

**S.E.E.D**

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND  
ECOSYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

# **GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS**

Social Entrepreneurship and Ecosystems Development



**Co-funded by  
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**Disclaimer:** This document has been prepared within the SEED project. The definitions and concepts used in this document are not legally or formally established and/or confirmed by official authorities. This guide largely summarises the “Manual description Social Entrepreneurship”. That manual provides more detailed explanations on the different topics.



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## 1. Introduction: why social entrepreneurship in VET?

Social entrepreneurship connects entrepreneurial skills with societal impact. Students learn to identify societal challenges (inclusion, circularity, wellbeing), design practical solutions, collaborate with stakeholders, and measure impact. This aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the demand for value-driven professionals. [THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development](#).

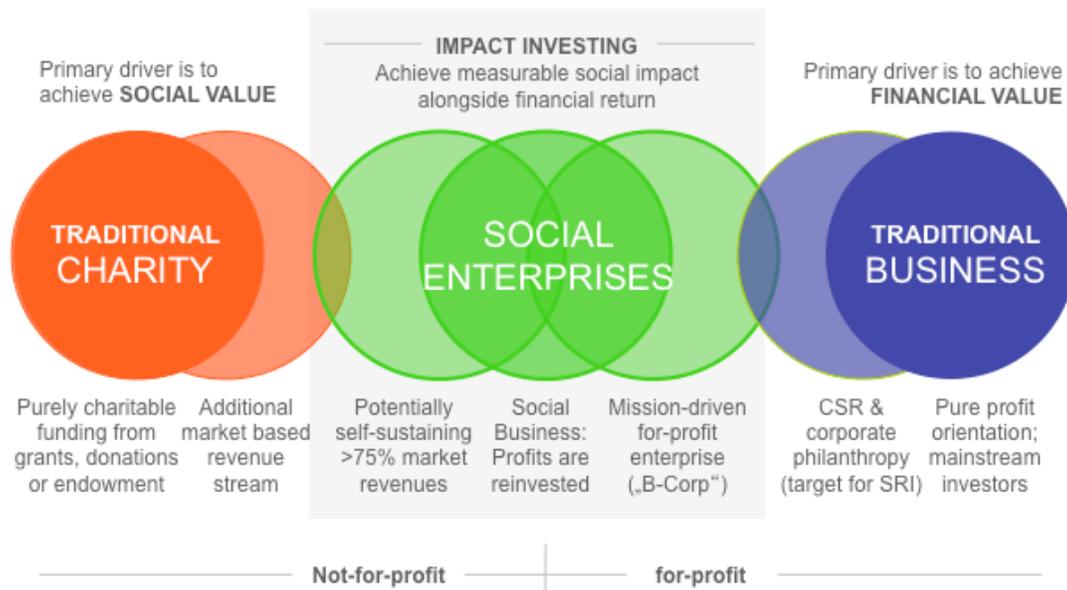


## 2. Working definition

A social enterprise is a private organisation (e.g., company, foundation, cooperative) that offers products or services on the market, with a primary social or ecological purpose explicitly recorded. Profit is a means and is (partly) reinvested. The enterprise identifies stakeholders, engages with them periodically, reports transparently on social value, and operates its strategy independently.

Social entrepreneurship comprises the skills, processes and governance to run such an enterprise sustainably..

