

Social Innovation Forum

1-2 October, Brussels

Workshop ‘Social Innovation for System-Level Change’

Objectives:

What does it take to turn good ideas into lasting change? For Europe, the answer may lie in the slow but steady rise of social innovation. Once considered niche, it is now at the heart of how the EU hopes to tackle challenges that markets and governments have struggled to solve alone, from social inclusion to climate resilience.

This workshop will focus on system-level change. The German case will open the conversation, with Judith Terstriep and Norbert Kunz showing how two decades of experimentation have reshaped welfare, community services and financial models for social enterprises. Their story underlines that resilience requires not just one-off projects, but structures that endure.

The second half of the workshop will shift from reflection to action. Together with Managing Authorities, Implementing Bodies, and National Competence Centres, the Community of Practice will co-design the 2026 work programme, addressing financial and philanthropic strategies to support societal change, proposing ways to embed social rights in European frameworks, discussing how to scale impact to advance the ESF+ SI Priority, and reimagining the role of the social economy.

The goal is to reinforce collaboration among cross-sectoral CoP SI members – public, private, and social – to strengthen Europe’s social innovation ecosystem. If successful, the workshop could mark a decisive step in moving from scattered experiments to systemic transformation.

Duration: 2 hours

Number of participants: 55

Part 1 (14:30–15:00)

System-Level Change

Welcome

- **Raluca Painter**, Head of Unit G2, European Commission

Workshop Introduction

- **Sofia Lai Amândio**, Lead Thematic Expert for Community of Practice on Social Innovation &
Gorka Espiau, Lead Thematic Expert for National Competence Centres Working Group

Presentations: Multilevel Social Impact: Insights from the German Case Study

- **Judith Terstriep**, Head of the Research Department Innovation, Space & Culture at the Institute for Work and Technology at the Westphalian University of Applied Sciences Gelsenkirchen &
Norbert Kunz, Chief Executive Officer, Social Impact gGmbH

Part 2 (15:00–15:30)

Co-Creating Action Plans to Social Change: ESF+ Bodies (Managing Authorities and Implementing Bodies) and NCCs Aligned

Introduction to Activities

- **Szilvia Simon**, Thematic Expert for Community of Practice on Social Innovation

Themes & Facilitators:

1. Financial and Philanthropic Strategies to Support Societal Change

- **Anders Folmer Buhelt**, Danish Social Innovation Academy – Akademiet for Social Innovation & **Szilvia Simon**, Thematic Expert for Community of Practice on Social Innovation
- Debrief: **Katharina Prigge**, Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Austria

2. European Pillar of Social Rights and Policy Recommendations

- **Amalia Zepou**, Kollektiva, Greek National Competence Centre for SI & **John Healy**, Thematic Expert for National Competence Centres Working Group
- Debrief: **Laure Garcia**, Department of Rural and Community Development, Ireland

3. Portfolio Approach for System Level Change

- **Berta Gonzalez Anton**, State Secretary for Social Rights, Spain & **Gorka Espiau**, Lead Thematic Expert for National Competence Centres Working Group
- Debrief: *TBC*

4. Scaling Impact to Advance the ESF+ SI Priority

- **Tomas De Groote**, Social Innovation Factory, Belgium & **Eglė Butkevičienė**, Thematic Expert for National Competence Centres Working Group
- Debrief: **Justyna Kryczka**, Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy, Poland

5. Social Economy and Policy Agendas

- **Gianluca Salvatori**, ICCSI – Italian Competence Centre on Social Innovation & **Georgios Alexopoulos**, Agricultural University of Athens, Greece & **Sofia Lai Amândio**, Lead Thematic Expert for Community of Practice on Social Innovation
- Debrief: **Katharina Lipp**, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Germany

Coffee Break (15:30 - 16:00)

Part 3 (16:00–17:00)

Debriefing & Discussion Towards the 2026 Work Programme

Summary: debriefing from each table

Room-wide discussions: activities for 2026

Closing Session

- **Sofia Lai Amândio**, Lead Thematic Expert for Community of Practice on Social Innovation
- **John Healy**, Thematic Expert for National Competence Centres Working Group