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Unione Europea e opportunità di finanziamenti per il Terzo Settore
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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
Accompanying the document

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE
COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Mid-term review of the action plan for the social economy: main achievements and way
forward**

{COM(2026) 138 final}

Fonte dell'intervento:

Mid-term review of the action plan for the social economy: main achievements and way forward

(report da pagina 30 a pagina 40)

[https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=SWD\(2026\)94&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=SWD(2026)94&lang=en)

Call condivise durante l'intervento:

- New call added: [Smart Social Economy Model in Tourism: Long Distance Trails \(PPPA-2026-SOCIAL-ECONOMY-TOURISM\)](#)
- [A New EU Call: Inclusive Incubation and Finance for More Entrepreneurs \(ESF-2026-SE-INCUBATION\)](#)

2.3. EU funding landscape: the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework

2.3.1. Overview and relevance for the social economy

The [2021-2027 multiannual financial framework](#) (MFF) provides the structural and financial basis for implementing the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) (EPSR), the [European Green Deal](#), the [Digital Transition](#) and the [European Industrial Strategy](#). Within this policy ecosystem, the [Social Economy Action Plan](#) represents the Commission's central initiative to mobilise the **social economy as a driver of inclusive, sustainable and fair growth**.

EU funding instruments under the MFF operationalise some of the SEAP's commitments by enabling social economy actors to **access finance, scale innovation, strengthen skills and reinforce territorial ecosystems**. Funding support is channelled either through *centrally managed programmes* administered directly or indirectly by the Commission and its executive agencies or through *shared management funds* implemented by national and regional managing authorities.

In this context, under the [InvestEU Programme](#), approximately EUR 1200 million⁴ in guarantees have been allocated to implementing partners for microfinance and social entrepreneurship, out of an overall EU guarantee amount of around EUR 2800 million.

From the **EU Cohesion Policy funds**, among which the ESF+, the European Regional Development Fund (including Interreg) and the Just Transition Fund (JTF) aim to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion, Member States have planned to allocate at least EUR 1410.7 million of EU funds⁵ to support the social economy and social enterprises, mainly through grants and financial instruments.

The [Single Market Programme](#) has allocated EUR 23.82 million in grants to social economy businesses, helping them to scale up and access new markets, promote social entrepreneurship skills, and green and digitise the ecosystem through transnational cooperation.

The [Employment and Social Innovation Programme](#) (EaSI) is channelling EUR 35.5 million in grants to social economy stakeholders to enhance evidence-based policymaking and social experimentation, as well as support job mobility and activities related to the former Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis.

The [Erasmus+](#) programme has allocated EUR 116.36 million in grants to social economy projects and social entrepreneurs.

The [Horizon Europe](#) programme has allocated EUR 35.26 million to research and innovation in the social economy, supporting the creation and dissemination of knowledge and technologies.

An overall amount of EUR 1621.6 million in grants and financial instruments from EU funds since the adoption of the MFF 2021-2027. Table 1 provides a summary visual overview.

The following sections describe how each of the main EU funding streams has contributed to the SEAP's implementation and to the development of the social economy. They outline the scope of each stream and the number of projects funded.

