



PLCs Internationalisation policies

Title: Scotland's Social Enterprise Action Plan - International Focus

Authors and organizational affiliations:

Authors of this paper: Gerry Higgins¹, Director, International Social Enterprise Observatory and Pauline Gordon, Director, SENScot. The Scottish Government is the owner of the Social Enterprise Action Plan – which was developed through consultation with social economy sector partners, enterprise agencies in Highlands & Islands, lowland and South of Scotland. The [International Social Enterprise Observatory](#) is an initiative to support social enterprise internationalisation, led by a Steering Group of social enterprise and governmental partners.

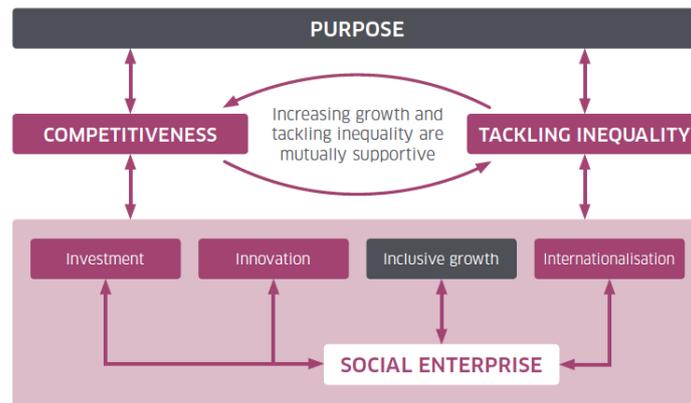
1. Background: Social and Solidarity Economy sector, institutions and policy in region/State/country

In December 2016, the [Scottish Government](#) published [Scotland's Social Enterprise Strategy](#) - a wide-ranging and ambitious 10-year framework. The Strategy was co-produced with the sector itself. As part of the Strategy - in April 2017, Scottish Government launched the publication of the first three-year action plan, which set out important early steps to deliver on an ambitious vision for the sector. Key achievements since that time have included:

- Investing over £30 million into Scotland's social enterprise sector
- Promoting social enterprise to young people in over 850 schools across Scotland
- Investing £5 million in start-up funds to support more than 300 new social enterprises
- Providing specialist business advice to more than 4,020 social enterprises
- An International investment to assist more social enterprises to trade internationally; support links with EU Social Economy partners, and invest in hosting the [10th Social Enterprise World Forum in Scotland](#) – promoting Scotland on a world stage.
- Establishing a £17 million fund providing affordable loans to social enterprises

The Action Plan is underpinned by a set of Guiding Principles which are important. Secondly every policy in Scotland must align with the Government's [National Performance Framework](#); and the economic strategy which focuses on the mutually reinforcing themes of **inclusive economic growth** (competitiveness) and **addressing inequalities**. This frames every policy developed in Scotland so all sectors and all of Scotland's key actors must pay attention to how they contribute to this overall purpose and the national outcomes. By way of illustration this graphic is central to the national social enterprise strategy and you will notice it has an international dimension.

¹ Gerry Higgins is also Managing Director of [Social Enterprise World Forum](#)



The key principles in producing a national SE Strategy are:

Co-produced - The Scottish Government continues to foster close co-operation with the social enterprise community and recognises the need to co-produce and co-deliver solutions.

Joined up – It is recognised that many stakeholders must play an active role if we are to deliver on the ambitions of this action plan. This will include Public Bodies and the Public Service Reform division. The Enterprising Third Sector team will continue to perform a strategic role, working across government and with national agencies to pursue parity of service and unlock the full potential of the sector – in areas such as education, economic development, and the environment.

Evidence-based – There will be recognition that the work introduced as part of this action plan must be based on the best available evidence and that must remain responsive to the needs of the sector as it evolves. This has been particularly evident during the COVID-19 crisis, with the Scottish Government having made available over £100m in emergency grant funding to social enterprises.

Inclusive - It is important to ensure the activity being funded is open and accessible to social entrepreneurs and social enterprises across Scotland; and that activity supported under this action plan is inclusive in its design and reach.

