



Support Network for Social Entrepreneurs

Hello,

We are delighted to publish the first newsletter for Support Network for Social Entrepreneurs (SuNSE). This first edition has been created to let you know about the project, what we are looking to achieve and introduce each of the partners involved in this exciting 3-year programme.

What is the Support Network for Social Entrepreneurs?

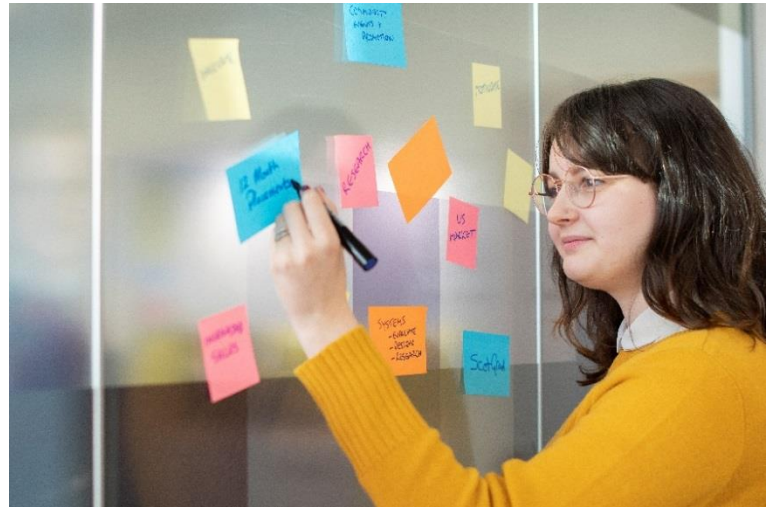
SuNSE is an exciting and ambitious 3-year project, aiming to support, nurture and grow social entrepreneurship across North West Europe. Our partnership is made up of 9 organisations, from 8 countries, representing a diverse range of economies and geographies.

The project will develop a network of social entrepreneurship hubs across Europe. The hubs will support ambitious individuals to establish locally-based social businesses, which will not only create career opportunities for themselves, but will help regenerate areas experiencing market failure, through job creation and delivery of products and services vital for community resilience.

SuNSE will test and trial different approaches to delivering support to social entrepreneurs (such as virtual delivery, pop-up shops, semi-permanent spaces and peer networking) utilising the transnational expertise across the partnership. Through sharing good practice, delivery techniques will be refined and adapted as the project develops. As we grow our network, participants will be encouraged to link in with an international peer group.

Why is Social Business Important?

Social businesses trade like any other business, but at their core they have a social purpose and reinvest profits to deliver social, community or environmental benefits.



Each of the partner regions represent varied socio-economic landscapes; from urban areas in the city of Heerlen, to the sparsely populated Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Despite these diversities, the regions share key challenges, presented by the remoteness of their communities, including; limited access to stable full-time employment, lack of key service provision and the outmigration of both young and highly skilled individuals.

As a result, the areas experience limited entrepreneurship, fewer business start-ups and low levels of regeneration.

SuNSE will draw upon these collective challenges, using a collaborative approach, to foster community development and help re-establish vibrant, confident and resilient communities, building an entrepreneurial mindset and culture, at a local level.

Who We Are

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Acting as Lead Partner for SuNSE, we are Highlands and Islands Enterprise, an ambitious organisation with a unique remit from the Scottish Government that integrates economic and community development.

Our remarkable region covers more than half of Scotland's land mass with a complex geography, incorporating the UK's highest mountains, a fjord-like coastline and around 100 inhabited islands.

The Highlands and Islands is a region home to a vibrant social enterprise sector. However, it is also a region of sparsely populated areas and remote communities, which presents a range of social and economic issues.



Isle of Skye, with a view to the Cuillin mountains.

Across the Highlands and Islands, we are developing 4 hubs to support social entrepreneurs. Each hub will be tailored to the needs of the geographic area in which it is located and the specific needs of the communities and individuals it will serve.

The hubs will run for 18-months, allowing participants to develop their own social business ideas and providing them with the skills, business acumen, support network and most importantly the confidence to take it forward.

