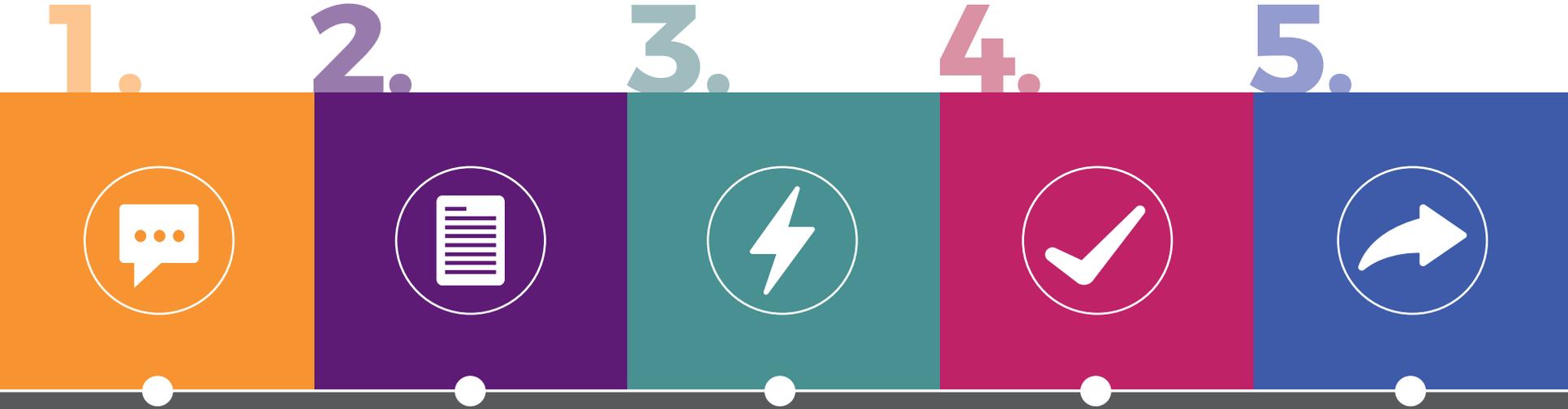




# STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

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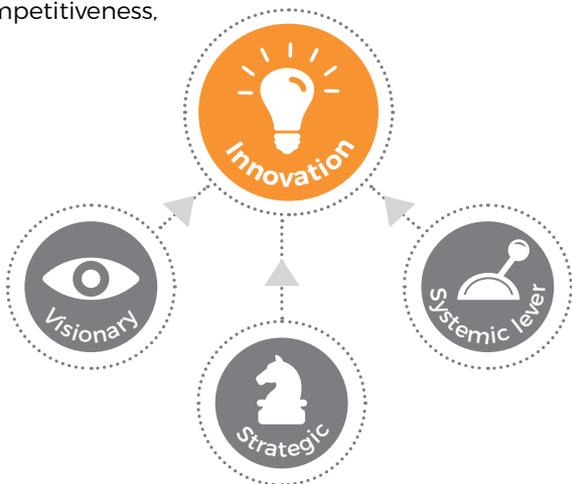
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# 1 Introduction.

## An Invitation

Social enterprises, by their very nature, are innovative by creating new ways of doing business which incorporate the triple bottom line of people, planet and profit. With a more considerate and broader approach to doing business, social enterprise is a 21st Century response to issues within our society, environment and an increasingly volatile global economy. The ability to positively contribute to each of these issues, is a unique set of characteristics that has a vital part to play in making our modern world a better and fairer place.

**Innovation** is a **visionary, strategic** and **systemic lever** to effect business breakthroughs, competitiveness, growth and value.



Innovation enables organisations to prosper and flourish in an unpredictable global climate. Organisations that can use innovation as a disruptive change mechanism will outperform their competitors, and create new markets by improving customers' experiences and, in the case of social enterprises, increasing and improving the social and environmental impact made.

**The Spark Project** is unique in its approach to supporting the impact and sustainability of social enterprises specifically, through increasing both their capacity and capability to innovate. Innovation is crucial to all business, although the complexity of social enterprise, with its triple bottom line of means the need to innovate is ever more critical. Innovation for social enterprise is, therefore, more complex and, in turn, requires a distinctive support environment.