Financially sustainable - It will be important that the activity supported under this action plan is efficiently delivered and designed with financial sustainability at its core; recognising the mixed economy of resourcing that social enterprise needs whilst working with organisations to realise enterprise potential where viable.

2. Summary of main characteristics of good practice approach

The good practice approach features both the policy environment and the delivery actions. The policy environment has 4 elements: the [10 Year Social Enterprise Strategy](#), two [Action Plans](#) to underpin the first periods of the strategy and a complementary 2016 strategy “[Internationalising Social Enterprise, A Strategy for Scotland](#)”. The delivery approach focuses on the programme of the [International Social Enterprise Observatory](#), the primary body charged with delivering the internationalisation outcomes for Scotland’s social enterprises.



Policy Approaches and internationalisation

The international ambitions in the Social Enterprise Strategy for Scotland are expanded in the [International Strategy for Scotland](#) launched in 2016. The document identified “the Scottish Government’s ambitions for international excellence, leadership, and impact in the social enterprise field. Our commitment in this field is intended to contribute to sustainable economic growth domestically and to increase the presence and impact of Scottish social enterprises across the world. In doing so we hope to enhance Scotland’s reputation and attractiveness to others”.

The strategy identified 4 priorities, each with 4 action areas as shown below. Details on the action areas are shown in the strategy.

A. Global Citizenship

Intended Outcome - Scotland will fulfil its role as a good global citizen, promoting social enterprise where possible and extending its international impact. This will help to frame, lead, and accelerate global developments in the social enterprise movement.

Action Areas: A1. Taking to the global stage: A2. Supporting international development: A3. Extending international engagement: A4. Scotland in Europe

B. Trade

Intended Outcome - Scotland’s social enterprises will become more aware of international opportunities and more global in their outlook. More social enterprises will grow their international sales and impact.

Action areas: B1. Gathering intelligence: B2. Fostering an international outlook: B3. Realising trading ambitions: B4. Making the connections

C. Investment

Intended Outcome – Create an environment where Scottish social enterprises have access to the investment needed to expand international reach and impact, ensuring Scotland is a destination of choice.

Action Areas: C1. Anchoring international activity: C2. Securing finance for international expansion: C3. Investing in Scotland as a destination: C4. Inward Social Enterprise Visits

D. Education

Intended Outcome - Scotland will become recognised as a world catalyst for knowledge about social enterprise and the leading destination for learning about it. This will build on Scotland’s world-class educational offering and reputation for research excellence.

Action Areas: D1. Sharing learning: D2. Strengthening leadership: D3. Extending education: D4. Collaboration through research

From 2016 to 2021 the policy has evolved with adjustments to priorities required by Scotland’s exit from the European Union and the value identified by Scottish Ministers in including social enterprises in international economic policy. The latest [Social Enterprise Action Plan 2021-2024](#) plan reasserts the Scottish Government’s long-term vision of social enterprise at the forefront of a new wave of ethical and socially responsible business in Scotland; far-reaching and becoming central to the way that Scotland chooses to do



business. The plan sets out how we will take action over the next three years and its international focus includes;

- On-going support and investment to an International component to support social enterprises who can create social impact. Invest **£1.5m** to create a clear pipeline for social enterprises from conception to the international market, with a focus on ethical opportunities in emerging markets such as Africa and South East Asia.
- Internationalisation remains an important component within the national strategy linking as it does with a separately published [International Strategy for Scotland](#).

The [Social Enterprise Action Plan 2021-2024](#) (pages 28-30) states: “The Scottish Government recognises the important role played by social enterprises in strengthening our links with the international community, as a potential source of international trade, in supporting Scotland as an international destination and in developing Scotland’s reputation as a good global citizen.”

Delivery of internationalisation

The Scottish Government invested in the [Social Enterprise International Observatory](#) to advance its place in the world and to ensure Scotland continues to benefit from sharing its learning and international reach and in turn learn from others. Scotland’s [Internationalising Social Enterprise Strategy](#) was developed to offer encouragement for social enterprises to think globally, seek opportunities to trade overseas and attract international investment, to remain open to new ideas and learning, and in turn share expertise and assistance with others across the world. In producing the strategy, the Scottish Government has demonstrated that it is ready and willing to share its knowledge and expertise, placing Scotland's blueprint for social enterprise on the world stage.

