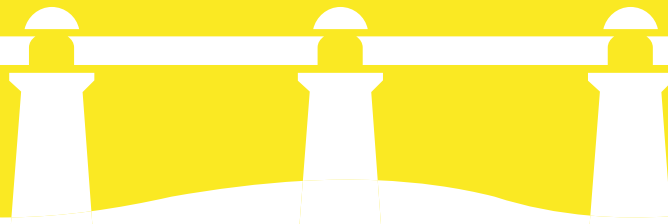
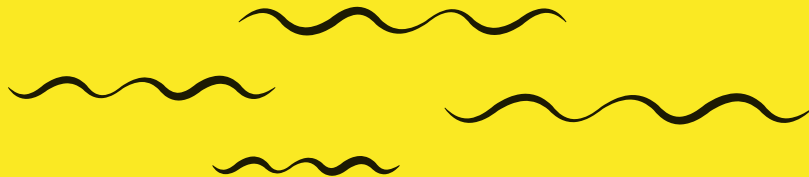


Social Innovation and Active Public Engagement



Atlantic Social Lab

Atlantic Social Lab is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the INTERREG Atlantic Area Cooperation Program (EAPA_246/2016).

The Atlantic Social Lab

The Atlantic Social Lab (ASL) is a project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund through the INTERREG Atlantic Area. It has fostered several social innovation actions across Portugal, Spain, France, United Kingdom and Ireland. Its goal is promoting and developing better innovative solutions to complex social needs. The project intends to produce social change by involving citizens, social enterprises, third sector organisations and public institutions, in finding sustainable solutions to existing problems.

Social Innovation

Social innovation distinguishes itself from other forms of innovation by focusing on how innovation can lead to social change through social movements, new forms of social relations and new approaches to dealing with social problems. We can understand social innovation as an idea that **deliberately** attempts to better satisfy explicit or latent **social needs and problems**, resulting in new or improved capabilities, and in the **transformation** of social and power relations, aiming at **social change** and at the establishment of new social practices that positively affect individual's lives.

Public engagement in the EU

The greater encouragement of citizen participation in the decision making process has moved up the policy agenda in a number of European countries over the last few years, leading to the development of a series of processes, techniques, instruments and methods that enable the involvement of individuals in public affairs. Public participation processes intend to accentuate democratic values, legitimacy, and justice, and to improve government relations with the wider public.

The ASL project sought to encourage public engagement through the inclusion of a series of actors and groups in the process of creating social innovation. The following pilot actions were implemented by the ASL project partners and are examples of social innovation initiatives that attempted to promote public engagement and public participation.

Enhancing Public Engagement in Cork, Ireland

This pilot action had the goal of improving civic engagement throughout Cork City. The City Council decided to work with local businesses, community groups and the Public Participation Network in general to distribute information and reach the community. Between September 2018 and May 2019,

approximately 35 venues, consisting of businesses, libraries, language schools, etc, held voter information and registration stands, leading to over 5 000 engagements, mostly from new groups or communities, resulting in over 500 voter registrations. These engagements also informed a much larger audience of their voting rights and brought awareness about civic participation in government and democratic processes.



Public Engagement and Participatory Budgeting in Santiago, Spain

Santiago had a deficit in civic participation and involvement in the region. A lack of knowledge about the participation mechanisms available to the public and an insufficient interest amongst citizens were considered responsible for the low

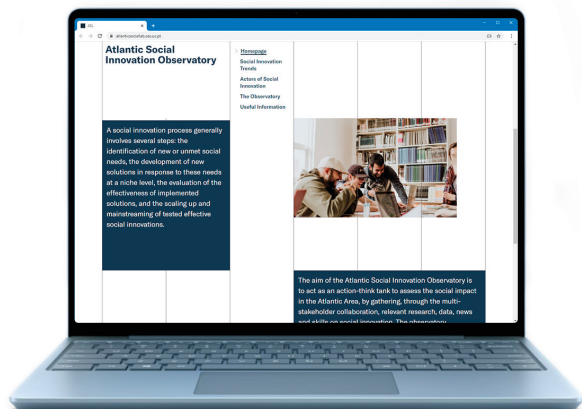


civic participation. The objectives of the pilot action were to promote a more cohesive and balanced society, with a deeper level of trust between citizens and public institutions, as well as reaching all population groups, especially the most vulnerable ones; empower citizens to voice their needs and proposals and answer needs for services and works that are not routinely identified by making use of the participatory budgeting.

Conclusion

Lack of information about individual rights is one of the greatest challenges for the integration and inclusion of vulnerable groups. Difficulty in properly integrating immigrants as to avoid exclusion or segregation cannot happen without a conscientious effort to engage them at a civic level. The same applies to younger

generations who are less prone to civic participation. Working closely with local community groups and organisations to gain a better grasp of the situation on the field and promoting initiatives that allow for the active participation of such groups have proven to produce positive results and can lead to the improvement of many social issues.



The Atlantic Social Innovation Observatory

The Atlantic Social Innovation Observatory is a monitoring tool that aims to act as an action-think tank, gathering relevant research, data, news and skills on social innovation. The observatory is developed and implemented by the **Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra** (Portugal) in the context of the Atlantic Social Lab project.

Partners



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