

Enabling Social Innovation in Poland

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 Poland'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 🔗



Poland has no formal legal definition of social innovation. Public policy instead relies on EU-level understandings that frame social innovation as new solutions addressing social needs more effectively while creating social value ². The concept is mainly applied through social economy and social entrepreneurship policy.

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



Rather than a dedicated agency, responsibility for social innovation is distributed across ministries.

- The **Ministry of Family and Social Policy** oversees social economy and social enterprise policy ³.
- The **Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy** manages EU-funded programs that finance social innovation initiatives ⁴.

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



Poland does not have a standalone national social innovation strategy. Social innovation objectives are embedded in broader frameworks, notably the **National Programme for the Development of the Social Economy (KPRES)**, which promotes innovative solutions delivered by social enterprises ⁵.

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗



- **Social Impact Bonds pilots (2017–2019)** tested outcome-based financing for social services ⁶.
- **Act on Social Economy (2022)** establishes a legal framework for social enterprises and support measures ⁷.
- **Public benefit legislation** allows taxpayers to allocate 1.5% of personal income tax to public-benefit organisations, indirectly supporting innovative social initiatives ⁸.

Official Statistics 🔗



Poland does not collect statistics explicitly labelled as "social innovation." Instead, **Statistics Poland** produces a **Social Economy Satellite Account**, measuring the economic contribution of social economy entities ⁹.

Government Programs



Government support for social innovation is largely delivered through EU funds.

- **Social Innovation Incubators (since 2016)** support the testing and scaling of grassroots solutions ¹⁰.
- Under **European Funds for Social Development 2021–2027**, around **PLN 900 million** is allocated to social innovation activities, including incubation and acceleration ¹¹.

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders



Poland's ecosystem relies heavily on non-governmental and hybrid actors.

- **Social Innovation Catalyst** (National Competence Centre) coordinates incubators and knowledge exchange ¹².
- A nationwide network of **Social Economy Support Centres (OWES)** provides advisory and capacity-building services ².
- NGOs, foundations and academic centres play a central role in piloting and disseminating innovations.

Support Initiatives



Non-financial support is mainly delivered through incubators and labs.

- Regional and thematic incubators provide mentoring, testing grants and evaluation.
- Knowledge platforms document and disseminate validated social innovations ¹².

Collaboration



Cross-sector collaboration is growing but remains project-based.

- Partnerships between incubators and local governments aim to mainstream proven solutions into public services ¹³.
- Coordination platforms link public authorities, NGOs and social enterprises.

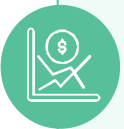
Events & Awards



- **wymiaNna** – national social innovation exchange forum organised by the Social Innovation Catalyst ¹².
- **Best Social Enterprise of the Year (Jacek Kuroń Award)** recognises innovative social enterprises ¹⁴.

FINANCE

Financing Schemes



Social innovation financing is predominantly public.

- **ESF / ESF+ grants** fund incubation, piloting and scaling of innovations ¹¹.
- **National Fund for Social Entrepreneurship** provides loans to social enterprises ¹⁵.
- Private impact investment remains limited, with few dedicated funds.

Inclusiveness of Financing



Public funding prioritises vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, older people, long-term unemployed and disadvantaged territories ¹⁰. Access to capital remains uneven for smaller and rural initiatives.

SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation



Social innovation is not widely recognised in public discourse. Awareness remains largely confined to policy, NGO and academic circles, despite growing visibility of individual projects ².

Research



Academic work on social innovation is emerging, mainly within social economy and public policy research. Polish institutions participate in EU-level research and evaluation projects, but no dedicated national research program exists ².

Education & Human Capital



There are no dedicated degree programs in social innovation. Elements are integrated into courses on social entrepreneurship, social economy and public policy, complemented by informal training through incubators and NGOs ¹⁰.

Entrepreneurship

Poland's business environment is moderately supportive.



EIU Business Environment Ranking

upper-middle among 80+ economies ¹⁶.



Innovation Capacity

Global Innovation Index 2024



Social entrepreneurship prevalence

remains niche, constrained by low early entrepreneurial activity ¹⁸.

Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity

relatively low generalised trust and volunteering levels ¹⁹.



Political participation

moderate ²⁰.



Volunteering



Sustainability

Poland ranked mid-range on the Environmental Performance Index ²¹