

Enabling Social Innovation in Liechtenstein

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 Liechtenstein'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 🔗

While a standalone, formally adopted definition of "social innovation" is not explicitly identified in the publicly available policy sources of Liechtenstein, related and operational concepts are reflected within adjacent legal and ecosystem frameworks. Notably, public-benefit and charitable purposes particularly within the context of foundation law and philanthropic entities serve as key reference points for mission-driven activity. ²

In parallel, the ecosystem discourse around social enterprise and social entrepreneurship is emerging, with existing monitoring efforts highlighting a notable data gap on social enterprises and social start-ups in Liechtenstein. ¹⁷

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓

Liechtenstein's enabling framework is shaped through public bodies that contribute to innovation, oversight, and data functions, even in the absence of a dedicated social innovation unit:

- The Stabsstelle für Digitale Innovation (SDI) plays a coordination and advisory role on innovation and digitalisation, including fostering enabling conditions and stakeholder exchange. ^{2 3}
- The Office for Economic Affairs (Amt für Volkswirtschaft) supports research and innovation functions, including an NKS interface that facilitates participation and cooperation pathways. ⁴
- The Foundation Supervisory Authority (STIFA) oversees foundations and publishes official facts and figures related to the sector. ⁶
- The Office of Statistics (Amt für Statistik) serves as the official body for national statistics. ⁵

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓

While no standalone strategy titled "social innovation" was identified, relevant elements appear in broader strategies:

- Innovation and digital innovation coordination, where SDI describes its innovation remit as shaping enabling conditions (including regulatory needs and coordinating implementation). ³
- Research & innovation support framing, where the Office for Economic Affairs describes government support to strengthen innovation capability and participation in external funding mechanisms via the NKS interface. ⁴
- Development co-operation strategy, which the OECD reports as 2023–2026, implemented primarily through a publicly owned foundation (Liechtenstein Development Service), with priority themes such as food security and vocational training/employability, and principles including "leaving no one behind" and gender equality. ¹¹

Policies, Laws & Regulations

Liechtenstein's enabling environment includes legal frameworks that support innovation and mission-oriented organisational activity, even where not labelled "social innovation".

Examples identified include:

- **Public procurement law:** The Public Procurement Act (ÖAWG) includes procurement instruments such as an "innovation partnership," supporting public-sector engagement with innovative solutions. ⁸
- **Foundation law context:** Government explanatory materials linked to foundation-law reform provide an official reference point for the public-benefit/charitable purpose concept used in structuring philanthropic and public-benefit foundations. ²
- **Access to EU social and employment innovation programming through EEA arrangements:** An EEA Joint Committee decision documents participation arrangements concerning the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI). ¹⁰



Official Statistics

Official statistics relevant to social-purpose activity are available in parts of the ecosystem.

- **Foundation sector statistics:** STIFA publishes official counts for registered and non-registered foundations and the subset of charitable foundations. For example, STIFA reports that as of 31.12.2024 there were 1,780 registered foundations and 1,398 charitable foundations, alongside 7,386 non-registered foundations. ⁶
- **Broader official statistics:** The Office of Statistics serves as the national statistics body. ⁵
- **Social enterprise/social innovation data:** Public evidence of official statistics specifically on social enterprises or "social innovation" was not identified in the sources reviewed; ecosystem monitoring initiatives explicitly frame their work as responding to a lack of data. ¹⁷



Government Programs

Relevant public programmes appear primarily through innovation support and international funding instruments.

- **Research & innovation support (NKS interface):** The Office for Economic Affairs describes a government interface helping actors strengthen collaboration and participation in research and innovation support mechanisms. ⁴
- **EEA Grants:** The national administration portal describes EEA Grants as a programme financed by EEA states (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway) to reduce economic and social disparities in the EEA and strengthen relations with recipient states. ¹²



ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders

Liechtenstein's ecosystem is characterised by a strong philanthropic/foundation landscape and a small, networked set of support actors.

