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YOUTH SOCIAL INNOVATION BROKERS
MOBIUS

MOBIUS EUROPEAN COUNTRY REPORT – FRANCE



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1.Introduction

The aim of this report is to analyze and diagnose the potential of existing practices in France related to Social Innovation Brokerage on a European scale to support social innovation.

France has a rich history of social innovation, rooted in its strong tradition of social solidarity and public welfare.

By involving youth in social innovation, France can tap into their creativity, fresh perspectives, and digital savvy, which are crucial for developing innovative solutions to complex issues like unemployment, social inequality, and climate change. Young people, particularly those from marginalized communities, can use social innovation as a tool to address the specific needs of their communities, reducing disparities and promoting social cohesion. Moreover, engaging youth in social innovation nurtures their entrepreneurial spirit and enhances their skills, making them more adaptable and resilient in an ever-changing job market. This not only improves their employment prospects but also contributes to the country's economic growth by fostering a new generation of socially responsible entrepreneurs. As future leaders, today's youth will be responsible for shaping the policies and practices of tomorrow. By equipping them with the tools and mindset for social innovation, France ensures a more sustainable and just future.

The French government, through its various ministries and agencies, plays a central role in promoting social innovation. Initiatives such as the French Impact, a national program to support social enterprises, and La French Tech, which fosters innovation in technology and social entrepreneurship, are prime examples of public sector involvement. Organizations such as Le Comptoir de l'Innovation, makesense, and La Ruche provide incubation, acceleration, and networking opportunities for social enterprises. These entities act as brokers by connecting social innovators with funding, mentorship, and market access. There are also foundations like the Fondation de France and the Ashoka Foundation support social innovation by providing grants, impact investments, and strategic guidance. They also facilitate partnerships between different sectors to enhance the reach and impact of social innovations. Moreover, the universities and research centers in France contribute to social innovation through research, education, and the development of new methodologies and tools. These institutions often collaborate with other stakeholders to broker knowledge and expertise.



2. Analysis and diagnosis of existing literature

Key studies on social innovation in France have significantly shaped the field, offering insights into both theoretical and practical aspects. Notable works include *"La dynamique de l'innovation sociale en France"* (2014) by CGSP, which analyzes drivers of social innovation across sectors, and *"Innovations sociales: de la théorie à la pratique"* (2015) by Philippe Eynaud and Jean-Louis Laville, which explores its practical applications. The OECD's 2012 report on the social enterprise sector highlights policy challenges, while *"Les nouveaux défis de l'innovation sociale"* (2019) by Fondation de France addresses emerging societal needs. These studies have influenced both policy and practice in France.

Youth in France face a multifaceted set of challenges, including high unemployment rates, especially in economically disadvantaged regions, and social exclusion among minority and immigrant communities. Additionally, mental health issues have become a growing concern, exacerbated by the pressures of academic performance and social media. Educational disparities further compound these issues, leaving many young people without the skills or opportunities needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

In response to these challenges, various stakeholders—including government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social enterprises, and educational institutions—have increasingly turned to social innovation as a means to create impactful and sustainable solutions. Innovative educational methodologies related to social innovation are being increasingly applied in France, reflecting the country's commitment to fostering social entrepreneurship and civic engagement among youth. One prominent approach is **project-based learning (PBL)**, which is widely used in schools and universities. PBL encourages students to work on real-world problems, often in collaboration with local communities, NGOs, or social enterprises. This hands-on approach not only enhances students' problem-solving skills but also instills a sense of social responsibility and active citizenship.

Another innovative methodology is **design thinking**, which is integrated into educational programs focused on social innovation. Design thinking workshops and



courses teach students to empathize with users, define problems, ideate solutions, prototype, and test their ideas. This user-centered approach is particularly effective in developing socially innovative solutions that are both practical and impactful. **Service learning** is also gaining traction in France, where students combine academic learning with community service. This approach enables students to apply their knowledge to address social issues while reflecting on their experiences to deepen their understanding and civic consciousness.

