Lessons Learned

Report for transnational community

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TITLE	**PILOT ONLINE COMMUNITY-BUILDING TOOLS**
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Introduction

The countries of Hungary and Serbia implemented an online community-building tool to build and broaden their macroregional social innovation networks.

The lessons learned report is an outcome of the creation and implementation of the online tool. It compiles the learnings regarding the questions of how the community and the target audience did respond to the online tool, how the tool contributes to the social innovation ecosystem and how the D-Care Lab as a format and innovation program profits from the community.

It compiles the most important learnings during the project phase and explores opportunities for future collaboration and stakeholder acquisition.

Hungarian tool by TÖOSZ

This new tool created by the D-Care Lab Budapest project to support, automate and increase the efficiency of their internal workflows has been well received by our community/target audience.

The D-Care Lab Budapest project's new online tool allows people to interact with each other in more ways when using certain functions, as most functions can be set up for automatic notifications, allowing users to interact with each other.

Users welcomed this tool as an easy way to share information with the community without the fear of information falling into the wrong hands. With this tool, they can feel free to share their project ideas and innovative ideas within the community. The system of the platform allows to differentiate levels of access for the participants, and at the same time, it is suitable for involving many local governments, which could increase the value of the online tool from the perspective of potential social investors.

It promotes collaboration within the community, automates workflows, and sends out automated mailings. The tool provides an excellent platform to develop and find potential collaborations and partnerships in the field of innovative care solutions, as participants, including social investors, can share not only their own services but also their experiences and cooperation proposals. Users of the platform can access services from anywhere, in a fundamentally secure way. This means that this tool will facilitate greater collaboration between different stakeholders.

One of the most popular features of the tool is the data -/resource repository, where users can access content that cannot be found elsewhere. In addition to this feature, there is also an upcoming section of events that are widely used by participants. Here they can find out about events related to the D-Care Lab project, or any other event relevant to the community.

There is a helpdesk function through which users can contact each other. If one of them uploads content/event, the others can respond to it by using this function. This online tool helps to build an ecosystem of social investors by creating knowledge and sharing best practices. It is also a platform through which social investors invited to register can learn about innovation projects/ideas from local governments/NGOs/foundations seeking funding. D-Care Lab Budapest and TÖOSZ itself can benefit from this online tool by learning about the problems/ideas that our community members are working with. This will allow TÖOSZ to pay more attention to these issues and raise them at TÖOSZ

events/conferences. As TÖOSZ provides services to municipalities, the association can expand its portfolio by developing online services which save cost and time for the target group.

Serbian tool by MODS

The online tool is a **Lonac** platform – a regional platform that can reach people from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

The target group includes social intrapreneurs and activists from the region, especially from Serbia.

The platform has the option to count how many people visit the page with MODS announcements and information. MODS introduction on the Lonac platform attracts more than 500 visitors. The announcement has an average of 200 visits. Visitors can use the option to get in touch with peers and experts from different social entrepreneurial fields. The target group also has the option to reach out to MODS as the responsible organisation for the D-Care Lab and moderators of the online community.

As a result, people were mostly interested in the Social Lab program, especially regarding specific issues and topics, such as go–to–market strategy. This is how MODS uses the channels of the online platform to provide relevant information for the lab format. We further provided relevant knowledge of the lab cycle and social entrepreneurial developments. Both, the information as well as the knowledge sharing initiated experience exchange and discussions on the social innovation topic, where people left comments, and they could use the option to like our announcements.

The online community-building tool also contributed to building an ecosystem for the participating innovators in the field of home care and other social innovation initiatives. It increased the visibility of the D-Care Lab at the regional level. Community members could diffuse innovative solutions through announcements on Lonac.

People that visit the Lonac could find information about innovation in home care in Serbia, and about the MODS Social Lab approach. The tool is further built to address Social Investors as relevant stakeholders for the developed solutions at the finalisation of the D-Care Lab cycle.

In the future, online community building can also be used to initiate cooperation with professionals in the broader field of social innovation, e.g. cooperation between digital and home care innovators on the platform.

The regional D-Care lab itself and MODS as the responsible organisation of the lab also profit from the online community-building tool. They got new valuable partners from the region as Mozaik. They established MoU with Mozaik which is the base for the long-term collaboration.

Broadening the networks and partnering with valuable stakeholders also gives us the opportunity to do target-specific marketing. It is good to have an online community-building tool that is independent of social networks (such as Facebook or Instagram). We are ahead of the channels used and the process and can be sure that we reach people that are interested in our topic, like social intrapreneurs and activists. A great benefit of the digital tool is that it is extendable and scalable for further regions. Reaching macroregional actors is a great opportunity and a benefit to building on in the future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the main advantage of creating an online community-building tool is, that it was purposefully designed to meet the needs of the community and not a tight circle of experts. This means that it is user-friendly and aims to engage the community (easier to use than SharePoint, for example). The main emphasis is on its community feature. This tool has the potential to involve international experts, whom many times have more credibility than national ones in the eyes of the users. This could be enhanced in a way that international experts could express their opinions about certain topics. The search function integrated into the platform could enable more targeted searches. However, it is important to note, that a feature like a community platform needs prolonged time to build up a wide range of databases. Here is where the international community could help – by inviting a wider community – the database would be more comprehensive.

Considering the implementation so far, online community building is a fruitful starting point for further collaboration. To get there, online communities offer several scaling opportunities on a transnational level. On the level of knowledge exchange, online communities contribute to macro-regional and transnational knowledge creation, which has special importance because of the identified common challenges in the field of home care, such as demographic changes towards an ageing society. There is also a need for knowledge creation on the European level because care systems vary along the welfare states as well as innovative funding streams. The latter are just examples of important reasons to promote transnational best practice exchange. The political impact lies in the raising of awareness for the national and European governments while formulating social entrepreneurial needs concertedly. So in addition to the accompaniment of the social innovators by the D-Care Lab experts, the online platform creates a network for policy dialogue. At the same time, policymakers on the national and European levels can use it for the publication of topic-related calls. From an economic point of view, social investors may use the platform to publish calls for potential financing sources to support the development of social innovations.

To work on the above-described challenges to reach this strategic goal, the tools need to implement a layer for transnational cooperation opportunities and extend the local/national events to a transnational level to discuss common challenges. The latter requires a regularly updated database for international cooperation opportunities and calls that are maintained by the responsible organisations. It is, of course, important to translate the entire platform into English for the international community.

In order to build bridges to the scientific community and to further topic-related clusters, the community needs to be actively managed. There is no community without fostering the network approach. Relevant topics must be shared in the community, but also prepared and presented in an incentifying way, in order to foster entrepreneurial opportunity recognition or initiate exchange. The creation of common experiences in the innovation process creates a cultural identity. It is important to create certain benefits for community members, such as once-in-a-month personal consulting, the usage of a database, peer learning experiences, offering expert lectures on current topics from research and social entrepreneurs from different countries for the community (exclusive offer).

To narrow it down to a few points, we need the following:

1. A transnational online tool for collaboration not depended on social networks algorithms,
2. To clearly define what we expect from the community – how to interact with the community, what we expect from the community – to inform them, to educate them, to have counterparts, to get beneficiaries for our Social Lab,
3. Active community management to give incentives to collaborate (peer learning events, contests, calls for collaboration, knowledge sharing),
4. A core of people that will start the community with a clear goal – connect people from different countries that share the same values,
5. To use the online community to arrange occasional face-to-face meetings to strengthen online collaboration.