

GAP ANALYSIS REPORT LITHUANIA



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1. Designing future WELFARE systems – Social innovation in welfare (education)

1.1 Introduction and background

In Lithuania, there are two definitions of social enterprise - sector - specific, which is defined by national laws and organizational, which is defined by national strategies / programmes. Its concept is politically and legally accepted, though has some narrow understanding (work integration) - weak self-recognition. Social enterprises are regulated by Law IX-2251/2004 and are conceived exclusively as WISEs, through which social enterprises are institutionalized. In WISE, a resource mix with a high proportion of public funding largely based on grants for employing disadvantaged workers exists. SE status could be obtained only by organizations operating in the field of work integration of disadvantaged people.

SEs in the form of NPO are mainly financed on a yearly basis by state and municipalities to organize the provision of public services to specific groups in society. The largest portion of financing is distributed through project tenders within the framework of specific yearly programmes. The Lithuanian public procurement system creates favorable conditions for SEs. The main obstacle for SEs in the development of the social service market is the fact that state and municipal institutions tend to systematically purchase social services through grants or rely on state or municipal service providers.

Since 2017 Guidelines for Social Enterprise Projects have been accepted, while Conception of Social Business has been existing since 2015. There are supporting grants and subsidies to start a SE from private stakeholders, foundations, second-level organizations (without limitations), European funds and public authorities (with limitations), which still prefer to deliver the majority of welfare services themselves. Also, social enterprises could receive special fiscal benefits, while incubators and business innovation centers could receive private and public support (without limitations).

In the period of 2016-2017, Lithuania was one of the smaller countries in Europe, which stood out with its comparatively high numbers of SEs. At that time there were almost 3,500 (3,476) SEs in Lithuania, which was not that bad for such a small country as Lithuania. In contrast, in European countries, which were bigger population wise or in size, such as Croatia, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Austria, Serbia, Greece, Czech Republic or even Turkey, the number of SEs was quite lower, therefore Lithuania was doing quite well. In the meantime, according to the number of SEs per million inhabitants, Lithuania was the sixth country among 35 European countries and the number of SEs was only higher in France, Belgium, Hungary, Italy and Luxembourg.





KEY STATISTICS

			Es ta bl is h e d	Fr a g m e n t e d	In d e v e l o p m e n t	N o n e x i s t e n t
Estimated number of SE's (year)	3,476 SE (2016-2017)	Legal framework for SE's		x		
Estimated number of workers in SE's (year)	No data available	Publicly funded measures for SE's	x			
Growth of SE's (years)	No data available	Training and education	x			
		Existence of SE networks	x			

1.2 Ecosystem

Businesses and organisations creating social innovations in different areas (including welfare) operate within the same legal and regulatory framework as other types of innovations. In terms of authorities responsible for support to and development of innovation in Lithuania, a rationalisation of government agencies took place in 2022. By merging Lithuanian Business Support Agency, entrepreneurship and export development agency “Versli Lietuva” and certain functions of Science, Innovation and Technology Agency, a new Innovation Agency was established. The Innovation Agency is responsible for developing Lithuanian innovation ecosystem and promoting innovation at all stages of business development. Notably, the centralisation of functions that were spread out through several institutions is a step forward to addressing one of the pertinent challenges for social innovation - a fragmented social business and innovation ecosystem. In addition to the public sector stakeholders participating in the ecosystem, clusters, associations and various networks exist that focus specifically on social businesses and social innovations.