Examples of stakeholders identified include:

- **Association of Liechtenstein Charitable Foundations and Trusts (VLGST):** A network organisation for charitable foundations and trusts, founded in 2010 (opened to charitable trusts in 2019), focused on networking, standards, and sector positioning. ¹³
- **Ideenkanal (foundation/initiative):** A national initiative supporting project ideas through structured formats (including public pitching and prize-based support). ¹⁵
- **digihub.li:** Involved in Liechtenstein-facing social enterprise monitoring (European Social Enterprise Monitor), positioned as enabling improved future laws, guidelines, support, and funding for social entrepreneurs. ¹⁷
- **Private University in the Principality of Liechtenstein (UFL):** A higher education institution describing research with ethical and socially relevant topics and structured research institutes relevant to governance/innovation frameworks. ¹⁸
- **Liechtenstein Development Service (LED):** Reported by the OECD as the primary implementation channel for Liechtenstein's development co-operation. ¹¹



Support Initiatives

- **Ideenkanal Incubator / Ideencamps:**

The Ideenkanal Incubator, along with its Ideencamps, operates as a structured support mechanism for early-stage social innovation ideas. These formats combine mentorship, expert guidance, and peer-to-peer exchange to help participants refine problem statements, test solutions, and develop viable project models. Ideencamps typically serve as intensive, time-bound workshops where selected participants receive hands-on coaching from practitioners, sector experts, and facilitators. The emphasis on collaborative learning and iterative feedback enables participants to strengthen both the social impact and operational feasibility of their initiatives, while also fostering a community of practice among emerging social innovators. ¹⁶

- **Social enterprise monitoring for evidence-based improvements:**

Monitoring mechanisms for social enterprises play a critical role in strengthening the broader enabling environment by generating data on performance, impact, and operational challenges. Through systematic tracking of key indicators—such as social outcomes, financial sustainability, and scalability—policymakers and ecosystem actors can identify gaps in support structures, regulatory barriers, and areas requiring targeted intervention. This evidence-based approach informs adaptive policy design, improves resource allocation, and supports continuous refinement of incubation, funding, and capacity-building programs, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the social innovation ecosystem. ¹⁷



Collaboration

- **Ideenkanal pitch and selection formats (official portal reporting):**

Ideenkanal uses structured pitch and multi-stage selection formats to assess and refine social innovation ideas. Participants present to expert juries, enabling both evaluation and feedback, while official reporting enhances transparency, visibility, and learning across the ecosystem. ¹⁵

- **SDI's cross-sector stakeholder exchange and coordination role:**

SDI facilitates collaboration across government, civil society, academia, and private actors through platforms for dialogue and knowledge-sharing. This coordination helps align efforts, reduce duplication, and strengthen a more cohesive social innovation ecosystem. ³



FINANCE

Financing Schemes

- **Philanthropy and foundations (STIFA):**

STIFA publishes official data on the number and types of foundations, along with annual oversight reporting, supporting transparency and sector monitoring. ^{6 7}

- **Enabling environment evidence (GPEI):**

The Global Philanthropy Environment Index provides a comparative view of philanthropic conditions in Liechtenstein, highlighting regulatory and operational strengths and gaps. ^{14 19}

- **Development finance (OECD):**

OECD data indicates Liechtenstein's ODA at USD 44.6 million (2024, preliminary), reflecting its role in international development support. ¹¹

- **EEA Grants:**

The EEA Grants framework promotes cohesion and partnerships, offering funding avenues that can support collaborative and cross-border social innovation initiatives. ¹²



Financing Inclusivity

While targeted domestic schemes were not identified in the sources reviewed, the OECD notes inclusion-related principles (e.g., “leaving no one behind” and gender equality) in development co-operation. ¹¹



SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation



- Public discourse is visible through philanthropy enabling-environment narratives on an official country portal. ²⁰
- Ecosystem actors position monitoring as input to improving future policy and support. ¹⁷

Research



- UFL describes research activity including ethical and socially relevant topics. ¹⁸
- GPEI offers structured external evidence on the enabling environment for philanthropy. ¹⁴

Education & Human Capital



- UFL's institutional framing includes social responsibility and sustainable development. ¹⁸
- Ideenkanal incubator format includes mentoring and peer exchange. ¹⁶
- Government innovation support emphasises collaboration pathways via the NKS interface. ⁴

Entrepreneurship



While key entrepreneurship indicators (e.g., Global Innovation Index rank; GEM indicators) were not identified in the sources reviewed, Liechtenstein is covered in the World Bank's Business Ready (B-READY) indicator series (example page). ²¹

Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity

International comparators: The CAF World Giving Index offers a global benchmark for giving behaviours, providing a useful comparative lens, although Liechtenstein-specific results were not detailed here. ²⁴



Political participation

The IPU dataset provides data on the 76.3% voter turnout and election results (e.g., February 2025), offering insight into levels of democratic engagement. ²²



Volunteering

GPEI estimates that around one-third of Liechtenstein's population engages in voluntary work, indicating a strong culture of civic participation. ¹⁴



Sustainability

Climate reporting: The UNFCCC National Inventory Document (2024) presents greenhouse gas inventory data for 1990–2022, supporting environmental monitoring and policy tracking. ²³

