

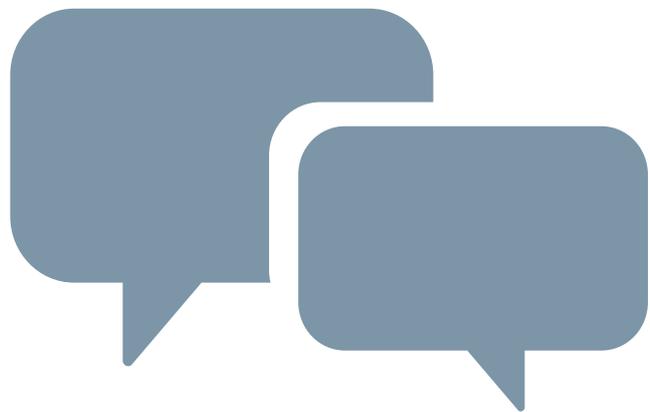


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ONGOING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP FROM GERMANY AND CROATIA



DelFin partners organised eight capacity building seminars, two in each partner region, for local and regional authorities and development agencies: to further promote the tools and financial instruments delivered through the DelFin toolbox; and financial institutions and business support organizations, for the promotion of social entrepreneurship.

Seminars explained the use of developed DelFin tools, shared the practical experiences from pilots, contributed to the debate on what makes a good ecosystem for social entrepreneurship, and what the specific needs and characteristics of social enterprises are.

Bringing together different actors from target groups in seminars aimed at improving the local ecosystems, as well as for the discussions to contribute to a better understanding of what social entrepreneurship needs in terms of financial but also non-financial support.

We bring to you parts of the ongoing conversation with relevant stakeholders from the German and Croatian partner regions.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SAXONY- ANHALT: POTENTIALS FOR MUNICIPALITIES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

How can economic efficiency and community welfare returns be combined as optimally as possible in social start-ups? What accompaniment do social entrepreneurs need from business development? These two questions were the focus of the online seminar "Social entrepreneurship in Saxony-Anhalt: potentials for municipalities and economic development agencies". It was organized by the Merseburg Innovation and Technology Center (MITZ) as partner of the DelFin project, on September 23, 2021.

As a component of the state development strategy, social start-ups make contributions in solving current problems in the coming years, for example in the course of demographic change, as well as helping to improve the quality of life, especially in rural areas. To make this possible, social entrepreneurship needs to be integrated into the local start-up network on the one hand and the framework conditions have to be improved via a differentiated "ecosystem" on the other hand. In order to coordinate this and compensate the disadvantages of rural areas in terms of support, a network office SENSA for the entire state of Saxony-Anhalt is now being created at MITZ.

Three questions for ...

**Marina Dübner, Project Manager Value Creation Potentials,
Location Marketing Mansfeld-Südharz GmbH**

How can social start-ups contribute to the development of rural areas in Mansfeld-Südharz district?

"We see great potential for development here. Innovative approaches to local challenges can emerge in this way. Topics are for example the climate change or the supply in the rural area. In addition, more and more people are focusing on the region's companion services."

To what extent are social start-ups already widespread in the Mansfeld-Südharz region?

"We are still in the early stages and start-up activities in our district are rather below average. First and foremost we want to rise awareness for this topic."

How can you imagine accompanying social entrepreneurs?

"As I said, first we want to rise awareness and attention for this topic. Maybe there are already companies with a social focus. Therefore, the first step is to create local networks for social entrepreneurs and later national ones. One of the planned key projects in structural change for the district is the establishment of an innovation center in the city Lutherstadt Eisleben. This is to be built on the site of the former Mansfeld combine (a former large-scale enterprise). In addition to space for research and development, as well as for education, there will also be room for socially committed projects. The site will help to create and provide bundled access to knowledge. It will help to expand knowledge and thus, also promote exchange. In this way, we will ensure broader visibility in society and sharpen the outward view of visible areas of the site. In brief, the aim is to create a better overview. The toolbox is very helpful in this regard for me."