Areas of activity	Actors
Governmental departments/institutions	Lithuanian Ministry of Economy and Innovation, Agency of Innovation
Authorities designing and enforcing social innovation in the welfare domain, Authorities designing and enforcing legal, fiscal and regulatory frameworks	Lithuanian Ministry of Economy and Innovation, Government of the Republic of Lithuania, Lithuanian Parliament, Agency of Innovation, Lithuanian Innovation Centre
Institutions and initiatives promoting social enterprise education and training Observatories and entities monitoring the development of social enterprises and assessing their needs and opportunities	Agency of Innovation, Social Business platform (socialinisverslas.lt/), Social Business platform (https://socialinisverslas.verslilietuva.lt/), „Gerinorai.lt“
Incubators	Social change incubator „Domus Solis“, Innovation Bureau (“Inovacijų biuras”)
Facilitators of learning and exchange platforms	Social Business platform (https://socialinisverslas.verslilietuva.lt/)
Organisers of social enterprises networks, associations and pacts that engage in advocacy and mutual learning and in facilitating joint action	Lithuanian Cluster of Social Innovation, Social Innovation Institute, Lithuanian Innovation Centre, Lithuanian Social Enterprise Association, NVO Avily, Science and Technology Parks
Financial intermediaries (social-impact investors or funds, philanthropic investors or funds, crowdfunding platforms, etc.) for social enterprises and support infrastructure	European Social Fund Agency (ESFA), INVEGA, Central Project Management Agency (CPVA)

1.3 Gaps

Regarding social innovation in Lithuania, the main gaps could be grouped into three main groups that are on three different levels - public sector, non/social profit sector and education.





In the public sector?

Social innovation continues to receive little attention. Neither the objectives of the Lithuanian Innovation Development Programme 2014-2020, nor the individual targets of the programme, are directly aimed at



In the non/social profit sector?

The biggest challenge for social innovation startups is to have a strong team and a shared persistence to see a solution through to the end, as well as the inability to take responsibility, which plays a major role when



In education?

It is often unclear what social innovation is and how it differs from social business. While more and more lecturers and practitioners in universities are incorporating social innovation into their courses, there

1.4 Challenges

The challenges in education on social innovation are mainly associated with teaching skills that are essential for innovating - creativity skills, cooperation skills, starting social business / entrepreneurial skills etc. The lack of competencies applies to different level professionals and organizations. For students, the challenges relate to including such teaching in the education curricula and providing opportunities for experimenting with their ideas. Professionals can face difficulties with changing their traditional ways of working and accessing programmes for learning new skills. At the level of social organizations and businesses, these also require access to training, as well as consultations on establishing and upscaling their businesses, partnering with private and public bodies etc. Some business activities can be hindered by a fragmented ecosystem (notably, improvements were made by centralizing certain functions of different public bodies and establishing the Innovation Agency).





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For students in higher education (social-oriented disciplines)

Lack of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurial competencies taught in the education curriculum.

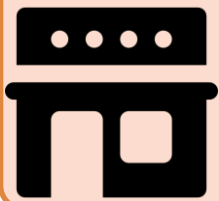
Opportunities to experiment with their ideas and create innovations.



For professionals working in the welfare domain

Lack of innovation skills and awareness about different business models.

Changing traditional ways of working.



For social organisations and businesses (public, non-profit, social profit)

A fragmented ecosystem.

Lack of training, information, consultations and support in the following areas:

Human resources and finances needed to initiate and upscale innovations;

Risks associated to creating a viable and sustainable business model;

Cooperating with different stakeholders of the innovation ecosystem;

Experience with establishing public-private partnerships.





2. Good practice in higher education – Combating Social Exclusion with Internet Access



All images courtesy of <https://www.slideserve.com/fritz/projektas-vie-j-interneto-prieigos-ta-k-tinklo-pl-tra>

Key findings

- The project of establishing public Internet access points was recognised at Lithuanian and international level as an exemplary initiative of central and regional government cooperation with the private and academic sector.
- The number of Internet users in rural areas has increased more than 15 times after the project was implemented.
- Lithuania has one the largest centrally managed public Internet access point networks in Eastern and Central Europe, spread evenly throughout the country.

2.1 Introduction, challenges and background

The aim of the project *‘Expanding the network of public internet access points’* is to promote the use of the Internet in Lithuania, thereby raising the standard of living of the population, which helps to reduce social exclusion levels in Lithuania.

The target groups of this project are various societal groups, especially those at risk of digital exclusion, e.g. living in rural areas where it is not cost-effective for companies to install and develop Internet infrastructure. It also involves people that encounter social exclusion or persons in poverty who cannot afford Internet services. These target groups are also the main beneficiaries of the project.