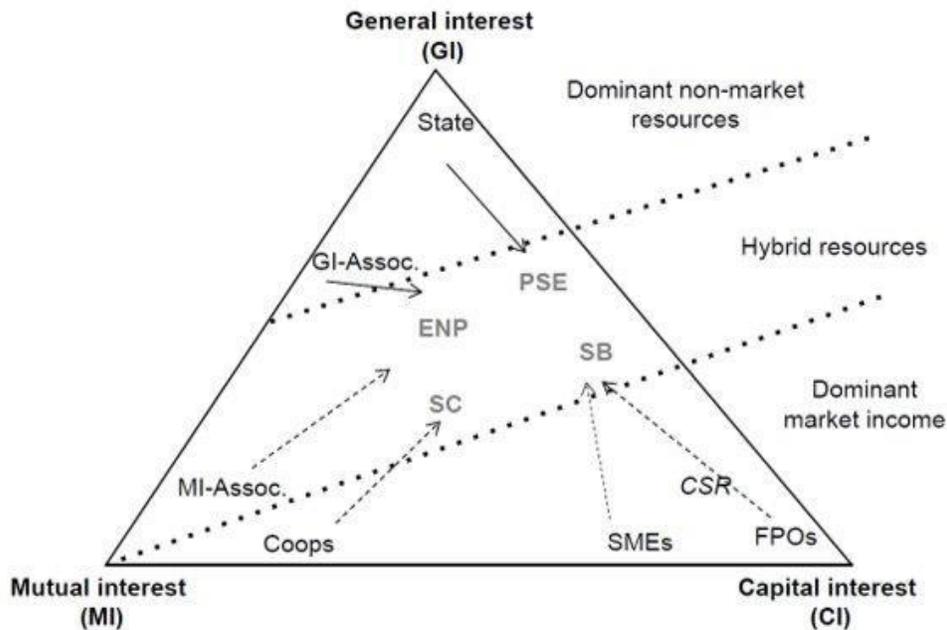
### The business model spectrum revisited



Source: Adapted from J. Kingston Venturesome, CAF Venturesome, and EVPA.

### 3. Three “principles of interest” (triangle model)

The three drivers are: capital interest (CI), mutual interest (MI) and general interest (GI). Social enterprises blend these interests and vary in market orientation, public support and philanthropy.



Social enterprises mix these interests in different proportions. They often sit between the extremes: neither purely profit-driven nor purely philanthropic. The model shows that:

- CSR initiatives of commercial firms can move towards GI.
- Cooperatives may shift from MI towards GI by embracing broader societal goals.
- Non-profits that develop market activities move towards CI.

Additionally, the resource mix matters: some social enterprises rely strongly on market income, others on subsidies or donations. The triangle model makes these hybrid positions visible and helps students understand that social entrepreneurship is a spectrum rather than a fixed category.

## 4. Models of social enterprises

There are four common models of social enterprises:

**ENP – Entrepreneurial Non-Profit:** Non-profit with market activities that support its mission.

**PSE – Public-Sector Social Enterprise:** Market-oriented spin-off/outsourced public services working more independently.

**SC – Social Cooperative:** Cooperative that combines member interest with general interest.

**SB – Social Business:** Commercial enterprise pursuing blended value (profit and social mission).

Note: these models are not strict categories. New social enterprises can emerge anywhere in the triangle, and hybrid forms (e.g., partnerships between businesses, non-profits and municipalities) are common.

Table 0.2 SE models and diversity of social missions

<i>Social mission</i>	<i>Work integration</i>	<i>Access to health or social services</i>	<i>Ecological transition</i>	<i>Fight against social exclusion, access to housing, culture, social finance, etc.</i>
<i>SE models</i>				
Entrepreneurial non-profit	WISE implemented by a charity	Association providing home care services for the elderly	Second-hand associative shop	NGO providing training to migrants
Public-sector SE	WISE implemented by a local public authority	Local public body providing social services on a quasi-market	Joint initiative of municipality and citizens to produce renewable energy	Social-housing public agency
Social cooperative	Cooperative WISE	Cooperative of health-care professionals	Citizens' cooperative in short circuits for organic and local food	Social-finance cooperative
Social business	Social venture whose primary social mission is to hire vulnerable people	Residential care institution launched by a social worker	small and medium enterprise (SME) providing compensation for CO <sub>2</sub> emissions	SME active in fair trade