**To make this happen**, it is not enough to have innovation-driven social enterprises in isolation, they need an environment with strong and responsive institutions, supportive policies, public awareness and stimulating resources. Gleaning and sharing international knowledge, experience, influences, inspirations and innovations will lead to an expansion and strengthening of the phenomena of social enterprise.

**The Spark Project partners** invite stakeholders to join us in achieving the strategic goal for social enterprises to reach their potential in creating sustainable and high impact innovations. Together we will enable social enterprises to map innovation, gain support, create partnerships and access the conditions to innovate successfully, sustainably and with high impact.

## Sign up

- Sign up to this strategy
- Commit to take action
- Be part of a better and fairer future

# 2 Context.

## Social Enterprise & Innovation



### Social enterprises are businesses that:

- Have a social or environmental mission
- Generate at least a quarter of their income through selling goods and services
- Have organisational autonomy and reinvest the majority of their profits to further their mission

**Innovation is a powerful force**, which can transform organisations through making new products and techniques possible, helping us reach important audiences in new ways, or making us more efficient. However, innovation can also be costly and distracting, and many struggle to know when and how innovation is worthwhile, or even possible.

**In the optimum environment**, social enterprises are able to address inequalities in society, the modern world's negative impact on the environment and economic instability in innovative ways, generating solutions that have mostly eluded governments, the voluntary sector and for-profit businesses, or at least been out of reach for these sectors. Unlocking this potential requires capable entrepreneurs who understand the innovation process and have access to the right support, partnerships and conditions.

The European Commission conference 'Social Enterprises and the Europe 2020 Strategy' stressed that:

**“Social enterprises are drivers of social innovation and act as vehicles for employment creation, sustainable growth and cohesion”.**

Combining both economic and social aims is in itself an act of innovation, requiring the development of new strategies, marketing approaches, organisational processes and partnerships. However, the need to innovate across all areas of business can be a challenge with limited 'tried and tested' models to build on. Many social enterprises are struggling to meet their potential through developing innovations that are both high impact and sustainable.



## Social Enterprise & Innovation (continued)

The 2015 European Commission report 'A map of social enterprises and their eco-systems in Europe' concluded that:

**“Understanding of social enterprise [is] required across Europe as the basis of future national and European research and policy development - including identification of the range of features and relationships that could comprise an effective and efficient ecosystem for social enterprise development.”<sup>1</sup>**

**Currently there is no clear methodology** for the consistent harnessing of sustainable social enterprise innovation, alongside a lack of joint tools and services for their development and this has a detrimental effect on innovation driven social enterprises, which cannot exist in a vacuum, but need a supportive and knowledgeable local, national and global environment in which to operate, namely the innovation system which encompasses:



The actions and the interactions of the relevant institutions, authorities and influences including the physical and financial infrastructure



The availability of skills and the relevant resources



The social and political climate

# 2 Context.

## The Spark Project - An Introduction



Spark Social Enterprise is an Interreg 2 Seas project enabling social enterprises to develop and deliver more sustainable and high impact innovations leading to increased growth.

Drawing on the existing range of knowledge, tools, networks and methods that support innovation we are refining the overall conditions that influence their development.

To achieve our aims, the project is:



Developing this evolving strategy and action plan



Building a social enterprise innovation accelerator network



Establishing a new innovation model to promote and facilitate sustainable innovation within social enterprises



Delivering a cross-border innovation accelerator programme for established social enterprises