Table 1 Funding landscape: 2021–2027 multiannual financial framework

Funding Landscape 2021–2027 multiannual financial framework		
Programmes under direct and indirect management		
Single Market Programme COSME	Improves the functioning of the internal market, enhances the competitiveness of enterprises (especially SMEs), strengthens market surveillance and consumer protection, and supports high-quality EU statistics and standards.	EUR 23.82 M
Employment and Social Innovation	Enhances evidence-based policymaking and social experimentation and supports job mobility and non-financial instrument activities related to the former Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis.	EUR 35.5 M
Erasmus+	Develops skills, curricula, innovative teaching and learning practices through transnational partnerships that strengthen the human capital base of the social economy.	EUR 116.36 M
Horizon Europe	Finances research and innovation, tackling global challenges, boosting EU’s competitiveness and growth, and supporting the creation and better diffusion of knowledge and technologies.	EUR 35.26 M
Programmes under shared management (EU amount)		
European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)	Recognises the social economy as a driver of inclusive growth and quality employment. Promoting the social economy and social enterprises is a specific objective and the core shared management instrument.	EUR 1300.8 M
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	Supports investments in infrastructures, innovation ecosystems and capacity-building that are relevant to the social economy.	EUR 81.7 M
Just Transition Fund (JTF)	Mitigates the social and economic impacts of the climate transition in carbon-intensive regions.	EUR 5 M
Interreg programmes (ERDF)	Supports cooperation across EU borders and beyond, tackles shared challenges and creates lasting connections. Projects cover areas from boosting economic growth to regional cohesion.	EUR 23.2 M

InvestEU		
InvestEU's Social Investment and Skills Window (SISW)	Supports sustainable investment, innovation and job creation. In the SISW, it finances projects in skills, education, training, social infrastructure, social innovation, microfinance, social enterprises, social impact investing, integration of migrants, refugees and vulnerable people, and more.	EUR 1200 M for microfinance, social entrepreneurship and social impact investing

2.3.2. Directly or indirectly managed programmes

Programmes under direct management are implemented directly by the Commission or its executive agencies. Programmes under indirect management entrust budget implementation to pillar assessed organisations (e.g. Erasmus+ national agencies). These programmes support skill development, innovation, cooperation and investment in the social economy. They also complement national and regional measures under cohesion policy by promoting transnational cooperation, mutual learning, the testing of innovative practice and the scaling-up of successful models. Directly or indirectly managed programmes include the following.

I. Single Market Programme – COSME pillar (SMP-COSME)

The [Single Market Programme](#), which the Commission implements through the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA), is one of the EU's instruments for supporting the competitiveness and sustainability of SMEs. One of the pillars of the programme dedicated to the competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (COSME) specifically supports the Proximity and Social Economy ecosystem. Between 2021 and 2024, 6 dedicated calls for proposals specifically targeting the social economy were launched, resulting in 44 grant agreements with a total of EU contribution of EUR 23.82 million.

Local green deals and territorial resilience

The [SMP-COSME-2021-RESILIENCE-SEM](#) call for proposals aimed to build resilience and increase the capacity of regional or local public administrations, social economy SMEs and civil society to overcome difficulties and crises. The call supported the building of local resilience through i) transnational and interregional peer-learning and collaboration in the field of the social economy, ii) developing social economy local action plans with the cooperation of social economy stakeholders, and iii) formulating recommendations that could potentially be replicated in other parts of the EU.

A second call ([SMP-COSME-2021-RESILIENCE-LGD](#)) provided support to SMEs, regional and local economic operators to lead the twin green and digital transitions and implement actions to direct the local economy towards a sustainable and inclusive pathway; create new jobs; mitigate the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis; and accelerate a new, green and fairer recovery.

A third call ([SMP-COSME-2023-RESILIENCE-01](#)) had a more specific focus on rural areas, boosting the development of social economy SMEs that are active in rural areas. It aimed at building an EU network of regional and local authorities with converging priorities on the social economy, and at creating space and opportunities at EU level for learning and collaboration

These calls include the main following projects: [ESIC](#), [GRAPE](#), [SOCRATES](#), [SEA4NEB](#), [LADESE](#) and [MU.ST.SEE](#).

These initiatives have together produced transferable models for location-based social-economy ecosystems, thereby strengthening climate resilience, local innovation and community-led governance. 23 projects were financed under these three calls for proposals for a total EU contribution of EUR 4.60 million.

Digital and skills transition

The [SMP-COSME-2023-SEED](#) call for proposals aimed to support transnational partnerships in boosting the digital capacity of actors. The aim was to enable social economy entities to turn digital challenges into opportunities, ensuring a fair and inclusive digital transition. The call also aimed to strengthen the capacity of social economy ‘enabling organisations’ to support members, clients and stakeholders in their digital transition, and supported the implementation of the [Transition Pathway](#) for proximity and social economy. Projects under this call included [BLUEDOTS](#), [DIGI-SEII](#), [DIGISET](#), [DIGIT-ABLE](#), [DO Impact](#), [ENACT](#) and [DigAccessAgrotourism](#).

