

# Strengthening Support for Social Innovation



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Zoritz Kiresiewa & Holger Gerdes, Ecologic Institute, 25 March 2025

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# Agenda



March 25, 2025, 10:00–11:30 CET

## Strengthening Support for Social Innovation

10:00–10:05	<b>Welcome &amp; Introduction (Ecologic Institute)</b>
10:05–10:20	Key results of the assessment of social innovation measures and policy recommendations + Q&A (Ecologic Institute and BTG)
10:20–10:50	Empowering Social Innovation: Practical Support Mechanisms and Success Stories <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Platform for Social Innovations and Social Enterprises, Florian Birk, Social Impact gGmbH</li><li>• Enabling local initiatives for ecosocial transformation, Johannes Suitner, Research Unit Urban and Regional Research, TU Wien</li></ul>
10:50–11:25	Plenary Discussion / Guiding questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is your feedback on the policy recommendations?</li><li>• What could be relevant dissemination channels for the policy paper (key target groups)?</li><li>• What are appropriate means to raise awareness and transparency for consumers (and what can be the role of labels)?</li></ul>
11:25–11:30	Wrap-up (Ecologic Institute)

# Key results of the assessment of social innovation examples

John Vos, BTG, 25 March 2025



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# What is Social Innovation?

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*"**New ideas** that work in meeting **social goals**"*