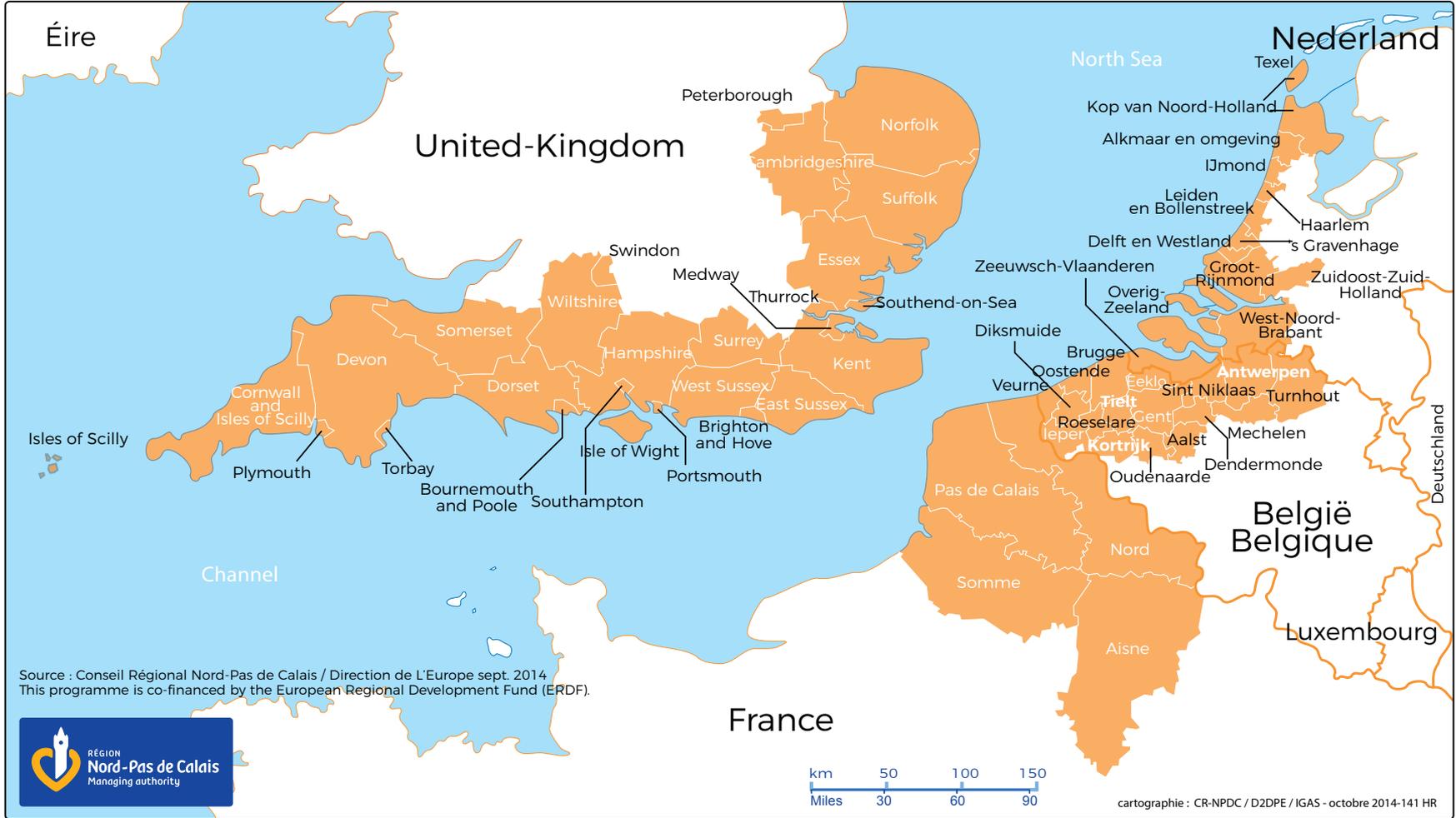


Creating an online innovation tool for start-up social enterprises

**The strength, value and inspiration** of this project is magnified by cross border collaboration. Partners in England, Belgium, Holland and France are working as a team; sharing expertise and experience, learning together and building a cross border network, to ensure the highest possible outcomes are reached for social enterprises in the region and beyond. In each region we have identified challenges and opportunities to develop solutions for regional stakeholders to implement which will improve the innovation system and support innovation in social enterprises.



# The Spark Project - An Introduction (continued)



## The Spark Project – An Introduction (continued)

**The Spark project** started in 2016 with extensive cross-border social enterprise innovation research with social enterprises, support organisations, public sector bodies, policy makers, researchers and wider stakeholders. The aim of the research was to gather information on the participant's experience of innovation; the barriers and challenges faced, what has assisted in the past and what might need to be in place in order to pursue further innovation.

**The research has led** to a clearer understanding of the effective processes and journeys involved in social enterprises achieving sustainable and high impact innovations. The findings have underpinned the development of the strategy and action plan, innovation model, accelerator and design of the startup tool. To facilitate a forum for the wide range of stakeholders involved in any aspect of the project, the Innovation Accelerator Network is the bringing together of a community of people and organisations from across sectors who want to support social enterprises to innovate for growth.