7 projects were financed for a total EU contribution of EUR 8.18 million.

In addition, the [SocialTech4EU](#) project (EUR 1.40 million), implemented under [SMP-COSME-2021-CLUSTER-01](#), provided support to strengthen the resilience and innovation capacity, competitiveness, and the sustainability of social economy ecosystems and social enterprises start-ups (with a special focus on technology social ventures).

Greening and finance for social SMEs

The [SMP-COSME-2022-SEE-01](#) call for proposals aimed to support transnational and cross-sector cooperation and the exchange of good practices to foster the sustainable growth of social economy SMEs and entrepreneurs in the green transition by boosting their managerial and staff skills to green their operations – encouraging the uptake of sustainable and innovative solutions through capacity-building, incubation, acceleration, advisory services and coaching; and by strengthening cooperation between social economy entities, mainstream businesses, academia and public authorities. Projects financed under this call included [SOFIGREEN](#), [GreenBoost4WISEs](#), [GRAINS](#), [Green at Heart](#), [SEE BRIDGE](#) and [SKI.F.T.](#)

6 projects were financed for a total EU contribution of EUR 5.89 million.

Market access and social procurement

The [SMP-COSME-2022-BUYSOCIALB2BMARKET-01](#) call for proposals aimed to support the creation of local and regional partnerships to reinforce policy initiatives and improve

collaboration between social economy entities and mainstream businesses in their supply chain strategies. In particular, these partnerships aimed at helping mainstream businesses to engage with a range of social economy suppliers and embed sustainability and diversity into their core operations and value chains. It also helped social enterprises to grow their revenues and impact by tapping into corporate purchasing power. Projects financed under this call include [MATCH](#), [BuySocCirc](#), [BuyWISEly](#), [BuySocialEuropeB2B](#), and [BFSE-B2B](#).

5 projects were financed for a total EU contribution of EUR 1.56 million.

Social Housing

Two calls for proposals ([SMP-COSME-2021-HOUS-01](#) and [SMP-COSME-2023-HOUS-01](#)) aimed to foster the new construction or regeneration of social and affordable neighbourhoods by supporting organisations across the EU through a tailored and comprehensive learning programme that encompasses financial and technical advisory, mentorship, study visits and joint capacity-building events (online classes, workshops, seminars and webinars).

2 projects were financed for a total EU contribution of EUR 2.2 million.

II. Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand

The Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand, implemented under the [ESF+ Regulation \(Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1057\)](#) under direct and indirect management by the Commission, is one of the EU's main financial tools for social innovation, experimentation and social finance. The EaSI strand supports the SEAP's implementation and acts as a strategic engine for EU-level social innovation, bridging pilot experimentation, financing access and structural policy reform. Between 2021 and 2025, 5 dedicated calls for proposals specifically targeting the social economy were launched, resulting in 42 grant agreements for a total EU contribution of EUR 35.50 million.

Development of finance markets for social enterprises

The [ESF-2023-SUPPLY-DEMAND](#) call for proposals aimed to (i) ease access to finance for social entrepreneurs by fostering cooperation between public and/or private entities of any type, and (ii) develop the investment readiness of social enterprises, ensuring they can take on repayable finance. The objective was to contribute to the development of feasible, suitable and reliable schemes or funds to provide finance to social enterprises, as well as support structures in offering business development services and networking facilities to improve investment readiness. The call also aimed to identify, develop, promote and disseminate good practices in supporting social enterprises in accessing finance.

The call funded 9 projects for a total EU contribution of EUR 3.49 million.

