



# "ACCELERATOR OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES!" ROMANIA'S FIRST SOCIAL ECONOMY CLUSTER REGISTERED ON THE EUROPEAN CLUSTER PLATFORM



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At the end of 2021, **ADV Romania** registered the **Accelerator of Social Enterprises Cluster** in the **European Cluster Platform** - an initiative of the European Commission funded by the EU Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs (COSME) programme.

ADV Romania launched the **Accelerator of Social Enterprises** program in **2019** and became a grant administrator for **42 social enterprises established and developed in Romania**. This program became a **social economy cluster** in 2020.

The establishment of the **Accelerator of Social Enterprises Cluster** represents for ADV Romania the next stage of **coalescence and development of the social economy sector in Romania**.

"Together, we can be a **voice** and an **example of the social and economic impact social enterprises have**, learn from each other, develop products and services in the value chain and even develop partnerships for **innovation and sustainability**," said **Angela Achiței**, social entrepreneur and **president of ADV Romania**.

Currently, the cluster comprises **60 members from Romania and the Republic of Moldova**, primarily social enterprises but also authorities and educational institutions. The cumulated employment of cluster members is **319**, and the total turnover is **3.000.000 euros**.

Most of the members of this cluster are also founding members of **AFIN IFN SA**, the first **non-bank financial institution with Romanian capital for financing social enterprises**.

The **Accelerator of Social Enterprises Cluster** aims to **help social enterprises grow and become more competitive**, thus multiplying their positive impact on local communities and the environment. With this in mind, ADV Romania created the **first interactive map of social enterprises**, a platform that connects social enterprises from **Romania, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine** with buyers and companies driven by a **strong social commitment**.

**Among the support services provided by the cluster, we can find:**

- **advisory services,**
- **access to public and private funding,**
- **facilitation of collaboration between members (within the cluster),**
- **support training services for cluster managers/policy makers,**
- **upskilling and reskilling expertise,**
- **staff mobility, access to training, etc.**



## Why are these clusters important?

The "**clustering**" of the social economy is a **recent and growing social movement** in the European Union.

**Social and green innovation clusters** are ideal vehicles to align **local SMEs, social enterprises, citizens' initiatives, local and regional authorities and research centres** to contribute to the **digitisation** and **sustainable transition** of the **local and community economy**.

**Social enterprises and industrial clusters** have proved valuable in crisis response and recovery, as they have demonstrated **concrete actions of solidarity, cooperation, innovation and regeneration**. The European dimension is equally visible in the drive of clusters to expand their model and learn from other structures. **Clusters deliver prosperity across many sectors, help build resilient local value chains, and serve many stakeholders.**

**Clusters go far beyond simple networks, implying a more substantial commitment and ownership from all stakeholders and a willingness to share resources and decision-making on common aspirations.**

The main strength of these clusters is their capacity and know-how for cooperation stemming from the values promoted by the social economy and their ability to experiment and innovate.

Among the priorities most pursued by these clusters are **job creation** and **local economic development**. In some cases, the focus is exclusively on **developing a regional "social economy ecosystem" by creating an enabling environment of conditions and support**. In most cases, this stems from a **social ambition - social inclusion, work integration, education, a green and circular economy promotion, etc.**

The majority of social and innovation clusters are engaged in **interregional and international networks**. ADV Romania is member of [RISE - Romanian Network of Insertion Social Enterprises](#), which is the only member from Romania in ENSIE - European Network for Social Integration Enterprises. In 2022 ADV Romania also joined [Diesis Network](#), one of the widest European Networks specialised in supporting social economy and social enterprise development.

### References:

European Commission, Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, Clusters of social and ecological innovation in the European Union, perspectives and experiences : the role of clusters and similar forms of business cooperation in fostering the development of social economy, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2873/07591>