**The Social Enterprise** Innovation Model underpins the project through articulating a process for social enterprises to achieve sustainable and high impact innovations. The model draws from the insights developed in the research phase and will be tested and developed through the innovation accelerator and startup programmes.

### Project partners:



The Platform, UK (Lead Partner)



University of Brighton

University of Brighton, UK



West Sussex County Council, UK



Social Innovation Factory, Belgium



DePunt, Belgium



Seinwezen, Netherlands



Nord Pas de Calais, France (Observer Partner)

# 2 Context.



## Cross-Regional Differences

Cross regional analysis of the Spark research conducted in the 2 Seas Region suggests that there are key cross regional differences in the support and conditions for innovation available to social enterprises.

### Belgium

**When compared to** other regions, social enterprise in Belgium has:

- More focus on the commercial aspects of running their businesses in terms of management, innovation and commercialisation
- Good access to commercially focused support specifically for innovation activities
- Found it more difficult to engage with higher education institutions
- A more complex support environment that can be difficult to navigate
- Pressure to create social impact straight away

### Holland

**When compared to** other regions, social enterprise in Holland:

- Had advanced methods of measuring social impact which allowed them to more effectively market their products and services and seek further funding

- Has received interest at a local and national level
- Is more likely to go beyond local impact and tackle challenges on an EU scale
- Has good relationships with local authorities to engage in exchange of knowledge in order to better support their activities and improve consistency in policy implementation.
- Has challenges in engaging with local government administration which was not well structured to meet their needs

### United Kingdom

**When compared to** other regions, social enterprise in the UK:

- Is more developed as a concept and has greater support infrastructure in place
- Has a legal form 'Community Interest Company' which can be selected by social enterprises to meet their legal and operational needs
- Mostly focus on local issues making it more difficult for them to scale up
- Is experiencing a blurring of the line between mainstream business and social enterprise as there is a shift to the belief that all companies should aim to have positive social and environmental impact.

### Impact of cross regional difference

**While social enterprises** benefited significantly from the support they have received, this was often uneven and took different forms across each region which can have an impact in terms of innovation practices, social impact, and profitability. The difference in the level of awareness about the value of social entrepreneurship in each region may also have an effect on the support available to them from local governments, higher education, and financial institutions.



# 3 Spark Strategy.



## Strategic Goal

**The strategic goal** for this strategy and action plan is to enable social enterprises to reach their potential in creating sustainable and high impact innovations through working collaboratively with a range of partners across-borders.

By drawing on the best of each region's existing range of knowledge, tools, networks and methods of supporting social enterprises, the strategy will act as a conduit to strengthen interaction and collaboration ensuring a bridge across all players in the field encourage a more coordinated and navigable framework.

## Methodology

**The priority areas** and actions have been developed through analysis of the Spark research and consultation. The process has included:



Assessed the variation of concept, infrastructure and vision within each region



Identified strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats that exist for each region



Cross-border comparisons; establishing alignments, differences, needs and opportunities

Consultation on the strategy and action plan will be carried out with a range of stakeholders for robust feedback to ensure we can achieve our goals.

Social enterprises, businesses, experts, policy makers, researchers, the public sector, social enterprise support organisations and individuals are invited to join us and contribute actions to the action plan to promote collaboration and create impact.

## Making it happen

**To make this** strategy happen we are working with a range of partners across borders and sectors through our evolving strategy action plan which we will deliver between now and September 2019. The actions will be co-ordinated through the Spark project partners working in collaboration with a range of businesses, experts, policy makers, researchers, the public sector, social enterprise support organisations and individuals.

Together we will provide the skills, expertise and impetus to deliver the strategy through the action plan enabling social enterprises to map innovation, gain support, create partnerships and access the conditions to innovate successfully, sustainably and with high impact.

## Priority areas

**The Spark Project** research of social enterprises, stakeholders and social enterprise support organisations has been used to identify key priority areas and actions that will affect the most change through the delivery of the Spark Strategy and Action Plan. Detailed actions are included in the action plan section of this document.

# Priority 1 - Understand to Innovate

## Outcome

Social enterprises, support organisations and wider stakeholders have an improved understanding of high impact and sustainable innovation in social enterprise.