These methodologies are instrumental in equipping young people in France with the skills, mindset, and motivation needed to become leaders in social innovation and to contribute meaningfully to society.

These studies have not only shaped the academic discourse on social innovation but also informed the development of policies and programs aimed at fostering social innovation in France. For instance, insights from these works have been instrumental in the design of initiatives like the French Impact, which seeks to create a supportive ecosystem for social enterprises. Additionally, the emphasis on practical applications in these studies has encouraged greater collaboration between academia, government, and civil society, leading to more effective and scalable social innovation projects. As a result, France has emerged as a leader in integrating social innovation into both its policy framework and its social economy.

3. Current situation of social innovation for young people

The French ecosystem for social innovation brokerage is characterized by a diverse array of actors, including public institutions, private organizations, non governmental organizations (NGOs), and social enterprises. These actors operate at various levels—local, regional, and national—creating a multifaceted and dynamic landscape. The country has developed robust mechanisms for mobilizing financial resources for social innovation. The availability of impact investing, government grants, and philanthropic funding provides a solid foundation for supporting social enterprises.

Social innovation among youth in France is supported also by a range of policies and programs designed to empower young people to engage in social entrepreneurship,



civic engagement, and community development. These initiatives are driven by both national and regional governments, as well as by non-governmental organizations and private sector partnerships. The main policies and programs focus on fostering youth innovation, providing access to resources, and creating supportive ecosystems for social innovation.

- **French Impact Initiative**

Launched in 2018, the French Impact initiative is a key government-led program aimed at promoting social innovation across France. This initiative includes a specific focus on youth and seeks to create a national ecosystem that supports social enterprises and innovative projects addressing societal challenges. French Impact provides funding, mentorship, and networking opportunities to young social innovators, helping them scale their projects and achieve broader impact. The initiative also encourages collaboration between different sectors, including public institutions, private companies, and civil society, to create a supportive environment for social innovation.

- **Service Civique (Civic Service)**

Service Civique is a voluntary program established in 2010 that offers young people aged 16 to 25 the opportunity to engage in community service for a period of 6 to 12 months. Participants work on projects that address social issues such as education, environment, health, and social inclusion. The program is designed to foster civic engagement and social responsibility among youth while providing them with valuable skills and experience. Service Civique also includes training components, where participants can develop competencies relevant to social innovation, such as project management, teamwork, and leadership.

- **Pacte National pour l'Économie Sociale et Solidaire (ESS)**

The National Pact for the Social and Solidarity Economy (ESS), established in 2013, is a comprehensive framework that supports the development of the social economy in France. The ESS sector includes a wide range of organizations, such as cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, and social enterprises, many of which are focused on social innovation. It provides funding, legal support, and educational resources to help young social innovators launch and sustain their projects.



- **Youth Entrepreneurship Programs by La French Tech**

La French Tech is a government-backed initiative that supports the growth of startups in France, including those led by young entrepreneurs. While traditionally focused on technology, La French Tech has increasingly incorporated social innovation into its agenda, recognizing the potential of tech-driven solutions to address social challenges. The initiative offers various programs for young entrepreneurs, including incubation, acceleration, and access to a global network of investors and mentors. By supporting tech-driven social innovation, La French Tech helps young people develop scalable solutions to pressing social issues.

- **Erasmus+ and European Social Fund (ESF) Programs**

On a broader European level, programs like Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund (ESF) play a significant role in promoting social innovation among youth in France. Erasmus+ offers funding and support for projects that encourage youth participation, social inclusion, and innovation across Europe. The ESF, on the other hand, provides financial support for initiatives aimed at improving employment opportunities and social inclusion for young people. These programs often focus on cross-border collaboration, allowing French youth to engage in social innovation projects with peers from other European countries.

