regional social entrepreneurship initiatives, and secondary schools and universities—proved highly effective in recruiting participants.

Entry requirements for the ActSEnt course were minimal; the only criterion was that participants be under 30 years old. Special support was provided for participants with disabilities and those from disadvantaged groups. This inclusive approach was made possible by the course's adaptable content, which catered to a broad audience, even those with no prior knowledge of social entrepreneurship. The option to deliver the course online further increased accessibility, allowing participants to save time and avoid the need to travel to specific locations.

Collaboration with municipal and regional representatives and experts was invaluable, as it brought hands-on regional experience into the training and helped identify key challenges that could be addressed through social entrepreneurship. This approach significantly enhanced the course's impact. For example, Hungarian partners successfully linked the development of social business ideas by participants to specific urban brownfields and abandoned buildings, which could be repurposed for social benefit. Meanwhile, course participants from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Italy, and Austria reflected on the current social and environmental needs of their specific municipalities and regions, developing appropriate social business plans in response.

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## 7.6 Follow up, Monitoring and Evaluation

Follow up, monitoring and evaluating the training course is essential to measure its effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and ensure sustainability. **Pre- and Post-Assessment** can help gauge participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes before and after the course. This assessment can provide valuable insights into the impact of the training and highlight areas where additional support may be needed. **Feedback Mechanisms** should be put in place to gather input from both participants and trainers. Participant feedback on course content, delivery methods, and overall experience can help identify strengths and areas for improvement, while trainer feedback can provide insights into participant engagement and learning outcomes.

**Impact Evaluation** is crucial for understanding the course's long-term effects on participants and the community. A **Short-Term Impact** evaluation can measure immediate outcomes, such as knowledge gained, skills developed, and business plans created. In contrast, a **Long-Term Impact** evaluation can assess the success of participants in starting and scaling social enterprises, the social impact they create, and their contribution to the local economy. Developing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework with clear indicators and metrics is essential to ensure the course achieves its intended outcomes.

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## ActSEnt best practice and lessons learned:

As part of the ActSEnt initiative, the partnership organized an online final conference where selected participants had the opportunity to pitch their social business ideas in an international setting. One or two participants from each country were chosen to present their ideas in English and receive feedback from an international audience during a two-hour online session. This activity was a highly effective follow-up for participants, providing them with valuable experience presenting in English before an international audience and offering additional motivation after the training.

Upon successfully completing the course, all participants received an ActSEnt certificate, which can serve as a useful reference for those pursuing future careers.

The primary feedback mechanism for the ActSEnt Social Entrepreneurship trainings was direct feedback from mentors. Suggestions for improvements were incorporated into the ActSEnt Training Toolkit. Additionally, mentors were encouraged to gather anonymous feedback from participants using simple online questionnaires.

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## 7.7 Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

Implementing a social entrepreneurship training course is not without challenges. One common challenge is **Limited Funding and Resources**. Municipalities may face budget constraints that limit the scope and reach of the training course. To mitigate this, it is essential to explore multiple funding avenues, such as public-private partnerships, sponsorships from local businesses, and grants from foundations and government agencies. Additionally, leveraging low-cost or no-cost venues, such as community centers or public libraries, can help minimize expenses.

**Low Participant Engagement** can also be a challenge, especially in courses that are lengthy or heavily theoretical. To mitigate this, the course should incorporate interactive and experiential learning methods, such as workshops, group projects, and real-world case studies. Providing continuous mentorship and support can also help keep participants motivated and engaged. Another challenge is **Resistance to Change**. Some community members or stakeholders may be skeptical of social entrepreneurship or prefer traditional approaches to social change. To overcome this, conducting awareness campaigns that highlight the benefits of social entrepreneurship and engaging community leaders and influencers can drive buy-in and support. Finally, **Measuring Social Impact** can be challenging due to the complexity of social issues and the difficulty of quantifying impact. Developing a clear framework for measuring social impact and providing training on impact assessment tools and techniques can help address this challenge.

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## ActSEnt best practice and lessons learned:

The ActSEnt project was funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ programme, and municipalities can adopt a similar approach to seek funding opportunities.

From the outset of the ActSEnt course development, the risk of low participant engagement was identified. To mitigate this risk, the partnership developed a well-balanced mix of activities, combining workshops, mentoring support, and engaging exercises. Requiring each participant to develop their own social business plan created more engagement opportunities and motivated participants to complete the course. Additionally, the option for online course delivery provided a less demanding way for participants to attend the training sessions.

To ensure the required participant quotas and indicators were met, the partnership initially accepted more participants than necessary for the ActSEnt Social Entrepreneurship course, allowing for potential dropouts.

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## 8. Sustainability

Developing an action plan for social entrepreneurship is a crucial step for municipalities aiming to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The development of a municipal action plan for social entrepreneurship requires a strategic and collaborative approach. Municipalities play a critical role in fostering social enterprises by creating favorable conditions and providing necessary support mechanisms. The action plan should be a dynamic, living document that adapts to the evolving needs of the community and incorporates feedback from diverse stakeholders. A well-developed action plan should provide clear objectives, identify resources, define roles and responsibilities, outline specific actions, and establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

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## ActSEnt best practice and lessons learned:

The ActSEnt partnership developed five Policy Recommendation and Action Plan papers to support the growth of social entrepreneurship. These papers include:

- Policy Recommendation and Action Plan for the Municipal District of Brno-střed, Brno Region
- Policy Recommendation and Action Plan for the Municipal District of Bratislava-Staré Mesto Region
- Policy Recommendation and Action Plan for Kaltenleutgeben, Vienna Region
- Policy Recommendation and Action Plan for Szombathely, West-Transdanubia Region
- Policy Recommendation and Action Plan for Dozza, Emilia Romagna Region

Drawing from the lessons learned in the ActSEnt project, these papers provide municipalities with guidance on how to support social enterprises through strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, capacity building, and other supportive measures.

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## 9. Conclusion

Implementing a social entrepreneurship enhancement activities and capacity building activities in a municipality offers a unique opportunity to foster innovation, address social issues, and promote sustainable development at the local level. By carefully planning the curriculum, targeting the right audience, allocating necessary resources, and implementing effective strategies, municipalities can empower individuals to become social entrepreneurs and create lasting social impact. Continuous monitoring and evaluation will ensure the course remains relevant, effective, and capable of driving meaningful change in the community. This comprehensive approach can help build a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable local economy that benefits all residents.

### Further documents to read:

- ActSEnt Regional analysis
  - ActSEnt Common framework
  - ActSEnt Social Entrepreneurship Training Toolkit
  - ActSEnt Policy Recommendation and Action Plan for selected municipalities/regions
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