For further information on HIE's activity, please contact helen.lavery@hient.co.uk or visit <http://www.hie.co.uk/>

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council



Situated at the centre of the South Wales valleys, we are Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, a unitary authority with around 63,000 residents across our 55 square miles.

The communities of Merthyr Tydfil have experienced protracted socio-economic challenges for very many years. But over the last decade, MTCBC has been active in delivering various and ambitious regeneration projects.

The Council's Community Regeneration team has been successful in securing extensive EU and other external funding to support the growth of social business, tourism, retail and small manufacturing sectors.

Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Public Protection Cllr Geraint Thomas said "While it was once the iron capital of the world, Merthyr Tydfil is currently the smallest of the local authorities in Wales.

“Heavy industry was the town’s past, but tourism, retail, light manufacturing and the service and public sectors are its present - and social enterprises are a significant part of its future.

“Having met the SuNSE partners, we’re confident that sharing the excellent best practice we’ve all undertaken in this area is going to help us continue to provide a dynamic environment for social enterprises to thrive and prosper.”

For further information on MTCBC activities, please contact

Alex.Stephens@merthyr.gov.uk

The University of Greenwich

We are the Centre of Innovation, Imagination and Inspiration (I3Centre), located in the Faculty of Business at the University of Greenwich. We have led on entrepreneurship and innovation for 10 years.

Professor Chris Birch, Founder, commented “I initially founded the Centre as I wanted to encourage, support and nurture students who have an idea that they want to turn into reality. These could be commercial, social or community oriented. The Centre has supported thousands of would-be entrepreneurs in this period, and we are delighted to be part of SuNSE. We bring expertise in practical and accessible social enterprise course development to the project, hopefully to create support materials that you will find useful and which will help you to realise your dreams and aspirations.”



The image above shows, the soon to be, specialist University Centre for Research and Enterprise. The Centre for Innovation, Imagination and Inspiration will move here, and at the heart of their current agenda will be supporting both new, and growing, social enterprises. As SuNSE develops over the next three years, updates on progress will be shared.

For further information, contact C.J.Birch@greenwich.ac.uk or visit <https://enterprise.gre.ac.uk/>

Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

We are Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. We are a local authority, in rural Northern Ireland, serving a population of c. 139,000. As a Council, we are committed to developing the local economy by creating opportunities, supporting local business and encouraging new investment. In addition to the regulatory standard public services we provide, we also work to stimulate local economic development, supporting business solutions, rural development, regeneration and tourism.

LCCC currently provides support to private businesses, through SuNSE we will improve mechanisms to provide tailored support for social entrepreneurs.

Collaborating with the SuNSE partnership will support us in designing, developing and implementing this new programme of support. It will allow us to explore social innovation hub models as a means of delivery and encourage the consideration of social business as a viable career option in our region.

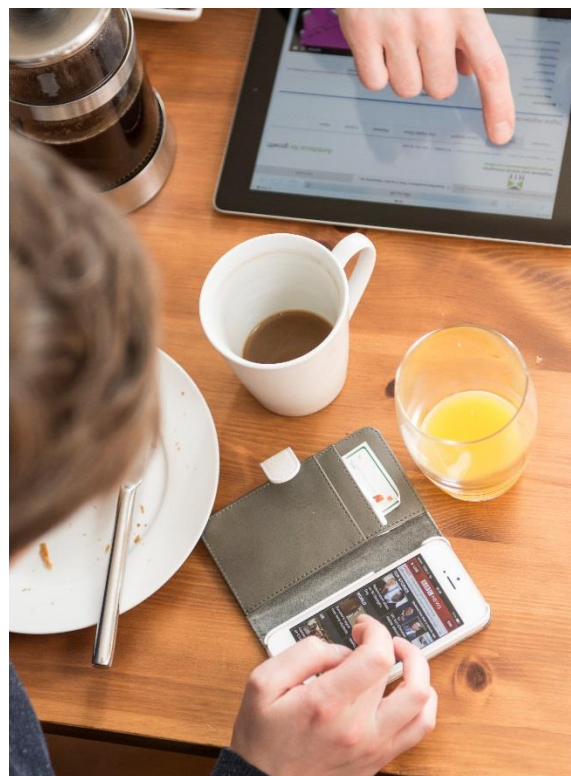
For further information, please contact emma.fearon@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk

HKU University of the Arts Utrecht

We are one of the largest educational institutions for the arts, culture and media in the Netherlands. Our work is closely linked to the cultural and creative industries at local, regional national and European levels. We were the first institution to launch a degree in Games and Interaction in the Netherlands.