Support for transaction costs

The [ESF-2022-SOC-FIN](#) call for proposals aimed to support the development of the social investment market and facilitate access to finance for social enterprises, using grants to intermediaries in the social enterprise finance field to partially cover the transaction costs. Activities were based on three facts: that the most important funding gap for social enterprises is below EUR 500 000, that the transaction costs for such small cases can be high, and that

social impact fund managers may not have sufficient incentive to focus on such small amounts in order to preserve their sustainability.

This call funded 9 projects for a total EU contribution of EUR 4.20 million.

Development of impact performance intelligence services

The [ESF-2024-SOC-IMP](#) call for proposals aims to promote better-informed investment decisions, greater market transparency and performance-benchmarking by supporting enhanced data capabilities and impact management tools and practices for social purpose entities.

This call is funding 8 projects for a total EU contribution of EUR 5.67 million.

Development of European social economy networks

The [ESF-2021-OG-NETW-MF-SE-SGA](#) call for proposals⁶ supported EU-level networks active in microfinance and social enterprise finance, strengthening EU-level networking, institutional capacity and awareness of EU policies and funding. The Commission cooperated with these networks as multipliers for outreach and as key partners for consultation and implementation of the SEAP and related files (e.g. long-term care, the green transition and social innovation).

This call funded 5 projects for an EU contribution of EUR 8.52 million.

A second call for proposals with a similar purpose was published in 2025 ([ESF-2025-AG-NETW-MF-SE](#)). This call is funding 11 projects for a total EU contribution of EUR13.62 million.

III. Erasmus+

The [Erasmus+](#) programme is supporting the SEAP's implementation by helping develop skills, curricula and training partnerships that strengthen the human capital base of the social economy. Within the 2021–2027 MFF, it addresses part of the education and skills dimensions of the SEAP, promoting learning mobility and transnational cooperation in the fields of higher education, vocational education and training (VET), school and adult education, and youth entrepreneurship. Erasmus+ operates under both direct and indirect management through actions entrusted to the Erasmus+ national agencies.

Under direct management, 18 social economy projects have been funded by Erasmus+ for a total EU contribution of EUR 14.37 million⁷. Among these projects, the following 4 projects have received the largest financial allocations.

⁶ And subsequent complementary calls ESF-2022-OG-NETW-MF-SE-SGA, ESF-2023-OG-NETW-MF-SE-SGA, ESF-2024-OG-NETW-MF-SE-SGA

⁷ The [B-WISE](#) project (Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills in Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs)) should also be mentioned, even though it started before 2021. It is designing an EU strategy to identify and address digital and transversal skill gaps in the WISE sector, supporting inclusive workplaces and long-term employability.

- [baSE](#) (Blueprint for Advanced Skills and Trainings in the Social Economy) develops an EU-level competence framework and modular curricula for social economy practitioners and managers, aligned with twin transition priorities and SEAP actions on skills and capacity-building.
- [ESIC](#) (European Social Innovation Campus) is a blueprint alliance that is establishing an EU learning ecosystem for social innovation and entrepreneurship through partnerships between higher education institutions, VET providers and social economy organisations.
- [ECOPRISE](#) intends to promote a new entrepreneurial model and skillset for a new professional figure – the Ecoprise Designer – that can contribute to local regenerative development, promoting a harmonious coexistence between human life and nature within enterprises. The project will to this end create a multisectoral alliance that brings together higher education institutions (HEIs), VET providers, enterprises and non-profit associations to develop a multidisciplinary course on ecopreneurship.
- [Tech4Impact](#) aims to equip technology-oriented students in HEIs and VET with the knowledge, skills and tools they need to become successful social entrepreneurs.

Under indirect management, the Erasmus+ programme has funded numerous projects across different fields with the aim of developing the social economy and social innovation and embedding them in national systems. Between 2021 and 2025, more than 800 projects or grants for a total EU contribution of EUR 116.36 million explicitly referenced⁸ the social economy, social enterprises, social entrepreneurship and social business.

