

Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) EVPA Progress Activity Report – January-December 2015

In January of 2014 EVPA and the European Commission entered into a 4-Year Partnership Agreement. The Partnership was awarded under the new financial Programme for [Employment and Social Innovation \(EaSI\)](#) in the context of the European Union's intention to foster cooperation with pan-European networks active in promoting access to social finance. In addition, the Partnership aims to increase access to finance to VP/SI practitioners in emerging and developing European markets. The partnership entered its second year in 2015.

The Partnership recognises the role EVPA plays as a network promoting societal impact through venture philanthropy and social investment and is aimed at encouraging further development of social finance in Europe.

Establishing this Partnership allows EVPA to work closely with EU institutions and better represent its member interests by strengthening the link/s between European institutions and practitioners alongside the possibility to voice the concerns and expectations of EVPA members to EU policy makers directly.

As part of the Partnership agreement EVPA focuses on four priorities:

- *Support the Commission in its outreach activities at EU, national and local level with the aim of ensuring the implementation of European policies in the relevant area*
- *Reinforce the capacity of the network's members, including through offering a platform for the exchange of good practices in the relevant field, and raising awareness on relevant EU policies*
- *Voicing the concerns and expectations of organisations facilitating access to finance to (potential) entrepreneurs from disadvantaged and under-represented groups / social enterprises*
- *Provide data / research on developments in the field and on priority topics*

These four priorities have informed a number of projects and events over 2015. From January to December 2015, the following activities were undertaken by EVPA:

Support the Commission in its outreach activities at EU, national and local level with the aim of ensuring the implementation of European policies in the relevant area

Country meetings: EVPA organises national events in countries where the Commission's work offers high potential for the sector. A particular focus of these events was and is the Commission's [Social Business Initiative](#). To increase awareness of the Social Business Initiative (SBI) within Europe, in 2015 EVPA organised country meetings in **Belgium** (31st of March), **The Netherlands** (7th of May), **Italy** (1st July) and **United Kingdom** (30th September), which included a session entitled "EVPA Policy Dimension: Building bridges with policy makers and across EU countries". These meetings provided the ideal forum for the dissemination of information about the SBI, as well as the broader work of EVPA.

Sector Building Events: Sector building events were held to expand the network and increase awareness about EU related actions. The events were coordinated with local partners (country champions) and were directed at organisations that have the potential to become active in the field of SBI & related EU actions. The events in 2015 are:

Croatia: April 16th; Event in partnership with Croatian Banking Association

Portugal: April 21st, Event in partnership with IES Social Business School

Denmark: June 15th, Event in partnership with TBLI Nordic Conference

Poland: July 2nd, event by invitation only

Czech Republic: November 4th, Event in partnership with Czech Venture Capital Association.

Malta: October 2nd, Event in partnership with Inspirasia



Greece: 15th December, Event in partnership with Bodossaki Foundation

EU policy and SBI news: In order to better inform our members of EU developments, EVPA publishes short articles on SBI and EU related topics in its website and shares them in the monthly newsletter.

In 2015 they were the following:

1. January 2015: “Social Economy at the European Parliament”
2. February 2015: “Creating synergies in the market for social enterprise finance: Projects supported by the EU”
3. March 2015: “EVPA’s Hub for National Policy; thinking about policy solutions around Europe”
4. May 2015: “A unique opportunity for social enterprises in European procurement markets”
5. May 2015: “EVPA’s input to the Green Paper on “Building Capital Markets Union””
6. June 2015: “A New European Guarantee to Support Social Enterprises!”
7. August 2015: “Social Impact Bonds: US vs UK”
8. September 2015: “EVPA Launches “EU Index Cards””
9. October 2015: “The OECD and the European Commission launch Call for Initiatives and Policies for Social Enterprises”

A concerted effort to spread EU news was also made through EVPA’s Twitter and LinkedIn accounts.

In addition, four “SBI Index Cards” were developed and shared on EVPA’s website in 2015 to further increase the SBI awareness in our sector. They deal with the topics of EuSEF, EaSI Financial Instrument, Mapping and Public Procurement and can be found [here](#).

A Policy Session entitled “EVPA and European Public Affairs – How to be more proactive?”, was delivered during EVPA’s Gathering of Leaders in Venice, 29-30 April 2015. Here EVPA’s members were brought up to date on EVPA’s current policy activities and given the chance to provide input to shape EVPA’s policy activities for the future.

EU webinars: As part of EVPA’s ongoing “EU Webinar Series” three webinars were organised in 2015, dedicated to addressing European topics of interest to the VP/SI community. These were:

EU Webinar on Social Impact Bonds (05/03/2015) looked at Social Impact Bonds (or SIBs) as a results-based form of social impact investment

EU Webinar on EU Funding (17/06/2015) covered the types of funding available for VP/SI organisations.

The EU Webinar on Social enterprises and Public Procurement (23/09/2015) dealt with public procurement questions such as how can social enterprises can become suppliers to the public sector instead of depending on subsidies? To what extent are public authorities “buying social” today? Are they encouraged to do so with the recent reform of the European Union in this field?

All EVPA webinars see a number of speakers from the VP/SI sector, alongside experts from the European Institutions take part.

Reinforce the capacity of the network's members, including through offering a platform for the exchange of good practices in the relevant field, and raising awareness on relevant EU policies

Training Academy: EVPA’s training academy offers access to organised learning opportunities to advance the professionalisation of the sector. The academy offers practical guidance and thus fosters the societal impact of both social investors and the social purpose organisations they support. The first module of the 2015 Training Academy took place the 4th and 5th of June 2015 in Barcelona, Spain and the second, the 15th and 16th of September in Brussels, Belgium.