The main initiator of this initiative is the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania. According to order of the Ministry, the project was implemented by Alliance 'Langas į ateitį' (Window to the Future), which was comprised of various bank services providing enterprises, mobile phone and IT companies. The implementing authorities partnered with the Ministry of Interior Affairs, as well as other stakeholders from private and public sectors.

In order to promote social innovation in the regions, the Ministry informed the public about the social support provided by the municipalities to the population, the measures taken to overcome poverty and social exclusion, and encouraged citizens, local communities, and civic organisations to get involved in the public practice of reducing social exclusion and poverty, thus making this practice more effective. The Ministry has also promoted dialogue between public authorities and municipalities in tackling poverty and social exclusion, and facilitated the most effective social policy decisions. In addition, the Ministry has taken the initiative to create an information dissemination network between the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, municipalities, NGOs and local communities.

The welfare system in Lithuania by the implementation of this initiative was supposed to experience a reduction in the needs of financial support, as the people who struggle or are in poverty would have a better access to Internet services.

2.2 Proposed solutions and recommendations

The main results of the project were:

- Around 70 000 people have received computer literacy training, including people with reduced mobility, which received a special training adapted to their needs and possibilities;
- 300 public Internet access points providing free internet access were set up in rural areas with poor telecommunications infrastructure;
- A unified Lithuania's network of public Internet hotspots connecting more than 800 Internet access points and locations providing free internet services to residents was implemented.

As the director of the "Langas į ateitį" said:

"Today, the public Internet access point in Lithuania has become not only a place with free Internet connection, but also a meeting place for the local community, a center for self-education, an institution where you can use electronic services and find the information you need. We have indeed achieved the goal of making the Internet access point one of the ways to overcome social exclusion and geographical barriers."

Such initiatives propose that social exclusion and geographical barriers could be even addressed while not addressing them directly. Maybe it could be a solution of how a welfare system could be improved?





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2.3 Concluding remarks – Lessons learned, inspiration for future curriculum

Such social innovation as Internet access point implementation does not only help to overcome social exclusion and geographical barriers, but at the same time it helps to improve the quality of life of people who struggle or who are in poverty. The improvements that are made by implementing something which is accessible to some but not to all people stimulates the welfare sector and reduces the needs for financial support.





3. Good practice in the public sector – Universities of Applied Sciences in Collaboration



All images courtesy of Dovilė Vainorė (https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/socialini%C5%B3-lyderi%C5%B3-pusry%C4%8Diuose-apie-inovacij%C5%B3-visum%C4%85-ir-kriukelyte/?trk=read_related_article-card_title)

Key findings

- Practical knowledge could be gained not only through experiential learning in collaboration with lecturers, but more importantly by collaborations with NGOs and business representatives, which could provide students not only with practical experience but even future workplaces.
- When the development of entrepreneurial and creativity competences is horizontally integrated throughout the education process students are better equipped, prepared and more importantly encouraged to get started with social innovation.

3.1 Introduction, challenges and background

This good practice tries to address inclusive academic agendas and emerging organizational formations in science and higher education institutions that promote youth creativity and entrepreneurship. These initiatives include creativity camps, entrepreneurship academies, and social business idea generation events where students tackle real cases and challenges presented by real organizations.

For example, one the latest works of Vilnius University of Applied Sciences was when students got the chance to organize teams of students, where they were asked to analyze the alternative of the





premises of Vilnius hotels, which had been suspended during the quarantine period. Their findings were submitted to GO Vilnius, Vilnius city tourism and business development agency.

Quite a different approach is practiced at the SMK University of Applied Social Sciences. Here the community initiates movements, spaces and formats - such as WeCreators and VibeLift - that show the potential of co-creation, the innovative ideas that are born and the concrete practical solutions that are implemented.

The chosen practices mainly address students with different socioeconomic backgrounds, which also happen to be the main beneficiaries of this practice. For the implementation of this good practice the main responsibility belongs to higher education institutions, in this case Vilnius University of Applied Sciences and SMK University of Applied Social Sciences, while such stakeholders as NGOs and business representatives have a secondary role.

