**COMMON METHODOLOGY FOR THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IN LESS DEVELOPED REGIONS OF CENTRAL EUROPE**

**(WPT1, Activity A.T1.2, Deliverable D.T1.2.1)**

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**July 2017**

**Methodology Guide for the Needs Analysis of Social Enterprises**

1. **The Purpose of the Document**

This document has several intents:

- to make guideline for carrying out the needs analysis

- it will lay out the methodology for the needs analysis

- it also aims to mainstream SENTINEL project approaches

- it will ease the compilation of comparable results.

**2. About the Social Enterprises**

Because of the different social and institutional conditions the function and form of the social enterprises (SE) differ in every partner country of the project. Because of this, the partners should choose the group or the type of social enterprises according to local and regional conditions. The selected SEs will be the base of the needs analysis document.

Conditions:

* The analysed enterprises must match with the definition of social enterprises by the European Commission <http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy/enterprises_en>
* Please, justify in some sentences, why you chose the specific group of the SEs.

We also recommend reading other definitions used in this document: Map of social enterprises and their eco-systems in Europe (page 1-3.) <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=12988&langId=en>

**3. The Content of the Needs Analysis**

**The aim is to identify the support and capacity building needs of SEs operating in less developed regions.**

In order to achieve this aim, the project partners are requested to collect answers in the following main questions:

* The general features of SEs: sectors, products, services, financing, ecosystem, development stage, etc.
* The main challenges of SEs, in the themes of support system, human resources, management, financing, networks, market and development.
* The needs of SEs concerning support and development services

**4. The Methodology for Drafting the Document**

In the interest of comparable result, every partner uses a similar methodology to carry out the needs analysis, according to the Application Form of the Sentinel Project.

It has two main research tools:

**Desk research** (secondary research): Gather, analyse and summarize information from already existing researches. Recommendation of useful tools and sources:

* Interpretation of relevant scientific literature
* Analysing public accessible documents (e.g. development strategies)
* Analysing media articles and publications. This might also contain anecdotal information which can highlight stakeholders’ personal perspectives on relevant issues.
* Analysing available statistical data (e.g. public statistical departments)
* Legal documents and public statements
* Already existing handbooks and mentoring manuals issued by other projects and/or support organizations

Ideally project partners should rely on the newest data and information available (ideally not older than 2010). However, depending on the topic and availability of data older sources also may be included.

**Qualitative research trough focus groups interviews**

The **focus group** is a method for [qualitative research](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qualitative_research) consisting of interviews in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions and experiences towards the theme of the research. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members. The rationale behind focus group settings is to encourage stakeholders to develop and discuss aspects in more depth.

**Main features**:

For making a focus group interview, always use a semi-structured guideline, with the most important topics and questions. But the flexibility and spontaneity is also very important.Questions should be defined beforehand. These shall cover all the relevant aspects of the needs assessment. It is also recommended to define sub-questions in order to moderate the FG.

* The number of group members usually 8-12. (If necessary, you may involve more members.)
* The interview is always conducted by a moderator.The moderator should not suggest answers but rather guide the discussion among the participants. The moderator shouldn’t add personal perspectives to the topic
* Use notes and/or sound recording to facilitate the later analysis.
* The duration is usually less than 2 hours. (But it depends about the theme, and number of questions or the discussions.)
* It is useful to use teamwork, brainstorming and other tools.
* Usefulhelp: <http://www.eiu.edu/ihec/Krueger-FocusGroupInterviews.pdf>

In order to come up with robust results and a meaningful needs analysis, we request PPs to carry out at least 4 focus group interviews (optionally even more), with the relevant participants of the SEs.

* Expert FG: Experts, consultants, scientific researchers
* SE FG: The representatives, leaders, managers, etc. of social enterprises
* Ecosystem FG: The financers, founders, owners of social enterprises, local politicians, important business partners, etc.
* Mixed FG: A mixed group (Maybe with the stakeholders mentioned in the AF page 40.)

(It could be useful to involve those who will be possibly also involved in the pilot programs.)Please, make your own guide for every group, but using a similar thematic structure, with the following main questions and dimensions:

* the status of the SE sector in general
* regulation, laws and the role of the government
* market, products and doing business
* financing and supporting, structure and cash flow issues
* networks and cooperation
* know-how transfer
* human resources (employing, education)
* management issues
* development opportunities, needs and limits
* future vision about the SE sector
* suggestions and other

**Additional research tool:** please make a short questionnaire with the social enterprises involved in the focus group. It will be very useful to compare the information from the partners. Please make a short summary about these surveys’ result in the appendix of the need analysis document.

Use the following mandatory questions:

**SE’s general information:**

* The name of the SE
* The legal form of the SE
* Year of foundation
* Owner

**SE characteristics:**

* Main activity/activities
  + Target Group of SE
  + Description/Characteristic of Product/Service
  + Non- For-profit activities/engagement

**Enterprise key figures:**

* The number of employees (development over last years if possible)
* Annual Turnover
* Income in the last year (2016)

**Ecosystem relations:**

* Main business partners
* Membership in any specific cooperation bodies, organizations, unions or cluster
* Receiving of (local) governmental financial support. Compared with the annual revenue how much proportion it means.?

**Documentation of the focus group interviews**

It is highly recommended for every partner to use the following tools for the documentation of the focus groups interviews.

* Invitation (letter or email)
* Agenda
* Short briefing for the FG Participants; including purpose of FG and info on SENTINEL
* Attendance sheet for each organised focus group interviews
* Short memo or minute of the meeting
* Photo documentation (if possible)

**5. Territorial Questions**

The project’s main target is SEs operating in “less developed regions”. However there are different viewpoints about the definition and characteristics of less developed regions among our partners. In order to make these different perspectives explicit, partners are requested to summarize their interpretation of the less developed regions. (Some of the partners already did it in the project documentation.Only summarize it.)

When drafting the needs analysis document, please use the following remarks:

* In the desk research module, mainly concentrate more on the general and national phenomena, data and information, and less on your own regional/local features.
* In the focus group module, the main viewpoint could be local/regional features of the less developed region target of your project activities, beside some general information and results.

**6. The Structure of the Needs Analysis Document**

The language of the document is English, it is recommended for the document to be at least 20 pages (but not more than 25 pages), with TNR font, font size 12, line spacing 1.5.

Please use the Template document!

**Structure:**

* Executive Summary (2-3 p.)
* Introduction. (Recommended content: structure, sources, territorial approach, other information, etc. about the document) (1 p.)
* The status of SEs in general. (Recommended content: main statistical data, territorial differences, legal forms, short history, owners, typical activities, etc. Source: deskresearch.) (3p.)
* Business Ecosystem.(Recommended content: regulation, governmental/regional strategies, financing, local/regional opportunities, etc. Source: desk researches, focus group interviews.) (3 p.)
* The main challenges of the SEs. (Recommended content: market, labour-market, capital, technology, management, guidance, networks, bureaucracy, etc. Source: desk researches, focus group interviews.) (3-4 p.)
* Support and capacity-building needs. (Source: desk research, focus group interviews.) (3-4 p.)
* Other information, recommendations. (1-2 p.)

**In Annex** (out of extent limit)**:**

* The summary of the short surveys’ result with the involved SEs.
* Information and documentation ofthe focus group interviews: list of the participants, conclusions, results in 2-3 pages.
* Optional: other relevant data, statistics, tables, information, etc.