

Strengthening Social and Solidarity Economy: Key Insights from the 3P4SSE Peer Review in Szombathely



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The 3P4SSE project continues to drive forward its mission of fostering Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) initiatives across Central Europe. On February 5th, Szombathely hosted a pivotal Peer Review, bringing together key partners to assess and strengthen Hungary's Local Action Plan (LAP). Organized by Pannon Business Network (PBN), the event offered valuable exchanges on innovative approaches, best practices, and challenges faced by SSE actors in the region.

Exploring Hungary's SSE Landscape

The Peer Review provided an in-depth look into the SSE ecosystem in Szombathely, highlighting both its opportunities and structural challenges. The West-Transdanubian region, known for its economic dynamism, presents a complex landscape for SSEs, which often face hurdles such as limited access to funding, fragmented policy support, and low market visibility. PBN's Local Action Plan aims to address these gaps by fostering stronger networks, enhancing awareness, and developing structured support mechanisms.

Study Visits: Bridging Research and Practical Solutions

A key feature of the Peer Review was the opportunity to explore innovative initiatives at the intersection of SSE and technological advancements. The delegation visited:

- **at.HOME**, a cutting-edge research and development environment focusing on smart living solutions, aging population engagement, and social innovation.
- **am-LAB**, a research, development, and training laboratory specializing in digitalization for businesses and SSEs, demonstrating how technology can be leveraged to boost the sector's sustainability and competitiveness.

These study visits reinforced the importance of integrating digital innovation into SSE strategies and underscored the need for tailored support frameworks to help SSEs navigate the challenges of technological adaptation.

Key Takeaways and Policy Recommendations

The discussions during the Peer Review emphasized several critical factors essential for strengthening the SSE landscape in Hungary:

- **Bottom-Up Approach:** Encouraging participatory engagement and experimentation within platforms to generate best practices.
- **Stronger Stakeholder Involvement:** Enhancing collaboration between public authorities, business support organizations, and SSE actors to create a more structured support system.
- **Innovative Support Structures:** Utilizing research-driven solutions to empower SSEs through technology, training, and strategic guidance.
- **Policy Alignment:** Ensuring the Local Action Plan aligns with European strategies to foster sustainable growth and cross-border collaboration.
- **Peer Learning and Transnational Cooperation:** Leveraging international best practices to enhance SSE sustainability and scalability.

Looking Ahead: Strengthening the SSE Ecosystem

The Szombathely Peer Review underscored the need for enhanced business and funding support mechanisms to ensure the long-term sustainability of SSEs. Key recommendations for LAP 2.0 include:

- Establishing blended financing models and impact investment strategies.
- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms through clear KPIs.
- Facilitating ongoing capacity-building activities for SSE actors.
- Expanding public awareness campaigns to promote the benefits of SSEs.
- Encouraging cross-border peer learning initiatives to enhance knowledge-sharing and policy development.

Stay tuned for more updates as we continue to support innovative and impactful SSE development across Central Europe!