

GREEN & BLUE FUTURES

TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY BETWEEN ACTORS

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**SOCIAL
ENTERPRISE
UK**



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At the heart of the Green & Blue Futures project has been a wish to share, learn and work practically across country borders within Europe. This recognises some of the shared aspirations of those working in similar fields, but also that there are shared challenges to be tackled and overcome.

What the project has demonstrated is that this kind of transnational mobility between those taking part is difficult to achieve. Despite common objectives and, in some cases, common methodologies, the contexts for different organisations are very different. Most notably, there is significant variety in the size and capacity of the social enterprises, differences of structure and legal form and, more broadly, differences in the wider social economy and how it is treated by national governments.

Given that where such transnational exchanges took place, they have created real value and knowledge-sharing, and given that social enterprise is on the rise across Europe, we believe there is a need to consider different approaches to promote transnational mobility. These recommendations are intended to:

- encourage knowledge-sharing which is practical and delivers tangible results
- make such initiatives accessible to as wide a range of organisations as feasible
- foster greater transnational working and connections across EuropeThe Scottish Canals pilot brought expertise on social enterprise to the G&BF project and were able to share this with other pilots.

Recommendations:

1. One EU Directorate should be given a clear mandate and responsibility to provide a focal point for programmes, and to foster a more consistent approach to social enterprise and social entrepreneurship across member states. Currently, the wide variety of regulation, legal structures, criteria and the broader social economy make transnational working challenging even for those willing to help and collaborate with each other.
2. Workshops between actors should be more clearly themed and specific: tangible, practical outcomes will result in greater buy-in and payback for the investment of time, travel and accommodation; it will also allow organisations to identify the most relevant person in their organisation to attend, and who will benefit the most. Themed and focused workshops will also allow for greater planning ahead, as capacity is one of the main barriers to full participation, particularly for smaller organisations.
3. Webinars and online video-conferencing should be explored to facilitate more accessible exchanges and mobility of knowledge and learning, if not people; this will also allow for a reduced environmental footprint from those participating, and is very cost-effective. A number of options emerge:
 - videoconferencing software to more regularly check in or share expertise or invite experts on a particular theme; these can be recorded and hosted on a website
 - use video conferencing capabilities for direct one-to-one conversations
 - agree a hashtag for use by all those in the network to both disseminate and share relevant links and content; those using social media could also use existing hashtags (eg. #socent for social enterprise) to raise awareness of their work with others, and make direct contact with key European and in-country networks
4. Face-to-face meetings help build relationships and trust while leads to greater honesty, closer working and more in-depth exchanges of learning, insight and experience; it is important for these to take place, but accessibility and cost should be noted as important. The EU should create a voucher scheme to encourage direct exchanges, learning site visits and action research – this could be part of Erasmus or other existing programmes.
Another way to achieve this could be for actors to employ a cross-subsidy or bursary model (where larger organisations pay more than smaller organisations, or the former support the latter to attend) which in itself fosters collaboration and mutual working.
5. Participants and actors should also look beyond their own project partners and seek other opportunities to share learning and showcase achievements in different countries. For example, Tipperary and Canal & River Trust presented a case study to German colleagues at an event, and subsequently hosted a German delegation to learn about their work. This demonstrates the wider applicability and interest in the Green & Blue Futures project, so an openness of learning and networks will provide a greater, genuine reach.