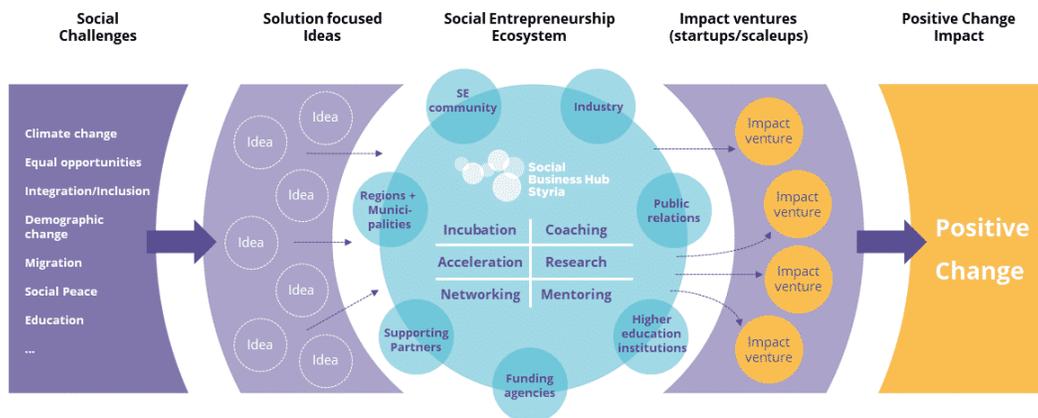
Defourny, Nyssens & Adam

Source: Based on Defourny and Nyssens (2017a: 2488).

## 5. Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem (SEE)

All entrepreneurs are in some way dependent on others: on customers and clients, but also on providers of housing/locations and on organisations that set rules for businesses and for products or services. These dependencies are often – but not always – mutual. For example: a company developing machines to recycle plastic depends on impact businesses that buy those machines to recycle. The whole system of these dependencies forms the ecosystem of (social) entrepreneurship.

The journey of a student interested in social entrepreneurship and that of a founder of a social enterprise at the start of their venture share a common starting point: both want to solve a social or environmental issue. This begins with being moved by a societal challenge, such as climate change or education, which leads to solution-focused ideas that underpin starting a social enterprise, supported by the surrounding ecosystem.

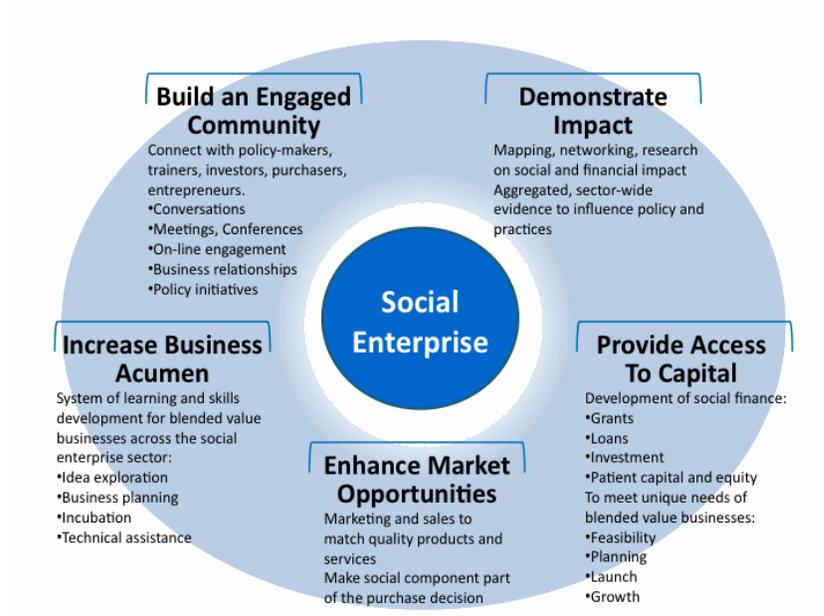


A SEE is therefore a multi-layered network environment of actors (entrepreneurs, education, financiers, government, intermediaries, community) that collectively create conditions for sustainable solutions. Market opportunities and community-building are not only responsibilities of the social entrepreneur but also of the SEE, because a social entrepreneur cannot succeed alone and depends on others.

### Five dimensions:

- **Engaged community and networks:** Events, help desks, inclusive work opportunities.
- **Market opportunities and access to markets:** Platforms, SROI, procurement, joint selling locations.

- **Learning and skills development:** Education collaboration, coaching, start-up support, SDG education.
- **Political recognition and the role of municipalities:** Action programmes, affordable locations, one-stop-shop.
- **Access to finance:** Funds, banks, impact investors, blended finance.



The table below provides examples of stakeholders per dimension

SEE-dimensie	Voorbeelden	Stakeholders
Engaged community and networks	Events, helpdesks, inclusive work opportunities	Intermediaries, social enterprises, citizens
Market opportunities and access to markets	Platforms, SROI, joint selling locations	Municipalities, businesses, social enterprises
Learning and skills development	Education collaboration, coaching, start-up support	Education institutions, hubs, entrepreneurs
Political recognition and the role of municipalities	Action programmes, affordable locations, one-stop-shop	Municipalities, policymakers, intermediaries
Access to finance	Funds, banks, impact investors	Financiers, social enterprises, investors

## 6. Skills for social entrepreneurship

A successful social entrepreneur needs a mix of general entrepreneurial skills and specific capabilities that are particularly important in mission-driven contexts.

