

# Enabling Social Innovation in Lithuania

## 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 represents a descriptive, non-exhaustive overview of key highlights from Lithuania'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 🔗

Lithuania often relies on European Union (EU) and programme definitions of social innovation, including ESF+ framing that supports developing and implementing new or improved approaches to meet social needs. <sup>2</sup>

A standalone statutory definition was not identified in the reviewed public sources; however related policy concepts include "social business" (socialinis verslas) is a key adjacent policy concept. Programme guidance on social innovation is also available (e.g., Socialinių inovacijų gairės). <sup>3</sup>

### Government Body for Social Innovation ✓

Lithuania's enabling environment is supported through several public bodies whose mandates intersect with social innovation, social policy experimentation, and social business development:

- **Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania:** Presents social innovation as central to the EU EaSI programme (managed by the European Commission) and its support for social innovation activities. <sup>4</sup>
- **European Social Fund Agency:** Implements ES-funded programming and leads work linked to a National Competence Centre for Social Innovation. <sup>5</sup>
- **Ministry of the Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania and Innovation Agency Lithuania:** Maintains "social business" policy and support tools, including acceleration support. <sup>17</sup>

### Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓

While no standalone strategy exclusively dedicated to social innovation was identified, related elements appear in:

- Lithuania 2050" (Seimas-hosted national vision/state progress strategy) references innovation approaches to societal challenges, providing a broad context in which social innovation can be positioned. <sup>2</sup>
- The 2021–2030 National Progress Programme sets an overarching national planning framework (useful as a reference point for linking social innovation to public investment priorities). <sup>10</sup>
- Smart specialisation priorities include thematic areas that explicitly reference "social innovations" as a component of innovation policy. <sup>11</sup>

## Policies, Laws & Regulations

Lithuania's policy environment supports social innovation primarily through adjacent legal and regulatory mechanisms, especially social business policy, SME legislation, and public procurement guidance.

Key instruments include:

- “Social business” policy concept: the Social Business Concept outlines what is meant by “social business” in Lithuanian policy, including mission primacy and the use of business models to deliver social benefit.
- SME framework: amendments to the Small and Medium Business Development Law provide for a “social business status,” with procedures and requirements to be set by the Government or an authorised institution (including promotion measures and an impact measurement methodology).<sup>7</sup>
- Socially responsible procurement: Public Procurement Office guidance supports the operationalisation of social objectives in purchasing and notes reforms affecting “social enterprise status” (including that the status is described as abolished from 1 January 2023, in the context of procurement guidance).<sup>8</sup>

## Official Statistics

Public evidence points to administrative and programme datasets relevant to social innovation-adjacent fields, including:

- NGO/legal-entity data referenced as sourced from the State Enterprise Centre of Registers (via OECD reporting).<sup>12</sup>
- Register datasets labelled “non-governmental organisation,” noted in European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights civic space reporting.<sup>13</sup>

A dedicated official statistical series specifically for “social innovation” was not identified in the reviewed sources.

## Government Programs

Lithuania's public support for social innovation is visible through EU-funded programming, competence-building initiatives, and structured support for social business development.

- **National Competence Centre for Social Innovation:** ESF Agency programme information outlines a mission and strategic goals focused on stimulating social innovation and strengthening society's capacity to solve problems innovatively.<sup>5</sup>
- **Social innovation guidance:** “Socialinių inovacijų gairės” provides a programme-linked framework for understanding and applying social innovation principles in practice (including public sector relevance).<sup>3</sup>
- **ES investments calls for social business:** Published calls support social business creation/development; one call example sets a maximum grant amount of €58,500 and a high co-financing rate (demonstrating the scale and design of grant-type support).<sup>13</sup>
- **Social business accelerator:** An Innovation Agency programme provides training, expert consultations, networking, and international exposure elements for social businesses.<sup>12</sup>
- **EaSI programme positioning:** The social policy ministry page describes EaSI as an EU instrument where social innovation is central and notes annual funding for social innovation activities.<sup>4</sup>

# ECOSYSTEM

## Stakeholders

Lithuania's social innovation ecosystem includes public implementers, EU-programme actors, networks, and higher-education institutions active in social innovation research and skills development.

