MAKING OUR ECONOMY MAKE SENSE

November 2019

This is not a guide

VISES

Let's work together and amplify the IMPACTS OF SOCIAL entrepreneurship

With the support of the European Regional Development Fund

Interreg France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen
UNION EUROPÉENNE EUROPESE UNIE
VISES

SUMMARY

EDITORIAL

In France, Belgium and across Europe, the idea of making a positive **social impact is gaining ground. There are several reasons for this, including new contract conditions for public and private financing initiatives, the development of social impact financing (philanthropy,** *impact investing*, social impact contracts, etc.) and a newfound willingness for traditional companies to improve their social or environmental track record (CSR).

Yet while social impact has become one of the hottest topics in recent years, there seems to be a lack of clarity in terms of what it is and what it's for. Inherently, the term is wide open to interpretation - does it mean social utility, a concrete net impact, or something completely different? And if defining it is hard, understanding it may be even harder. When confronted with a mess of quantitative indicators, avoided-cost calculations, quality-based methods and others, it's easy to get lost. It is true that **no evaluation tool can be neutral**, but that doesn't detract from the value and utility of these methods if we want a clearer picture of what is actually going on around us.

Indeed, identifying the political potential of an impact evaluation is one of the VISES project's core commitments[1]. For those involved, an evaluation which includes the unique aspects of the social economy shouldn't be seen as an audit, but rather a tool to point them in the right direction, make the most of their initiatives, promote their achievements and work towards greater social innovation.

The VISES project was a direct response to these observations.

EACH PARTNER WANTS TO **PROVIDE HELP AND SUPPORT TO THE SOCIAL ECONOMY** AND EVALUATE THEIR SOCIAL IMPACT.

The VISES method is unique in its commitment to **co-development**. Let's think about adopting the method: once you start, all of the participants linked (whether closely or distantly) to your organisation can voluntarily integrate the evaluation, its key issues and its results.

One of the core advantages of our approach is its basis in the results and in the lessons learned from all the **research and action taken by research centres, participants in the social economy, federations, financiers and public authorities:** 23 French and Belgian (both Flemish and Walloon) partners and 68 participants in the social economy have already gotten on board. By working across the border, we can reinforce our method and prove that it is applicable to all companies in the social economy, no matter where they are.

NOW LET'S BEGIN !

(1) You can see our appeal for a co-developed social impact evaluation at the following address: http://www.projetvisesproject.eu/Notre-plaidoyer

THEIR STORY

THE AXHOM GROUP
DUNKIRK
FRANCE

AXHOM is a Social Group consisting of several structures designed to facilitate integration into the workforce: an Integration Business, an Integration Worksite and Workshop, and an Intermediary Association. Our goal is to build bridges into the workforce across Flanders, from the coast to the border.

WHY CHOOSE A SOCIAL IMPACT EVALUATION?

We had two objectives in mind when we signed up for the VISES social impact evaluation. The first was to build a positive dialogue with our partners by finding a better and more comprehensive way to evaluate what we do. The second was to help us analyse our own practices so we could become better and more effective ourselves. We decided to focus on **the impacts of our reintegration process for people who left without a career solution.**

SO, HOW DID WE GO ABOUT IT?

Several members of our group were involved in the evaluation process. Some of these members used the semi-collective[2] support system provided by the VISES project partners, and one person from our organisation was appointed process pilot. We also recruited an intern to collect the data we needed.

First, we conducted a self-evaluation which had been provided by our own federation. This facilitated the first step of the VISES assessment phase. We were able to collectively look at our identity, our services and our support in terms of our own objectives and assignments. Using the VISES analysis, we could assess our practices and our links to the people and organisations involved, and the local area where we work.

In an effort to answer the question we'd asked ourselves, we developed a two-step data collection method. First, we made contact with all the people who had left AXHOM without a career solution since 2015. We conducted a brief questionnaire over the phone to help us identify their current situation and identify what they thought had motivated them to stick with one of the group's establishments. We then held semi-structured interviews with 13 people who had accepted to talk about their experiences in greater detail.

AND THE RESULTS?

By analysing the data obtained, we were able to cross-check a great deal of both qualitative and quantitative data. We could hear directly from the people involved about how useful the reintegration process was.

From our analysis, we could see that, at every step of the reintegration process in the AXHOM Group, our interviewees described a benevolent, respectful and professional environment which allowed them to:

- acquire new and develop existing skills,
- increase their self-confidence and their feeling of being useful,
- get professional experience,
- meet local people and companies who recruit local people,
- guarantee access to all of their rights and full independence,
- improve their financial situation,
- create social links.

We would not have reached these conclusions using traditional integration *reporting* tools. The VISES method clearly gave us a concrete measure of the work we'd done and allowed us to see and evaluate what had previously been difficult to measure.

(2) Semi-collective support: a system of collective meetings with several social companies (5 days), followed by individual support

Introduction

There are several good reasons to evaluate your social impact- these evaluations are primarily a way to better document and communicate the effects generated by an organisation. The impacts may be short- or long-term, direct or indirect, and apply to individuals or society as a whole. When you use the VISES method to evaluate your social impact, you can get a handle on whether your actions are suited to your objectives, and reassess your actual impact on society.

Using the VISES project, you can get a real overview of your actual social impact - it can cover your organisation's economic, social, political, environmental and local effects. We're looking to do more than simply describe and/or cost an organisation's activities in terms of economic performance. We want to show you why you're doing this work and ascribe real value to it. When you get started with this kind of programme, it's an opportunity to stop, step back, ask the right questions, make the right changes and make real progress by working differently. You'll try and understand just what your users and/or clients are experiencing, and how they benefit. This is how you can really see what you've done, what you're doing and what sets you apart.

VISES is a process that will help enhance your social impact, not a tool.
This process is ongoing. It's a series of steps that your company takes to evaluate and enhance the work you do and the effects it has on the people involved and on the place you are working in. It goes much further than just creating and implementing performance indicators. Rather, you can adjust the evaluation to reflect your priorities, ensuring that it is a properly adapted and useful way to help your company meet its objectives.

VISES IS NOT:

- an audit, checking to see whether you are achieving your results,
- a client satisfaction survey - we're looking to find out why and how people are experiencing their interactions and the service (and not just whether they are satisfied),
- a tracking tool - we want to evaluate the impact of the organisation as a whole, rather than whether one person has made progress or kept to their commitments,
- a *reporting* tool - we aim to co-develop the evaluation process and go further than a mere action item list,
- an analysis of your working practices.

In this brochure, we'll illustrate the social impact evaluation process to you, according to the methods proposed by the VISES project partners.

OUR PROCESS HAS **FOUR STEPS**:

GETTING READY	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3
the questions you need to ask before getting started	identifying the question you're asking with the evaluation	choosing and developing the data collection tool and collecting the data	analysing the data collected and turning the results into something tangible

You'll discover that there are a set of conditions which will help you evaluate your social impact. You'll also see that support and guidance, from somebody outside of the process, will help make it a success.

As you read on, you'll hear from companies who have tested and tailored the method to their needs and objectives, plus the lessons learned and the recommendations which have benefited the people supporting them and the various researchers involved.

GETTING OFF TO A GOOD START

TO EVALUATE YOUR SOCIAL IMPACT, YOU FIRST NEED TO CO-DEVELOP THE EVALUATION ITSELF.

By evaluating your social impact, you'll be able to begin a strategic process that will ensure your continued improvement. It will allow you to better understand and document your own processes, provide confirmation and/or an opportunity for improvement, manage your project more effectively by making enlightened decisions and ensure that your teams of employees or volunteers are motivated and effective. In short, you'll get better at evaluating your social impact - a theme that's becoming more and more important every day.