## Success Indicators

200

Social enterprises use the innovation model as a map to improve their innovation process

75%

Social enterprises using the innovation model will report an increase in their ability to innovate more effectively

30%

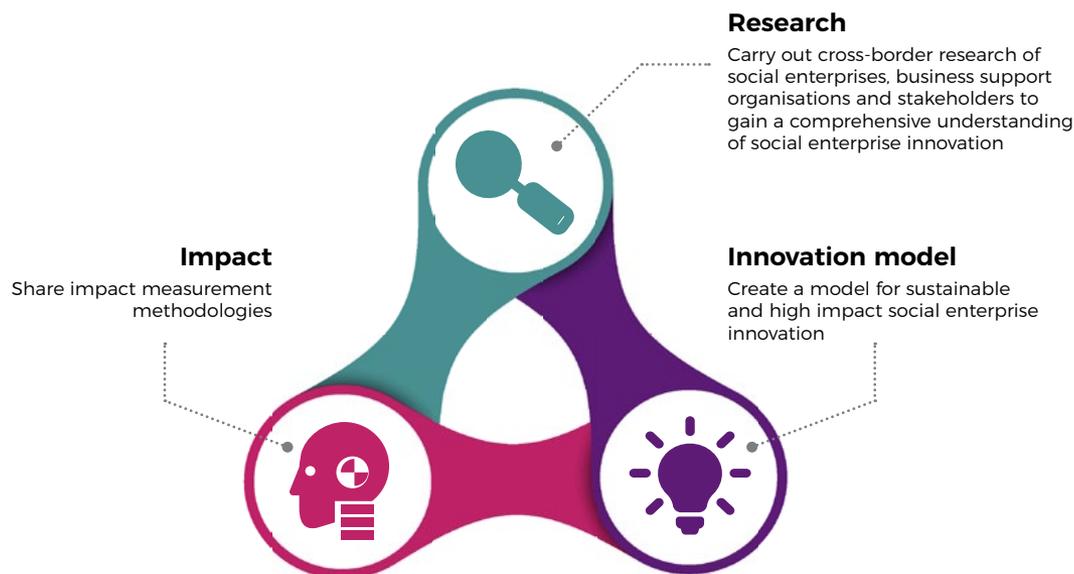
Social enterprises using the innovation model report delivering a sustainable and high impact innovation in their organisation

## Target Audience

Social enterprises, social enterprise support organisations, wider stakeholders

## Areas of Action

See action plan for detailed actions



# Priority 2 - Support to Innovate

## Outcome

**Social enterprises are able to access the support they need to develop sustainable and high impact innovations**

## Success Indicators

30

Social enterprise support organisations integrate aspects of the innovation model and tools into their support offerings

100

Social enterprise support staff report an increase in skills to deliver support in Social enterprise innovation by using the innovation tools

2

Social enterprise innovation support programmes are created

## Target Audience

Social enterprises, social enterprise support organisations

## Areas of Action

See action plan for detailed actions

### Space and time to innovate

Provide time efficient innovation spaces and opportunities

### Innovation tools

Create a social enterprise innovation model, tools and delivery methods

### Innovation programmes

Create social enterprise innovation programmes

### Consistent support

Promote more consistent social enterprise support and signposting across regions



# Priority 3 - Connect to Innovate

## Outcome

**Social enterprises are able to make the connections and partnerships they need to create sustainable and high impact innovations**

## Success Indicators

300

Social enterprise support organisations integrate aspects of the innovation model and tools into their support offerings

200

Social enterprises and innovation specialists attend networking events

20

Social enterprises develop innovation projects with universities, R&D centres and innovation specialists



Increase in the number of social enterprises developing public sector partnerships

45

Social enterprises take part in cross border partnership building activities

50%

Social enterprises engaged report an improvement their ability to create sustainable and high impact innovations as a result of connections and partnerships formed through the network

## Target Audience

Social enterprises, social enterprise support organisations, research and development organisations, universities, public sector, mainstream business

## Areas of Action

See action plan for detailed actions

### Cross border partnerships

Create opportunities for cross border partnerships to develop

### Public sector engagement

Facilitate opportunities for social enterprises to create innovation partnerships with the public sector

### Partnership development

Facilitate partnership development skills and opportunities

### Access to innovation and impact specialists

Enable better access for social enterprises to engage with R&D organisations, universities and innovation coaches



# Priority 4 - Conditions to Innovate

## Outcome

**Social enterprises have better conditions to enable them to create sustainable and high impact innovations**

## Success Indicators

- 

Policy makers and external stakeholders have gained new knowledge to support the delivery of improved conditions for social enter
- 

