

**Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)  
EVPA Progress Activity Report – January- December 2014**

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 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.

Under the Agreement, a key focus of EVPA’s future activities is to train and build the capacity of our members to enable them to have the parity of opportunity that our members in the rest of the EU currently enjoy. Being a European Organisation with members in 24 countries, having a strong presence in Southern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe is crucial.

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 will focus 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 2014. From January to December 2014, the following activities were undertaken by EVPA:

*Support in outreach and member awareness raising of EU policy initiatives*

**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, EVPA organised country meetings in Luxembourg and Sweden, which looked respectively at EU funding instruments and how the EU Social Business Initiative can support Venture Philanthropy organisations (VPOs). In 2014, further events took place in Spain, Portugal and Greece. These meetings provided the ideal forum for the dissemination of information about the SBI, as well as the broader work of EVPA. In addition, a number of “SBI Index Cards” will be developed and made available on EVPA’s website in 2015 to further increase the SBI awareness in our sector.



**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 part of the 2014 training module took place in June in Barcelona, Spain, the second in Brussels in September. For the second part of the 2014 training module, a 3- hour session on the EU 2020 strategy and how this EU initiative is relevant to the VP/SI sector took place, including a presentation on the EC's SBI initiative by Commissioner Pia Holmen. In 2015 the EVPA Training Academy is planning to release a manual that will collect all the learning material used during the training.

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.

**EU policy and SBI news:** In order to better inform our members of EU developments, EVPA began publishing short articles on SBI and EU related topics in its monthly newsletter. These included the EC communication on crowdfunding, the EC agreement on an Impact Measurement Standard, the European Consultation of the Social Economy and the European Commission's overview of European social enterprises.

A concerted effort to spread this type of EU news was also made through EVPA's Twitter and LinkedIn accounts, and its member websites.

**EU webinars:** In June, 2014 EVPA launched an "EU Webinar Series" dedicated to addressing European topics of interest to the VP/SI community. Its first edition took place on June 25 and saw 30 attendees. It covered the EuSEF regulation gathering e-speakers from the European Commission, the UK Financial Conduct Authority and two VP/SI organisations familiar with EuSEF. EVPA's second webinar entitled "Impact Measurement: from Policy to Practice" was held on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September and had 117 registered participants.

**Member networking** – *help build EVPA member capacity and support networking and exchanges on best practice*

**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. This June 20 attendees were part of a site visit at EVPA member "Noaber Foundation" in The Netherlands focused on the topic of health. In October 2014 EVPA offered its members the chance to spend a day examining the possibilities of scaling social purpose organisations. EVPA UK-based members UnLtd and Impetus- PEF, and Denmark based Den Sociale Kapitalfond shared their investment models and approaches to achieving critical mass. The site visited was hosted by UnLtd and attended by 24 individuals.

**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. The thematic group on employment met in May 2014 and looked at employment challenges and the strategies that members are implementing to address unemployment. One outcome of the meeting was the decision to involve EU Policy makers to get a perspective on EU related initiatives in the area of employment. A follow-up meeting around the theme of employment took place in November as part of the 2014 EuroPhilantopics held in Brussels. It included the participation of EU Commissioner Max Uebe. A dedicated online group for EVPA members interested in the topic was launched just after the event.



In November EVPA's thematic group on gender in VP/SI took place as part of EVPA's 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Berlin. 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. A follow-up event on the same topic is planned for 2015.

In order to ensure that the Thematic Groups are easily accessible to all EVPA, travel fees for members in underrepresented member nations are 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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. But more than that they contribute to the building of a community.

**Increasing collective knowledge-** EVPA has produced a video and brochure presenting EVPA's activities and services to prospective members. It is used for prospective member meetings, external and member events in all markets, including Southern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe.

*Voicing the concerns and expectations of organisations*

**Member survey access to finance and blog** - In order to best represent its members 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. Its findings were captured in an infographic, and will be presented in a dedicated webinar planned for 2015. A blog offering a platform to voice member concerns and challenges was launched in August, seven blogposts 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 attended **23** conferences **in nine European** countries, in which 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 ten meetings with EU and facilitated and participated in ten exchanges between members and national authorities. These served to support evidence based policy making. Regular exchanges with the European Commission were also had 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*

**Annual survey and translations-** In May of this year EVPA launched its 2013/14 sector survey. This survey allows for an increased understanding of the approach and trends within the sector and provides starting points for evidence based policy making.

In order to make the survey accessible in local European markets in other languages than English, the 2012/13 survey was translated into four languages; French, Italian, Spanish and Polish. These translations can be used to build local knowledge on the VP/SI markets and can be used as fundraising tools by members.

**EVPA Research** – EVPA's research and policy team conducts research on best practice with a view to deepening knowledge about social enterprise funding. In 2014, two major research reports were published EVPA's "Report on Social Impact Strategies for Banks" and a "Practical Guide to Planning



and Executing an Impactful Exit”. During the research phase of these publications numerous practitioners, consultants, academics and social enterprises are 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 planned and executed. These included the dissemination of the EVPA annual survey, its Social Impact Strategies for Banks report and Practical Report on Exits. For the latter, a number of interviews with participants of the EVPA exit report were produced, and a dedicated exit website to present the research was created. Time was also invested in communicating the GECES social impact measurement framework

### *Staff Capacity*

For EVPA to be able to deliver on its partnership commitment, a number of positions were recruited for- to both manage activities and to fill knowledge gaps that were existing on certain topics within EVPA. These were:

- A Southern Europe Manager: Federica Saccia is responsible for outreach related to the Social Business Initiative and related EU actions in Southern Europe.
- A manager for Central and Eastern Europe: Ewa Konczal is responsible for the development of a regional dynamic which will facilitate the entry of new funding resources for social enterprises
- A Public Affairs Manager : Elinor de Pret is responsible for voicing the concerns and expectations of our members towards the relevant European players (Commission, Parliament) and for assisting our members in their contacts with their national governments
- Communication Manager: Linde Wolters is responsible for the practical organisation of all tasks related to the communication of tender related projects