We will use our existing knowledge and expertise, in state-of-the-art-gaming and interaction technology, to aid in the development and design of an innovative digital learning platform for SuNSE.

We are also exploring how business support tools, mainly designed for use in urban areas, can be adapted and be more relevant, to rural social businesses.



South East Business Information Centre

Established in 1995, we are the South East BIC, a specialist provider in the Irish Government's portfolio of support to indigenous industry, supported by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

We provide support to entrepreneurs and existing companies at every stage of a project's development, from start-up support with incubation space, feasibility studies and business planning and investor readiness, through to expansion of existing businesses into new markets or new product development. Our team at South East BIC has extensive business exposure, technical expertise and the commercial and financial skills needed to help entrepreneurs.

South East BIC is part of an expert network of similar BICs in Ireland and over 200 Business and Innovation Centres throughout Europe.

For further information, please contact soates@southeastbic.ie or visit our website <http://www.southeastbic.ie/>

City of Louvigné du Désert

The City of Louvigné du Désert is a rural municipality in Brittany, which implements a strong voluntarist policy in terms of revitalisation and regeneration of its territory, to increase the attractiveness of the region and reverse the demographic trend of depopulation.

As part of the SuNSE project we will be involved in the development of a transnational support network and in our region we will develop a social innovation hub. The hub – called Villa Numérique – will serve as a ‘base camp’ for a travelling team that will tour the region to meet young people, support them and develop social entrepreneurship.

Working with the SuNSE partnership will help us to raise awareness of social entrepreneurship and to promote social economic models as a lever for the development of our region.

To carry out this project, LDD will work in close collaboration with the TAg35 Organization and the Fougères Agglomeration Community.

For more information, please contact guillaume.foucault@louvignedudeseert.org



On 7th February, LDD and TAg35 held a public meeting to raise awareness of SuNSE and social entrepreneurship.

Community Council of Heerlen

We are the Community Council of Heerlen, which is a former coal mining region located in a disadvantaged area of the Netherlands. The area has been negatively impacted with the transition to natural gas, replacing the need for coal mining industries. 70,000 families lost their income and unemployment has been a significant issue within the region. To combat these issues, we at the Council, together with the Province of Limburg, the Ministry of the Interior, the nearby Maastricht University and Open University have developed targeted actions to tackle youth unemployment.

The SuNSE project will allow us to work closely with the universities, through the institute Neimed. We will use this expertise to support social initiatives in the area.

For further information, please contact linda.frints@neimed.nl.

Ecotransfaire

We are a social impact company, active in the Greater Region (Luxembourg, France, Germany, Belgium). We specialise in project engineering, for sustainable development and energy transition.

We develop projects in the field of innovation and circular economy, acting as a facilitator for local economic development. Our activities focus on; short supply chains (food), circular economy, sociology of the urban environment, community engagement and local development.

Our work, through the SUNSE project, will lead to the development of a transnational social entrepreneurship hub network. We will use our expertise from previous cross border programmes to support the development of hub models. We will compare these models and business support delivery methods from across the partnership, to gather best practice and measure impacts.

Working with the locally based solidarity economy cluster, Le Cluster ESS Grande Région will contribute to developing a unique European network of social entrepreneurship hubs, which will have significant and long-term impacts from their operations.

For further information, please contact ftheate@ecotransfaire.eu



A view across Luxembourg City during our SuNSE Steering Group Meeting, June 2019.

What's Next?

We look forward to sharing the SuNSE journey with you. It is an exciting time for social entrepreneurship and innovation. We hope to raise awareness of the opportunities that the social business sector can offer, from creating jobs to uniting communities.

Keep an eye on our webpage for progress <http://www.nweurope.eu/projects/project-search/sunse-support-network-for-social-entrepreneurs/>

The next edition of the SuNSE Newsletter will be available in December 2019.

Farewell for now,

SuNSE Partnership