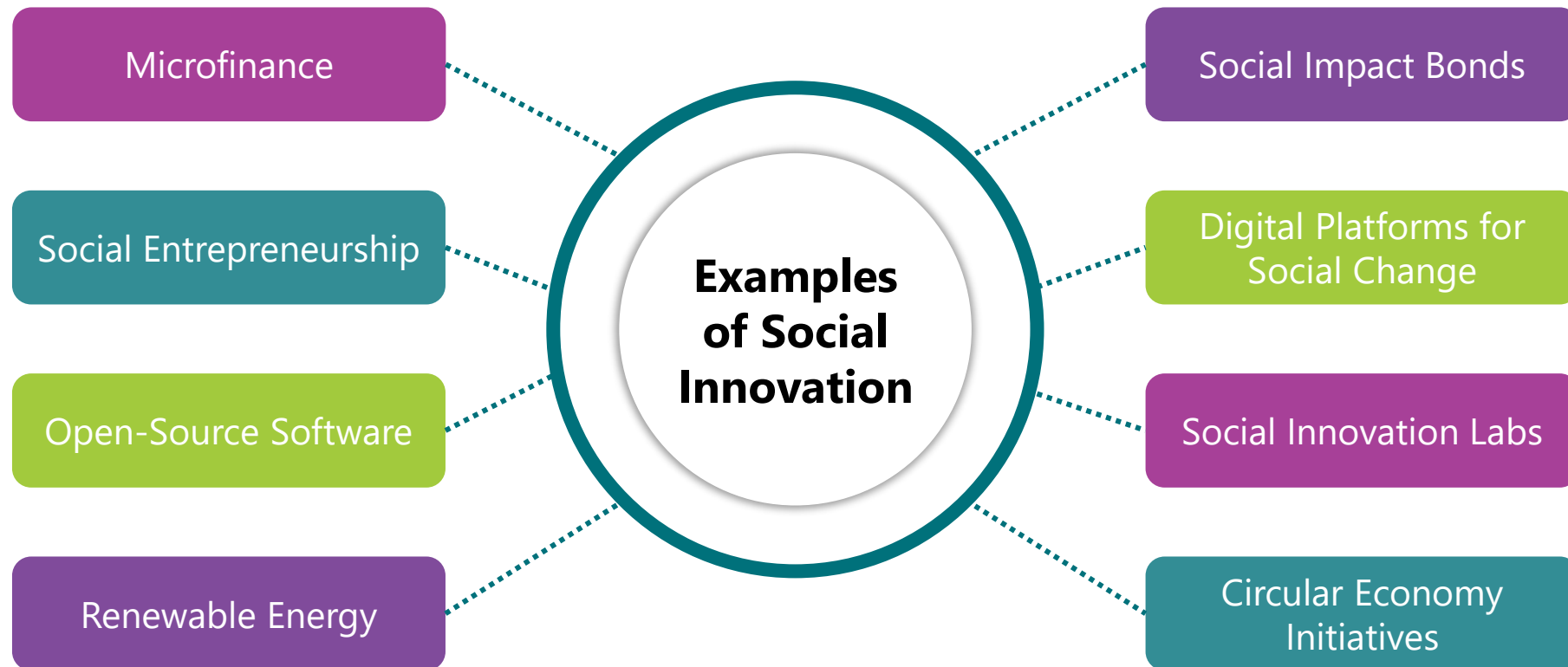
Mulgal *et al*, 2007

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*"Social innovations are **new ideas** (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet **social needs** (more effectively than alternatives), create new **social relationships** or collaborations and foster **sustainable** consumption patterns"*

3-CO definition

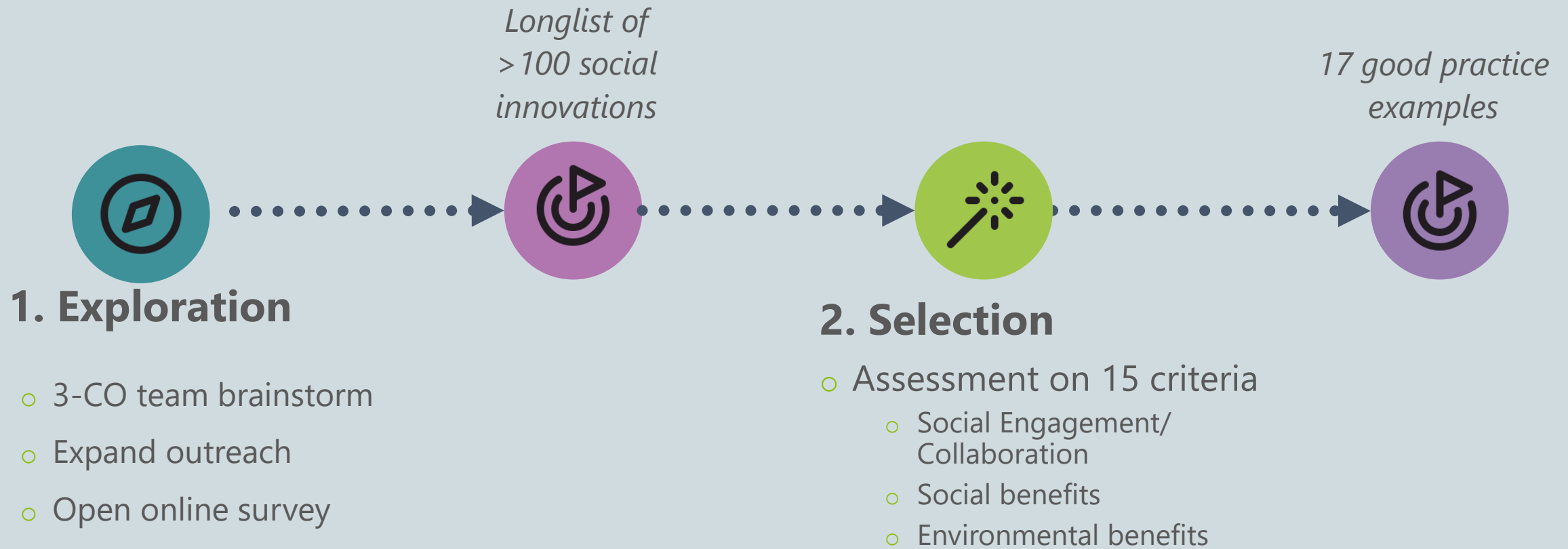
# Examples of Social Innovation



Adapted from <https://ideascale.com/blog/what-is-social-innovation/>

Strengthening Support for Social Innovation, BTG

# 3-CO Approach





# Selection criteria/considerations

- Combining **social engagement & collaboration** with **responsible production/consumption**
- Showcasing a wide thematic and geographical reach
- Mainly Circular Economy initiatives, from within and beyond the bioeconomy