The results you get will allow your company to promote and defend its model, and no longer focus exclusively on the « economic » side of your business. By making it clear why you need to act and by making what you do and why you do it easy and clear to understand, you can enhance your services, improve your methods and expand your target audience. By taking control of the evaluation (rather than just accepting it), you'll be able to anticipate any social impact evaluation criteria that may be imposed on you.

Be careful though, this sort of process is not entirely risk-free. First, this could shine a spotlight on any negative effects generated by your company or reveal any internal or external difficulties you've been having. Secondly, the results of the evaluation may not meet your expectations, and may not reflect what you originally wanted to highlight. It is important to remain thoughtful and flexible throughout the process, so you can adjust it as you go - if you need to. Bear in mind that embarking on this kind of process is beneficial in itself, and even if the results are not what you were hoping for, it is still valuable for your organisation.

Additionally, evaluating your social impact takes time and involvement from various different parties. It can create power issues between people and provoke strong emotions.

The VISES project takes these risks into account and proposes a social impact evaluation process based on the research already conducted, and which adjusts to the realities of companies in the social economy. This process takes the specific nature and methods of the social economy into consideration, helping companies reclaim the issues at the heart of social impact evaluation.

This is one of the governing principles of the VISES programme: a social impact evaluation must be co-developed to succeed, within the company itself, and involve all of the people concerned.

THEIR STORY

NOUVOULOOK
MARCQ-EN-BARŒUL
FRANCE

The Nouvoulook Community Shop is a place where clothes are collected, sorted, sold and shared, and where people can come together in a friendly environment. The association works to transform our society into something more united, where we can share, work and live together. « People are at the heart of what we do, and everything we do is decided and implemented collectively. Another of our highest priorities is sustainable development. Every woman and man will have their own space [...] to grow, take responsibility and take control of their future. For the association, evaluating means growing and making progress. The evaluation must then be shared and discussed with other partners and participants. »

2 OBJECTIVES

The social impact evaluation for the shop was conducted according to two objectives: firstly, to evaluate the impact on the neighbourhood, and secondly, the impact on the people volunteering at the shop.

The study was conducted in order to better understand, discuss and identify what the shop gave back to the different people who visited or knew about it.

The semi-structured interviews with the volunteers allowed us to better understand what provided them with the stability and long-term motivation they needed at a time when other organisations were having trouble recruiting. What we found was this:
- a strong attachment to the association's ethos;
- the impression that « it wasn't just social work » - they were working in a real shop and weren't merely donating clothes;
- the shop's organisation and management style took personal freedom and liberty seriously;
- there were no constraints in terms of their involvement;
- the friendly atmosphere gave each person a great sense of personal satisfaction.

This information was extremely useful, allowing us to better understand how the shop functions - but even more importantly, how to try and roll this model out in another neighbourhood.

The second part of the evaluation looked at two target audiences:
- the customers, using assisted questionnaires. The questions were the following: What do they look for in the shop? Has the shop been a way to interact with the community and evaluate its needs? What do people actually think about the shop?
- the elected representatives and technicians in the town of Marcq (the main backer of the shop), with the core question: what do you get out of financing this kind of initiative?

The answers provided by the local representatives were very revealing.
The shop is seen as an effective way of mixing the different strata of society. People consider it a place which simultaneously addresses a social problem (access to gifts and clothes) without stigmatising the beneficiaries, while (more importantly) being a place where you can be a good citizen in a somewhat segregated neighbourhood. Here, links are created and the needs of the population can be identified.
Throughout the study, various people were mobilised to evaluate the social impact of the Nouvoulook shop. The first step of the VISES process was to bring together as many of the different participants as possible: customers, volunteers, employees and managers, members of the associations Administrative Council, a representative for a neighbouring social centre, the Community Social Action Centre, the *Secours Catholique* (a partner) and more. They worked together to examine every aspect of the shop, what it does and what sets it apart. As this was a project based on education and inclusion, it seemed logical to involve all of the people who make the association what it is in the process.

Similarly, it was obvious that we had to talk to the volunteers, clients and elected officials when collecting the data: the shop could not stay open without the volunteers working inside it or without the local customers shopping there.

As such, this social impact evaluation ignored the volumes of clothes collected or sold by the shop and the turnover it made. Instead, it focused on the social links, issues and interactions which arose in the shop and in the neighbourhood. The objective was not to understand what the shop « sells », but rather how its model helps create a positive dynamic for the people who come there - both individually and collectively.

Getting started

WHAT ARE THE QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE EMBARKING ON THIS KIND OF PROCESS?

Before you begin evaluating an organisation or company, you first need to think about what you're doing. There are important questions to ask about the various issues involved in this kind of process, and a framework must be set. Ideally, these would be discussed among a team with input and guidance from a support assistant. We'll give you a list of useful questions to ask yourselves before embarking on the evaluation process. This list is a starting point, and other questions can be asked too.

1 WHY DO YOU WANT AN EVALUATION?

The first question to ask yourself is: « Why do you want to begin a social impact evaluation? ».

There are several reasons why you might want to embark on such a process.
You might want to:

- *Get a clearer perspective of your actions and potentially adjust some of what you do,*
- *Promote your actions and activities to participants outside the organisation (clients, financial backers, etc.),*
- *Develop a training programme to help improve your practices,*
- *etc.*

By asking this first question, you can think about your objectives in terms of further improvement, or what you want to do with the results. Do you want to broadcast your results within or outside the company? Do you want to use the results to develop new activities, modify your governance, adapt your practices, improve your team's cohesion or seek out new financial support? Or is this evaluation a way to improve how you evaluate your own social impact, and understand/document/promote what your workers are doing?

There are many options and opportunities. Yet, while it is important to think clearly about what you want before you start, new answers may arise and evolve as the evaluation progresses. It is not uncommon to see organisations set a new objective for the evaluation process after seeing the initial results of their investigation.

Lastly, you need to ask: « Is this the right moment for us? ». Certain times are better than others for companies to embark on an evaluation, such as during crisis periods, financial difficulties or governance issues. Social impact evaluations can highlight many different issues. By asking the right questions, examining clearly and frankly the situation and involving many different participants in a free and open discussion, a whole range of feelings and emotions can come to the surface.

2 WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

Social companies will often reflect on their processes, their methods and how they conduct their various activities. Looking over these past analyses is a useful first step, providing food for further thought and avoiding having to go back over old ground. It is important to use the evaluation methods already in use within the company.

This is also a good time to decide whether you want to conduct this evaluation on your own, or bring in some support. Here, you can either put the evaluation on the shoulders of somebody within your organisation who already has the relevant skills (quality director, project manager, director, etc.), or bring in a professional support assistant. By choosing somebody from outside your organisation, you can reduce bias and improve your perspective. This person is freer to speak and host meetings, formalise the process and stick to a specific schedule.
You must identify any inherent bias in your choice of person and take it into consideration when you analyse your results.

You'll need to draw up an evaluation schedule. The clearer your schedule, the more chance you have of successfully completing the evaluation. Setting milestones will help you regulate your speed and make better progress. It also gives you a pre-defined horizon for your evaluation.

It's also a good idea to identify the resources available to you. Leading an evaluation is an investment: it takes time and requires you to invest your human resources, time and money. There are various useful resources, such as identifying a « project team », recruiting an intern or bringing in a service provider to collect data. You'll also need to give your employees the time they need to attend the various meetings and interviews. It is the perfect time to select an evaluation manager, who will track the process.