- OECD mapping highlights the “Lithuanian Social Innovation Cluster” and cross-sector partnerships involving public bodies.<sup>15</sup>
- European Commission EU Social Economy Gateway provides an overview of Lithuania's social economy landscape and entity types.<sup>16</sup>
- Universities contribute via programmes, labs, and convenings (e.g., Kaunas University of Technology, Vilnius University, Mykolas Romeris University, Vytautas Magnus University).<sup>19 20 21 22</sup>

## Support Initiatives

Ecosystem support initiatives combine public-programme capacity building and structured entrepreneurship support:

- Social business acceleration and capacity building is delivered through the Innovation Agency's accelerator model (training, consulting, networks, and international exposure). <sup>12</sup>
- The National Competence Centre for Social Innovation is positioned to strengthen ecosystem coordination and capability through a national competence-building approach. <sup>5</sup>
- Higher-education “labs” and academies add practice-oriented infrastructure, including MRU's social innovation lab network framing and VDU's Social Innovators Academy initiative. <sup>25 26</sup>

## Collaboration

Lithuania demonstrates cross-sector collaboration through convenings, awards, and network activity:

- **Innovation recognition:** The Lithuanian-American Innovation Awards include a dedicated “Social Impact Award” category. <sup>27</sup>
- Research and ecosystem convening: SOCIN'24 provides an academic and practitioner-facing forum on social innovations. <sup>25</sup>
- Network collaboration: OECD reporting highlights partnerships facilitated through the Lithuanian Social Innovation Cluster (cross-sector linkages). <sup>14</sup>

# FINANCE

## Financing Schemes

Funding for social innovation and adjacent activity is primarily driven by EU-linked programmes and national implementation mechanisms:

- ES investments grant calls support “social business” development, with published call parameters (e.g., maximum grant amounts and co-financing rates) illustrating operational funding mechanisms. <sup>13</sup>
- Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) positioning in Lithuania describes annual resources devoted to social innovation activities. <sup>4</sup>
- OECD and EU ecosystem mapping provide contextual evidence on the financing landscape for social economy and social enterprise development (helpful for identifying funding pathways and institutional roles). <sup>14 15</sup>

Public evidence of dedicated national impact investment funds or social impact bonds was not identified in the sources reviewed for this snapshot; EU and public grant instruments appear to be the most visible funding backbone in this brief. <sup>13 14</sup>

## Financing Inclusivity

Available programme documentation suggests that inclusivity targeting is embedded in at least some instruments:

- Youth: The EaSI framing in Lithuania highlights youth as a priority area for social innovation activity. <sup>4</sup>
- Disadvantaged groups: ES investments calls for social business development are designed to address exclusion and may specify disadvantaged target groups (as described in call documentation). <sup>13</sup>

Public evidence of dedicated funding streams explicitly earmarked for women-led social innovation (as a primary criterion) was not identified in the sources reviewed.

# SOCIETY

## Public Awareness of Social Innovation

Social innovation is visible in public-policy framing through EU programme positioning (EaSI) and ES-funded national guidance and capacity-building initiatives. <sup>3 4 5</sup>



## Research

Higher education institutions support social innovation research and convening (e.g., KTU programme and MRU conference platform).<sup>19 21</sup>



## Education & Human Capital

Education and skills development for social innovation are supported through both higher education and ecosystem programmes:

- Degree and curriculum-based learning (KTU programme; VU curriculum including social innovation course content).<sup>23 24</sup>
- Practice-oriented training and mentoring for social entrepreneurs and social businesses through the Innovation Agency's accelerator model.<sup>12</sup>
- University-led initiatives such as VDU's Social Innovators Academy contribute to talent pipelines and community-oriented capacity building.<sup>26</sup>



## Entrepreneurship

General entrepreneurship performance and the broader innovation environment provide useful context for scaling social innovation



### Business Environment

World Bank B-READY (Business Entry) overall score reported as 79.5 (2024).<sup>25</sup>



### Innovation Capacity

(World Intellectual Property Organization).<sup>23</sup>

Global Innovation Index 2025



### Social entrepreneurship prevalence

Lithuania impact report by Global Entrepreneurship Monitor highlights entrepreneurship context indicators (NECI).<sup>24</sup>



## Social & Environmental Consciousness

Selected indicators suggest enabling societal conditions that can support civic engagement and sustainability-oriented innovation:



### Solidarity

Lithuania is ranked 9th in the Climate Change Performance Index 2026 country profile.<sup>22</sup>



### Political participation



### Volunteering

Volunteerism is reported at 18% in Charities Aid Foundation's World Giving Report data explorer for Lithuania.<sup>17</sup>



### Sustainability

with climate-related sub-scores reported on the country profile.<sup>21</sup>

Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2024