3.2 Proposed solutions and recommendations

Such practices as the ones described above could be implemented elsewhere in similar educational settings, where students strive to learn and acquire practical knowledge. It is important to involve students in practical and real-life situations, as some of the higher education institutions already practice that, as one of the representatives of Vilnius University of Applied Sciences has shared on the specifics of youth entrepreneurship education and the meaning of integrating social innovation in education:

"We develop entrepreneurship and creativity by involving students in practical, real-life situations of real organizations, and the requirements for the expected solutions - sustainability, durability, innovation - are in line with the principles of social entrepreneurship and socially responsible business."

Social innovation integration though could seem like a challenge, however the examples given above have shown that social innovation could be easily integrated in the curricula of higher educational institutions' programmes.

3.3 Concluding remarks – Lessons learned, inspiration for future curriculum

Students after acquiring theoretical and practical knowledge are not afraid to take the initiative and set up social businesses.

Co-creation where students and lecturers are involved (the creation, development and establishment of new business ideas) is found to be interesting and meaningful not only among lecturers, but also among students.





4. Good practice in non/social profit – Home of Independent Living as a Social Innovation



All images courtesy of <https://orusnamai.lt>

Key findings

- There is an alternative for senior homes. This alternative could be called homes for independent living, where no one regulates the lives of seniors, but there is always someone there to help whenever the help is needed.
- In order to have dignified life at the latter stages of life, a senior has many different options that can provide him or her with a better quality of life followed by less stress-related chores. Among many, one of them is swapping apartments, where the apartment of the senior is being rented out, while the senior could live in such a home of independent living for free and does not have to worry about apartment related utilities, rent or any other spendings. Moreover, the home remains the property of the elderly person and he/she has the possibility to return to his/her old home if he/she chooses.

4.1 Introduction, challenges and background

Almost half of Lithuania's seniors live alone in their homes. They spend most of their income, especially during the heating season, on uneconomic and unsuitable housing for the elderly. The social project 'Orūs namai' aims to provide lonely seniors living in poverty with physically, psychologically and financially dignified aging services by helping them to settle into self-supporting peer-help households. 'Orūs namai' is a social enterprise that aims to create the conditions for seniors to live safely, comfortably, economically and communally in seniors' apartment blocks that are adapted to their needs.

The experimental senior citizens' apartment block in Vilnius opened its doors in autumn 2018. Following its success and seeing the demand, they are currently developing a second senior apartment





building in Krokialaukis, Alytus district. Once completed, it will invite seniors who do not have a home of their own, or are no longer able to live there in dignity and safety, to move into cozy and comfortable apartments, paid for either by themselves or by renting their own apartments.

The main beneficiaries of this social project are seniors. This initiative helps to save taxpayers' money, which could be considered to be a positive contribution to the Lithuanian welfare system. As the system will be more and more 'loaded', as the senior number in Lithuania is growing and seniors in 2040 are expected to comprise one third of the population, such practices as this one could be considered to be very relevant.

In terms of social innovation, '*Orūs namai*' is a new idea in Lithuania, addressing a sensitive issue social problem of the elderly. From a social innovation point of view, the '*Orūs namai*' initiative involves not only a new model that goes beyond the traditional sphere of responsibility and involves citizens themselves in solving social challenges, but also the creation of a culture of trust and tolerance of risk.

4.2 Proposed solutions and recommendations

The main contributions that have been achieved by the social project '*Orūs namai*' could be concluded into three main lessons that could be learned and practiced elsewhere:

- Homes for independent living are not only a cheaper and safer way of life, but it also helps to solve the problem of loneliness, which tends to prevail among senior citizens more frequently;
- Home of independent living is a home, but not an institution. There is a cohort of seniors, which are afraid to end up in a senior home due to stereotypes existing in society about or due to the way of life that is practiced in senior homes. Some seniors want to be as independent as possible and such alternative could be the home they are looking for;
- Such activities, as the one described above, help to eliminate the causes of poverty and loneliness rather than fighting the consequences of poverty and loneliness.

It is important to share this initiative not only as a good practice itself, but moreover it is significant to spread the word on the impact that could be achieved by implementing such practices as homes of independent living. That is one of the ways how the welfare sector could function in a better and self-sustaining way. What is needed is an individual initiative, as this case has shown.

