

# SOCIAL INNOVATION IN SLOVENIA

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## *What is the history of social innovation in your country - what has been happening in the last 10 years?*

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A number of social innovation projects in Slovenia have been launched in last decade. The majority of them have come as a result of individual entrepreneurial initiatives within more innovative organisations. Having said this, there is no overview or historical research on social innovation (SI) in Slovenia. This is due to the fact that the field is largely under-developed and there is a lack of a supporting environment for social innovators, including a scarcity of data.

The organisation of the first Slovenian Social Innovation Competition in 2012, which saw over 50 social innovation projects participate, was an important step which promoted SI and placed it on the agenda for the first time. The increasing popularity of social innovation can now be noticed by the number of responses submitted to different calls and tenders for funding from public sources (both national and local) where social innovation is often listed as a key selection criteria. There is however no harmonized methodology for evaluating social innovation projects.

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## *What challenges are being addressed by social innovation?*

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The social innovation projects tackle a range of problems in Slovenia, including:

- Long-term unemployment
- Youth unemployment
- Inclusion of marginalised groups such as Roma
- Sustainable and impact tourism
- Technological social innovation such as apps for disabled people (e.g. mobile app for people with visual impairments)
- Education (e.g. new educational models)
- Social finances (e.g. round up models, microcredits with crowd guarantees)

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## *Who are the key actors? - What kind of businesses, what parts/levels of government, which sectors support social innovation if anything? What other organizations are involved in doing social innovation? What about citizens or local communities?*

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At **government** level there are two key actors:

- Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
- Ministry of Economic Development and Technology

Until recently, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities had been coordinating social entrepreneurship activities. However, this area has now been transferred to the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, where the focus now lies more with entrepreneurship and less with social innovation and inclusion. It is not clear which governmental body will promote social innovation in the future, if any.

Most of the support for social innovation is provided by **third sector** organisations, such as:

- Fund 05 – foundation for social investments ([www.sklado5.si](http://www.sklado5.si))
- Social Innovators of the Future ([www.socialni-inovatorji.si](http://www.socialni-inovatorji.si))

The **Fund 05** is a private foundation whose aim is to provide impact investment and other support to different social ventures, social entrepreneurs and innovators. The Fund 05 is also the organiser of the Slovenian Social Innovation Competition (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015).

The **Social Innovators of the Future** is a program of Društvo mladinski ceh (Youth Guild Association), which supports young social innovators and entrepreneurs with incubator and accelerator programs, educational programs and infrastructure.

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### *Who is promoting social innovation?*

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There are a few events that promote social innovation:

- **Slovenian Social Innovation Competition** - run by Fund 05
- **Days of Social Economy** - run by Slovenian Association for Mental Health (ŠENT) and the Union of private institutes (SKUP)
- **Social Innovation Camp** - run by Social Innovators of Future (Youth Guild Association)
- **SIXPO** – run by a group of volunteers.

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### *Please share a few of the key projects that illustrate social innovation in your country?*

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#### *PREMIKI travel agency (by ŠENT)*

PREMIKI travel agency is a provider of accessible tourism products, such as holidays and sightseeing trips tailored to the individual's wishes and abilities. This includes people in wheelchairs or with mobility issues; people with hearing and visual impairments; people with intellectual and psychological disabilities; the elderly, etc.

#### *EXIT (SKUP – Association of private institutes)*

EXIT is an innovative program on active inclusion for residents of safe houses and other users of social programs in Slovenia. EXIT program provides counseling, venture support and educational trainings for unemployed mothers.

#### *Social Innovators of the Future (Youth Guild Association)*

Social Innovators of the Future is a program run by the Youth Guild Association which looks to support young social innovators and entrepreneurs. The program offers training, incubation and acceleration programs as well as consulting and infrastructure support.

The program specialises in connecting technology and social innovation to create new solutions and products for organisations that are tackling the most pressing societal problems.

#### *Sotra – the store for open hearts*

SOTRA is a new form of store, which supplies affordable basic products to the most vulnerable group of buyers whose buying ability has been strongly affected by the recent economic crisis. Connecting the suppliers and buyers with an income of less than 490 € per month, SOTRA creates a new market for basic goods.

#### *Impact Tourism – tourism with impact*

Impact Tourism's objective is the inclusion of visitors in innovative touristic products which have a positive impact on society ([www.impact-tourism.net](http://www.impact-tourism.net)).

Social Impact products are designed within the Impact5 model. These include building local partnerships with local tourist and non-governmental organisations, the inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups, positive environmental impacts including sustainable tourism principles, fairer

financial models distributing funds to solve local problems in society, and having a positive impact on visitors and their social responsibility.

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### *Disclaimer*

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There is a lack of any competent study on social innovation in Slovenia. There are no accepted standards, nor criteria regarding what constitutes social innovation. Therefore, it is hard to source and include all relevant stakeholders.