IV. Horizon Europe

[Horizon Europe](#) is the research, knowledge and innovation pillar of EU support for the SEAP, transforming its objectives into evidence-based and technology-enabled solutions for inclusive growth, circular business models and territorial resilience.

Social inclusion and quality jobs

The [HORIZON-CL2-2024-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-09](#) call for proposals aims to analyse how the social economy contributes to countering social exclusion in the EU and beyond; assess the services it provides and their efficiency, cost and quality; and identify innovative practices (including in care provision and in rural areas). It also examines the working conditions in social economy organisations and provides policymakers with recommendations to overcome policy and legal barriers, strengthen the role of the social economy in providing quality jobs, and support its further development and scaling-up.

This call is funding 4 projects ([ASSETS](#), [DICES](#), [SONYA](#), [WISESHIFT](#), [SEIZMIC](#)) for an EU contribution of EUR 12.40 million.

⁸ Search made via the [Erasmus+ portal](#).

Social inclusion in rural areas

The [HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-1](#) call for proposals aims to build more inclusive, socially resilient and prosperous rural areas by improving the understanding of social inclusion and social economy challenges in rural territories; taking stock of existing policy responses and solutions for providing adequate services to people in a vulnerable situation; and piloting innovative approaches to foster the social economy and enhance social inclusion. The call seeks to analyse the drivers of social exclusion; assess the needs of vulnerable groups, benchmark existing services and initiatives; explore the role and limitations of the social economy; and develop policy recommendations to improve service delivery and create an enabling framework for the growth of the social economy in rural areas.

This call is funding 3 projects ([ESIRA](#), [SERIGO](#) and [INSPIRE](#)) that are directly related to the social economy for a total EU contribution of EUR 14.40 million.

Social innovation

The [HORIZON-EIE-2022-CONNECT-01-02](#) call for proposals aims to raise awareness and ease social entrepreneurs' access to the resources of pan-EU, national, regional and local innovation ecosystems, fostering their active participation by interlinking them with SMEs, start-ups, accelerators, investors, industry, philanthropy and the public sector. The call seeks to mobilise wider access to alternative financing; strengthen knowledge-transfer and capacity-building among innovation actors; support the creation or connection of social innovation hubs; and identify innovation models with potential for scaling-up and replication through digital platforms and the promotion of best practice.

This call is funding 2 projects ([IBESI](#) and [CRAFT](#)) that are directly related to the social economy for a total EU contribution of EUR 1.07 million.

Others

Two calls for proposals ([HORIZON-MSCA-2022-PF-01](#) and [HORIZON-MSCA-2023-DN-01](#)) are supporting doctoral candidates and universities. They have funded two projects related to the social economy for a total EU contribution of EUR 4.40 million. A call ([HORIZON-CL4-2023-HUMAN-01-54](#)) funded one project related to the social economy for a total EU contribution of EUR 0.49 million. Another call [HORIZON-MISS-2022-SOCIALCAT-01-01](#) funded one [project](#) for a total EU contribution of EUR 2.5 million.

V. InvestEU – Social Investment and Skills Window (SISW)

The [InvestEU Programme \(2021–2027\)](#) and its Social Investment and Skills Window (SISW) is one of the main EU tools to support social economy organisations. It transforms EU policies on inclusion, skills and social innovation into scalable investment instruments. InvestEU SISW financial products cover debt and equity instruments that target a diverse set of beneficiaries. These include microenterprises, social enterprises, impact-driven enterprises, individuals (students, trainees) and entities that invest in skills and social infrastructure (e.g. affordable and social housing). InvestEU SISW is implemented by the Commission's implementing partners,

which include the European Investment Bank, the European Investment Fund, the Council of Europe Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Cassa Depositi e Prestiti, Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations, Instituto de Crédito Oficial and Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego. Around EUR 1.2 billion⁹ in guarantees have been allocated to InvestEU implementing partners for microfinance, and social entrepreneurship and social impact investing; these guarantees are expected to mobilise EUR 11.7 billion in investments.