However, the Scottish Government recognises that to deliver its ambitions, there needs to be a sharp focus on the actions agreed in the strategy, a co-ordinated effort to back this up, as well as additional capacity to deliver. It is for this reason that one of the key actions set out in the strategy was the establishment of an ‘[International Social Enterprise Observatory](#)’. This was described in the strategy as a mechanism to harvest learning from across the world, spot trends, strengthen the Scottish evidence base and shape developments in the field.

The 3-year workplan of the Social Enterprise Observatory demonstrates the scope of social enterprise internationalisation, its links to government policies and ambitions and its integration with the general social enterprise ecosystem. The objectives and actions are as follows;

Objective 1 Building a pipeline of social enterprises with global potential through overseas trade.

Obj	Action
1.1	Identify social enterprises interested in internationalisation through the <u>Census</u> and pro-actively highlight business opportunities.
1.2	Draft and deliver an Observatory communications strategy to raise awareness in the social enterprise community
1.3	Support enquiries about internationalisation coming from the new <u>Just Enterprise</u> Business Support contract.



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1.4	Signpost social enterprises to SDI and Challenges Group for specialist internationalisation support when ready.
1.5	Work with Scottish Government , Highlands and Islands Enterprise , South of Scotland Enterprise , Scottish Enterprise and key intermediaries to profile internationalisation.

Objective 2 Visibility and Influence - enhance Scotland's social enterprise leadership reputation.

2.1	Manage a learning journey programme for attenders at the annual Social Enterprise World Forum
2.2	Support Inward international visits with advice and guidance ensuring the social enterprise community and agencies are engaged.
2.3	Supporting outwards Ministerial visits by identifying social enterprises in destination country and brokering visit arrangements.
2.4	Ensuring inwards governmental groups of ministers and or policy makers are directed to appropriate contacts in Scottish Government.
2.5	Ensure Scottish policy developments are prepared for external audiences including the annual Social Enterprise World Forum Policy Forum.

Objective 3 International development - mobilising Scotland's social enterprises to support Scotland's international development initiatives.

3.1	Support the Challenges Group access Africa Programme through referrals and promotion/information opportunities.
3.2	Work with Scottish Government International Division to identify social enterprises matching international development themes/countries.
3.3	Support the World Bank and others to engage Scotland's agencies to bring entrepreneurial approaches to developing economies.
3.4	Work with the Scottish Government's International Development and International Relations , DfID and others to broker wider and deeper se engagement.
3.5	Engage with British Council to include Scottish social enterprises and agencies in the society and education work of British Council.

Objective 4 - Visitors and Investment - to create the conditions needed to attract visitors, global start-ups and investment to Scotland.

4.1	Support inward social enterprise visits with signposting and guidance and maintenance of a visits log for reference and reporting.
4.2	Support international social enterprises and agencies to locate in Scotland due to its unique ecosystem and policy environment.
4.3	Attract direct and indirect investment to Scotland through inward visits and inward location of headquarters or branches.
4.4	Be a contact point with Scotland House , SDI Hubs and Scottish Government Overseas offices, notably Scottish Affairs for Canada .



4.5	Support Scottish Government to refresh its International Headquarter Grants Programme, creating clear actions and criteria.
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Objective 5 – Learning, Education and Research - to realise opportunities for learning, education, research and knowledge transfer.

5.1	To showcase and provide introductions to the Social Enterprise Academy as one of Scotland’s leading international innovations
5.2	Work with academic institutions including schools to promote their social enterprise education courses to overseas students
5.3	Highlight international opportunities for online networking and engagement for Scottish social enterprises and supporters.
5.4	Provide links to international research initiatives, find partners and showcase Scottish research.
5.5	To support Inspiralba 's rural social enterprise learning materials ViSENet project, Rural Social Enterprise Hub project and provide opportunities for knowledge transfer.

