

## Social Entrepreneurship in Estonia, Ireland and Malta – discovering new collaboration opportunities together

The closing of the European Union co-financed FOSO POCO project has created a strong foundation, whilst opening new doors, for collaboration between social economy stakeholders from Tartu (Estonia), Cork (Ireland) and Malta.

The one-year project, entitled ***Fostering Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystems post Covid19*** – in short FOSO POCO – which is co-financed by the EU's COSME programme, comes to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> January. It has proven a significant collaborative platform to support Tartu City Government, Cork City Council and Malta Enterprise in their individual and joint endeavors to improve their understanding of their respective local social enterprise ecosystems, to collaborate closer and get to know better their key stakeholders as well as developing potential ideas for support for the social economy in their respective regions.

Around 50 stakeholders from the three partner regions joined the project's closing event organized online, recently. Participants hailed from the public sector and business support organizations, as well as from enterprise, academia, education and the services sector.

During the closing event the three partners presented their project experiences and concurred that the project had allowed to build a stronger collaboration with stakeholders, and increased awareness about their social enterprise ecosystem both in their respective organisations as well as in the wider community. The partners also agreed that the good practices presented at the three workshops, and the ensuing discussions between participants hailing from a variety of cultural and economic backgrounds, experiences and interests, has helped generate new ideas to better foster their local social economy environment.

Mr Chris Gordon, CEO of the Irish Social Enterprise Network, presented the recently launched EU Social Economy Action Plan, highlighting relevant areas for potential collaboration between the participants, followed by Mr Ronal Gingles, EU Affairs coordinator of the Cork City Council, who presented various potential new EU funding opportunities allowing for potential new ways of furthering the collaboration between the three partners in collaboration with their social economy stakeholders.

The event was concluded by all acknowledging the great results from the excellent work done, and taking note of the many opportunities available for the near future. Cork City Council, Tartu City Government and Malta Enterprise aim to join forces once again and investigate potential new project opportunities which are relevant to the local social economy, whilst keeping close contact with their relevant stakeholders.

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