3 WHO SHOULD YOU MOBILISE FOR THIS SOCIAL IMPACT EVALUATION?

When you embark on a social impact evaluation like this, you need to think about the various participants you want to bring on board at the various steps in the process - especially the first step, when you're assessing the situation and setting your key question. The important thing is to clarify the roles and responsibilities assigned to each person involved in the project. If you are bringing people on board to work on the preliminary assessment, they need to know, for example, whether they have any decision-making power over the evaluation question. Transparency throughout the process is the key to a successful evaluation.

THEIR STORY

THE ALTER-BOUTIQUE IN ANDAGE MARCHE-EN-FAMENNE BELGIUM

The Alter-Boutique in Andage is a city-centre shop which operates a barter system for high-quality objects, and is run by disabled workers and a team of support staff. They also have a coffee bar and a room for various activities available to customers, other shops and associations (for example, a zero-waste workshop).

The Alter-Boutique's activities and coffee bar are a way to help combat social isolation for some of the clients who visit the shop, a role they discovered when they ran a social impact evaluation. This was only one of the surprises which resulted from the VISES process, which also helped enhance the feeling of value and usefulness perceived by the workers and volunteers. There was a whole host of stories and experiences behind the cold figures and indicators - people who were managing to escape isolation and regain a sense of positivity and inclusion.

Using an open impact evaluation method, the Alter-Boutique chose a somewhat unusual way to collect their data: participative observation. This gave them a better idea of the relations which formed between the clients in the boutique and the disabled people working there. By taking a step back to observe the situation, the disability support staff have been able to promote and enhance this rich vein of interaction and community. When they first designed a place that combined the demands of business with professional support for the disabled, the Alter-Boutique had no idea that it would work so well - and while the team had noticed that something was going on, this evaluation added real value to their work and put the team's expertise into perspective, highlighting their role as a crucial link between the workers and the clients.

More than that, the interviews with the disabled shop staff also revealed just how tangible the social impact has been for them. Please note that the interviews were conducted using a framework and questions which respected the unique needs of the interviewees.
Openness with yourself, openness with others. Independence and recognition. Their words resonate, illuminating the value of what they're doing. Inclusion is at the heart of what they do here - for the disabled staff running the shop, but also for everyone who stops in. Every one of us has our own fragility, and our own unique disabilities.

Their definition of *inclusion*, the Alter-Boutique's guiding principle, helped set the direction of the evaluation from the very first discussions about the evaluation question. Using real, tangible facts and experiences to demonstrate and flesh out this sense of inclusion was one of the additional benefits of their work on the subject, as they attempted to answer their key question: **what is the social impact of the Alter-Boutique on its beneficiaries and on its customers?**

Step 1

TAKE ENOUGH TIME TO ASSESS THE SITUATION AT THIS PRECISE MOMENT

The first step of the VISES process helps you assess the situation and take a snapshot at one precise moment.
Here, **you can take the time you need to set out in detail what you're doing:** with whom, in which areas, how and why.

WHY SHOULD YOU SPEND TIME DOING THIS?

It lets you:

- Set the key evaluation question against a full, relevant backdrop,
- Open your company's « black box » and see what is specific to your situation. Look at what could explain a possible impact, and look at your surroundings and other external factors which could also explain this impact,
- Distinguish what you do (your activities) from how you do them (your practices), because both of these will generate their own effects,
- Prepare yourself for the upcoming evaluation conditions,
- Adopt a shared language and understand each other, allowing you to better understand any future divergence and disagreement,
- Uncover new aspects and information - specific practices you implement but to which you had never really paid attention,
- Anticipate any feedback loops, reciprocal influence and backlash,
- Identify any discrepancies or divergence between the points of view of the various participants involved.

This first step will give you a valuable view of your situation as a whole, allowing you to better choose your key evaluation question - your angle of attack, from where you'll begin to assess your impact.
It is a valuable source of information for everybody around the table.
It will motivate all of the people involved to participate, and each participant has a different perspective on your company.

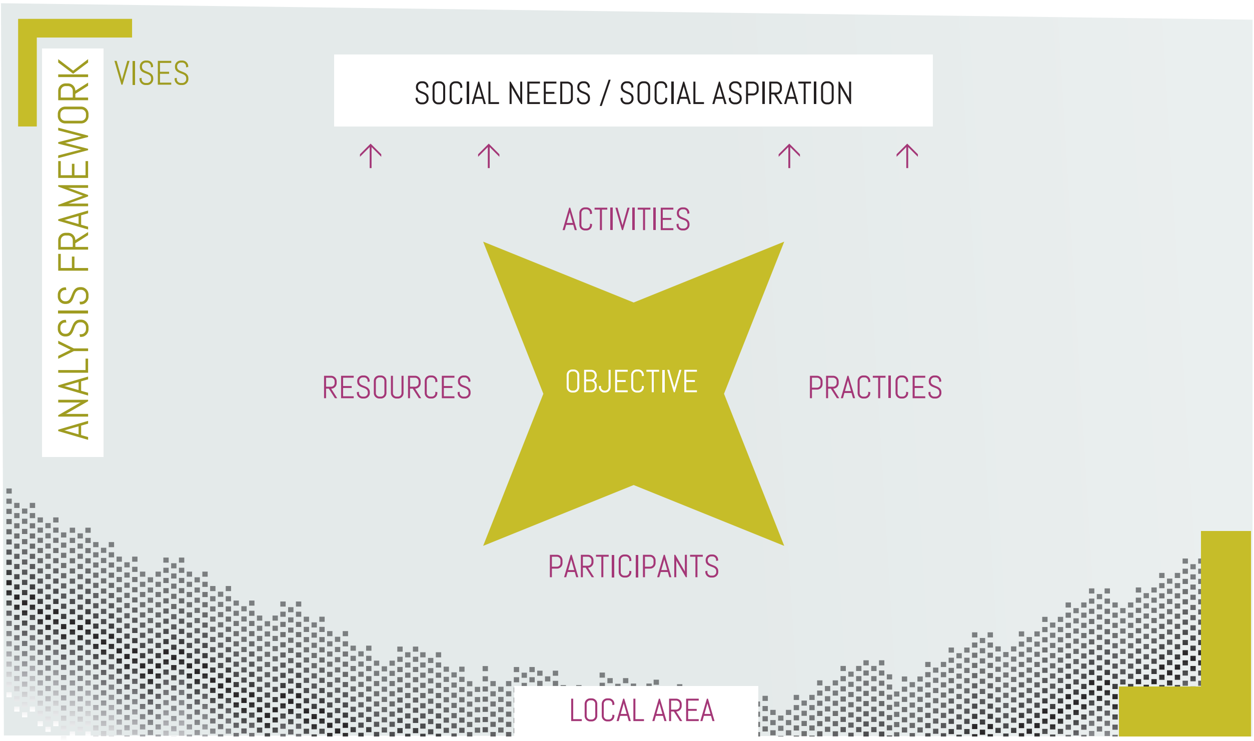
WHY CHOOSE A KEY EVALUATION QUESTION?

Because you need to be aware of the scale of the task ahead of you before you plough on with your social impact evaluation: **you can't evaluate everything!** By choosing a single question, you can set the scope for your study and mobilise the internal and/or external participants according to a specific set of objectives.

1 TAKE STOCK OF YOUR ORGANISATION

We can offer a tool that will help steer the conversation between the people involved and help you make an accurate assessment of your organisation at this precise moment. While this tool may take various different forms[3], the objective is always the same: to give you a clear view of all of your activities, why you do them, with whom, how and for what kind of results. By keeping your own objectives at the heart of the process and getting a clear overview of your unique needs and issues, this assessment will make it easier for you to set an effective key evaluation question.

