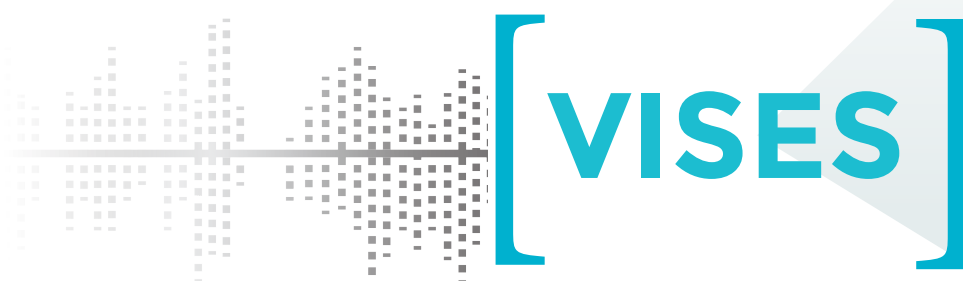


LET'S GIVE SENSE TO OUR ECONOMY



ADVOCACY POSITION FOR A CO-CREATED
ASSESSMENT OF THE SOCIAL IMPACT
OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP.



Valorisons ensemble l'IMPACT SOCIAL de l'Entrepreneuriat Social

Interreg
France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen



VISES

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ADVOCACY POSITION FOR A CO-CREATED
ASSESSMENT OF THE SOCIAL IMPACT
OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP.

Performing an evaluation **process**^[1] is not **neutral**. For the enterprises of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), to seize this question **goes hand in hand with the affirmation of their specificities**. In addition, the valorisation of the social impact must make it possible to display the contribution of activities of social utility and of general interest, and to highlight that the enterprises of the SSE are “**creators of wealth**” before being “cost drivers”. The essence of the **VISES project** lies in the development of a **co-created social impact assessment approach**^[2], which takes into account the specificities of the SSE (i.e. its “practices” rather than its “results”).

Evaluation has always existed, although its modalities that tend to evolve.

Thus, according to times and contexts, evaluation has taken many forms: a purely internal approach, a process co-created with the stakeholders, a task with rules imposed from the outside, etc. While evaluations can be conducted in all areas of socio-economic activity, social impact assessment is now a major focus of attention.

Social impact-assessment practices based on the process of quantification, or even monetisation, of social facts appear increasingly often. In fact, the development of impact investing and *venture philanthropy* is attracting new players to the SSE and these new players are in demand of indicators on the results of enterprises of the SSE and on their impact.

The context of contraction of public finances – both in France and in Belgium – is also accompanied by a reflection on the optimisation of public spending and a search for greater efficiency in its management. Moreover, the evaluation of public policies and the tight control on public spending have developed jointly, and some studies show that this trend poses **a risk of switching from evaluation to measurement**^[3], and from **public policy development to public service performance**. These transformations are important, as they entail a transformation of the nature of the welfare state.

[1] An evaluation process is a set of steps undertaken by the company to document, evaluate or valorise the way in which it carries out its mission(s) and the effects that this generates on its stakeholders.

[2] The VISES system comprises 3 dimensions:

- A “prototype” dimension
- An “mentoring” dimension
- A “co-creation” dimension

[3] Evaluation has the advantage of raising questions about the value of the object under study, unlike measurement, whose exercise is confined to positioning the object studied on a defined scale.

CHALLENGE 1

Why addressing the question of social impact ?



TO “DISSEMINATE OUR SPECIFICITIES”

The challenge is to “open the black box of the enterprises of the SSE”, in order to promote both practices and results, and to remind that the “how” (process of production, management, governance and mission) and the “why” (notion of ethics) matter just as much as the results.

It is a question of showing that, beyond the proposed activities and the services performed by the enterprises of the SSE for the community, **the way in which they carry out their actions is in agreement with their values** (solidarity, the core importance of the human being, limited profitability, etc.) **and their principles** (participatory management and democratic governance). The goals they set for themselves and the social aspirations that underlie their missions create an alternative way of producing goods and services that must be accounted for.

The specificities of the enterprises of the SSE make it possible to:

- rethink the organisations themselves and involve the different (sub-) stakeholders;
- have a grasp on social and societal issues;
- bring out and propose solutions to social aspirations by developing new economic, social and cultural models;
- mould public policy;
- stimulate the debate among citizens;
- be anchored to the territory and be closer to the needs of the population.

THE SPECIFICITIES
OF THE ENTERPRISES OF
THE SSE RESIDE FIRST
AND FOREMOST IN
THEIR PRACTICES



TO “SHOW OUR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ADDED VALUE”

Through this mechanism, we want to **assess the interaction of the enterprises of the SSE with their environment, their ability to meet the essential needs of the territory and of its population**, and to show the deep **meaning of their actions and their social aspirations**^[4].

[4] By “social aspirations” we mean the projection of a social ideal.

3

TO "CLAIM OUR VISION OF SOCIETY"

THE SSE CARRIES A PECULIAR VISION OF THE SOCIETY AND THE ECONOMY, AS WELL AS AN AMBITION OF EMANCIPATION OF HUMAN BEINGS.