### 6.1 Soft skills (transversal)

- Communication (pitching, storytelling)
- Empathy & emotional intelligence
- Networking & relationship management
- Creativity & innovative thinking
- Problem solving & critical thinking
- Leadership & motivation
- Resilience & stress management
- Ethics & social responsibility

### 6.2 Hard skills (technical/business)

- Financial management & fundraising (budget, cashflow, subsidies)
- Business & strategy development (value proposition, impact model, CSRD basics)
- Legal/regulatory (statutes, asset lock, GDPR, social reporting)

*See the annex “Table Skills” for further elaboration*

## 7. Practice examples

Examples from the Netherlands, Finland and Italy

### The Netherlands:

- Turquoise (foundation): work for refugees; mix of subsidies and hospitality revenue. [Home - Stichting Turquoise](#)
- SMAAK Haarlem: learning workplace for youth with disabilities; WMO/LTC financing + hospitality. [Restaurant SMAAK Haarlem: Lekker gezonde biologische lunch, koffie en take-away](#)
- MeltUp (Plasticworkshop/Snippr): circular products from local plastic; market-driven + collaboration. [MeltUP \(@meltup.nl\)](#) • [Instagram-foto's en -video's](#)
- Spaarne Werkt (participation company): PSE-like; assignments + WSW subsidies. [Spaarne Werkt - Verbindt mens en werk](#)
- Brownies & Downies: national formula; care budgets + hospitality. [Brownies&downieS - Wij maken lunchen leuker! | Nederland](#)
- Sûr Atelier: slow fashion with status holders; Participation Act contributions + sales. [Sûr Atelier - sociaal & duurzaam kledingmerk](#)
- NyHAVN Conceptstore: sustainable retail. [Conceptstore NYHAVN - cadeauwinkel Haarlem](#)
- Juttersgeluk (ANBI): beachcombing, upcycling; donations/subsidies + sales. [Home - Juttersgeluk beach cleanup foundationJuttersgeluk](#)

### Finland – definities en voorbeelden:

Social enterprises have a primary goal of societal benefits and use most profits for the general purpose. Typical goals: wellbeing, inclusion, employment for people with partial work ability, local vitality and ecology.

- Eloisa Welfare Region Management: public steering and procurement from the third sector. [Eloisa - Etelä-Savon hyvinvointialue](#)
- Tornado Theatre: community musicals, volunteers, ticket sales. [www.tornis.net](#)
- Kulttuurikellari (Savonlinna): artistic hub; restaurant + venue rental; no city funding. [Savonlinnan Kulttuurikellari | tapahtumat savonlinna | Olavinkatu 34, Savonlinna](#)
- Puruvesi Service Home / Louhumäki Homes: care/housing with health-care subsidies. [Savas brochure in English 2025](#)
- Elävä Foundation & Toimintakeskus Outi Rahikainen: secondhand/WISE; mix of municipal subsidies and sales. [Yhteystiedot - Savonlinnan toimintakeskus](#)
- Yhdistystalo Kolmonen: umbrella of 160 associations, member financing. [Etusivu - Savonlinnan Seudun Kolmonen ry](#)
- TUVA: preparatory education with entrepreneurial skills (ENP).

**Italy – legal framework (ETS & Legislative Decree 112/2017):**

- Public deed, explicit social purpose, non-profit; profits/surpluses earmarked for the purpose or asset increase.
- Responsible and transparent management; social report and financial statements filed.
- Broad stakeholder involvement; volunteers ≤ 50% of workers.
- Legal forms: associations, foundations, committees, partnerships and companies (not single-member), cooperatives, consortia; religious entities under conditions.
- Sectors: social/health/education/culture/environment/social housing/migration/microcredit/social agriculture/sport/re-use of confiscated assets/fair trade/ labour re-integration>



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## 8. Role of education and partnerships

### Co-creation with social entrepreneurs

Educational institutions can collaborate with social enterprises to develop projects and assignments in which students work on real-world social issues. Consider:

- Internships and learning workplaces at social enterprises (e.g., hospitality, circular economy, care).
- Practice-based research: students conduct market research, impact measurement or develop a business model.
- Hackathons or challenges: students co-create solutions to local social problems with entrepreneurs.

