

Enabling Social Innovation in Serbia



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 Serbia’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 🔗



There is no legal definition of social innovation in Serbia. However, the 2022 Law on Social Entrepreneurship defines social entrepreneurship as an innovative business model for addressing social challenges. ²

- The law focuses on innovation in business practices that pursue social aims.
- The term "social innovation" is used informally and lacks operational metrics.

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



Responsibility is shared between newly formed and long-standing institutions.

- The **Council for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship** (2022) coordinates strategy.
- The **Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit (SIPRU)** (2009) supports inclusion and innovation. ³

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



Serbia is finalizing its first 5-year Social Entrepreneurship Development Programme.

- Prioritizes vulnerable group employment, capacity-building, awareness, and local ecosystems. ⁴

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗



Policy reforms are underway, anchored in the 2022 legal framework.

- **Law on Social Entrepreneurship (2022):** Recognizes social enterprises; mandates 50% profit reinvestment. ²
- **Funding Support Regulation (2024):** Allows for state and local public funding. ²
- Tax incentives and socially responsible public procurement measures are in development. ⁴

Official Statistics 🔗



Data collection remains limited.

- 24 enterprises registered under the new law by late 2024.
- No dedicated social innovation statistics or satellite account.

Government Programs



The government is gradually launching targeted support.

- **Social Entrepreneurship Development Programme (2024–2028):** Grants, training, awareness campaigns, and local initiatives. ⁴
- **ReLOaD2 Program:** EU-funded, established a Social Entrepreneurship Center in Kruševac. ⁵
- Labour and social inclusion measures (e.g., self-employment subsidies) offer indirect support. ⁶

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders



A growing number of actors are shaping the social innovation landscape.

- **Smart Kolektiv**, **Trag Foundation**, and **KoRSE** lead advocacy and capacity-building. ⁷
- **Responsible Business Forum** and emerging peer networks foster business engagement.
- Universities are integrating social impact themes in elective courses.
- **Chamber of Commerce of Serbia (PKS)** supports through its advisor network. ⁸

Support Initiatives



Support services are expanding through civil and private efforts.

- **Impact Hub Belgrade** and **Nova Iskra** offer incubation and mentoring. ⁹
- **Social Impact Award:** Annual youth competition including workshops and seed funding. ⁹
- NGO programs include grants, coaching, and promotion of social enterprise role models. ¹⁰

Collaboration



Multi-sector engagement is increasing.

- The **Council** and **SIPRU** enable public-private dialogue. ³
- The **Social Innovation Forum** facilitates ecosystem networking. ¹¹
- Annual awards incentivize partnerships between businesses and social ventures. ¹¹

FINANCE

Financing Schemes



Funding channels are diverse but underdeveloped.

- **Public:** RSD 50 million allocated in 2024 for social enterprise support. ⁴
- **Donors:** EU, Sida, GIZ, EIB provide grants and technical assistance. ¹²
- **Private:** Corporate CSR, philanthropy, and crowdfunding are growing. ¹⁰
- **Impact Investment:** Conceptual stage; no dedicated national fund yet. ¹²

Financing Inclusivity



Access remains uneven across demographics and regions.

- Barriers: collateral, geographic concentration, and low awareness.
- Opportunities: decentralized outreach, tailored public financing. ^{4 8}



Public Awareness of Social Innovation

Understanding of social innovation is limited but growing, but media, public events, and youth programs are helping normalize the concept. ¹¹



Research

Research is active but fragmented. While there is no national research institute, NGOs and universities contribute to EU projects and national mappings. ^{7 12}



Education & Human Capital

Education offerings are emerging but not yet widespread.

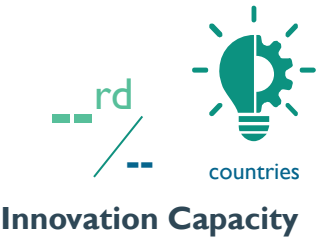
- Some universities offer courses on social entrepreneurship.
- NGOs dominate non-formal training delivery.
- No dedicated degree programs yet; retention of talent is a challenge. ^{8 10}



Entrepreneurship



Key challenges: mentorship gaps, fear of failure, limited capital. ⁸



Youth involvement in SI is rising.



Entrepreneurial infrastructure is improving.



Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity is strong in emergencies.



Civic engagement and awareness are increasing.



Volunteerism and philanthropy are growing.



Environmental innovation is emerging but remains uneven. ^{10 12}