

TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITY BUILDING WORKSHOP

T 2.2

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List of Abbreviations

BSO	Business Support Organization
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
GSG	Global Steering Group for Impact Investment
NGO	non-governmental organization
PA	Priority Area
SE	Social enterprise
SIB	Social Impact Bond
SII	Social Impact Investment

Introduction

The project **Finance4SocialChange** aims to develop an ecosystem supporting social entrepreneurship and social impact investment (SII), propagate innovative financial instruments and promote social impact investment-ready social enterprises in the Danube region.

This document delivers a summary on the workshop called “**Transnational Community Building Workshop**” that was organized in the frame of the closing conference of the project in Hungary, Budapest on 25. November 2021.

The workshop focused on the summary of project implementation by partners and stakeholders and delivers recommendations for further networking.

The first part of the report provides descriptive information about the planning and organization of the workshop while the second part deals with the findings and conclusions that can be drawn from the workshop’s discussions and exchanges.

1. Workshops organization

Workshop objectives

The workshop was organized by IFKA Ltd. within the frame of Activity 4.3 Strategy Development- Social Impact Investment Community Council (pool of mentorship network) to support the elaboration process of the strategy.

The workshops aimed at:

1. The reflections on the project **led by Anna Mészáros**, the project manager of Finance4SocialChange project at IFKA
2. Strength, weaknesses of the project and possible future cooperation of project partners

Target audience and participants

The Transnational Community Building Workshop targeted primary the project partners, but in wider sense all other participants (as they were in fact taking part in the event) involved in the social entrepreneurship ecosystem namely local, regional and national policymakers, (impact) investors and financial intermediaries but also business support organizations (BSOs) and social enterprises. In addition, all project partners and associated strategic partners were invited. The hosting partner was IFKA Ltd. Table 1 provides an overview of the workshop participants. The detailed lists of participants are given in Annex 3.

Table 1: Participants of the workshops

Host	Project Partners	SEs	Investors	BSO, capacity-builders	Policy-makers	Other	Total stakeholders	Total participants
IFKA	38	5	9	9	10	3	36	74

Workshop format

The workshop was organized in hybrid form (Budapest/online), including summarizing presentation from the lead partner, a free discussion among project partners and other participants of the conference also took part. Agenda and some pictures of the workshop are given in Annexes 1 and 2. The event was held in English. Table 2 provides descriptive information about the workshop.

Risk management

The COVID crisis directly impacted the organization of the workshop. In spite of the pandemic situation getting worse the participants were enthusiastic to take part in the event and registration was high, 94 people all together; however, actual participation was slightly lower, 80 people, out of which 57 was present and 23 followed the whole programme online. Even though it had been planned as a hybrid workshop from the very beginning it was still hit by the fifth COVID-19 epidemic wave preventing a number of participants to travel to Budapest, especially from Germany and Austria.

2. Major findings from the workshop

This workshop had a specific thematic focus on project implementation, the strength, weaknesses of the project and possible future cooperation of project partners and stakeholders. The workshop

Review on the project by Project Partners based on questions sent in advance

led by Anna Mészáros, PM, Lead Partner, IFKA Ltd.

Partners agreed:

It can be stated that the project was pretty successful despite the

- big partnership,
- the change of some members of the consortium
- COVID situation

Strengths:

- strong project management (strictness and clearness)
- strong – best! - financial support
- good workpackage leaders
- all partners are very good
- so much to learn during implementation, good experience

Weaknesses or things to improve in future project proposals:

- complicated application form
- length of project (if there was 2 more years, it would be perfect)
- too complex structure – at the beginning: who is doing what?
- internal and external communication:
 - tool was not available at the beginning;
 - lots of similar projects on the market
- lack of regular meeting at the beginning – later monthly project meetings were very useful
- stakeholder's engagement:
 - too many meetings, councils in the project plan, only partly successful, not really visible results
 - too many committees
 - BUT: SURPRISED BY intensive Unicredit engagement
- in countries where the ecosystem is small, different/more careful planning is needed