It provides students a realistic context, strengthens their soft skills (communication, collaboration) and shows how entrepreneurship can have a social impact.

### Intermediaries and hubs

Organisations such as impact hubs or local platforms (e.g. Stadsgarage in Haarlem, [Stichting Stadsgarage](#)) offer:

- Coaching and mentoring for start-ups.
- Impact Booster programmes: short trainings in strategy, impact measurement and financing.
- Networking events: students can participate to build networks.

Intermediaries connect education, businesses, and government. They foster ecosystem development and offer students access to a broad network.

### Municipalities

Municipalities play a key role by:

- SROI linkages (Social Return on Investment): municipal contracts requiring social impact create opportunities.
- Procurement and purchasing policies: municipalities can include social enterprises in strategies.
- Locations and space: affordable workplaces for start-ups and social enterprises.

Municipalities create policy frameworks and market opportunities. Students learn how policy influences entrepreneurship and how collaboration with government works.

## Financiers

Social enterprises often have a hybrid financing model. Partnerships with financiers can give students insight into:

- Impact funds: investors seeking both returns and societal impact.
- Microcredit: small loans for start-ups.
- Blended finance: combinations of grants, loans and private investment.

Financing is crucial for the sustainability of social enterprises. Students learn how to develop a business case and which financing options align with their mission.

## Regional platforms

Platforms such as Kennemer Impact Platform ([Kennemer Inkoop Platform](#)) ensure:

- Visibility of social enterprises.
- Matchmaking between entrepreneurs, education, government and businesses.
- Joint selling locations and impact days.

Regional platforms strengthen the ecosystem and provide students with practical access to local networks and projects.

## 9. Common challenges

### **Market access and visibility**

Social enterprises often struggle to make their products or services visible in a competitive market. They compete not only on price but also on values (impact, sustainability), which aren't always immediately apparent to customers.

Solution: Strong storytelling and transparent communication about social impact. Consider certifications, impact labels, and social media campaigns.

### **Balancing the financing mix**

Social enterprises often operate with a hybrid revenue model: market revenue, subsidies, and donations. Ensuring financial stability can be challenging when subsidies are withdrawn or market revenue fluctuates.

Solution: Develop a blended finance strategy and teach students how to build a business case that appeals to impact investors.

### **Quality of governance and reporting**

Transparency and ethics are crucial. Stakeholders (municipalities, financiers, clients) want to know how social value is being achieved. Preparing social annual accounts and complying with the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) can be challenging.

Solution: Have students practice impact reporting and ethical decision-making.

### **Team wellbeing**

Social enterprises often work with vulnerable groups or small teams. There are potential risks such as burnout and decreased motivation.

Solution: Include stress management and resilience in the curriculum, including practical tools like mindfulness and time management.

## 10. Opportunities

### EU-trends (Social Economy & CSRD)

The European Union encourages social enterprises through policy and regulations. The CSRD requires companies to report sustainability information, which offers opportunities for social enterprises that are already strong in this area.

*Educational opportunity:* Students will learn how European frameworks (CSRD, Social Economy Action Plan) are opening up new markets.

### Local action programs

Municipalities are increasingly developing impact programs (like Haarlem). Social enterprises gain access to networks, subsidies, and joint marketing.

*Educational opportunity:* Students can participate in local challenges or projects..

### Education as an innovation force

Educational institutions can serve as living labs for social innovation. Students develop prototypes for circular products or inclusive services.

*Educational opportunity:* Project-based work on real-world social issues strengthens entrepreneurial skills.

## 11. Conclusions and next steps

- Social entrepreneurship offers VET students relevant, future-proof skills.
- Integrating soft and hard skills plus understanding of models and ecosystem is crucial.
- Use country cases (NL, FI, IT) for context-aware, case-based learning.
- Start with a 4–6 lesson module and regional partnerships.
- Organise an impact day and structural collaboration with intermediaries and municipalities.



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