3. Evidence/Justification for Good Practice

Soft evidence:

Launching a 10-year SE Strategy in Scotland was a significant milestone and achievement. It was developed from the bottom-up and involved a ‘visioning’ exercise where key representative bodies facilitated a series of roadshow events around the country to consult social enterprises themselves and a number of other stakeholders from the public sector and policy makers. This then informed the Strategy development process and the inclusion of internationalisation reflected the ambitions and activities of over 350 Scottish social enterprises targeting international markets. To ensure it was delivering on the ambitions, it was agreed that the strategy would be delivered through 3 x 3year Action Plans. This brought a great sense of pride for the sector and for Government and allowed all involved to promote Scotland’s social enterprise development and comprehensive eco-system in Scotland and on the world stage.

The biennial [Social Enterprise Census](#) is important in developing a national strategy as it provided a robust baseline. Every two years the project reports on the scale, reach and contribution of **social enterprise activity** across the country as well as the characteristics, prospects and needs of the organisations behind it. Since 2015 to 2019 the SE Census provides some evidence that the sector is growing and well supported. The 2015 census identified 5199 social enterprises and 7% with international markets, (therefore 363 international social enterprises became the benchmark). The 2019 Census identified that while the majority of social enterprises have a local focus, “some social enterprises, however, have a global outlook and ambitions. The share of social enterprises selling products or services overseas has remained consistent at 6-8% since 2015 but remains below that of the business community at large”.

Given the impacts of Brexit and COVID-19 the International Social Enterprise Observatory partners will view with interest the data and finding from the next Census publication in September 2021. Under normal circumstances the internationalisation programme would expect to see growth in the number of social



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enterprises trading internationally, however census data was collected during a national lockdown and this may have a greater impact on the international data.

Hard evidence: For example data from evaluations or relevant quantitative indicators.

The following extract from the 2019/20 report to Scottish Government indicates outcomes achieved in year 1 of 3 of the current Observatory programme. Some agency and enterprise names have been redacted on confidentiality grounds and identified as Enterprise 1,2,3 etc.

Three Year Outcome	Year 1 Target	Year 1 Actual	Outcome Description
A return on investment of 300% as the Observatory intends to generate a positive roi through attraction of inward investment to Scotland.	£290k	£285k	1.Enterprise 1: development of University spin out with international investment of, £200k secured, £10m projected. 2.Enterprise 2: business development, funder engagement and funding strategy, £20k secured in this phase. 3. Enterprise 3s, incorporation support provided, investment of £50k secured from Canadian partner. 4. Enterprise 4, development support provided and investment of £15k confirmed as a result.
Increase in Scottish social enterprises involved in exporting and overseas trade from 7% to 10%	9%	n/a	Will not be possible to track until 2021 Census (reported in September 2021) and this target may be hard to reach due to covid-19 impact.
5 education/research partnership projects established with higher education or specialist social enterprise agencies.	2	3	1.Partnership established with Travalyst but paused due to covid. 2. GCU involved in establishment of SEWF Academic Forum 3. ISEO promoting and supporting internationalisation of rural social enterprise learning materials at ViSENet project run by Inspiralba.
6 new international development projects supported.	2	3	1.Giraffe Healthcare supported 2.Send a Cow (Scotland) supported 3.Challenges Group programme featured at SEWF Ethiopia
Engagement with 100 Scottish social enterprises	35	127	1.ISEO engaged lightly with 127 though newsletter and updates. 2.ISEO engaged with 24 enterprises in our covid-19 response. 3. ISEO supported 15 se's on SEWF 2019 Bursary programme.



