# ADDRESSING COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL BUSINESSES WITH DIGITAL STORYTELLING

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IN THE NETHERLANDS AND BULGARIA

The Dutch economy performs above the EU and OECD averages with regard to economic growth and employment rates, as well as most OECD well-being indicators. However, the country is also facing increases in poverty and inequalities.The poverty rate has been increasing in recent years. Netherlands faces an ageing population and associated challenges posed to the labour market and welfare system. Non-standard forms of employment, including self-employment and temporary contracts, have witnessed a rapid rise in recent years and now account for a large share of total employment
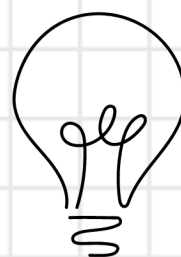
Many social enterprises in Bulgaria are registered as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that engage in economic activities or as cooperatives and small businesses with a social mission.The main challenges should also be noted like limited access to funding and investment, lack of widespread public awareness about social enterprises and underdeveloped legal and institutional support compared to other EU countries.Seen from another point of view, Bulgaria is experiencing significant demographic challenges as of 2023 and 2024, marked by population decline and aging.
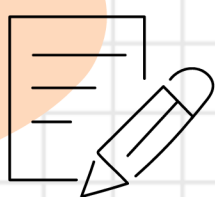
THE BEGINNING IN BULGARIA

Bulgaria's cooperative movement started in 1890 with the establishment of the first agricultural cooperative in Mirkovo. These cooperatives aimed to support rural farmers by providing access to affordable credit, shared resources, and market opportunities.
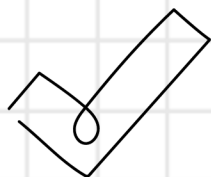
THE BEGINNING IN THE NETHERLANDS

The provision of public goods and social services by private entities has been a strong tradition in the Netherlands. At the turn of the 19th century, many schools, universities, hospitals and housing corporations were established by citizen-led or religious groups, and later became largely state-funded.
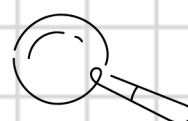
The term "social enterprise" appeared in the media in 2006 in the Netherlands.

The term social entrepreneurship gained traction in Bulgaria in the 2000s, particularly with the influence of European Union policies and funding mechanisms.
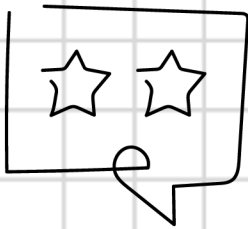
Challenges in the Netherlands

EDUCATION

Scarce offer of social entrepreneurial education at primary and secondary education levels, but Dutch higher education institutions offer a rich variety of courses and programmes on social entrepreneurship.
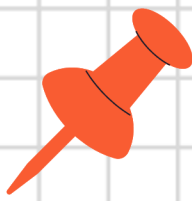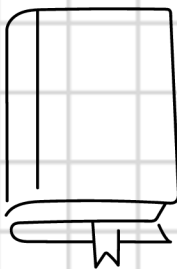
SKILLS

Despite a rich capacity-building offer, social enterprises still lack critical business skills.

RECOGNITION

Difficulties for social enterprises to be recognised by buyers.

VISIBILITY

Increasing the visibility of social entrepreneurs and their products and services

PERCEPTION

Negative perception of social enterprises in access to bank lending

FINANCING

Financing gaps for community-based organisations

EDUCATIONAL GAPS

Early Education Deficit

Skills in Impact Measurement and Business Acumen

Practical Digital Storytelling Skills

IMPORTANT!

Challenges in Bulgaria

DIGITAL ACCESS

Limited access to digital tools in rural areas:
Low digital literacy among target populations and some social entrepreneurs.
Fragmented funding and lack of tailored support for digital adoption.

UNDERSTANDING

Communities may not fully understand the concept of social entrepreneurship, viewing it with skepticism, based on bad experience or no experience at all, or they accepted it as a temporary intervention.

RESOURCES

Many community representatives, especially in rural or economically disadvantaged regions, lack the financial, human, or infrastructure resources to participate.

SYNC

Bulgarian communities are not synchronous, and internal conflicts or differing priorities among members often, can hinder future collaboration or support.

