

Enabling Social Innovation in Tunisia



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Country Snapshot

Social innovation: "the processes and outcomes of developing novel approaches to address societal challenges facing people and planet." ↓

This snapshot represents a descriptive, non-exhaustive overview of key highlights from Tunisia’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 Tunisia does not have a specific legal definition of social innovation (or social enterprise), the concept is generally framed through **social entrepreneurship** and the **Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)**, emphasizing inclusion, social justice, and the formalization of informal activity.

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



While there is no standalone social innovation agency, the **Social and Solidarity Economy Framework Law (2020)** established SSE governance bodies, including a **Higher Council for SSE** under the Prime Minister. Operational responsibility currently sits with the **Ministry of Social Affairs**, though implementation remains partial

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



While Tunisia does not have a standalone national strategy for social innovation, relevant objectives are embedded in broader frameworks, notably:

- **Startup Act (2018)** – incentives for innovative startups, also accessible to social ventures.
- **Digital Tunisia / Smart Tunisia** – promotes innovation for socioeconomic development.

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗

Broader enabling frameworks include:



- **Social and Solidarity Economy Law (2020)** – first of its kind in the Arab region; introduces SSE governance, limits profit distribution, reserves public procurement quotas, and promotes inclusion of marginalized groups [3].
- **Startup Act (2018)** – tax incentives, startup leave, simplified regulation [5].
- **Crowdfunding Law (2020; Decree 2022)** – enables participatory financing, including for social projects.

Official Statistics 🔗



Tunisia does publish some statistics relevant to social innovation (e.g., associations/NGOs and parts of the SSE ecosystem). Still, the SSE law’s envisaged measurement tools (including a satellite account) are not yet fully operationalized.

Government Programs



Tunisia has some public programming with a close focus on social innovation, though most programs have a broader remit.

- **“Jonas” Project (2021–2023)** – EU/ILO initiative supporting youth-led SSE projects (170 initiatives supported).
- Public microfinance and entrepreneurship schemes indirectly support social innovators but are **not Specifically Designed for Them**.

ECOSYSTEM

Stakeholders



Key support organizations:

- **Lab’ess** – incubator/accelerator for SSE and social enterprises.
- **EI Space** – social innovation hub and coworking space.
- **Impact Partner (ex-Yunus Social Business Tunisia)** – impact accelerator and investor.
- **Enactus Tunisia** – university-based social entrepreneurship network.
- **Sectoral networks** – Cooperative federations and SSE advocacy coalitions.

Support Initiatives



- Incubation, acceleration, and capacity-building programs led mainly by NGOs and donors (EU, UNDP, GIZ).
- Startup competitions and social innovation challenges provide small grants and visibility

Collaboration



Collaboration is emerging but uneven. The SSE law itself resulted from strong civil society-government cooperation. Partnerships remain mostly **project-based**, driven by international actors

Events & Awards



- Social entrepreneurship forums, Enactus competitions, and startup challenges with social categories.

FINANCE

Financing Schemes



Dedicated social innovation financing is somewhat limited and fragmented.

- Approx. USD 22 million invested in social-impact startups in 2018 (small scale) [5].
- **Main sources:** microfinance, donor grants, competitions, and early-stage impact funds.
- **Key instruments:** microloans (e.g., BTS, Enda Tamweel), impact investment (e.g., Impact Partner, Anava Seed Fund), and crowdfunding (early stage).

Financing Inclusivity



Financing targets **youth, women, and informal workers**, but access remains difficult due to the lack of a legal social enterprise status, limited tailored financial products, and regional and gender disparities. However, the planned **Social Economy Bank** may improve access if implemented

Public Awareness of Social Innovation

- Public awareness of the concept is low. Social innovation is often conflated with charity or NGOs, though visibility is growing through youth entrepreneurship and donor-funded initiatives

Research

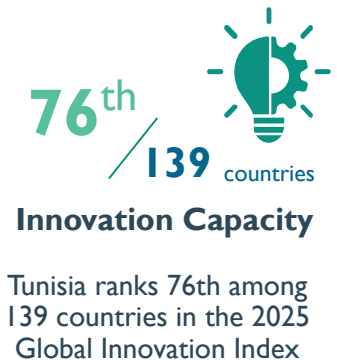
Research on social innovation is nascent, with limited academic work on SSE and social entrepreneurship. Practitioner research is primarily led by international organizations (e.g., ILO, UNDP).

Education & Human Capital

Tunisia offers formal higher-education programmes relevant to social innovation/social entrepreneurship (e.g., professional master’s programmes in entrepreneurship/project management, and enterprise creation). However, dedicated “social innovation” degrees are not widespread.

- Social entrepreneurship appears in **elective courses** and **student programs** (e.g., Enactus).
- Capacity building is largely informal (bootcamps, NGO training).

Entrepreneurship



Social & Environmental Consciousness

