

1. A School of Will

"How are entrepreneurs a catalyst for an inclusive society? Can entrepreneurs turn the potential of the most vulnerable into (social and economic) value?"

A School of Will is an ESF project initiated by Blenders, I-Diverso, and Moving Marseille with the aim of developing a learning programme for Flemish entrepreneurs who want to retrain as catalysts for an inclusive society. For this, we drew inspiration from entrepreneurs from Antwerp, Marseille and Rotterdam. These three port cities have many similarities but are also very different, so the chance of finding interesting convergences around inclusive entrepreneurship is very high.

Duration: 01/09/2020 - 31/12/2022

How?

In a first phase (spring 2021), we selected 5 leading, social entrepreneurs in each city region. We asked for 1-2 hours of their time for an in-depth interview. In a later phase (autumn 2021), we also asked for their cooperation in a number of online workshops. With the data from this development group, we will put together a learning programme.

After an open call to Antwerp entrepreneurs and targeted contacts (early 2022), we brought together a diverse network of socially driven entrepreneurs. They were questioned, supported, trained and guided according to their needs and requirements. The result is a blueprint and roadmap on entrepreneurs as catalysts for an inclusive society and recommendations for the Flemish government.

Why?

A School of Will is an ideal opportunity to highlight the work of some inspiring entrepreneurs for an inclusive society. It offers entrepreneurs from Marseille, Antwerp and Rotterdam the opportunity to look across borders and learn about each other's models. What can they learn from each other and from each other? How do they reach their target groups even better with other initiatives? Which elements in their business plans can serve as examples for other entrepreneurs? How do they deal with a withdrawing government? What revenue models had they not yet thought of themselves?

We are convinced that this transnational cooperation offers a lot of opportunities to make the various initiatives of the selected entrepreneurs more widely known and also provides opportunities to learn from each other and inspire each other as entrepreneurs for an inclusive society.

The transnational comparison of input from the interviews and contacts with Flemish entrepreneurs also provides relevant information in relation to the relationship between the government and the power of entrepreneurs to engage in social impact. From this, we highlight key insights below.

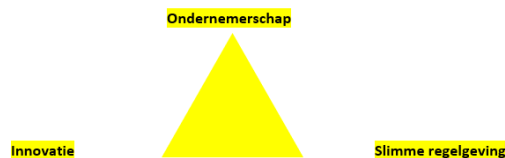
2. Comparison of laws

To arrive at this advice to the Flemish Government, we collected input from interviews with the entrepreneurs from the pilot group, reactions and experiences in collaboration with Flemish entrepreneurs, and a digital survey of internal and external stakeholders via Google Forms. However, we received limited response to the latter, but previous insights are confirmed.

In addition, based on relevant input from entrepreneurs, we have made a comparison between the legislative framework in Flanders and the Netherlands around a number of aspects that can accelerate or slow down the social impact of entrepreneurs.

For our advice to the Flemish Government, we rely on the "triangle of progress" to see how we can contribute to smart regulation, which can stimulate and strengthen social innovation from entrepreneurship.

De driehoek van vooruitgang



In doing so, we focus on three themes from our transnational project:

- The Major Law and diversity and employment in port regions
- Employment of people with a vulnerable position on the labour market and the legislative framework around it
- Promoting social innovation from entrepreneurship through public procurement.

3. Advice for the Flemish government

• Diversity and employment in port regions

The Major Law or the Belgian Port Labour Act dates back to 1972 and stipulates that work in port areas can only be carried out by a recognised dock worker. Moreover, those dock workers can only be recognised by a committee of employers and trade unions.

Opponents of the law call it a violation of free competition. Recently, the European Court of Justice examined the issue.

This leads to the opinion that the Belgian law on dock work does not conflict with European legal rules, at least as long as its aim is to ensure safety in port areas and prevent industrial accidents.

However, **the fact that dock workers can only be recognised as such by a joint committee of employers and employees** does go against European legal rules. **In that respect, the law should be amended.**

The role played by that committee in the recognition of dockers and in the admission to the pool of dockers and also for the selection tests, the Court finds contrary to European Union law. Indeed, it violates the free movement of persons, the free movement of establishment and the free movement of services.