This is the tool we propose: the « VISES analysis framework »:



- Social needs / social aspirations: Which needs are we trying to meet? (for example, the need for a decent standard of living)
- Objectives: How do we meet these needs? (for example, by helping people find work)
- Means or resources: Which resources do we have to fulfil these objectives? (for example, active interns or workers, job-seeking assistance, donations)
- Activities: Which activities do we offer in order to attain our objectives? (for example, we offer training for people in farming or construction)
- Participants: Who are the people, institutions and organisations that we interact with? What kind of interactions are these?

On top of this, some people prefer to add:

- Practices: Are there any "specific" ways we work in our organisation, or in how we conduct our activities?
- Locale: Where are we active? What are this area's specific geography, demographics and politics? Do they have an impact on our activities?

(3) Here are some examples of the tools you can use: *Social Business Model Canvas* (SBMC), the value chain by SAW-B, the simplified analysis framework by APES, CAP by the Coorace (self-assessment tool), etc.

Next you have to look at the **effects**: What effects are we having? These may take the form of results (for example, a job found) or a social impact in response to the initial objectives (for example, independence, a decent standard of living).

2 PEOPLE YOU NEED TO MOBILISE FOR THIS FIRST STEP

In order to conduct a proper assessment of your organisation, it is useful to mobilise a diverse range of participants. These can include: Managers, administrators, employees, beneficiaries, users, customers, partners, clients, neighbours, financial backers and elected officials. They'll all have something useful to say! The more diversity you can bring in, the more you'll get out of the process. We recommend mobilising people from at least two participant groups for this first step.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

→ Choose your participants carefully, according to both your expectations and theirs. It might be useful to **bring in people that you're used to working with**, as you may already have a constructive rapport and channel of communication.

→ You may also want to organise **various different meetings or formats in order to involve participants who are less accessible** (for example, an initial meeting with participants from inside the organisation, then a second with people from outside). This could help prevent any disagreements or conflict during this initial step.

WHY BEING IN A DIVERSE RANGE OF PARTICIPANTS?
THIS IS ONE OF THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE VISES PROCESS.

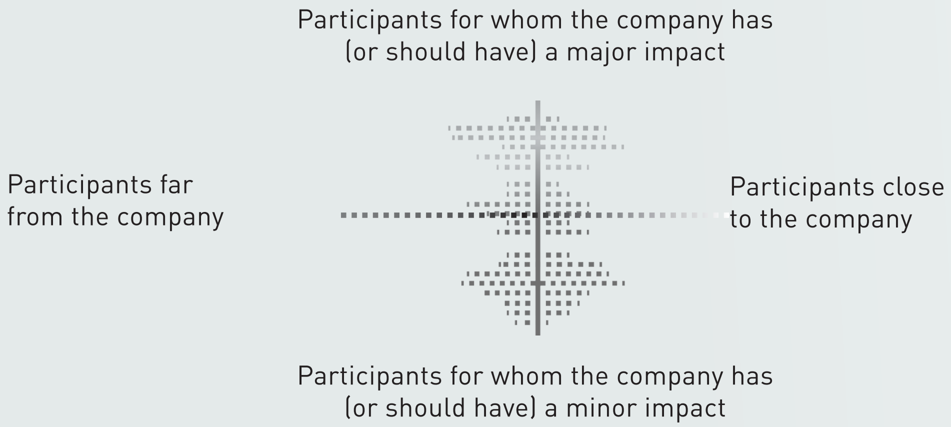
By bringing together a variety of different participants, you can:

1. Legitimise the process by sharing responsibility for the initial assessment;
2. Co-develop an evaluation, rather than have one thrust upon you and your participants;
3. Involve the various project participants in your organisation, and make it easier for your interests to converge;
4. Have a free and frank discussion: multiple points of view will develop the depth and nuance of your discussions, revealing unexpected and surprising new information;
5. Prepare for the data collection phase, as you'll have a much better grasp of what you'll be investigating later.

→ *For example: An administrator, an employee and a user of an organisation will likely have a very different way of talking about what it does and what it's for.*

There are a variety of tools available to help you choose which participants to involve in the process. For example, the participant map will help you number each one and position them too - you'll be able to see just how they are affected by your organisation.

COMPANY PARTICIPATION TABLE



3 DETERMINE YOUR KEY EVALUATION QUESTION

When choosing the question that will eventually guide your social impact evaluation, it is important to identify the most prominent and relevant aspects of your company. The key evaluation question frequently is used to reveal:

- added value: what you do differently to other companies;
- or what you don't yet know: shining a light and understanding what is actually going on.

There might be a range of options for your key evaluation question, and it will be up to you to make a choice. When you're thinking about your key evaluation question, we recommend giving it a test run. Think about these points:

- What do you want, need and aim for when embarking on this social impact evaluation?

→ *For example, one of your financial backers may be asking you about one area of evaluation (external need) while you want to look at another subject (desire).*

- What are the risks relating to your key evaluation question?

→ *Could this question open a Pandora's Box? Also, do you want to see how people are responding and reacting to the effects of your activities? If yes, you can make these feelings an objective, but there's a risk that you won't learn anything new. Are you OK with this? Etc.*

- Which resources (financial, human, time) have you decided to allocate to the process?

→ *Are they suitable and sufficient? For example, you may want to interview or meet all of your clients or all of your beneficiaries, but think about how long it will take to do this - and to process all the data you collect...*

- What is the target population for your key evaluation question?

→ *For example, if you want to talk to all the clients who visited your company on a specific day but don't have their contact details, this makes the question difficult to answer. If your audience has trouble understanding the text, this can also lead you to modify your question, etc.*

By asking these questions, you can quickly rule out any unworkable evaluations.
And now you've asked these questions, you can now choose your key evaluation question.

The key evaluation question(s) may concern primarily:

- Your beneficiaries: their participation in the company
- Your employees: their well-being in the workplace
- Your political project: the strength of your appeal
- Your activities: their coherence with your social objectives, their connection to the local area, etc.

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- How does our approach to socio-educational support (workshops/individual support) make our trainees more independent?
- What is the impact of sustainable job creation on the local area?
- What are the impacts of our practices on life in the community? (in terms of citizenship, diversity, social cohesion, etc.)
- How do the impacts of our activities on our members and the local area explain the longevity of the establishment?

YOU NEED TO TAKE A **REALISTIC APPROACH TO YOUR SOCIAL IMPACT EVALUATION:** ANY STUDY, NO MATTER HOW COMPREHENSIVE, WILL PRIMARILY SERVE TO **CONFIRM OR OBJECTIFY YOUR HYPOTHESES** AND PRECONCEPTIONS.

We recommend that you formalise the discussions and thoughts which result from this first step. The picture you paint here may change over time, other key evaluation questions may arise later, areas for improvement may be revealed or a progress plan may be developed. By formalising this first step, you can keep track of the work you've put in and see how the project has developed over time.

THEIR STORY

ESPACE 36
SAINT-OMER
FRANCE

Espace 36 is a community art centre which was founded in 1987. The association offers a space to create and display contemporary art, supporting artistic creation while promoting the links between the producers and the audience. Their objectives are to create, to distribute and to educate, and confirm their commitment to social responsibility through their mediation and integration work in poorer neighbourhoods.

