

Enabling Social Innovation in Armenia

Country Snapshot

Social innovation: "the processes and outcomes of developing novel approaches to address societal challenges facing people and planet." ¹

This snapshot represents a descriptive, non-exhaustive overview of key highlights from Armenia's social innovation ecosystem.

✓ Direct focus on social innovation ⌘ Connected but indirect focus on social innovation ✗ No focus on social innovation

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Official Definition of Social Innovation ⌘



Armenia does not have an official legal definition of *social innovation*. Policy discussions instead focus on **social entrepreneurship and innovative civic initiatives**, generally referring to entrepreneurial approaches that address social or environmental challenges while reinvesting revenues into mission-driven activities ^{1,2}.

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



There is no dedicated government agency for social innovation. Responsibility for related policies is distributed across several institutions, particularly the **Ministry of Economy** (entrepreneurship and SME policy) and the **Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs**, which oversees social inclusion and community development initiatives relevant to social innovation ⁴.

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



Armenia does not have a dedicated national strategy specifically for social innovation. However, several broader strategies promote innovation and inclusive development, including the **Armenia Transformation Strategy 2050**, which emphasizes innovation, entrepreneurship, and technological development as key drivers of social and economic progress ⁵.

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ ⌘

Law on Social Enterprises (Draft policy discussions since late 2010s)

- Armenia has explored legislative frameworks for social enterprises, though a comprehensive national law has not yet been adopted ⁶.

Law on Public Organizations (2016)

- Establishes the legal framework governing nonprofit organizations and foundations that often implement socially innovative programs and community initiatives ⁷.

SME Development Strategy 2020–2024

- Promotes entrepreneurship, innovation, and startup development through business support programs and investment incentives ⁸.

Public-Private Partnership Law (2019)

- Provides a framework for collaboration between government and private actors to deliver infrastructure and social services, potentially enabling innovative social solutions ⁹.



Official Statistics

Armenia does not collect official national statistics specifically on social innovation. Government data collection instead focuses on **nonprofit organizations, startups, and SMEs**, which indirectly capture parts of the social innovation ecosystem ¹⁰.

Government Programs

Enterprise Incubator Foundation Programs (ongoing)

- Government-supported initiatives that promote technology entrepreneurship, start-up development, and innovation ecosystems in Armenia ¹¹.

Impact-oriented entrepreneurship initiatives

- Government and donor-supported programs promoting innovation, youth entrepreneurship, and regional development projects addressing social challenges ¹⁰

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders

A growing number of civil society organizations, innovation hubs, and entrepreneurship accelerators contribute to Armenia's social innovation ecosystem.

Impact Hub Yerevan (2016)

- A major social innovation hub providing co-working, incubation, and accelerator programs supporting social entrepreneurs and community initiatives ¹².

Enterprise Incubator Foundation (2002)

- A leading technology incubator supporting innovation ecosystems, start-ups, and entrepreneurship development in Armenia ¹¹.

Sectoral Networks

Armenian Social Entrepreneurs Association

- Supports the development of social enterprises through networking, advocacy, and capacity-building initiatives ⁶.

NGO Center Civil Society Development NGO (1994)

- A key civil society support organization providing training, networking, and development programs for nonprofit organizations ¹³.

(Non-financial Support Organisations)

Common ecosystem actors supporting social innovation include:

- **Innovation hubs and incubators:** Impact Hub Yerevan, Enterprise Incubator Foundation.
- **Civil society development organizations:** NGO Center.
- **International organizations:** UNDP, EU programs, and development agencies supporting social entrepreneurship and community innovation initiatives ^{10 12}.

Support Initiatives

Leading types of non-financial support initiatives include:

- **Accelerators and incubation programs** supporting early-stage social enterprises.
- **Capacity-building and mentorship programs** for NGOs and community leaders.
- **Regional youth innovation initiatives** supporting socially impactful start-ups ^{10 12}

Collaboration

Partnerships between government institutions, civil society organizations, and international development partners are relatively common in Armenia's innovation ecosystem.

Examples include:

- **EU and UNDP** programs supporting social innovation and community development initiatives.
- Partnerships between municipalities and NGOs to implement local social services and community development projects ¹⁰.

Events & Awards

Events

- Social entrepreneurship forums and innovation events organized by Impact Hub Yerevan and international partners.

Awards

- Entrepreneurship and innovation competitions occasionally recognize socially impactful start-ups and community initiatives.

FINANCE

Financing Schemes

Reliable estimates of total annual funding specifically directed to social innovation in Armenia are not publicly available. However, financing for socially impactful initiatives comes from a mix of public programs, international donors, and impact-oriented investment initiatives [10].

Key sources of financing include:

- **Government entrepreneurship programs** supporting start-ups and innovation.
- **International development funding** from organizations such as the EU, UNDP, and the World Bank supporting social enterprise initiatives and community development.
- **Impact investment and philanthropic funding** from regional and international organizations.
- **Accelerator and incubator seed funding** provided through innovation hubs and startup support programs ^{10 12}.

Financing Inclusivity

Many funding initiatives prioritize disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, particularly:

- Youth entrepreneurs
- Women entrepreneurs
- Rural communities
- Refugees and displaced populations

These priorities often align with international donor programs promoting inclusive economic development and community resilience ¹⁰.

SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation

The concept of social innovation is increasingly present in public discourse, though it is usually framed as **social entrepreneurship, civic innovation, or technology-driven solutions to social problems** ¹².

Research



Academic research on social innovation in Armenia is still emerging. Universities and research institutes increasingly study topics such as entrepreneurship ecosystems, civil society development, and social enterprise models in the country ⁶.

Practitioner research initiatives include ecosystem analyses and reports produced by organizations such as Impact Hub Yerevan and international development partners ¹².

Education & Human Capital



There are relatively few formal degree programs dedicated specifically to social innovation. However, topics related to **entrepreneurship, innovation management, and civic engagement** are increasingly integrated into higher education and training initiatives ¹⁰.

Reliable estimates of the proportion of graduates specializing in social innovation fields are not publicly available.

Entrepreneurship



Business Environment:

Armenia has a growing entrepreneurship ecosystem supported by innovation hubs and government initiatives promoting start-up development ¹¹.



Innovation capacity

Armenia continues to strengthen its innovation ecosystem through digital transformation and technology-focused policies.



Social entrepreneurship prevalence

Social entrepreneurship is still emerging but growing, particularly within youth-driven innovation communities and NGO-led initiatives ¹².

Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity

Community solidarity remains relatively strong, with active civil society engagement and community-based initiatives addressing social challenges



Political Participation:

Armenia has experienced increasing civic participation in recent years following democratic reforms and public mobilization movements.



Volunteerism

Volunteer engagement occurs primarily through NGOs and civic initiatives addressing social and environmental challenges.



Commitment to sustainability

Volunteer engagement occurs primarily through NGOs and civic initiatives addressing social and environmental challenges.