Public sector organisations develop methods of more effectively adopting social enterprise innovation
- 

New finance providers facilitate access to funding for social enterprises to innovate
- 

Increase in social enterprise marketing activities
- 

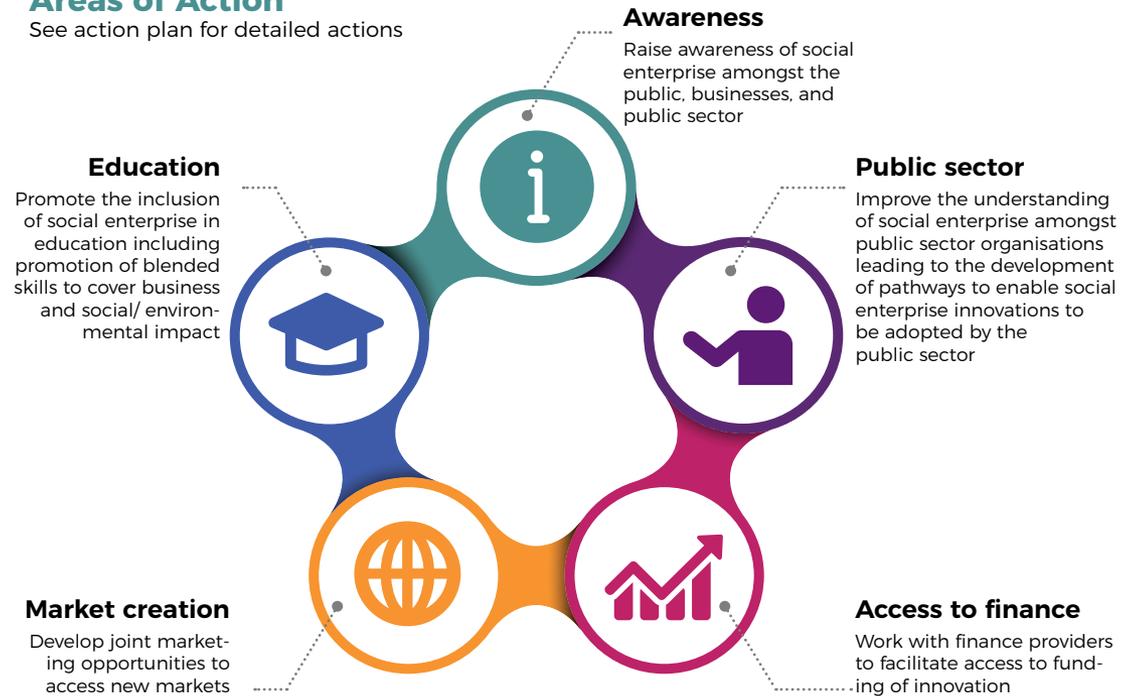
Increase in inclusion of social enterprise in education at schools, colleges and universities

## Target Audience

Social enterprises, social enterprise support organisations, research and development organisations, universities, public sector, business, finance providers, colleges, schools, members of the public

## Areas of Action

See action plan for detailed actions



# 4 Get involved.



15

**“Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world; indeed it’s the only thing that ever has”**

– Margaret Mead

There are many ways you can get involved in making the strategy happen whilst having the opportunity to collaborate and form partnerships with a range of people and organisations who support the Spark project and are passionate about enabling social enterprises to innovate for growth.

## **Contribute to or create an action for the plan**

If you can contribute to any of the actions or would like to create a new one that will help us achieve our strategy then please get in touch with your in-country contact to discuss how to get involved:

**Holland** - Andre Brasser, Director at Seinwezen  
[andre@seinwezen.nl](mailto:andre@seinwezen.nl)

**England** - Emma Turner, Social Enterprise Network Manager at The Platform  
[emma.turner@theplatform.org.uk](mailto:emma.turner@theplatform.org.uk)

**Belgium** - Pieter Werrebrouck, Coördinator Bedrijfsadvies at De Punt,  
[Pieter@depunt.be](mailto:Pieter@depunt.be)

## **Join the Spark Innovation network**

The Social Enterprise Accelerator Network is a collaboration of people and organisations from across sectors who support the Spark project to enable social enterprises to innovate for growth.

