



## **MODULE: Social and eco innovations Introduction:**

### **Brief explanation:**

Humanity is now influencing every aspect of the Earth on a scale akin to the great forces of nature. If we are to stay within the planetary boundaries, major transformations are needed in the human-environment interactions. This includes innovations that can increase human well-being and at the same time enhance the capacity of ecosystems to produce services.<sup>1</sup>

Social innovation involves social groups and communities creating, developing and diffusing ideas and solutions to address pressing social needs. More recently, social innovation has been gaining policy attention, providing a means to stimulate new ideas that address complex issues alongside ensuring citizen participation. Due to its participatory and creative nature, it is well positioned to address environmental challenges, which are multifaceted and often require societal or behavioural shifts towards more sustainable options.

Eco-innovation refers to all forms of innovation – technological and non-technological – that create business opportunities and benefit the environment by preventing or reducing their impact, or by optimising the use of resources.

This module will introduce young people to the concept of social innovation, including green/ eco-social. Within this module, the areas where social innovation makes the greatest impact will be presented, some of the social challenges we are facing nowadays will be displayed, the difference between social entrepreneurship and social innovation will be explained briefly, and innovation skills will be fostered, through tailor-made activities.

### **Overall Aim of module:**

The overall aim of the module is to familiarise young people with the concept of social and innovation and lead young people to actively participate in building and improving the communities they live in.

As well:

- ✓ To engage young people, teachers, non-formal educators and other professionals in the practices of SI and create a better future for the local and the global societies.
- ✓ To provide youths and educators with knowledge on eco-social innovation, different business models and tools for sustainable products and businesses, in order to tackle social issues, including the environmental and climate crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2012-04-13-time-for-social-ecological-innovations.html>



## Why is it important for a community?

Social innovation does not measure its return to investment with profit but with social achievements. It has a broad impact in many areas such as Healthcare, Education, Human Rights, the Environment.

The concept of eco-innovation has begun to be considered as a solution to preventing environmental damage, especially since the 1990s. Eco-innovation is expected to reduce amounts of waste, air pollution, and material resource usage.

In summary such innovations should:

- Integrate both social and ecological (and economic) aspects.
- Improve human life without degrading the life-supporting ecosystems (preferably even strengthening ecosystems) on which we ultimately depend.
- Deal with multiple social and environmental challenges simultaneously (be sensitive to the fact that solving one problem often creates new ones, there are no ultimate solutions).
- Work more directly for social justice, poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability and democracy than profits for individuals.
- Break and/or help avoid lock-ins and create social-ecological feedbacks that help us stay within the safe operating space for humanity as defined by the planetary boundaries.
- Include the creativity and ingenuity of users, workers, consumers, citizens, activists, farmers and businesses etc.
- Utilise the power of social networks and organizations nested across scales (from local to national to regional to global) to enable systemic change at larger scales.<sup>2</sup>

## Key dimensions/ key word of module:

- Social innovation
- Green ideas
- Climate crisis
- Enterprise
- Legal framework
- Innovation skills.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2012-04-13-time-for-social-ecological-innovations.html>



## **The interplay between social entrepreneurship, with increasing awareness on environmental and climate matters**

Social Innovation is becoming an increasingly important topic in our global society. Those organizations which are able to develop business solutions to the most urgent social and ecological challenges will be the leading companies of tomorrow. Social Innovation not only creates value for society but will be a key driver for business success. It, in turn, can play a key role in enhancing sustainability by changing existing and creating new social practices for building a sustainable economy and lifestyle.

According to a report of the European Sustainable Development Network, strong linkages between sustainable development and social innovation exist but research still does not address them in depth.

Social innovators work on many environmental issues: providing sustainable products and services, waste disposal management, emissions reduction, preserving land and wildlife.

Sustainability could be achieved if Europe manages to ensure greener, cleaner and more equitable economic growth, which is based on green business practices, environmentally-friendly technologies and services, education and employment opportunities for all.