The SSE reconstructs the relationship between the economy and the social sphere. The activities of the enterprises of the SSE are not evaluated solely through the standard economic or performance lens (number of jobs, number of establishments, wage bill, turnover ...). There also is a deep focus on the logics of social and societal transformation that these activities are able to feed.

The SSE is not characterised just from its economic value but also from its impact on the environment. It reframes the economy as a form of relationship between humans and ensures that there is a positive connection between 'economic impact' and 'social impact'.

4

4

TO "IMPROVE OUR PRACTICES"

Beyond the evaluation, the reflection carried out by the VISES project first wants to **empower the enterprises of the SSE in terms of management and strategic development**, and aims at advancing or improving the social utility of the array of their services, pursuing the well-being of all people. Reflecting on what the enterprises of the SSE do, and on why and how they do it, can lead to the transformation of their practices towards an even more appropriate response to the needs, in line with the goals they set for themselves and in respect of the values of the SSE.

THE SYNERGY OF THE ACTORS (researchers/ companies/networks) OF THE VISES PROJECT

ALLOWS TO PRODUCE A COMMON SYSTEM, which improves the practices of all the companies of the SSE

and INVOLVES ALL THE ACTORS AS TRUE STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN THE PROCESS.

5

TO "UNDERTAKE OUR BIASES"

EVALUATION IS A TOOL FOR MEDIATION AND PROGRESS, AND NOT FOR CONTROL OR CERTIFICATION.

The VISES project has a concept of social impact assessment that:

- strengthens the resolution and the capacity of action of the enterprises of the SSE (which liberate and do not cage-in) and takes into account their complexity;
- is rooted in the reality on the ground and is tailored on the needs of the SSE;
- entails an empowerment of the actors.

The system does not insist on favouring standardisation of practices, and on prioritising what is easily measurable. **It is not limited to quantitative methods, but makes also use of qualitative methods.** Furthermore, it will not use the results of the test in the 69 companies to benchmark the enterprises of the SSE and compare them with one another.

5

6

TO "STRENGTHEN OUR COMMON IDENTITY"

The aim of the VISES project is to **build a common culture and voice in assessing and valorising social impact** by going beyond the national and regional frameworks; and creating a common discourse that springs from the enterprises of the SSE themselves. The aim is to encourage mutual learning among the enterprises of the SSE and to reinforce common capabilities in terms of evaluation analysis and valorisation of social impact.

CHALLENGE 2

How to address the issue of social impact assessment?

1

BY "COLLABORATING AT THE CROSS-BORDER SCALE"

THE CROSS-BORDER CO-CREATION OF THE SYSTEM IS A STRENGTH.

The cross-border co-creation of the system is a strength. To be able to pool existing work, expertise, resources, and to weave a network of coordinated collaboration between researchers and federations, companies and financiers of the SSE, beyond national and regional frameworks, is extremely valuable. It is also a step closer to a common identity of the enterprises of the SSE, notwithstanding all their diversity.

2

BY "CO-CREATING A CONCRETE, RELEVANT AND OPERATIONAL SYSTEM"

In order for the enterprises of the SSE to adopt the system and use it to assess their social impact, this must be created taking into account their specific realities, and be apprehensible to them and their stakeholders.

The VISES system takes into due account the reality on the ground, and it pushes enterprises and stakeholders to re-claim ownership on the issue of impact valorisation.

It will be designed within the companies themselves to meet their expectations, and enterprises will have control over the outcomes that will derive.

The developed system therefore has as objectives :

- for the whole of the SSE, to meet societal aspirations;
- for the enterprises of the SSE, to give competences of valorisation and strategic evaluation for:
 - 1°) the internal transformation of their practices, in order to achieve more easily the goals they have set for themselves;
 - 2°) the dialogue with all their stakeholders (users, customers, workers, private or public funders);
 - 3°) the communication of their practices.

THE VISES SYSTEM TAKES INTO DUE ACCOUNT THE REALITY ON THE GROUND.

3

BY "MAKING THE SYSTEM ACCESSIBLE"

If the aim is to have every enterprise of the SSE valorise their social impact, **the system developed by VISES must be easily understandable and accessible**, including by organisations for which social impact assessment is not a core activity...

Thus, the 69 "tester" enterprises will ensure that this system is:

- adaptable to the means, needs and constraints of the enterprises of the SSE;
- functional and easy to handle;
- producer of easily exploitable data;
- able to evolve over time;
- usable internally and, to some extent, externally;
- combinable with the tools and procedures of the stakeholders (especially those of the funders).

4

BY "SHARING OUR THOUGHTS AND WORKS"

The VISES project is first and foremost a means for the various partners to share their experiences in assessing and valorising social impact.

However, **the aim is to propose a solution that is mutually recognised by all stakeholders**, not disconnected from what is developing elsewhere, to which it will be duly linked, and having as starting point the realities experienced by enterprises in the SSE.

IT IS A PROCESS OF CO-CREATION OPEN TO OTHERS, IN DIALOGUE WITH THE FINANCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS OF THE SSE AND WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS.

Chef de file et coordinateurs



Partenaires Opérateurs



Partenaires Associés



Avec le soutien de



VICES

et



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Avec le soutien du Fonds européen de développement régional