THE VISES PROCESS AT ESPACE 36

By bringing together a wide range of different participants, the VISES process highlights each person and organisation's practices and prevents homogenisation. The Espace 36 management team decided to diversify the people they mobilised at each step of the process. With the diverse set of participants (but all with a connection to the full-time team), the project group managed to bring in a variety of different perspectives and involve them in the thought process. These included members, artists, professional partners and financial backers, all of whom demonstrated the importance and benefits of this kind of process.

> We consider it extremely important to work like this - even though we're used to co-development when we create new projects, we'd never done anything like it for our overarching strategy and direction.
> The most enlightening step was the first joint assessment of our organisation, which allowed us to fully examine how we work, how we're run, what we do and who we do it with. We'd been looking to work on our identity for a long time, so by formalising our activities and the support we get from APES, we were able to build something valuable together.
> As we worked our way towards a key evaluation question, we had the opportunity to debate and air any disagreements we had about the type of impact we should be looking at. In the end though, we realised that we all really wanted to go in the same direction.

In addition to the standard tools (interviews, questionnaires, etc.), we learned how to use a tool that was new to us, but which turned out to be extremely informative: **non-participative observation**. For this, we brought in our volunteer from the Civic Support Department who didn't know our target audience or our partners, and managed to bring up some valuable information.

Non-participative observation allows a researcher to maintain an independent, external perspective. They observe a social phenomenon as a spectator and pay particular attention to the observed party's behaviour and movements. The observer does not interact with any of the subjects observed.

KEY POINTS

Originally, we were mostly expecting to promote and defend our actions with our financial backers, but we soon realised that there could be a range of potential other effects.
Within the organisation, for example, we could take a closer look at our own practices.
The external support assistant helped us more than we thought she would at the start, and this was made possible by the relationship of trust that we developed. It was essential, ensuring that we could keep up our pace and our progress, and make the process as effective as possible. She also helped us develop our technical skills (tool creation, analysis, etc.) and gave us a neutral, unbiased point of view when the time came to analyse the data.

WHAT NOW?

The evaluation revealed that Espace 36 functioned as a place where a diverse range of people could come together, and was not limited to a single cultural community. It also showed us that interaction between different social categories was not always easy, and even though people with different backgrounds were there together, there was actually relatively little interaction between them.
Given that one of our priorities is to promote diversity and interaction, this information led us to look at how exactly we were working and what we could do to improve on a daily basis.

Step 2

SELECTING AND BUILDING A DATA COLLECTION TOOL

OK, so you've now got your key evaluation question. You've also got an idea of the kind of people from whom you will collect your data. Now, using this organisation-specific information, you need to choose the right data-collection tool and build it so it works for you. Here are a few tips to help you choose - take your time though, this is an important choice.

1 SHOULD YOU TAKE AN INDUCTIVE OR DEDUCTIVE APPROACH?

There are two main ways to collect information about the impact of your actions:

- you can either use an inductive method, and explore and reason after the fact (a posteriori). For example, you can ask people what it means for them to be independent;
- or you can use a deductive method, and base your investigation on a number of hypotheses you have already established (a priori). For example, you can ask them whether they feel independent.

It's also entirely possible - and often useful - to combine them. For example, you can ask a limited number of people what it means to be independent, before asking a larger group whether they agree with this vision of independence.

INDUCTIVE	DEDUCTIVE
A posteriori reasoning	*A priori* reasoning
Observation → model → attempted hypotheses → theory	Theory → hypothesis → observation → confirmation
Building new knowledge	Verifying hypotheses
A generally more qualitative approach	A qualitative and quantitative approach
Specific → universal	Universal → specific

2 A QUANTITATIVE OR QUALITATIVE APPROACH?

A second choice now presents itself: do you want a qualitative or a quantitative approach? To help you, here are a few differences between the two approaches.

	QUANTITATIVE	QUALITATIVE
Methods	Questionnaire, survey, etc.	Observation, focus group, interview, anecdote, etc.
Generalisation	Representative of the population, comprehensive	Exemplary case studies
Process	Deductive	Inductive and deductive
Objective	Describe, verify	Understand, observe
Category development	Before collection	Before or after collection
Type of questions	Closed questions	Open questions
Time needed	Depends on the situation	A lot of time
People needed	Before and after collection(4)	Before, during and after
When should you choose this method?	- When the theme is more or less defined - When a quantitative description is required - When you intend to compare or repeat the process later - When the variables are known - When the data must be representative (development of a new activity, for example)	- When the theme is unfamiliar - When the concepts and variables are unknown - When you are looking for meaning rather than frequency - When you need flexibility and are looking for the unexpected

3 BUILDING YOUR DATA COLLECTION TOOL

Whichever approach you use, the most important thing is to build an effective data collection tool (or tools). Whether you choose a questionnaire, an interview, a focus group or an observation, you must discuss with other people what you are actually looking for.

(4) NB : if the (quantitative) questionnaire is presented verbally, people will also need to be mobilised during collection.

STEPS

HERE ARE A FEW OF THE MOST IMPORTANT STEPS TO ENSURE THAT YOUR TOOL IS AS RELEVANT AS POSSIBLE

1. Form a diverse group of participants: this will allow you to take into consideration the accessibility of the questions and their relevance, and to involve your teams;
2. Organise a brainstorming session;
3. Write an initial version of the questions/themes to broach or observe;
4. Test the tool with as many people as possible, and specifically with the people for whom the tool is intended;
5. Write a new version according to the comments received and the tests conducted;
6. Validate the tool before rolling it out further;
7. Fully inform all of your data collectors about how best to use the tool, how to avoid bias and what to be aware of;
8. Collect the data.

PRE-CAUTIONS

A FEW THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

- You mustn't choose a tool without first thinking about how you are going to process the data you want to collect. If not, you run the risk of collecting data you'll never use. Sometimes, this can help you sort the wheat from the chaff.
- When you chose a tool, think about the consequences of this choice. For example, interviews require between 30 minutes and 2 hours of face-to-face contact, and can require up to ten hours to transcribe one (there aren't any tools that will do it for you!). If you are using written questionnaires, you'll need to transcribe the answers into a digital form so you can process the data.
- When you ask questions, try to have the least possible influence on the response and do not include the response in the question. For example, the questions « *What are the advantages of...?* » and « *What do you like about us?* » imply that there are indeed advantages...
- Think about the person who'll be collecting the data, so they'll be as neutral as possible. For example, if a member of the training staff is asking a trainee about the quality of the training, the trainee is likely to give a positive answer (to please the trainer, for example, or to be viewed more positively).
- Take a step back and build a tool that will be effective with the people who are going to provide the data. For example, develop a tool that is adapted to the target audience, with questions that take all possible options into consideration and a vocabulary that corresponds to the reality of their situation...
- Involve your teams as much as possible in the development of the tools: the more involved they are, the more motivated they'll be to get answers. They will encourage the participants to reply, and thereby increase the response rate.
- Make an evaluation at the mid-point and adjust the process if necessary by motivating the teams, increasing the sample size (but don't change the questions) or inversely, by scaling back your ambitions. It is better to adjust the process while it's underway (to reflect the time and resources available or the realities on the ground) than to abandon it.
- With this type of process, it is completely normal to have questionnaire response rates of around 10%. Don't get discouraged!

THEIR STORY

SOWEPO
POPERINGE
BELGIUM

Sowepo, Sociale Werkplaatsen Poperinge, is a partner for anyone with disabilities, providing them with a real job that they can enjoy and be proud of.

EVALUATE TO SHINE A LIGHT... AND ENHANCE BOTH THE ACTIONS AND THE END RESULTS

YES! We work hard to make a difference, every single day. We're convinced of the benefits of what we do, too. However, it can be difficult to convince other people. Are we really making a difference? What would happen if we weren't here? How can we explain the value of our organisation clearly and coherently? After all, this is the best way to ensure a sustainable impact and long-term funding.