- Be part of a community supporting social enterprises to develop and deliver innovation for growth
  - Connect, collaborate and form partnerships with other professionals to create a thriving cross-border social enterprise support network
  - Attend social enterprise innovation accelerator network events in England, Belgium and Holland
  - Contribute to the cross-border social enterprise innovation strategy and action plan to influence policy and the growth of the sector
  - Support social enterprises to innovate and grow but providing support, expertise and training
  - Learn and share expertise
  - Grow as a social enterprise ambassador
  - Receive our regular newsletter to hear about the latest thinking and developments
- Sign up now through [LinkedIn](#).

## **Visit our website**

Visit our website to find out about the latest developments, book an event and watch this space for our online innovation tool for social enterprises [www.sparksocialenterprise.eu](http://www.sparksocialenterprise.eu).



# 5 Action Plan. Priority 1



Areas of action	Action	Action by	Country	Progress
<b>Priority 1 – Understand to Innovate</b>				
<b>Research</b>	Carry out primary and secondary cross border research on innovation in social enterprise with social enterprises, support organisations and stakeholders	University of Brighton, Social Innovation Factory, De Punt, Seinwezen	UK, Belgium and Holland	
Add your action  				
<b>Innovation Model</b>	Develop an innovation model to facilitate the social enterprise innovation journey	University of Brighton	UK, Belgium and Holland	
Add your action  				



# Priority 1 – (continued)

Areas of action	Action	Action by	Country	Progress
<b>Priority 1 – Understand to Innovate</b>				
<b>Impact</b>	Promote the use of Impact Wizard to support social enterprises to understand and develop their impact	All Spark Partners	UK, Belgium and Holland	
<b>Add your action</b>  				

# Priority 2



Areas of action	Action	Action by	Country	Progress
<b>Priority 2 – Support to Innovate</b>				
<b>Innovation tools</b>	Explore and develop innovation tools to complement the social enterprise innovation model for inclusion in innovation programmes	All Spark Partners	UK, Belgium and Holland	
	Promote the innovation model and tools to social enterprise support organisations through events and networks			
<b>Add your action</b>  				
<b>Consistent Support</b>	Simplify signposting to business support on Social Enterprise Innovation website for startups	University of Brighton	UK, Belgium and Holland	
	Create closer links with social enterprises support organisations to share good practice	All Spark Partners		
	Present the benefits of providing consistent social enterprise support across regions to public sector organisations, funders and sponsors			
<b>Add your action</b>  				



# Priority 2 – (continued)



Areas of action	Action	Action by	Country	Progress
Priority 2 – Support to Innovate				
Innovation learning programmes	Develop and deliver an Innovation Accelerator programme for established social enterprises	West Sussex County Council, DePunt, Seinwezen	UK, Belgium and Holland	
	Develop and deliver an innovation programme for startup social enterprises	The Platform, Social Innovation Factory, Seinwezen		
	Provide support in the development of group innovation projects for social enterprises	West Sussex County Council,		
	Explore the provision of short work experience and shadowing opportunities to enable social entrepreneurs to learn from other sectors	West Sussex County Council	UK	
Add your action  				



# Priority 2 – (continued)

Areas of action	Action	Action by	Country	Progress
<b>Priority 2 – Support to Innovate</b>				
<b>Space and time to innovate</b>	Develop an e-hub for social enterprises on the innovation accelerator to develop innovation skills in their own time	West Sussex County Council, DePunt, Seinwezen	UK, Belgium and Holland	
	Develop a website for startup social enterprises to develop their innovation in their own time	The Platform, Social Innovation Factory, Seinwezen	UK	
	Cultivate opportunities for social enterprises to participate in crowdsourcing, hakathons and innovation challenges	The Platform		
	Develop affordable options for social enterprises to access the space they need	The Platform, De Punt	UK, Belgium	
	Create links for social enterprises with Kennemer Knowledge Centre	Seinwezen	Holland	
<b>Add your action</b>  				

# Priority 3



Areas of action	Action	Action by	Country	Progress
<b>Priority 3 – Connect to Innovate</b>				
<b>Partnership development</b>	Create an Innovation Accelerator Network for SocialEnterprises through cross sector social enterprise innovation events and a LinkedIn group	All Spark Partners	UK, Belgium, Holland, France	
	B:Talks development and promotion to encourage partnerships	Seinwezen, Dopper	Holland	
	Hold 'Seats to Meet' events	Seinwezen		
	Enrich existing social enterprise networks with shared learning and contacts developed through the Spark Project	The Platform, Social Innovation Factory, De Punt, Seinwezen, Region Pas De Calais	UK, Belgium, Holland, France	
<b>Add your action</b>  				