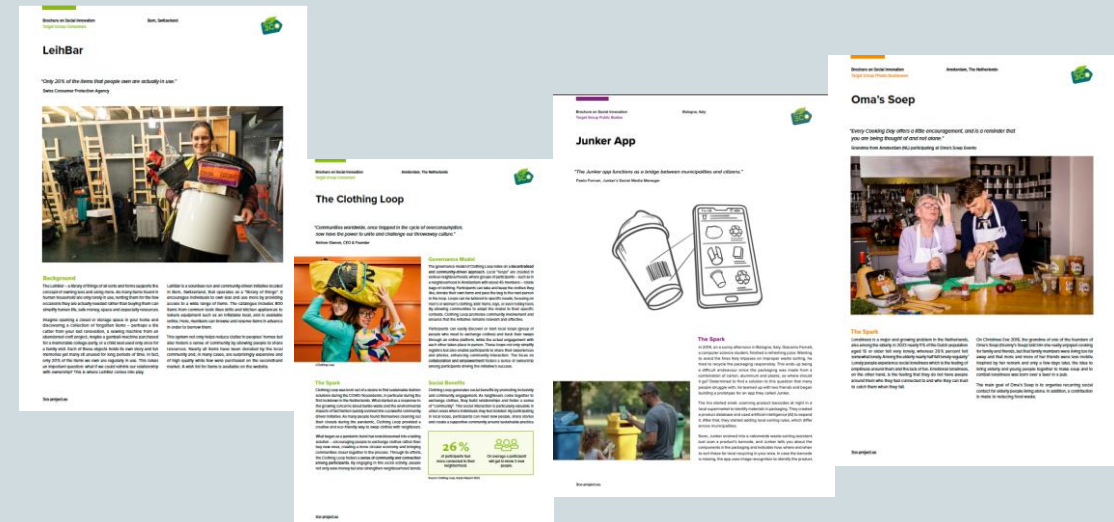
# Factsheets and Brochure development

## A set of factsheets

- **Citizens & Communities:** 6 factsheets
- **Private Businesses:** 8 factsheets
- **Public Sector:** 3 factsheets