The partners agreed, that community building worked well on project level

Future cooperation: it would be good to be able to offer sg else, new, therefore

- to ask stakeholders what they would be interested in,
- to make a questionnaire about future plans, ideas
- PPs should stay in touch

The stakeholders participated in the workshop also expressed their opinion on project implementation; earlier they joined the networking events for the networking opportunities, learned about policies targeting SE's and the social entrepreneurship and got information on the new financial instruments and practices. The stakeholders also participated actively as trainers, mentors in the AIRMOOC and AIRCOMPETITION events, and contributed to the development of action plans.

Based on all these activities, the stakeholders think the achievements of the project is above average. But, the main objective of the Project, the improvement of the social impact investment and financing of SE's in the region was partly achieved. Their favourite activities and results of the project were the AIRMOOC, the AIRCOMPETITION, the connected trainings and mentoring.

Stakeholders' recommendations:

- The SE's (but also the impact investors) need mentoring and training not just in the starting (startup) phase, but also in their later life and business circle.
- More active communication, better management skills is needed at the start of the project, as well as more active involvement of stakeholders and policy makers

Conclusion & recommendations

The aim of F4SC was to create an expert network supported by policymakers and stakeholders in order to create common understanding of social impact investment markets and ecosystems in the Danube region. Participation is volunteer and free of charge. The core mission is to create a core group of committed policymakers and a robust, diversified range of intermediaries who are willing to and able to coordinate and actively catalyse the strategic development of the social impact investment markets in the DR in terms of financial resources as well as the legal and political scope for action.

The expert network was given different names during project implementation, like Social Impact Investment Council, Policy and Technical Advisory Boards, Policy Focus Groups etc., the real networking worked only on Project Partner level, with little support from outside experts. In the first one and the half years of implementation of the project there was no clear direction on implementation beside the AF, and the lack of communicable achievements resulted weak community building exercise. Starting in 2020, with the AIRMOOC and AIRCompetition, with a significant improvement in communication, the results started to show. More than 400 participants registered for AIRMOOC, 243 SE's applied with their business cases in the competition. On the investor side, impact investors, Unicredit Bank and independent experts took an active part in evaluation of the projects and mentoring of the finalists.

The most important learnings from the process are:

- A simple construction of the network is more effective, rather than putting together different councils, supporting bodies.
- A good base for community building are good, visible results, and effective communication.
- In the Danube Region – due to the diversity of the SII markets- a common strategy for approaching social impact investors is hard to handle. The private investors prefer individual approach even within the given country. The fund managers of social impact investment funds with their bigger ticket size are even harder to involve.

The community building works well in the Danube Region with capacity builders, mentoring organisations, which themselves are often part of other different networks.

Annex 1:

Link: <https://zoom.us/j/99827584473?pwd=SHFWSWF3TVNzVkRmeXZzbjJPa3N1Zz09>

Host: IFKA Nonprofit Ltd.

Contact person: Anna Mészáros
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AGENDA

Transnational Community Building Workshop

Link: <https://zoom.us/j/99827584473?pwd=SHFWSWF3TVNzVkRmeXZzbjJPa3N1Zz09>

Host: IFKA Nonprofit Ltd.

Contact person: Anna Mészáros
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16:00 – 18:30

Reflections on the project (IFKA Ltd. LP)

Review on the project based on questions sent in advance by Project Partners

Anna Mészáros

Project Evaluation Toolkit for Period 7

Moderator: **Bence Janek** / IFKA Ltd.

Annex 2: Printscreens of the workshop

TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITY BUILDING WORKSHOP

Figure 1: Presentation of Anna Mészáros, IFKA Ltd.



Figure 2: Group photo - Partners



Annex 3: List of participants

TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITY BUILDING WORKSHOP
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