SOWEPO went to work with these questions in mind. Alongside WAAK and 't VEER, two other adapted-work companies in West Flanders, we looked at how to formulate the best key evaluation question (phase 1). Firstly, we drew up an analysis framework as recommended by the VISES programme. It was rewarding to see that this tool worked more or less identically for all three organisations, even though they are different sizes and have very different backgrounds and activities. In the end, it was a good idea to join forces.

In phase 2, SOWEPO attempted to identify the key evaluation questions that would be most relevant to them. They used one method: questioning, re-questioning, questioning further, and calling the process into question.

In real terms, SOWEPO wanted to make an impact:

- by finding a job for their target audience (i.e. revenue)
- by making these people feel capable and proud of themselves
- by making them stronger
- by including and involving them.

But... how can you evaluate something like that? The three adapted-work companies began by sharing their existing indicators. It was a good starting point, but it wasn't enough. In fact, there were far too many - so we scaled back and chose a series of relatively simple and clear indicators. They were purely quantitative and easy to produce. It was limiting in some ways, as not everything can be expressed as pure numbers. However, a set of low-level indicators did at least give us a level of transparency and avoid the vagueness that can plague this kind of evaluation.

We then enhanced these quantitative indicators by adding qualitative ones we could interpret - these would then give us clear identifiers that we could use to make improvements and make our actions more effective: quantitatively at first, then qualitatively. The order is important here - but the two sides are both important, and both complement one another.

And to make these indicators as thorough and unbiased as possible, we spent a lot of time defining them. This led us into a dialogue with the various other adapted-work companies in West Flanders. What does this number represent? When should it be evaluated? Should we be counting people or full-time equivalents (FTE)? What should we be collecting? Numbers or percentages? Data from single moments, or data changes over time? Etc.

We chose to collect our indicators annually (around fifteen in total). We may even include them as a permanent part of our annual activity report (phase 3).

In real terms, the three adapted-work companies now have a set of indicators that enable them to **evaluate** their own actions.

Moreover (and if this process becomes widespread throughout the sector), each company could have a set of references to work with. The aim is not for others to « judge » their actions, but rather so they can look at their methods and improve how they fulfil their objectives. This could act as **a spur, driving us to be more focused and thoughtful in our actions, and to make it easier to share good working practices.**

Lastly, the impact evaluation allows us to consolidate our work (aggregating fully costed data from the various adapted-work companies) and present a strong message to the media, politicians and other groups of partners.

Step 3

ANALYSING THE DATA COLLECTED AND MAKING THE MOST OF THE RESULTS

This third step involves an analysis of the data you've collected - and also making the most of the results you've obtained. What should you do with the results of the social impact evaluation, and how and with whom should you share them?

1 PROCESSING AND ANALYSING THE **DATA** YOU'VE COLLECTED

Now you've collected your data, it's time to analyse it. To do this, first prepare the data (for example, ensure that the interviews are all fully transcribed, or put all the questionnaire results into the same table). Next, you can run a two-step analysis:

- in order to get to grips with the scale of the data involved, it may be useful to create an analysis table or to get different people to analyse the data available;
- then, for a cross-sector type analysis that will give you a better perspective on the data, you may wish to share the individual analyses and compare the various interpretations.

You can quantify and/or qualify the data collected. Your options are still open at this point - you can quantify qualitative data, or vice versa. This means that, if you have numbers, graphs and indicators, you can describe what this information means to you in words (i.e. analyse what you're doing with them).

You can also turn interviews and text into quantitative data by calculating the repetition of certain words, by revealing « typical » responses, etc.

There are various different ways of analysing your data.

1 **You can count how many times certain words** are used in interviews, and collate them in a series of tables.

For example, you could compare the election platforms - concerning teaching - of a particular political party at two different times, using a tool such as http://textalyser.net/

Part 1

WORD	OCCURRENCES	FREQUENCY	RANK
Home	17	3.5%	1
Work	14	2.8%	2
Homework	7	1.4%	3
School	6	1.2%	4
Educational	6	1.2%	4
Family	4	0.8%	5
Student	4	0.8%	5
Cycle	4	0.8%	5

Part 2

WORD	OCCURRENCES	FREQUENCY	RANK
Decree	7	1.6%	1
Refinancing	6	1.4%	2
Homework	5	1.2%	3
School	5	1.2%	3
Financing	4	0.9%	4
Child	3	0.7%	5
Differing	3	0.7%	5
Teachers	3	0.7%	5
Educational	3	0.7%	5
Students	3	0.7%	5

The first table shows that the priority, in terms of teaching, is reflected in the use of the words « home » and « work », followed by « students » and « family ». In the second table, we can see « decrees », « financing » and we talk about « teachers » and « children ». The students' environments have disappeared. In the first case, the programme is focused on the student and their environment.
In the second, we talk more about schools and teachers.

This may be a changing priority which could change the way we work - moving away from a partnership with the student and their family, towards a partnership with the schools and their teachers.

2 You can make a word cloud

Word clouds show areas of focus and give an overall impression of an activity or business.
We can use it to give an accurate, immediate picture of the company. For example, using a tool such as https://www.nuagesdemots.fr/ we can see the feedback from social workers in a homeless shelter.

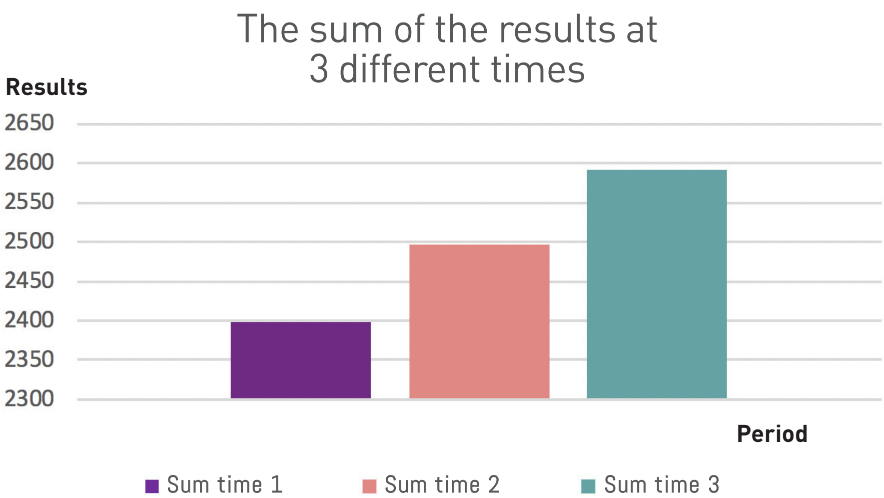
This word cloud highlights the expectations of the people who visit the shelter and how that affects the atmosphere in the centre.

This shows that the housing issue is what comes up most in this centre, which provides daytime shelter for homeless people.

We can also see that respect and health are crucial elements. There are parallels we can draw between health and hygiene, and between active, orientation and meeting.

3 You can run statistical analysis and create graphs using quantitative data

This graph presents the total results taken from a questionnaire. This questionnaire discussed the skill levels of trainees over various different skill sets. It was used by an organisation which helps people enter the workforce in three different periods: before the trainee entered the centre (period 1), while they were at the centre (period 2) and after they had left the centre (period 3).



