

Enabling Social Innovation in Norway

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 Norway'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 🔗



Norway does not use a single statutory definition of "social innovation." Policy discourse typically refers to **social entrepreneurship** and public-sector innovation. ² A practical definition exists within the national grant infrastructure for social entrepreneurship (focused on poverty and social exclusion), with criteria related to mission and organisational form. ^{3 4}

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



There is no single dedicated national authority; responsibilities are distributed across programmes and sectoral mandates. ²

- Public-sector innovation capacity-building: Digitaliseringsdirektoratet (Digdir) and DOGA via **StimuLab**. ⁶
- Poverty/exclusion-focused support: NAV (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration) grant schemes. ⁴

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



Norway does not have a consolidated national "social innovation strategy." Instead, it relies on cross-ministerial coordination and programme instruments. ² Strategic emphasis is placed on collaboration with social entrepreneurs and use of existing tools (procurement, grants, partnerships). ²

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗



The enabling environment is largely horizontal. ^{8 9}

- **Public procurement law (anskaffelsesloven)** enables innovative procurement (e.g., StimuLab). ^{8 6}
- **Sustainability reporting rules** (Accounting Act; phased from 2024) increase expectations for comparable sustainability data and may strengthen impact measurement norms. ^{2 10}

Official Statistics 🔗



No official statistical series explicitly labelled "social innovation," and no unified register. ² Evidence relies on commissioned mappings and ecosystem studies, including government-published mapping of social entrepreneurship. ^{3 12}

Government Programs

Support is instrument-led (grants, capability-building, innovation procurement). ^{6,4}

- **StimuLab (2026)**: ~5 million NOK; expert guidance + funding for innovative procurement and user testing. ⁶
- **NAV grant scheme (2026 call)**: poverty and social exclusion; development and regular grants with reporting obligations. ⁴
- **Innovasjon Norge**: mission-oriented innovation partnerships (e.g., Humanitarian Innovation Programme). ¹³

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders

The ecosystem is often described as “Janus-faced,” bridging voluntary and business sectors within a strong welfare-state context. ¹¹ Key actors include:

- **Frivillighet Norge** – voluntary sector coordination and policy dialogue. ¹⁵
- **SoCentral** – social innovation hub/community (SDG-oriented). ¹⁴
- **Ferd Social Entrepreneurs** – impact investor providing capital and non-financial support. ¹⁶
- **KS (Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities)** – municipal coordination. ¹⁷

Support Initiatives

Support comes from government programmes, intermediaries, and research centres. ^{6,12}

- **SESAM (University of South-Eastern Norway)** – national knowledge actor for social entrepreneurship and collaborative SI. ¹⁸

Collaboration

- Partnerships across public, private, and voluntary sectors are central. ^{2,12}
- Innovation-oriented procurement is a key bridge between municipalities and solution providers. ⁸

FINANCE

Financing Schemes

SI-labelled funding pools are relatively small but catalytic for early-stage testing. ^{5,6}

- **Competitive grants (2025)**: 5,842,589 NOK available. ⁵
- **StimuLab (2026)**: ~5 million NOK across selected projects. ⁶
- **Ferd Social Entrepreneurs**: capital + support (ticket sizes not specified). ¹⁶

Financing Inclusivity

Eligibility rules protect mission integrity but can create administrative hurdles. ⁴

- NAV grants require governance, documentation, and reporting capacity. ⁴
- Expanded sustainability reporting may influence impact reporting norms; effects on smaller ventures' finance access remain unclear. ²

SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation

Norwegian discourse more frequently uses “social entrepreneurship” and “public sector innovation” as entry points; social innovation is visible through municipal service challenges (inclusion, health, labour market, and welfare). ^{11 2}

Research

Norway has mapping research and academic capacity, but no national SI observatory. ^{3 12}

- **Uni Research Rokkansenteret mapping** – central practitioner reference. ¹²
- OECD trust analysis highlights trust as a key enabler of cross-sector collaboration. ²⁵

Education & Human Capital

Research and education capacity exists but is not standardised nationally. [18]

- **SESAM (University of South-Eastern Norway)** – focus on social entrepreneurship and collaborative SI. ¹⁸

Entrepreneurship

Innovation capacity is strong.



EIU Business Environment Ranking

not publicly available in reviewed sources. [20]



Innovation Capacity

Norway ranks 21st (WIPO). ¹⁹

Global Innovation Index 2024



Social entrepreneurship prevalence

GEM Social Entrepreneurship (2015): 0.4% start-up phase; 7.0% operational phase (ages 18–64). ¹⁸

Social & Environmental Consciousness

High trust, civic participation, and environmental performance support experimentation and engagement. ^{24 21 23 22}



Trust

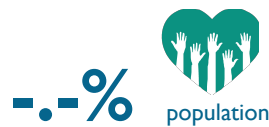
72% agree “most people can be trusted.” ²⁴



Political participation

#1 overall; 10.00 in political participation. ²¹

Democracy Index 2024



Volunteering

#21; 31% volunteered, 65% donated, 53% helped a stranger. ²²

CAFWorld Giving Index 2024



Sustainability

Yale EPI 2024: #7; score 69.9. ²³

Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2024