In order to ensure that the Training Academy remains easily accessible to interested EVPA members, the Partnership enabled the financing of travel and entrance fees for interested members in underrepresented member nations.

Site visits: In order to build/increase our members' capacity to engage in best practice of VP/SI, EVPA offers regular "site visits" which are a way for our members and EVPA to look behind the scenes of an experienced venture philanthropy organisation and learn from our network of members. The first Site visit of 2015 was held at the I&P Office in Paris, France on the 22nd and 23rd of June. The I&P team shared their extensive experience in supporting social enterprises, and focused mainly on their impact measurement and management approach. The team shared learnings, successes and failures with 20 attendees. The second site visit took place at IE Business School's Area 31 in Madrid, Spain on the 30th of November and was a Crash Course on Venture Philanthropy, introducing European organisations to the basics of VP, and having practitioners share projects and learnings.

Field Trips:

19 May: Norway, Oslo –in partnership with Ferd & TD Veen.

19 June: Austria, Vienna – during CEE Impact Day 2015, in partnership with Investment Ready Program.

15 December: Athens, Greece- after Sector Building Event in partnership with Bodossaki Foundation.

Thematic groups- Thematic groups are a way for practitioners active in a particular domain to exchange best practice and their experiences working within the framework of the Social Business Initiative and related EU actions.

This year EVPA convened its thematic group on employment in Portugal. Hosted by EVPA member IES Social Business School, the meeting formed part of a gathering of the Portuguese Social Investment Taskforce, an initiative to lay the foundations of the development of a social investment market in Portugal.

In 2015 EVPA organised a Training Academy Workshop in Berlin on the 29th and 30th of October as a follow-up event on last year's launch of the thematic group on gender. The thematic group on gender brings together EVPA members interested in learning about or mastering a gender sensitive approach to investments and grant-making and resulted in the launch of a dedicated online group for EVPA members interested in the topic.

In order to ensure that the Thematic Groups are easily accessible to all EVPA, travel fees for members in underrepresented member nations were covered under the Partnership agreement.

Online Portal- In response to member requests EVPA has developed an online community portal. The portal launch coincided with EVPA's 10th Annual Conference. Via the portal, members are able to connect with one another, share knowledge, propose partnerships, raise questions and feel part of a community of VP/SI practitioners. More than that, they contribute to the building of a community. In 2015, EVPA integrated the feedback of their members to an upgraded version of the portal that was launched before the 11th EVPA Annual Conference and was used by attendees to find and share information related to the event.

This year, EVPA also translated a video explaining what Venture Philanthropy is into 7 languages (Greek, Spanish, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Romanian, and Serbian), so as to be able to use it in markets where English is not well understood.

Country factsheets

Throughout 2015 factsheets about emerging markets were developed in cooperation with partners in each country and published on the EVPA website. The factsheets detail the state of the market in Portugal, Scotland, Greece, Norway, Poland and Croatia. These were also promoted in a series of articles featured in the EVPA monthly newsletter.

A brochure presenting EVPA's activities and services to prospective members in Europe was released at the end of the year. It will be ready and used from then on for prospective member meetings, external and member events in all markets, especially in Southern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe.



Voicing the concerns and expectations of organisations facilitating access to finance to (potential) entrepreneurs from disadvantaged and under-represented groups / social enterprises

Member survey access to finance and blog - In order to understand its member needs EVPA has designed an annual survey to gather insights into concerns and expectation around access to finance, specifically looking at disadvantaged and underrepresented groups of funding recipients. The findings for 2015 were presented in an infographic distributed in the Annual Conference and available online.

A [blog](#) offering a platform to voice member concerns and challenges was launched in 2014 and ten posts written by members and partners were published over 2015. Together, these activities are designed to glean an understanding of concerns and expectations of VP/SI practitioners offering access to finance across Europe and to allow practitioners to voice their concerns and expectations to the public, EU and national bodies. Both initiatives are intended to lend support to and strengthen evidence based policy making in the field of VP/SI.

EVPA Conference Attendance – Between January and December EVPA staff participated in more than 23 conferences and workshops as speakers in 15 countries. They provided insight into practitioner concerns to the public at large.

EU and national authority dialogues- EVPA's Public Affairs Manager represented EVPA member interests in eleven meetings with EU throughout 2015, facilitating exchanges between members and national authorities. These serve to support evidence based policy making. Regular exchanges with the European Commission are also maintained with a view to effectively handling member queries around the SBI and EU policy initiatives.

Provide data / research on developments in the field and on priority topics

EVPA Research – EVPA's research and policy team conducts research on best practice with a view to deepening knowledge about social enterprise funding. Between January and December 2015, an updated edition of EVPA's "A practical guide to measuring and managing impact" was launched, alongside a French translation was published. Three major additional pieces of research were launched: "A practical guide to Adding Value through non-financial support", "Impact Measurement Case Studies" and an updated version of "A practical Guide to Venture Philanthropy and Social Investment".

During the research phase of these publications numerous practitioners, consultants, academics and social enterprises were consulted in order to ensure numerous industry voices were represented in the research.

External communication - To communicate the research of the "Knowledge Centre" a number of communications campaigns were executed during 2015. EVPA is also working on disseminating its research by way of various multi-media formats. For "A practical guide to measuring and managing impact" a presentation outlining key reports and learnings from the report was created and made available online. It was also used by various EVPA team members to introduce the topic to interested professionals. For "A practical guide to Adding Value through non-financial support" a set of online tools was designed for practitioners to download and use and interviews with relevant experts were recorded and shared in the EVPA communication channels.