We can see growth over the three periods, and this growth remains steady from period 1 to 2 and 2 to 3. If the time elapsed between the periods is similar, than this data shows that the learning process is constant and fairly linear. If, for example, the first period was shorter however, we could surmise that the learning process was more effective at the beginning of the training, and that it lasted over time.

4 You can identify common themes in the interviews you conduct

> *« I wanted to meet people like me »*

> *« I met a volunteer at the organisation who said they were looking for more volunteers. I've been wanting to join this kind of association for a while now. I live next door too, so it's great »*

> *« That's something that I've always hated. There's something that doesn't work, and hasn't worked for a long time. That's why I wanted to get involved with people who thought the same was as I do. I had the time. But mostly, I wanted to do it with other people and not be alone »*

> *« I wanted an objective, a project, to meet people, see what's happening in the world... I didn't want to withdraw into myself »*

These different interview extracts all show why volunteers wanted to join the organisation. In particular, we can identify a precise motivation - a "relationship-based motivation": volunteers signed up to meet people who thought the same way as they did.

By identifying common themes (motivation) across the various interviews which could be explored as sub-themes (relationship-based motivation), you can run a "thematic analysis" on the qualitative data. These themes are often linked to questions asked during the interview, but sub-themes can often be identified in the responses and unexpected other themes may emerge too.

Illustrate your report using extracts from your interviews. This will let you draw directly on the words of your beneficiaries, clients, users, volunteers and workers.

5 You can analyse all of the qualitative and quantitative work together, by describing in your own words what the information means

By doing this, you can connect all of the information together, whether they concern your professional practices or more theoretical concepts.

« Using this as a base, we can define the Alter-Boutique's idea of inclusion as the capacity to discover, adapt to and recognise other people's differences and similarities, while allowing the other person to discover us and get to know us through our differences and similarities.
This definition of inclusion provides a very good summary of the Alter-Boutique's social impact, as a place where everybody belongs and can feel included. »

PRE-CAUTIONS

A FEW THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

What you need to do:

- Look at the bigger picture, and try to see what's happening without taking criticism personally (try and identify what's behind the negative feedback and the sources and reasons for criticism by breaking them down and deconstructing them);
- Analyse the data separately: for example, analyse the time devoted to preparing a task and compare it to its « effectiveness ». Using this analysis, you can see whether or not you should continue with it. *For example, this activity requires a great deal of you and it could be the core reason for your appeal. If you remove it, your whole approach could collapse.*

What you mustn't do:

- Focus solely on what supports your hypotheses and preconceptions. For example, if you find that an activity does not suit you, you must not only look for evidence that confirms what you're thinking;
- See information that isn't there, by manipulating data to say something different. For example, if 80% of the people you interviewed say they feel good, don't just conclude that you're the reason why - there could be many other factors!
- Draw conclusions before analysing the data. For example, don't use the activity participation rate to deduce that the participants like the activity.

2 MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR **RESULTS**

Once you've analysed the data, you must stop and think about how you want to use it. As we mentioned in the previous step, there are various options available to you. These include presenting your results (to various audiences or during events of different scales), the implementation of a multi-year action plan to modify your governance, social innovation, (for example, the creation of new activities or actions) and modifying your working practices (for example, adjusting your methods).

Using your social impact data is an integral part of your strategy, and can help you achieve two main objectives:

- Communicating the results within and/or outside of your organisation, as you pursue various other objectives;
- Improving how you work. The aim here is to use your results in order to improve your social impact and meet the needs of your beneficiaries and the local area.

1 Communicating the results within and/or outside of your organisation

Before starting to think about your communication strategy, you can list the results you've obtained and ask yourself what they say about your organisation or what solutions they can bring. This will help you identify the message you want to put out.

For example:
- The results show an increase in independence, well-being and self-confidence... →Your approach and your methods are generating value;
- The results show that your specific method is effective → this means that your method is needed, even if it takes time and resources.

The table below will help you decide upon which communication strategy suits your target audience and your objectives, and will give you some ideas about actions you can take. Now it's up to you to organise it, according to your own schedule. And of course, there are plenty of things which could be added to this list.

WHO? The targets for your objectives	WHY? Setting objectives	HOW? The type of actions needed to fulfil your objectives
Internal targets (workers, volunteers, interns, support staff, etc.)	- Take stock of what has been done throughout the process; - Bring your teams together; - Motivate your workers, volunteers, interns; - Improve how you work, modify your practices; - Adapt your strategic direction; this could, for example, lead you to implement a five-year plan;	- Team presentation; - Event; - Internal e-mail, etc.
Wider public	- Recruit clients or contributors; - Reach new beneficiaries; - Raise awareness of your causes and values;	- Articles in the press; - Advertising; - New brochure(s) / report(s); - New website; - Videos; - Stories...
Clients, beneficiaries and the people around them	- Inform them of specific methods and ways of working; - Thank them for staying with you; - Strengthen their links to the structure and the services provided;	- Client events; - Letter / e-mail with the results
Private or public financial backers	- Look for new backers; - Convince; - Reassure;	- Respond to tenders; - Subsidy file;
Politics and administration (officials, admin, future officials)	- Raise awareness of your causes and values; - Make a political appeal; - Convince;	Push for modifications to the legislation by targeting politicians and policies (during events, meetings with parties and officials, meetings with the administration, etc.)
Partners in your sector, influencers, etc.	- Increase your visibility with partners, politicians and academics; - Make people want to join your projects; - Help move the sector forward as a whole, promote the specific aspects of the sector; - Identify shared indicators; - Promote this social impact evaluation method, apply it and adapt it;	- Press release; - Conference; - Presentation brochure; - Round tables; - Meetings;

2 Using the results to improve the work you do

Using the observations you've made by analysing the data you've collected, you may want and/or need to improve how you work or operate - within or outside your organisation - and improve your practices or activities.

The table below explains what you can work on, and what this involves for you. This table is just a guideline, providing a few ideas for themes and subjects you can work on.

WHAT ARE YOUR OBSERVATIONS?	WHAT SHOULD YOU CHANGE?
The results show that the needs of the local area, your beneficiaries, clients and financial backers have changed. → *This is an opportunity to* ***innovate*** *and meet these new needs.* The results show that the needs are different to those previously imagined. → *This is an opportunity to work on some new priorities,* ***review your strategy*** *and adapt your practices.* The results show that not all of your workers' needs are being met, that your workers have too much to do or don't know how to work effectively. → *This is an opportunity to* ***reorganise****, review how tasks are delegated among employees (or even between employees and administrators), improve your internal communication, adapt how your organisation is structured, etc.*	Work on **what needs to be done**
The evaluation revealed changes in your aims and social objectives. → *You can conduct an in-depth review of your* ***community project*** *by changing your statutes and by modifying (all or part) of your targets, etc.*	Work on **your projects and objectives**
The results have shown that some of your methods are ineffective or unsuitable for your activities. → *This is the moment to* ***review your methods*** *= your actions/activities, and improve your practices.* The results show that some of your decision-making methods are ineffective. → *This is a good time to* ***review your organisation's governance***	Work on **your practices**
The results show that certain precise activities are under-financed or lack the skills needed to successfully implement certain actions. → *This is the opportunity to* ***look for other sources of funding or reinforce your team*** *by bringing in new skills.*	Work on **your resources**
The results show that your beneficiaries want a certain specific type of activity. → *You can create new activities, modify your working methods or develop new projects.* → *You are now in a* ***position to improve*** *your activities by changing your practices to remain in line with your core values and desired social outcomes.*	Work on **your activities.**

THEIR STORY

**ESPACE ENVIRONNEMENT
CHARLEROI
BELGIUM**

Espace Environnement is an association which works to increase participation on a daily basis. Their team is on hand to take part in demonstrations, information and awareness sessions, training programmes and more. They work on a variety of subjects, basing their approach on participative democracy, ethical citizenship, sustainable local development, ongoing education and humanism.

