

# Enabling Social Innovation in Kazakhstan

## Country Snapshot

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

This snapshot provides a descriptive, non-exhaustive overview of key elements shaping Kazakhstan'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 🔗



Kazakhstan has no formal legal definition of "social innovation." However, the 2021 Law on Social Entrepreneurship introduced a definition of social entrepreneurship as business activity aimed at solving social problems, including enterprises led by or employing vulnerable groups <sup>2</sup>.

### Government Body for Social Innovation ✔



There is no dedicated central agency for social innovation. The Ministry of National Economy oversees social entrepreneurship support (e.g. the registry) <sup>2</sup>, while the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs (Atameken) hosts a Social Entrepreneurship Subcommittee with regional branches to coordinate efforts at the local level <sup>3</sup>.

### Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✔



No standalone national strategy exists. Social innovation objectives are integrated into broader entrepreneurship and social development plans, but there is no explicit, comprehensive strategy for this sector.

### Policies, Laws & Regulations ✔ 🔗



- *Law on Social Entrepreneurship (2021)* – Establishes legal status for social enterprises and provides tax breaks and state support (e.g. interest subsidies) <sup>4</sup>.
- *Law on Charity (2015)* – Framework for charitable activities with tax incentives to encourage philanthropy <sup>7</sup>.
- *Law on Volunteering (2016)* – Defines volunteering and mandates support measures for volunteer organizations <sup>12</sup>.

### Official Statistics



An official registry of social entrepreneurship entities (est. 2021) exists. It has recorded 1,672 social enterprises as of 2025 (up from 835 in 2024) <sup>2</sup>. This provides a baseline measure of the sector, although no separate statistics on "social innovation" beyond social enterprise counts are collected.



### Government Programs

No dedicated social innovation program exists; support is offered through existing SME programs. Certified social enterprises can access concessional loans via the Damu Fund and compete for small state grants (~5 million KZT). The Bolashak scholarship program also introduced a social entrepreneurship track to build local expertise abroad <sup>4</sup>.

## ECOSYSTEM



### Stakeholders

A growing ecosystem of non-government actors is driving social innovation. The Association of Social Innovators of Kazakhstan (est. 2022) unites social entrepreneurs and advocates for supportive policies <sup>4</sup>. The Atameken chamber's regional subcommittees on social entrepreneurship facilitate local public-private dialogue to support social enterprises <sup>3</sup>, and various NGO coalitions, youth networks, and development agencies are active in this space.



### Support Initiatives

Key support platforms include Impact Hub Almaty (opened 2017, offering incubation, mentorship and networking for impact startups) <sup>5</sup> and a Social Innovation Hub in Astana (providing training opportunities and hosting innovation summits). International partners like UNDP (through its Accelerator Lab) also contribute via experimental programs to test and scale solutions (e.g. urban air quality projects).



### Collaboration

Multi-sector collaboration is increasing. In 2023, a Central Asian forum in Astana convened social innovators from five countries to share solutions and forge partnerships <sup>4</sup>, and new national awards now recognize outstanding social impact initiatives.

## FINANCE



### Financing Schemes

Funding for social innovation remains nascent. Government support consists mainly of tax incentives and loans <sup>4</sup>, so many social ventures rely on donor grants, corporate CSR contributions, or personal funds; lack of capital remains a major challenge for social entrepreneurs <sup>8</sup>.

## SOCIETY



### Public Awareness of Social Innovation

Public awareness is low but gradually growing. The concept is not widely understood – the term often needs explanation – though the 2021 social enterprise law and media stories of successful social ventures have started to spark interest <sup>8</sup>.



### Research

Academic research on social innovation is in its early stages. A few universities (e.g. AlmaU) have started centers or projects focused on social entrepreneurship, and interest is slowly increasing among researchers, but dedicated studies and data remain limited.



## Education & Human Capital

Formal education programs for social innovation are scarce. There are no full degree programs, only limited course modules and short trainings. A small number of students gain exposure abroad (e.g. via Bolashak scholarship placements abroad) <sup>4</sup>.



## Entrepreneurship



### Business Environment

Kazakhstan's overall environment for business innovation is moderate



### Innovation Capacity

The country ranks 81st in the Global Innovation Index<sup>2</sup>, indicating middle-tier innovation capacity.



### Social entrepreneurship prevalence

Social entrepreneurship remains nascent – only a small fraction of the population is engaged – and is hindered by bureaucratic and financing barriers despite slowly improving support <sup>8</sup>.



## Social & Environmental Consciousness



### Solidarity



### Political participation

political participation remains limited



### Volunteering

Kazakh society has strong mutual-aid traditions, reflected in rising philanthropy and volunteering. The country ranked 30th in 2025 World Giving Index (1.2% of income donated) <sup>10</sup> and saw its number of volunteer organizations triple after the 2020 Volunteer Year <sup>12</sup>,

CAF World Giving Index 2025



### Sustainability

environmental performance is relatively weak (72nd in the 2024 Environmental Performance Index) <sup>11</sup>.

Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2024