TRUST

Bulgarian citizens do not trust social programs, initiatives or new opportunities for them.

FINANCING

Some social initiatives are fully dependent on external funding or non permanent funding or expertise, making them unsustainable and untrustable for particiants in the long term.

EDUCATIONAL GAPS

Limitations in Formal Education

Limited knowledge among educators
Few teaching materials in bulgarian
Existing initiatives
Urban-rural divide
Digital divide

IMPORTANT!

Insufficient academic research
Few case studies of local success stories
Lack of knowledge and skills for digital storytelling

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND MODELS

THE NETHERLANDS

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Social Learning Theory posits that people learn through observation, imitation, and modeling. This theory identifies four essential processes in observational learning: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation, all of which are crucial for social entrepreneurs as they internalize new skills like digital storytelling by observing and replicating successful techniques (Bandura, 1977).

CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY

Constructivist Theory, as formulated by Piaget, emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed by learners as they interact with the world around them. This theory suggests that learners build new understandings based on their experiences and prior knowledge, leading to deeper, more meaningful learning outcomes (Piaget, 1964).

INTEGRATION IN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Digital storytelling, taught through these frameworks, equips social entrepreneurs with practical skills while enhancing their ability to communicate social impact authentically and compellingly, increasing engagement and improving societal impact.

AIM, ACTORS, ASPIRATION, AND ACTION MODEL

Aim: Defining the Story's Purpose
Actors: Engaging Stakeholders
Aspiration: Setting an Inspirational Context
Action: Choosing the Right Media

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND MODELS

BULGARIA

NARRATIVE PARADIGM

Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm is a communication theory that proposes storytelling as the fundamental way humans make sense of the world. It shifts the focus from traditional rational world paradigms, which prioritize logical argumentation, to narrative reasoning, emphasizing that people are "homo narrans" or storytelling beings.

EMOTIONAL DESIGN THEORY

Emotional Design Theory, is a framework that explores how design elements evoke emotions in users and influence their interactions with objects, interfaces, or systems.

INTEGRATION IN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Social entrepreneurship often involves complex ideas, such as sustainable development, ethical business, and community impact. By integrating these theories, storytelling can be designed not only to educate but also to motivate and inspire action.

PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES
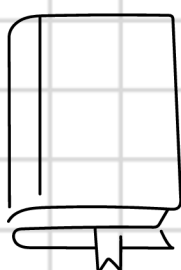
Workshops
Digital Narratives
Story Creation Projects

Trending Topics and Skills, the Netherlands

BUILDING CREDIBILITY AND ACCESSING FUNDING

DIFFERENTIATION AND MARKET POSITIONING

ENGAGING CONSUMERS AND RAISING AWARENESS

STRENGTHENING STAKEHOLDER CONNECTIONS AND BUILDING TRUST

NAVIGATING COMPLEX REGULATORY AND POLICY ENVIRONMENTS

Gap Analysis from Web-Based Findings, Bulgaria

DIGITAL STORYTELLING:

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS
EU-SUPPORTED PROJECTS
COMMUNITY PROJECTS

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP :

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING
LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES
SUPPORT AND FUNDING
EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES
POSITIVE TRENDS

Gap Analysis from Web-Based Findings, The Netherlands

LIMITED INTEGRATION OF STORYTELLING AND IMPACT MEASUREMENT

GENERIC DIGITAL STORYTELLING TOOLS

INSUFFICIENT FOCUS ON SOCIAL CHALLENGES

RECOMMENDATIONS

USE OF MULTI-SENSORY AND IMMERSIVE MEDIA

VISUAL AND EMOTIONAL APPEAL

COMMUNITY AND CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT

COLLABORATION WITH KNOWN PARTNERS

Recommendations for Bulgaria

EXPANDING LOCALIZED RESOURCES IN BULGARIAN

COLLABORATION BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

LEVERAGING EU PROGRAMS

DEVELOPING ACCESSIBLE TRAINING PROGRAMS

BUILDING STORYTELLING CAPACITY

HIGHLIGHTING OF LOCAL HEROES

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

SKILL-BUILDING PROJECTS

STORYTELLING COMPETITIONS