MAKING WORK MEANINGFUL

Job security, recognition, support, teamwork or solo work, gender equality and more: Espace Environnement's social impact evaluation was developed to ensure that the organisation's values and its reality were fully coherent with one another. This multi-faceted public interest association operates out of Wallonia in Belgium, working in fields as varied as the environment, town planning, land use, heritage sites, health care and environmentally friendly consumption. Their aim is to inform, advise and raise awareness - independently and objectively - among everybody involved in the local area, encouraging them to take a more sustainable approach to development. Their working methods are designed to promote active participation.

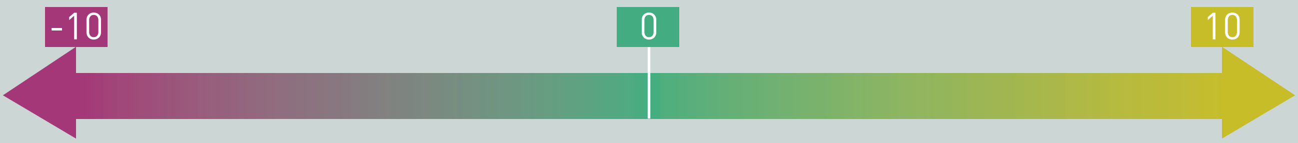
Worker well-being can be an end in itself, especially in social businesses. This was the starting point for the evaluation process. From the very beginning, Espace Environnement wanted to ask its workers about their « well-being » in the workplace. They believed that a positive and beneficial workplace would promote high-quality work and increase the likelihood that the actions taken would have a larger social impact. However, the team was wary of using the standard indicators commonly used to assess happiness in the workplace, which can create an artificial ranking of the happiest companies and lead to a « happy-cracy ».

To avoid this, they created an anonymous questionnaire which would allow their workers to talk freely about their well-being. For each item, they were asked to score each element on a scale of -10 to +10 concerning how much they needed it to feel happy at work. They then evaluated to what extent Espace Environnement fulfilled their needs for this item.

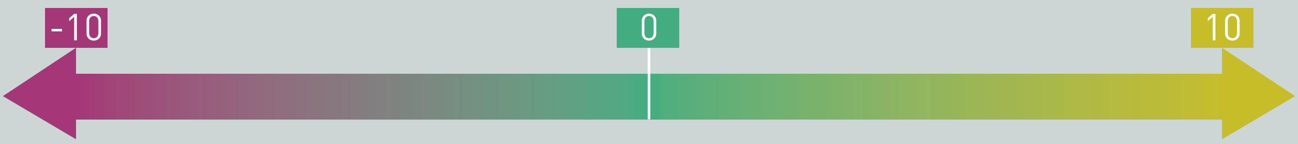
This two-part scale system allowed them to identify the level of worker satisfaction in terms of each item, and how important each item was to the worker. The discrepancy between the two scales formed the core of the social impact evaluation conducted by Espace Environnement as part of the VISES project. It allowed them to move on from thinking that each item was of equal importance: for example, a worker could be unsatisfied with the number of training programmes available (+6), but still consider this to be relatively unimportant in terms of their professional well-being (+4). On the other hand, they could feel that their work is valued relatively highly and give it a score of 8, and also feel that this element is extremely important for their well-being at work (+9).

Here is a graph which may help you understand how the items are viewed:

How much do I need my work to be valued?



How valued do I feel within the company?



The main difficulty in developing this kind of tool is working together to define each item - they must correspond to the elements that all of the workers consider important. For Espace Environnement, this work was completed over more than one step. Firstly, group sessions were organised with members who represented the entire team. Next, the workers were invited to propose more items.

This method provided a better source of information for the team than simply using standard indicators: here, they had co-developed indicators which measured what was actually important for their organisation.

At the end of the process, a total of 20 indicators were submitted for the evaluation. This group participation formed the backbone of Espace Environnement's process and allowed them to determine - as a group - the key question for the evaluation: **What do we need to be happy at work?**

Conclusion

BOTH THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF THE SOCIAL ECONOMY AND THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE VISES PROJECT ARE ESSENTIAL FOR THE PROCESS TO SUCCEED

Now you've read this brochure, you know a little more about the social impact evaluation process developed by the VISES project and its partners. The stories and descriptions you've read have given you an overview of the process and what it can do for companies in the social economy.

So now, if you want to start the process yourself, you'll need to return to the questions we ask in the preliminary step of the programme: Why do you want to begin a social impact evaluation? What are your objectives? Is this the right moment for you?

By sticking with the process from beginning to end, 68 companies took part in the VISES research project and demonstrated the benefits of a social impact evaluation. At the same time, they helped co-develop the programme that you're reading about here.

So, what are the main things to bear in mind?

- Our process can be adapted to your company and your needs. It is created as a response to your situation and your unique reality. Our process provides a lens through which you can see your work clearly.

- A social impact evaluation helps create a permanent dialogue between the people both within and outside of your organisation. This dialogue can be an excellent motivational tool in itself (acknowledgement of the work you've done, the relevance of your actions over the long term and the legitimacy of your project). Each participant who you bring on board to co-develop your evaluation will add further value to the process.

But you mustn't forget that this kind of process takes time and resources. This is why, after experimenting with the VISES project, our project partners ask that:

- ✓ the social impact evaluation of companies in the social economy take their values, principles, practices and processes into consideration - essentially, what sets them apart.

- ✓ the social impact evaluation of companies in the social economy:
  - is co-developed alongside the beneficiaries of the evaluation,
  - involves the various parts of the company in the different steps of the evaluation,
  - when possible, combines the quantitative with the qualitative.

OVERALL, OUR PROJECT PARTNERS WANT **THE SOCIAL IMPACT EVALUATIONS PROMOTED BY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FINANCIAL BACKERS TO BE BASED, IN THE FUTURE, ON THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE VISES PROJECT.**

The specific nature of social companies and the lessons learned from the VISES project must both be taken into consideration here, so dialogue between these companies and their financial backer (both public and private) is indispensable. What it means is this:

- ✓ the social impact evaluation process must be supported and given the appropriate human and financial resources, as it takes time. It should be possible to receive training or support from an external organisation with experience and expertise in the VISES process.

- ✓ If the social impact evaluation is spearheaded by a public or private backer, it MUST be co-developed alongside the companies in the social economy and include both qualitative and quantitative aspects.

SO ARE YOU READY TO GET STARTED?

Get in touch with the partners who can help you get moving
at **www.projetvisesproject.eu** !

THE CRESS

The CRESS is a public utility association tasked with ensuring the local promotion and development of the social economy, under the terms of article 6 of the framework law from the 31 July 2014 concerning the social economy.

CONCERTES

Concertes is a coordination platform for the organisations representing the social economy in French-speaking Belgium (Wallonia and Brussels).
It is designed to represent, defend, promote and research the social economy.

The cross-border projects illustrated in this document are projects financed by the EU FEDER funds, via the Interreg France - Wallonia - Vlaanderen Programme. This European regional cooperation programme is designed to promote economic and social exchange between cross-border regions. The projects supported by the programme must address the following themes: research, innovation and technological transfer, small-business competitiveness; heritage; natural resources; risk management; social cohesion, healthcare, training and jobs.

In France and Belgium, there is a slight difference in the translation of « social economy ».

In the French-language document, the term « économie sociale et solidaire » will be used.

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