ADVANCING AND STRENGTHENING SOCIAL ENTERPRISES TO MAXIMIZE THEIR IMPACT IN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SECTOR OF CENTRAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES
“Continue to be the motor that lifts and develops the weakest part of your local community and of civil society, especially by establishing companies to provide jobs; be leaders in creating new welfare solutions, as you are already doing...Participate actively in globalization in order to integrate - in the world - development, justice and peace.”

- said Pope Francis in 2015 when addressing the Confederation of Italian Cooperatives. Social economy is crucial for the convergence of disadvantaged regions of Central Europe, where market forces fail to revive the economy. Social enterprises (SEs) are key actors in social inclusion and work integration in these regions, but they face many common barriers at their birth, operation and growth. SENTINEL partners from 6 countries have initiated joint actions to develop and validate novel, widely applicable solutions for skills development, social enterprise mentoring and networking facilitation, enabling social enterprises to better fulfil their major role in social innovation and inclusive growth.
SENTINEL’s Main Objectives

**Empower** social enterprises in order for them to:
better contribute to **local economy** and **job creation** and to play a significant role in **social innovation**.

**Improve** **managerial competences** and **entrepreneurial mind-set** of social enterprise operators in **less developed** regions in the Central European Region.

**Facilitate** the emergence and **sustainable operation** of social enterprises in disadvantaged regions through specialised **mentoring services**.

**Facilitate** the **cooperation** of social enterprises to promote their sustainability and to **strengthen their role** in social innovation and **territorial cohesion**.
31.04% Social services, social and community development
16.88% Business associations, employment and training
14.52% Education
28.50% Health, culture, environment

Estimated number of SEs in the country
5200 Poland | Podkarpackie Voivodship
3000 Hungary | Whole country

Estimated number of SEs in the region
~1700-70000 Germany | Brandenburg federal state
283 82 Czech Republic | Moravia region
252 73 Slovenia | Podravska region
80000 425 Italy | Trentino - Alto Adige and Friuli-Venezia-Giulia regions

3 out of 100 employees work at social enterprises and cooperatives

160,000 Social enterprises
5.4 million jobs in the European Union

SEs in Project Countries
Podravje region, Slovenia
A pool of experts and social enterprises were gathered in the “Social Enterprise Hub”, where based on a needs analysis 27 enterprises received tailor-made support from 24 experts in the fields of marketing, sales, communication, etc. With this Hub the social enterprise network strengthened and a source of advice and relevant knowledge and skills was established.

Carnia and Cadore regions, Italy
Based on surveys and community fora, the needs of the population of these mountain areas were researched and analysed in order to give appropriate answers. A result of this activity was the creation of the Atlas of the Mountain, an online tool which not only increases knowledge about the area but also helps to detect local development needs.

Brandenburg, Germany
Instead of a pilot action, our German partner organised a “Socent Cycle Tour” to visit rural social innovation projects in their contexts. The event also contained workshops with local initiatives and connected local decision-makers with innovators and people working for change. Together they celebrated the potential of social innovation.
Podkarpackie region, Poland
The support path for to-be social entrepreneurs was the same for everyone in the region, but thanks to the SENTINEL start-up incubation activity, the Rzeszow Social Economy Support Centre is adapting a new, tailor-made support path based on the applicants’ needs. One of the start-ups receiving support in the pilot action is a group of young people creating a music studio, for example.

Four disadvantaged regions of Hungary
As a result of the mentoring activity, workshops and networking facilitation, a network is born of social enterprises operating in disadvantaged regions of Hungary. A logistical centre is being established and a common brand, serving social enterprises which are stronger together.

Moravia region, Czech Republic
Previously unemployed people with a business idea received mentoring/counselling support in the pilot action, and had the opportunity of trying themselves in the open market under the protection of a secure salary for 6-12 months, allowing them to experiment. As a result, 60% of participants became SE entrepreneurs, and 40% were employed.

Pilot Actions
Benefits of Pilot Actions

- Social Enterprise Mentoring
- Social Enterprise Networking Support
- Competence (Business Planning, Finance, Marketing)
- Scale Up Business
- Sustainability
- Innovation Capacities
- Management Skills Improved
- Impactization
- Together We Are Stronger
- Cooperation Skills
- Strategies
- Knowledge Sharing
- Competitiveness
Number of organisations (social enterprises) involved in SENTINEL pilots: 52
Number of employees of social enterprises involved in SENTINEL pilots: 323
Number of trainers and mentors involved in pilots: 52
Number of mentoring events, trainings and workshops in the pilot period: 205
Number of persons reached by mentoring events, trainings, workshops: 142
Number of other events linked to pilot actions (meetings, pilot visits, fairs): 33
The SENTINEL project is a great example of how social entrepreneurship finds manifold answers to many local societal challenges. The creativity of different approaches developed in the framework of this partnership perfectly reflects the mantra “united in diversity”.

(Social Impact, Germany)

In the rural mountain areas, the key to sustainable entrepreneurial activity is economic diversity, directly responding to local needs.

(Cadore Cooperative, Italy)
Increasing the value of the historic, artistic and real estate heritage through an innovative service that brings them back to life. (Cadore Cooperative, Italy)

Every time I contemplate the ways to move forward, words, sentences, questions, protective and encouraging guidance of the mentoring process come to my mind. (Pilot Participant, Hungary)
Some social enterprises met for the first time and explored possibilities for future cooperation. *(Prizma, Slovenia)*

Subsidies are good but adjusted support is better. *(ROPS, Poland)*

Local solutions for a globalized world. *(USI, Czech Republic)*
What’s great in SENTINEL is that we’ve been looking for ways to support people who decided to help themselves. Making individuals and their enterprises stronger is the best thing we can do.

(HCSOM, Hungary)

SENTINEL! Huge step: good cooperation, new solutions, stronger social enterprises!

(RARR, Poland)

Keep calm and join SENTINEL network!

(Fund05, Slovenia)
CONSULTING
MENTORING
RESEARCH
NETWORKING
FACILITATION
NEEDS ASSESSMENT
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION
SURVEYS
TRAINING
WORKSHOPS
TRANSNATIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE
SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
ADVICE
GOOD PRACTICES
INCUBATION

ACTION PLANS
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
TRANSNATIONAL SE ADVOCACY NETWORK
TOOLBOX
SOCIAL ENTERPRISE FAIRS
HANDBOOK

FEASIBLE BUSINESS PLANS
BETTER MARKETING
NEW SOCIAL ENTERPRISES
IMPROVED BUSINESS SKILLS
INNOVATIVE START-UPS
MORE JOBS
SUSTAINABLE BUSINESSES

STRONGER NETWORKS
TRAINING MANAGERS
INPUT
OUTPUT

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SENTINEL’s Main Outputs

TOOLBOX for Social Business Mentoring Services
- includes tools and methods of social enterprise support
- proved to be successful in SENTINEL pilot actions

HANDBOOK of Managed Networks of Social Enterprises
- gives a background on social enterprise networks
- provides a detailed, step by step description of how to set up and operate a network

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
- based on a regional/national needs assessment and transnational exchange
- targeting the establishment of appropriate legal, financial, and administrative conditions for social enterprises to thrive

ACTION PLANS
- partners drew up an Action Plan for every SENTINEL country
- ensuring sustainability of project activities, paving the way for long-term social enterprise support

TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ADVOCACY NETWORK (SETAN)
- established by the project partners with the possibility of new members joining
- strengthens social enterprises with transnational exchange, joint actions, and united advocacy
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