# Priority 3 – (continued)



Areas of action	Action	Action by	Country	Progress
<b>Priority 3 – Connect to Innovate</b>				
<b>Access to innovation and impact specialists</b>	Provide innovation clinics at Innovation Accelerator Events	The Platform, De Punt, Seinwezen	UK, Belgium and Holland	
	Facilitate access to innovation and impact specialists through referrals at events and through programmes	All Spark Partners		
	Provide social enterprises with initial one to one session for free	De Punt	Belgium	
<b>Add your action</b>  				
<b>Public sector connections</b>	Social Enterprise Strategy and action plan events to promote sign up to actions	All Spark Partners	UK, Belgium, Holland,	
	Hold a 'Meet the Buyer' Event for social enterprises to meet procurement teams	West Sussex County Council	UK	
<b>Add your action</b>  				



# Priority 3 – (continued)

Areas of action	Action	Action by	Country	Progress
<b>Priority 3 – Connect to Innovate</b>				
<b>Cross border partnerships</b>	Inviting social enterprises from across borders to collaborate through cross-border innovation programmes and innovation project	West Sussex County Council, De Punt, Seinwezen	UK, Belgium, Holland, France	
	Develop a virtual cross-border 'buddy' network with participants in the Innovation Accelerator	West Sussex County Council	UK, Belgium, Holland	
	Facilitate cross-border partnerships through the Innovation Accelerator Network	All Spark Partners	UK, Belgium, Holland, France	
<b>Add your action</b>  				

# Priority 4

Areas of action	Action	Action by	Country	Progress
<b>Priority 4 – Conditions to Innovate</b>				
<b>Awareness raising</b>	Promoting social enterprise through websites, events, meetings and through social media	All Spark Partners	UK, Belgium and Holland	
	Supporting social enterprises to link up with larger national social enterprise awareness campaigns such as Social Saturday, Social Enterprise Day and Buy Social Corporate Challenge	All Spark Partners, SEUK	UK	
	Placing a sign promoting social enterprise on a building in a public area	The Platform		
<b>Add your action</b>  				
<b>Public sector engagement</b>	Hold a Social Enterprise Innovation Event for MEPs in Brussels	Social Innovation Factory	Belgium	
	Liaise with public sector to create alliances that promote innovation amongst social enterprises on request	West Sussex County Council	UK	
	Engage with public sector stakeholders to develop procurement and commissioning processes that support social enterprises to apply			
<b>Add your action</b>  				

# Priority 4 – (continued)



Areas of action	Action	Action by	Country	Progress
<b>Priority 4 – Conditions to Innovate</b>				
<b>Access to finance</b>	Provide regular funding panels where social enterprises can pitch	Social Innovation Factory and DePunt	Belgium	
	Promote funding pathways through innovation programmes	All Spark Partners	UK, Belgium and Holland	
	Work with finance providers to develop pathways for innovation funds	The Platform	Belgium	
<b>Add your action</b>  				
<b>Market creation</b>	Support regional social enterprises to engage with Buy Social and Corporate Challenge campaigns			
	Create a Buy Social Directory for the Greater Brighton Area and promote to businesses and consumers	The Platform	UK	
	Create and distribute a guide to buy social for companies and public authorities in East Flanders	De Punt	UK, Belgium, Holland	
	Developing routes to market for energy co-operatives for collective solar roofs	Seinwezen	Holland	
<b>Add your action</b>  				



# Priority 4 – (continued)

Areas of action	Action	Action by	Country	Progress
<b>Priority 4 – Conditions to Innovate</b>				
<b>Education</b>	Develop a social enterprise challenge for schools	The Platform	UK	
	Develop partnerships with universities to promote social enterprise in the curriculum through showcasing social enterprise at Innovation Network Events	The Platform, De Punt, Seinwezen	UK, Belgium and Holland	
	Network with academics to promote inclusion of social enterprise and social enterprise internships in courses	All Spark Partners		
<b>Add your action</b>  				



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# THANK YOU