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			4. Case studies produced (5) 5. One to one strategic work with SEA, Challenges, INSP, Inspiralba.
18 social enterprises referred to SDI/Scottish Enterprise, HIE account management	6	24	We shared the headline data on 24 social enterprises impacted by COVID-19 with partners and provided business support and strategic intervention to address trading issues due to COVID, Brexit or expansion.
15 inward international delegations supported	5	3	1.World Bank Group 2.John Smith Trust group from central Europe 3.SE study visit from Sweden Others from Sweden and Ireland were postponed due to covid.
6 new inward locations of global enterprises or agencies.	2	2	1.Freedom Seal incorporated. 2.Social Shifters incorporated and trading.
6 se engagements with Scotland House	2	0	Planned engagement with Wild Hearts cancelled due to Covid
10 overseas engagements promoting Scotland's international reputation (new)	3	4	1.Supported First Ministers visit to Canada with reception in Ottawa 2. Worked with Scottish Affairs in Canada and Third Sector Division to support Minister Hislop visit to Canada – COVID postponed. 3.Scottish context at launch of Irish Social Enterprise Strategy. 4.Engaged with Tata Trust promoting Scottish SE in India and Pakistan, including social procurement focus. 5. Supported Lahore University Management Sciences (LUMS) social entrepreneurship event, Pakistan, Dec 2019.

4. Context and history of how it developed

A social enterprise consortium including [Social Enterprise World Forum \(SEWF\)](#), [Community Enterprise in Scotland \(CEIS\)](#), [Social Enterprise Academy](#), [Homeless World Cup](#), [Assist Social Capital](#), [Challenges Group](#) and [International Network of Street Papers \(INSP\)](#) took the initiative in identifying priorities for international social enterprises in Scotland. This group worked with Scottish Government to co-produce the, “[Internationalising Social Enterprise, A Strategy for Scotland](#)”, in 2016, and four group members, SEWF, CEIS, Challenges Group and Social Enterprise Academy went on to establish the International Social Enterprise Observatory alongside two divisions of Scottish Government (Third Sector Division and International



Division) and three Government Agencies, (Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise and South of Scotland Enterprise Agency).

This initiative is exceptional in that the vision came from the social enterprise sector, as did the initiative to develop the Internationalising Strategy and establish the Observatory. Government has been supportive at every step, providing seed funding and capacity to engage in the agenda and connect with other agencies of government when required. Major projects such as Scotland hosting the Homeless World Cup, the expansion of the Social Enterprise Academy franchise and hosting Social Enterprise World Forum in 2018 received financial support and a budget was agreed for the Observatory internationalisation programme.

Just as the 10-year Social Enterprise Strategy was developed and initiated by the sector itself the same was true for the Internationalisation Strategy. The leaders here were agencies and intermediaries focused on internationalisation and Government was ready to respond to the sector vision, consult formally to clarify priorities and identify actions. Furthermore, despite pressures on public spending the Scottish Government ultimately put resources into intermediaries, projects, services and programmes to ensure the vision and strategy was realised.

5. Outcomes (for different stakeholders)

The following hard outcomes have been agreed for the [International Social Enterprise Observatory](#) for a three-year period from April 2019 to March 2022. These may be revised and extended to account for the impact of COVID-19 when international activity was disproportionately affected as inward and outward travel was halted and the business climate was more about survival than international expansion. The outcomes cover both inward and outward priorities as they support Scottish social enterprises to increase overseas trading, while encouraging inward visitors and start-ups and the value generated contributes to Scotland’s trade and investment targets as well as its international development programmes in low income and conflict affected countries.

Three Year Outcomes
A return on investment of 300% as the Observatory intends to generate a positive roi through attraction of inward investment to Scotland.
Increase in Scottish social enterprises involved in exporting and overseas trade from 7% to 10% (based on Census data)
5 education/research partnership projects established with higher education or specialist social enterprise agencies.
6 new international development projects supported by the Observatory
Engagement with 100 Scottish social enterprises
18 social enterprises referred to SDI/Scottish Enterprise, HIE account management
15 inward international delegations supported
6 new inward locations of global social enterprises or related agencies, (office base, project activity/business registration)



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6 social enterprise engagements with Scotland House
10 overseas engagements promoting Scotland’s international reputation (new)

These hard outcomes allocated to the International Social Enterprise Observatory are complemented by other initiatives, including;

- Scottish Government support for the work of [Challenges Group](#), using social enterprise approaches in Africa linked to Scotland’s international development priorities.
- The work of [Social Enterprise World Forum](#) to grow the global social enterprise movement, bringing added value to Scotland through provision of platform to showcase Scottish innovation and impact.
- The location in Scotland of international social enterprise organisations including [International Network of Street Papers](#), [Homeless World Cup](#), [Social Enterprise Academy](#) each of which contributes to the reputation of Scotland as a leading country for social enterprise.

6. Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
Co-produced Internationalisation Strategy in 2016 reflecting sector initiative to raise the profile and recognition of internationalisation.	The COVID-19 crisis has set back internationalisation progress across all of the Scottish economy, including social enterprise.
International Social Enterprise Observatory is a sector led initiative, with Government as partners, all involved on equal basis.	Funding has been agreed on an annual basis impacting on longer term planning.
Scope of activity includes trade and investment, international development (ODA), third sector (growing the social enterprise sector), and business and enterprise (social business growth).	The UK exit from the European Union, against the wishes of the majority of Scots, has compelled Scotland to redefine its international position and this impacts on all sectors including social enterprise.
Internationalisation given appropriate emphasis in the 10-year social enterprise strategy and Actions Plans.	Internationalisation still regarded as “niche” by much of the social enterprise sector
The Observatory programme is linked to the national social enterprise business support programme (Just Enterprise) so business support and small grant assistance is available to support individual enterprises.	International social enterprise still regarded as “niche” by some within government agencies.
The remit for working with social enterprise is broad and includes pre-start activity and it recognises that some of those supported will not be classical social enterprises as defined by the Code of Practice in Scotland. Without this flexibility the scope and value would be limited.	



Of the strengths and weaknesses above it is perhaps worth focusing on some of the barriers as most of this paper has focussed on the progress and strengths of the system in Scotland. The two areas to highlight are where internationalisation has been described as “niche”.

Firstly, the issue of social enterprise being regarded as “niche” by government agencies and departments is a reality despite the enormous progress made in Scotland over a decade of collaboration between the social enterprise sector and Government and its agencies. Social Enterprise is in the [national economic strategy](#) and the [2019 Census](#) identified an economic contribution of £2.3bn per year to the Scottish economy by a sector that employs 88,318 people. But until the sector developed its identity and strategy in the mid 1990’s, it didn’t have an identity distinct from the third sector. Social enterprises have existed for hundreds of years but until relatively recently public consciousness, public procurement and business education systems recognised a public sector, a for-profit business sector and a non-profit third sector.

The emergence of the social enterprise sector, initially from the third sector, then as a start-up opportunity for businesses with social mission, has challenged procurement systems that were not built to recognise this business type. It has also challenged those who studied business at colleges, universities and schools before the early 2000’s where social enterprise was never mentioned and therefore the process of raising awareness is slow. This involves changes to process, systems and culture to overcome institutional barriers and senior leadership is part of the answer. The [Procurement Reform Act 2014](#) was one of the best initiatives to assist all those in the public sector to recognise that social enterprises are part of the solution to the Scottish economy achieving its inclusive growth ambitions. The Scottish parliament has held two debates on social enterprise, the latest being in [2018](#) and this demonstrates ministerial commitment to the agenda. There is a [cross party social enterprise group in parliament](#) and there is barely a government official in Scotland who won’t be aware of social enterprise to some degree.

While work has started across government to ensure that those in health, education, trade and investment, agriculture, transport etc are familiar with social enterprise, there is still much work to do. Internationalisation perhaps suffers as the number of social enterprises trading internationally is low, [estimated to be 363 in 2019](#), and within that cohort the international income levels are low. Government policy has been focussed on Scotland’s strengths in traditional areas like oil and gas, food and drink and financial services and while new industries such as renewable energy and new sectors like social enterprise are now being embraced, a lack of scale contributes to a lack of recognition. This is understandable and the strategy to address this is through raising of awareness and that is one of the focus areas of the social enterprise Observatory with a communications campaign commencing in July 2021. This will involve one social enterprise feature/case study per month, promoted across government and the social enterprise sector and social media, highlighting the diversity of Scotland’s international social enterprises.