## A brochure

- One brochure with 17 factsheets

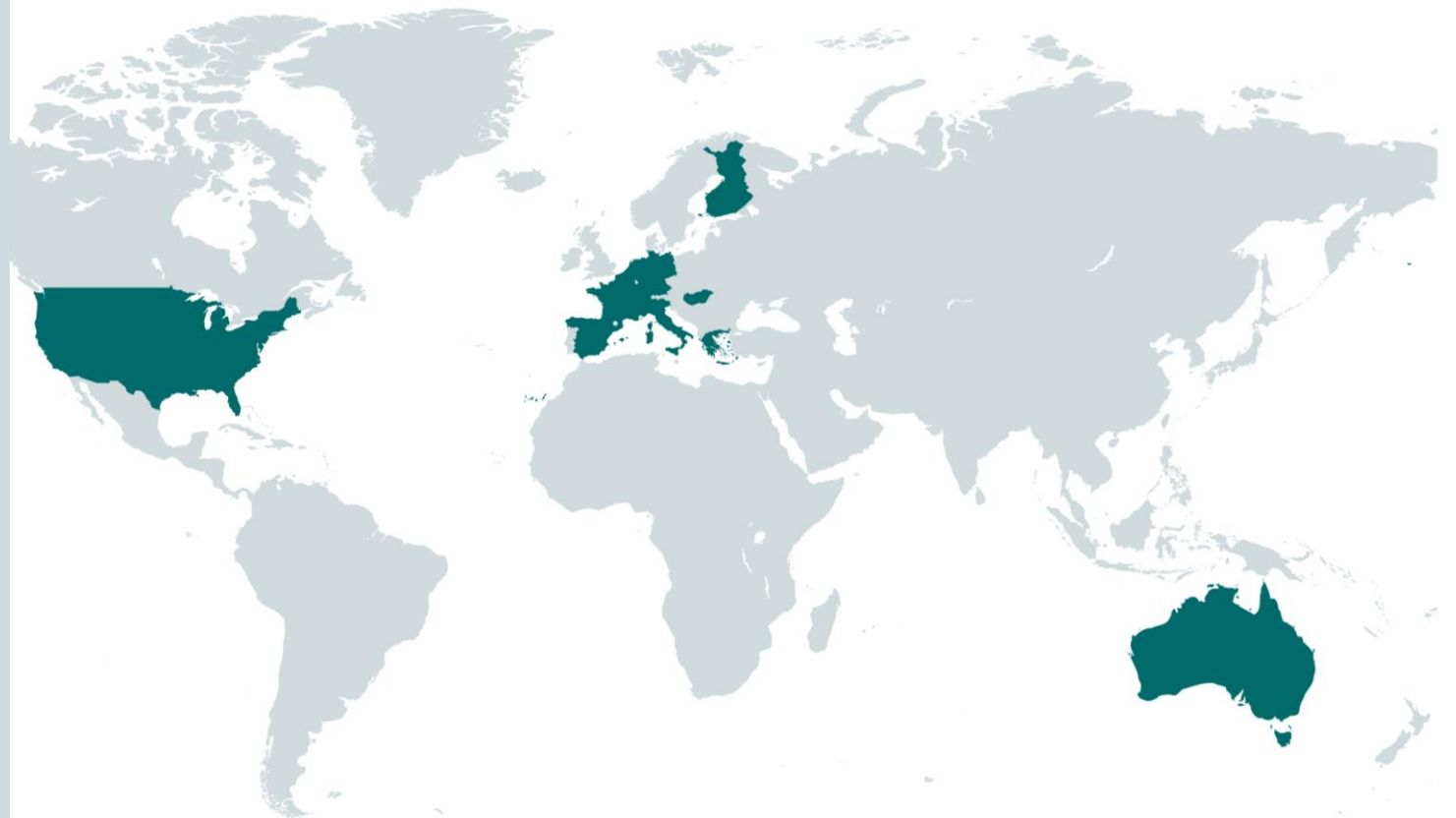


Accessible via: <https://3co-project.eu/social-innovation-factsheets/>



# Where are these good practices located?

- **Europe** (3-CO partner countries): Belgium, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain
- **Europe**: France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Switzerland
- **Australia**: Western Australia
- **USA**: California



# Factsheet Content

- **The spark:** who initiated the social innovation (founders)? What event, finding, thought or experience kicked off the social innovation? What is its purpose?
- The organisation or **governance model:** how is the SI structured and operating?
- **Social impact and benefits:** what aspects make the case study a social innovation? What impacts are being made? Which groups benefit from the social innovation?
- **Environmental impact and benefits:** what environmental issues are addressed? How does the SI contribute to responsible production and consumption?
- **Replicability potential:** What are the target groups of the social innovation? What makes that there is a good perspective to adopt the concept elsewhere?
- **Contact details, Data sources and Quotes**

# Insights (1/2)

## Social Innovation



Social Innovation can take place in every sector of society



Often foster community bonds (gardening, clean-ups)



Innovations may benefit disadvantaged people, such as the elderly and the underemployed

# Insights (2/2)

## Towards responsible production & consumption



Encourage better use of materials, extend product lifecycles, and prevent waste (food, packaging)



Can serve as educational hubs, teaching sustainable practices and develop environmental advocates



Germany's national strategy positions social innovation as chance to address social, economic and environmental challenges



# Thank you

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# Policy recommendations on deploying measures supporting social innovation



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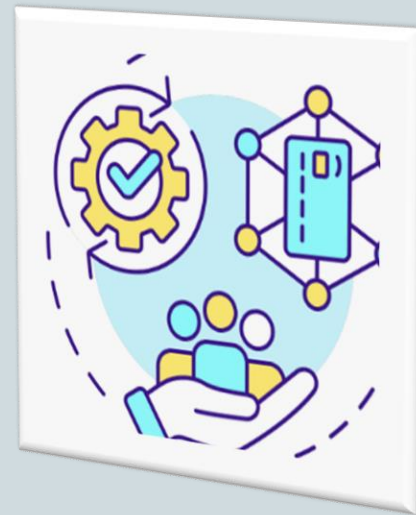
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# Financial & Regulatory Challenges