The success of this initiative has been facilitated by the availability of funding. Therefore, we believe that a clear and understandable business plan and budgeting would help the future training programme. In addition, the character qualities of the person who launched the initiative were also very important. We believe that it would be important for the training programme to focus on discovering the individual's strengths, identifying their profile, perhaps where they would be best placed to implement one or other of the desired initiatives. The legal framework was also important for the success of the initiative, so that it would not hinder the implementation of the project. We believe that it is important to include a clear regulatory model in the training programme, one that is





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understandable and clear, and of course it will be different in each country, but it would be important to emphasise the key points that will help the projects to succeed. Finally, it is important to keep in mind the stakeholders and the analysis of stakeholders that will help the development of the welfare sector.

4.3 Concluding remarks – Lessons learned, inspiration for future curriculum

As the good practice has shown, the rental income can fully cover the cost of living in the senior block. That means that the entire pension is left for other seniors' needs, which improves the quality of life and removes the stress levels of having to worry about how to pay utilities, taxes and other financial commitments.





5. Summary focus group interview

Each project partner/country selected 8-10 stakeholders (total of approximately 40 stakeholders) to be involved in national focus groups with 3 objectives in mind:

- 1) Exploring challenges that social entrepreneurs of different backgrounds are currently facing, in order to validate or adjust the gap analysis.
- 2) Discussing skills and competences that students, educators, researchers and practitioners in the social field lack in regard to social innovation and social entrepreneurship. Doing so we can better identify building blocks and relevant content for the curriculum to be designed.
- 3) Identifying stakeholders that want to participate in (co-)designing and/or reviewing the curriculum/training platform.

5.1 Data

- Date of the interview: 07/09/2022
- The interview was conducted online
- 8 respondents participated, *among which 0 students, 1 educator in social science, 1 researcher in social science, 1 practitioner in social innovation/entrepreneurship, and 5 practitioners in traditional organizations*

5.2 Main findings

5.2.1 What social innovation/entrepreneurship stands for

Most of the participants linked social innovation and social business to solving societal problems. Future-oriented change was also identified during the discussion.

5.2.2 Success factors identified

The most important factor identified by the participants was the financial factor, which determines the success of a project. More than half of the participants also identified networks as an important factor for the success of a project. According to respondents, personality can have a positive effect on the prosperity of the projects too. In addition to all this, for several participants, the existence of a successful project was unthinkable without a legal framework, education, and own organisation. Finally, there were mentions of other elements leading to prosperity - collaboration, market, support.





5.2.3 Barriers identified

Most participants pointed out that the financial framework can be a barrier in order to implement the project. Policy and network were also identified as very important factors, the absence of which hampers the implementation of the project and creates additional problems. About half of the participants pointed to the legal framework and personality as potential additional obstacles to project implementation. For one participant, it was important to keep in mind the education factor as a barrier, the absence of which would be a stumbling block for project implementation. Finally, several other barriers to the success of the project were mentioned - lack of time to show the results and lack of professional guidance.

5.2.4 Skills and competences needed for social innovation/entrepreneurship

Most participants identified legal and financial competences as important for social workers. Empathy, creativity, critical thinking and leadership are also important. To be more innovative/entrepreneurial, you also need to keep in mind competences such as finding out-of-the-box solutions. Finally, the ability to work in a team and entrepreneurship were identified by participants as very important competences too.

5.3 Concluding remarks

According to the focus group discussion participants, there are a lot of nice individual initiatives going on at the moment, but social initiatives are not working. On the other hand, they work through cooperation, mobilisation, bringing together as many organisations as possible for a common goal. This is the essence of social innovation. Participants found it important to focus on as much mobilisation as possible in the development of well-being, from which more and more sustainability will follow. It is also important to create new content, but not to duplicate it, to add value to society. Personal ambition is also important in achieving fundamental change in the welfare sector.





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Lithuania

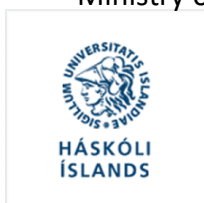
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More information and contact

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