Several initiatives in France exemplify the country's commitment to social innovation in addressing the needs of its youth population. **Unis-Cité** established in 1994, this non-profit organization offers young people aged 16 to 25 the opportunity to engage in civic service for a period of 6 to 12 months. **Les Déterminés** (founded in 2015) is an initiative aimed at fostering entrepreneurship among young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly those living in suburban and rural areas. **L'Ecole de la Deuxième Chance (E2C)**, or the School of the Second Chance, is an educational innovation aimed at young people who have dropped out of the traditional education system without obtaining a diploma. In addition to specific initiatives, France offers a range of training programs designed to equip young people with the skills and knowledge needed to engage in social innovation. These programs are offered by various institutions, including universities, NGOs, and social enterprises.



4. IDL's experience

Our core activities span a variety of domains, predominantly focusing on Design Thinking which is popular in French schools. We engage in projects that leverage design thinking to empower social entrepreneurs, helping them to develop innovative solutions for social challenges. These projects might include workshops, mentoring programs, or collaborations with NGOs and startups aimed at creating sustainable business models with a social impact. Each project is designed to blend creativity with practical solutions, fostering entrepreneurship that addresses pressing societal issues. Also, we focus on Serious Gaming, Artificial Intelligence, and Audio & Image signal analysis. To offer a more comprehensive view, our key areas of interest and expertise include:

- Gamification & Game-Based Learning
- E-learning content creation and Learning Management Systems
- User experience, usability, and accessibility and broader HCI contexts
- Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR/VR)
- Big Data & audiovisual semantic analysis (utilizing a variety of approaches, such as Deep Learning and NLP)
- Biomedical signal processing (specifically, audiovisual content analysis)

Infinitivity Design Labs has cultivated a strong reputation for its expertise in several domains, including user experience (UX) and product design, AI-driven analytics, and instructional design. The lab's unique strength lies in its ability to merge traditional design methodologies with modern technologies, such as natural language processing (NLP) and computer vision. This fusion allows them to deliver comprehensive solutions that not only address the immediate needs of their clients but also anticipate future challenges.

One of the lab's standout areas is its work in AI-powered data analysis. Infinitivity Design Labs goes beyond simple data interpretation by transforming raw data into actionable insights. This is achieved through a combination of statistical methods



and advanced computational techniques. Their services in this area include market segmentation, supply chain optimization, fraud detection, and customer churn prediction, which are critical for businesses looking to maintain a competitive edge.

Additionally, the lab has developed significant expertise in sound analysis and acoustics, exemplified by their creation of the SoundMaster iOS app series, which is designed for advanced acoustic measurements. This application has been utilized in various contexts, including health, media, and environmental studies, demonstrating the lab's versatility and innovation.

Key Projects

Infinitivity Design Labs has been involved in numerous high-impact projects, many of which are funded by the European Union under programs such as Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe. These projects reflect the lab's commitment to addressing contemporary challenges through innovative design and technology.

1. **CONVERT Project:** This Erasmus+ project aims to enhance digital skills among non-ICT graduates and junior employees, preparing them for the demands of the modern digital economy. Infinitivity Design Labs played a crucial role in developing short-term training modules that are both accessible and impactful, helping participants acquire essential skills for emerging jobs.
2. **TEX4.0 Project:** Another Erasmus+ initiative, the TEX4.0 project focuses on revolutionizing vocational education and training (VET) within the textile industry. Infinitivity Design Labs contributed to designing intrinsically motivating learning experiences that address the specific needs of VET trainers and learners, ensuring that the curriculum is both engaging and effective.
3. **PreschoolABA Project:** This project is centered on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) strategies, particularly for educators working with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Infinitivity Design Labs' involvement highlights their dedication to using design thinking to create inclusive educational environments.



4. **AI-Powered Data Analysis:** The lab has also developed advanced solutions in AI-driven data analysis, providing businesses with deep insights into customer behavior, operational inefficiencies, and market trends. Their expertise in NLP and machine listening has enabled them to offer services such as sentiment analysis, document automation, and voice command recognition.

5. Recommendations

While France has a vibrant social innovation ecosystem, scaling successful models to other European contexts remains a challenge. The diversity of social, economic, and regulatory environments across Europe requires adaptable and flexible brokerage practices. Capacity-building initiatives in France, such as training programs, mentorship, and technical assistance, have been effective in empowering social innovators. The emphasis on building skills and knowledge is a strong point of the French ecosystem. However, there is a need for more tailored support for early-stage social enterprises and grassroots initiatives, which often struggle to access the resources and networks needed to grow.