## Key Barriers Identified

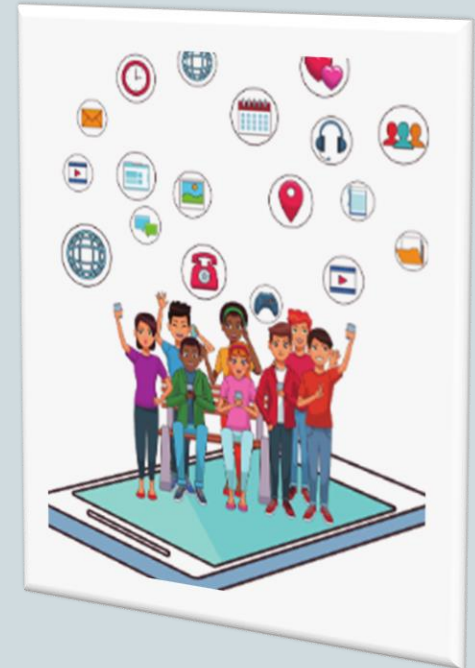
- Social innovation projects struggle to secure public and private funding
- Public funding is often uncertain, complex, and affected by political shifts
- High dependence on public grants limits long-term planning for social innovators
- Legal and regulatory rules are often rigid, not tailored to the needs of non-profits or smaller organizations
- Expensive certifications and slow approval processes make market entry hard



# Collaboration & Networking Barriers



- Lack of awareness and recognition of social enterprises as "real" businesses
- Limited awareness of their goals makes it harder to gain institutional support
- Fragmented networks hinder knowledge-sharing and coordinated action





# Key Policy Recommendations 1/3

## Funding & Regulatory Support

- More accessible EU Funding and simplified application processes; tailor grants to SI themes (e.g. loneliness, sustainability)
- Empower regional development agencies: financial and personnel resources, capacity-building & training
- Introduce tax incentives for SI and sustainable practices
- Encourage private sector engagement in social financing and promote mechanisms like Social Impact Bonds
- Support certification costs and offer guidance programs



# Key Policy Recommendations 2/3

## Structural & Strategic Measures

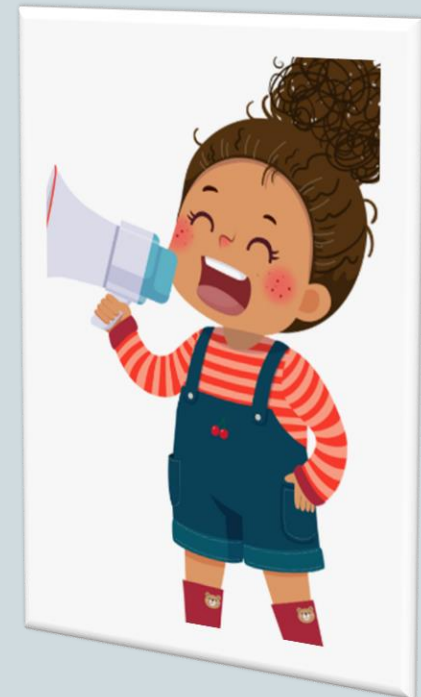
- Prioritize public procurement favoring social enterprises, e.g. formulation of legal requirements for fair and sustainable public procurement
- Improve regulatory standards, e.g. regarding greenwashing and value chain transparency (e.g. Green Claims Directive)
- Reduce regulatory burdens: streamline administrative and reporting tasks
- Ensure policy stability: long-term funding disconnected from political shifts
- Develop impact-oriented funding criteria and monitoring frameworks



# Key Policy Recommendations 3/3

## Strengthening Collaboration & Public Awareness

- Launch awareness campaigns to reshape public perception; e.g. informational events to increase understanding of social innovation
- Facilitate networking and collaboration among social-sector representatives; support multi-stakeholder collaboration: NGOs, government, private sector





# Thank you

Zoritzza Kiresiewa, Ecologic Institute, 25 March 2025

*Social innovation infographics: Canva. <https://www.canva.com/>.*



# Guiding Questions



1. *What is your feedback on the policy recommendations?*
2. *What could be relevant dissemination channels for the policy paper (key target groups)?*
3. *What are appropriate means to raise awareness and transparency for consumers (and what can be the role of labels)?*