



## Sociale InnovatieFabrik

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The Belgian ecosystem related to social enterprises is characterized by fragmentation, as social enterprise policy is largely within the competence of regional authorities, and often at the crossroads of several public bodies. Moreover, the domain of social enterprise is not addressed directly at policy level, but rather subsumed under policies that concern other fields (such as employment, innovation, the economy etc.). This is not to say, however, that policies in support of enterprises are lacking – quite the contrary, there is a spectrum of support measures and programs spanning different sectors.

### Presentation

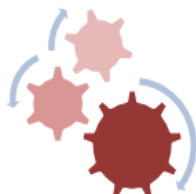
Sociale InnovatieFabrik (“The Social Innovation Factory”) is a networking organization jointly established and co-financed by civil society organizations, social enterprises, private companies and the Flemish government. The network enables its stakeholders to address social challenges in an entrepreneurial way by incubating innovative societal solutions in Brussels and Flanders.

Since 2013, the centre gathers a community of social innovators who support and coach other aspiring entrepreneurs with an innovative social idea through the development process by exchanging experiences and knowledge. Through The Social Innovation Factory, entrepreneurs can also request a feasibility study and (co-) financing by the regional government.



#### Idea Generation

- Idea campaigns
- Vision Sessions
- Networking



#### Idea Enrichment

- Enrichment modules (social impact measurement, solid financials, analysis of target audiences)
- Co-creation sessions
- Social innovation competition
- Training offer
- Partners matchmaking

#### Help in Idea Realization

- Guidance on financing of a feasibility study or pilot phase

Source: Sociale InnovatieFabrik, 2013

## Implications

During its early years, Sociale InnovatieFabrik has worked with four target groups – the public, innovators and enablers from civil society groups, social enterprises, and companies. While the Factory encourages all actors to build a solid financial business model for their innovative idea, it does not exclude projects that generate societal gains only, without financial returns.

More than 400 innovators have tested and validated their ideas within the Factory, which receives a constant influx of new candidates. While most are not embedded in an organisational structure (individuals), existing social enterprises innovate there as well. Furthermore, by focusing on a brokering role within a huge network, aiming to connect innovators with mentors, Sociale InnovatieFabrik has achieved an even greater impact.

The Factory has managed to reach a very wide and diverse audience in a relatively short time, raising awareness about social innovation and social entrepreneurship among civil society actors. Moreover, a cultural shift within civil society has been noticed, with the emergence of a new impact-related language and openness to new ways of financing.

Going forward, as the network continues to develop, there are issues that will need to be addressed. So far Sociale InnovatieFabrik has noted few innovations by existing social enterprises – the network tends to incubate new entities into existence. This represents untapped potential, as established companies could draw their connections into the network, thus contributing to its expansion. Another topic to be dealt with are exit strategies – how should the Factory facilitate the process of withdrawing support from its beneficiaries.

## More information

- For more information about the Belgian ecosystem for social enterprise:  
[Social enterprises and their eco-systems: A European mapping report: Belgium](#)
- [Training Showcase Social Innovation Factory: an accelerator for social innovation & entrepreneurship in Flanders and Brussels](#)
- [Boosting Social Enterprise Development: OECD Good Practice Compendium](#)

## Contact

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