The availability of impact investing, government grants, and philanthropic funding provides a solid foundation for supporting social enterprises. Nonetheless, the challenge lies in ensuring the sustainability of these resources, particularly in scaling social innovations across Europe. There is a need for more innovative financial instruments that can attract private capital and de-risk investments in social innovation. The analysis reveals that France has a strong foundation for social innovation brokerage, with well-established practices in stakeholder engagement, resource mobilization, and capacity building. However, to fully leverage the potential of these practices on a European scale, several areas need attention: Brokers should prioritize the inclusion of marginalized groups in the innovation process, ensuring that solutions are equitable and address the needs of all citizens. There is a need for the development of new financial instruments that can attract private investment and ensure the sustainability of social innovations. French brokers should focus on building stronger networks with European partners to facilitate the scaling of innovations across diverse contexts. Also, greater advocacy efforts are needed to



align national and European policies, creating an enabling environment for social innovation to thrive across the continent.

6. Conclusion

The exploration of social innovation in France, particularly concerning youth, reveals a robust ecosystem supported by both theoretical foundations and practical applications. France has emerged as a leader in social innovation, driven by a combination of national and regional policies, grassroots initiatives, and academic contributions that collectively foster a supportive environment for young social innovators.

At the core of France's social innovation landscape are several key studies that have significantly shaped both the academic and practical understanding of the field. Works like "La dynamique de l'innovation sociale en France" (2014) by the Commissariat Général à la Stratégie et à la Prospective (CGSP) and "Innovations sociales: de la théorie à la pratique" (2015) by Philippe Eynaud and Jean-Louis Laville provide crucial insights into the drivers and applications of social innovation across various sectors. These studies, alongside reports like the OECD's analysis of the social enterprise sector and the Fondation de France's exploration of emerging social challenges, have informed both policy-making and the implementation of social innovation projects. These academic contributions have not only enriched the theoretical discourse but also facilitated the development of practical solutions to pressing social issues, particularly those faced by the youth.

Promoting social innovation among the youth in France is crucial for several reasons. It empowers young people to address complex social, economic, and environmental challenges, leveraging their creativity and digital fluency to develop innovative solutions. Moreover, social innovation fosters a more inclusive society by enabling young people, especially those from marginalized communities, to contribute meaningfully to addressing the needs of their communities. This engagement enhances their skills and entrepreneurial spirit, preparing them for an ever-evolving job market while simultaneously contributing to the country's economic and social



development. By investing in the youth today, France ensures that the next generation is equipped to lead sustainable social change.

Innovative educational methodologies such as project-based learning, design thinking, and service learning are being applied in France to nurture this potential. These approaches not only enhance problem-solving and leadership skills but also embed a sense of social responsibility in students, preparing them to become active participants in social innovation. These methodologies are pivotal in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, ensuring that young people are not only equipped with the necessary skills but are also motivated to drive social change.

National and regional policies play a crucial role in supporting youth social innovation in France. Initiatives like the French Impact and Service Civique provide essential resources, including funding, mentorship, and practical experience, to young innovators. These programs are complemented by regional efforts, such as the Paris Region Startups program, which focuses on supporting young entrepreneurs in various sectors, including social innovation. These policies create a conducive environment for young people to explore and implement innovative solutions to social problems, reinforcing France's position as a leader in this field.

In conclusion, the integration of social innovation into France's policy framework, supported by academic insights and practical programs, has created a fertile ground for youth engagement in social change. The country's commitment to fostering social innovation among its youth is evident in its comprehensive approach, combining education, policy support, and grassroots initiatives. As a result, France is not only addressing current social challenges but also preparing the next generation of leaders who will continue to drive innovation and ensure sustainable social progress in the future. This holistic approach underscores the importance of continued investment in social innovation as a means of creating a more equitable, resilient, and inclusive society.



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