On the one hand, it provides protection and better working conditions for port workers. On the other hand, it limits the flexibility of port companies. The role of that committee makes it more difficult for port companies to work with foreign workers and for foreign companies to establish themselves in the port.

However, **port cities** can be seen as **innovation centres of diversity and inclusiveness**. Flows of goods and people generated by port activities intersect, among other things, with the dynamics of spatial planning and urban development. Port cities are therefore necessarily places that give space to change and often flourish thanks to that change.

- **Facilitating social employment within a regular business context**

In France, Marseille, we were told by social entrepreneurs that "the absence of government" makes entrepreneurs start taking social initiatives themselves to turn "the city of problems" into trying to make "the city of solutions". However, this is obviously not the advice we want to formulate to the Flemish government.

In Flanders, there are various **employment premiums and financial support measures for the employment of people distanced from the labour market**. However, we often hear from entrepreneurs that as an employer it is very difficult to find your way to the most suitable applications tailored to their company and/or employee. In addition, the customisation decree did create an important bridge to the regular labour market through the possibility of integrating **collective customisation** in the form of a customisation department within a regular company. Yet this appears to be a complex administrative procedure for many employers, with fairly strict requirements and restrictions towards quota allocation, etc. We look forward hopefully to **future possibilities**, following the recent approval of **individual customisation**. For dynamic and innovative entrepreneurship, it is important that administrative procedures to invoke certain measures are not too complex by **administrative burden** and the necessary procedures can be limited in **time**.

In the Netherlands, we note that the general framework regarding employment of people with a distance to the labour market is broadly more transparent. At the same time, the legislative framework around this is also more binding in the sense that the **Participation Act** and the **Jobs Agreement impose a quota** on employers to create employment opportunities for people with a distance to the labour market.

In addition, the principle of the "**more social entrepreneurship performance ladder**" provides an inviting and supportive framework for Dutch employers to grow in social entrepreneurship in a qualitative way. This **gradual approach**, linked to quality criteria, **encourages** entrepreneurs more to engage in social employment and inclusion than the "evaluative" character based on recognition conditions at the Flemish FPS Economy.

- **Encouraging entrepreneurship with social impact through public procurement**

Finally, the principle of "**Social Return on Investment**" in particular, as integrated into public tenders from the **Dutch government**, appears to be an **important "accelerator"** for entrepreneurs to engage in **social impact**.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is an approach to create more employment opportunities for people with a large(er) distance to the labour market. Public purchasers, when awarding contracts, can encourage or require the contractor to involve vulnerable groups in the labour market in the execution of the contract.

Framework agreements now offer scope by asking for a **Plan of Action ("Maatwerk voor Mensen") instead of applying the standard measure** (= contract provision from 250,000 euro => use 5% of the contract value for Social Return). By investing Social Return at Category Management level instead of in the underlying contracts, there are more opportunities to actually create social impact. And thus help people find work (= more sustainable employment)

With the application of social return, the Dutch Government ensures that an investment made generates a tangible social benefit in addition to the 'normal' return. **In this way, procurement and tendering contribute to the realisation of government policy and the creation of social added value.**

Principles behind reforms SROI policy in NL:

- broader target group (>1mnd unemployed)
- freer interpretation
- in function of broader social objectives

Whereas the **Flemish Government** provides for the possibility of tendering out **sustainable public contracts** by means of **standard clauses**, the framework from the **Dutch Government** appears to respond much more to **the potential of entrepreneurs as catalysts for innovative solutions and social impact**. This is our main call and recommendation to the Flemish Government to follow suit and create an opportunity for creative entrepreneurship with social added value in all activities and investments through public procurement.

4. Source list

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- <https://overheid.vlaanderen.be/overheidsopdrachten-en-raamcontracten/duurzame-en-innovative-procurement/standard clauses>
- [Sustainable public procurement focal point](#)
- [Central contact point Innovative Public Procurement Programme](#)