Online meeting: "Social innovation is looking for founders"

Climate crisis, demographic change or restructuring of agriculture, these and other current social changes are currently gaining importance as motivation for business start-ups. In addition to the intention of doing good, social enterprises bring new food for thought and creative ideas into the public debate. How this approach can be used for the development of rural areas in Saxony-Anhalt was discussed at the online meeting of the Merseburg Innovation and Technology Center (MITZ), "Social innovation is looking for founders" on September 16, 2021. The conclusion of the lively debate: in order to anchor social enterprises more firmly in rural regions support structures and offers should be tailored precisely to their needs in the future.

Three questions for...

Kevin Löber, Head of the Economic Development and Tourism Department of the Saalekreis district:

Saxony-Anhalt wants to improve the framework conditions for social start-ups. What is important in this regard?

"Social start-ups in urban areas naturally benefit considerably if forces can be bundled and well-functioning, established communication structures can be used. The rural area poses particular challenges with regard to networking as well as public support structures. The creation of framework conditions, for example with regard to support programs, is thus only one component. Of particular importance is the commitment in the network."

Against this background, how can the topic also be developed more strongly for the Saalekreis district?

"Opportunities in the field of social entrepreneurship arise from my point of view due to the steadily growing demand regardless of the spatial structure. For example, social services related to the organization of everyday life will also, but not only, experience an increasing demand due to demographic change – also in the Saalekreis district. Economic development can and should therefore offer accompanying services and support to successfully master the step to founding a company."

How can the proximity to Merseburg University of Applied Sciences help in this regard?

"The university is a very decisive player for stronger social entrepreneurship here in the region, not least because of its focus. In addition to the knowledge imparted there, the creative ideas of today's students, who in the best case scenario are the entrepreneurs of tomorrow, and the successful start-up network, are key factors. This is what the online seminar on September 23, 2021 showed: social start-ups also need intensive support and a strong network around them, in addition to entrepreneurial courage."

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP BRINGS VALUE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The seminar "Capacity building of local and regional self-government units for the promotion of social entrepreneurship" was held at the Polytechnic of Karlovac.

The seminar was organized by the Croatian tandem: City of Duga Resa and Brodoto Agency from Zagreb, with the support of associate partners LAG Vallis Colapis and the Cooperative for Ethical Financing (ZEF).

Targeted audiences were business support institutions and local self-government units, to involve them in the ongoing debate about the values which social entrepreneurs bring to their respective local communities.

Three questions for...

Ivana Sesar, Head of the Department for the Establishment and Implementation of financial instruments in the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social politics.

How do you see the future of social entrepreneurship in Croatia?

Although the strategy for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship has expired in Croatia, there are many opportunities provided to social entrepreneurs through European Union regulations. In the Ministry of Labor, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, although we are not policy makers, we are responsible for the implementation of European projects. Creating a critical mass through EU funds and increasing the number of social entrepreneurs will certainly influence decision-makers in Croatia.

Furthermore, the most important goal is to increase the number of real social entrepreneurs in Croatia in order to adopt specific regulations.

How do you think that public bodies can support concrete social entrepreneurship in Croatia?

We as a Ministry can make an impact by helping primarily financially social entrepreneurs. We can also influence the visibility of social entrepreneurship in Croatia by promoting it through examples of good practice. We need to finally explain to the general public what social entrepreneurship is because there is a great deal of misunderstanding. After so many years, social entrepreneurship is still mixed with socially responsible business. If the general public understands the concept of social entrepreneurship, we will find it easier to promote it.

Can social entrepreneurship help the public sector?

It definitely can. Social entrepreneurs are known for being innovative. The system is slow and sluggish and is not often innovative. The system can learn a lot from social entrepreneurs and thus understand how important innovation is and that the world of entrepreneurship is constantly changing.



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