The SISW marks a shift in the EU's funding of social economy organisations. The move from grants to blended finance is improving sustainability in the social investment market.

2.3.3. Shared management programmes

During the 2021–2027 programming period, the EU Cohesion Policy funds under shared management are the largest source of EU support for the social economy. They are implemented through national and regional programmes and provide territorial anchoring, multiannual continuity and structural impact. Four funds contribute directly to the social economy under this framework: (i) the [European Social Fund Plus \(ESF+\)](#), which supports employment, inclusion and skills, (ii) the [European Regional Development Fund \(ERDF\)](#), which finances infrastructure, innovation and place-based ecosystems (including through [Interreg](#) programmes which support cooperation across borders by bringing together partners from different regions in the EU and beyond), and (iii) the [Just Transition Fund \(JTF\)](#), which supports fair and inclusive transitions in the territories most affected by the transition towards climate neutrality.

As of December 2025, data from the [Cohesion Open Data Platform](#) show that a total of EUR 1.410.7 million in EU contributions was programmed under finance code 138 '*Social Economy and Social Enterprise*' across the ESF+, the ERDF (including Interreg programmes) and the JTF. Beyond this targeted support under the intervention code, Member States also provide mainstream support to the social economy entities. For instance, the ERDF can be used to invest in access to healthcare and capacity-building for stakeholders, or to boost the growth and competitiveness of SMEs. Social economy entities can be the final beneficiaries. However, it is difficult to quantify such contributions given the current monitoring framework of the programmes.

The ESF+ accounts for more than 90% of the EU allocation (EUR 1.300.8 million) to the social economy. The ESF+ explicitly recognises the social economy as a driver of inclusive growth and quality employment. Social economy and social enterprises are a specific objective, making ESF+ the core shared management instrument for implementing the SEAP (particularly in the areas of employment, inclusion and skills).

⁹ These amounts are approximative, as a precise split of the amounts allocated and the investment mobilized based on approved InvestEU operations is not possible in all cases.

The ERDF (including the Interreg programmes) and the JTF support investments in infrastructure, innovation ecosystems and capacity-building, as well as measures to accompany the fair and inclusive transition to climate neutrality in carbon-intensive regions.

The ERDF supports investments in infrastructures, innovation and place-based ecosystems. Support for the social economy is explicitly mentioned in recital 19 of the ERDF regulation, which states that *'In order to promote social innovation and inclusive access to high-quality employment, the ERDF should support social economy entities such as cooperatives, mutual societies, non-profit associations and social enterprises'*. Up to EUR 81.7 million of targeted support has currently been allocated to reinforcing the role of social economy actors at the regional and local levels.

The [Interreg](#) programmes support cooperation across borders by bringing together partners from different regions in the EU and beyond. They address shared territorial challenges and foster lasting cooperation through projects that strengthen regional economic and social development. These programmes together contribute to a more united, resilient and prosperous EU. The planned targeted support to social economy with intervention code 138 in Interreg programmes currently amounts to EUR 17 million (EU amount). Several projects funded by the Interreg programmes (e.g. the [Danube for social economy ecosystem](#)) have directly supported the implementation of the SEAP.

Several projects are being funded under the Interreg Europe and the Interreg Central Europe Programmes outside the intervention field 138. These include the Public-Private-Partnership For Social And Solidarity Economy ([3P4SSE](#)), Social Economy Regional Policies For Supporting Social Economy Enterprises ([SECON](#)), Reinforce Regional Social Economy Ecosystems And Stakeholders' Capacity ([RESEES](#)) and Procurement For A Social Economy, Implementation Of Social Procurement For A Sustainable Transition ([PROSECO](#)). These four projects provided support to the social economy for an additional total EU contribution of EUR 6.2 million.

The JTF aims to mitigate the social and economic impacts of the climate transition in carbon-intensive regions. Social economy entities are recognised as eligible beneficiaries of initiatives that promote economic diversification, reskilling and community regeneration. Current allocations under finance code 138 amount to EUR 5 million in EU contributions.