To a degree, the international social enterprise agenda is regarded as “niche” across much of the social enterprise and third sector also. According to the [2019 Social Enterprise Census](#), the majority of Scotland’s social enterprises trade locally with 26% trading in a single neighbourhood, 31% trading within one local authority area and only 11% identifying all of Scotland as their market. The 8% that trade internationally indicates that international trade is off the agenda for more than 9 out of 10 social enterprises. The International Social Enterprise Observatory is tackling this challenge through support and information. The support results in any social enterprise that wishes to explore an international market or opportunity



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getting prompt, specialised, free to access business support to look at feasibility and development. This can include financial assistance for market research, legal and professional fees or digital marketing. Larger and more mature social enterprises are likely to go directly to government agencies such as [Scottish Development International](#) for support alongside the commercial sector, but for smaller social enterprises and those taking first steps to internationalisation, having a dedicated resource that looks at the social enterprise first and the internationalisation as a feature of this, is important.

The awareness raising issue is perhaps a greater challenge with so much of the social enterprise sector having a local market focus, the Observatory is combatting a view that internationalisation is for the larger or even more corporate leaning social enterprises. The awareness raising initiatives planned by the Observatory are geared to address this by ensuring that small and rural social enterprises are emphasised in the features and case studies that form the backbone of the communications campaign from July 2021. The campaign message to government and its agencies is that social enterprises are contributing internationally across a range of economic sectors and the message to the third sector is that international opportunities can benefit small and remote social enterprises just as they can larger and more mature businesses.

7. Comparisons with other experiences

We believe the Internationalisation focus in Scotland to be unique. While others mention international activities and ambitions, none have the commitment and prioritisation identified in Scottish Social Enterprise Strategy and Action Plan, and the International Social Enterprise Observatory in Scotland.

The [Social Enterprise Strategy in Ireland](#) mentions international engagement and profile for Irish social enterprises, “there is scope to showcase the Irish experience of social enterprise at international level.” Additionally, the strategy identifies that “Ireland engages closely on social enterprise policy developments at international level so that Ireland can influence international social enterprise policy and, where possible, that social enterprises can benefit from international networks and supports.”

A [2019 analysis of internationalisation activity](#) in European countries identifies a range of aspirations and activities but nothing comparable to the focus in Scotland. Globally, we are aware that Taiwan has supported its social enterprises to engage internationally, primarily through attendance at [Social Enterprise World Forum](#) and promotion of the social enterprise ecosystem in Taiwan. The [Korean Overseas Development Agency \(KOICA\)](#) has a strategy of engaging and supporting South Korean social enterprises to deliver entrepreneurial support to beneficiary countries.

An [analysis of social enterprise in Quebec and Scotland](#) by academics from Glasgow Caledonian University and University of Aalborg identifies “the Scottish Government has also carved out an international leadership role in social enterprise development worldwide, becoming the first country to have a dedicated international strategy for social enterprise (Scottish Government, 2016). Scottish politicians have proclaimed Scotland as ‘the most supportive environment in the world for social enterprise’ (Roy et al., 2015) and ‘placing Scotland’s blueprint for social enterprise on the world stage’ (Scottish Government, 2016) has become a Government aim, (Pages 15-16).



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8. Overall assessment

The elements of internationalisation of social enterprise in Scotland, from the early sector leadership to create the Internationalisation Strategy in 2016, to the establishment of the International Social Enterprise Observatory and the identification of international priorities in the 10-year social enterprise strategy and Action Plans, reflect the common vision of international social enterprises, intermediary organisations and the Scottish Government. There are a number of unique features in the dynamic between these actors, including a history of co-production over 15 years, ensuing trust and respect between governmental and social enterprise partners and relatively high levels of resourcing for social enterprise support. The maturity of relationship between the social enterprise sector and national government and its agencies may be difficult to replicate elsewhere.

These relationship factors sit alongside an unwelcome imperative of developing a new international identity following exit from the European Union and the resulting importance of developing a national trading identity for Scottish business. Another factor in determining “value” is that COVID-19 has impacted on the anticipated outcomes for the internationalisation programme and therefore its “success” will be measurable in 2022/23 when the targets set in 2019/20 will be reviewed and evaluated.

Any observers of this Scottish Case Study should consider whether the hard and soft outcomes identified to date, and the unique features of this initiative within the Scottish social enterprise ecosystem, make this policy and programme a suitable candidate for replication or adaptation for other territories.