



Case Studies Report

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01 | Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Positioning of the Report

This deliverable presents the **Case Studies Report** developed within the framework of the **Social Impact Manager (SIM) project**¹. It builds on the implementation of the SIM programme across five partner countries and **analyses the cooperation schemes** that emerged through **participant-led social impact projects**.

The purpose of this report is not to provide another descriptive overview of national activities or to restate the content of training programmes. Instead, it adopts a synthesis approach, aiming to identify recurring patterns, extract cooperation models, and reflect on key perspectives that emerged when designing and implementing social impact projects within different territorial and organisational contexts.

By analysing cooperation schemes across countries and sectors, the report seeks to:

- highlight common dynamics and structural differences,
- identify enabling and limiting factors,
- reflect on the role of the Social Impact Manager profile in practice, and
- explore possibilities for transferability and replication beyond the SIM project context.

In this sense, D3.4 complements other project outputs by moving from implementation evidence to analytical consolidation.

1.2 Scope and Sources

The analysis is based on **final project reports** prepared by mentors responsible for the implementation of the SIM programme in Croatia, France, Austria, Greece, and Italy. These reports document **social impact projects co-created and implemented by participants of the pilot SIM programme in cooperation with companies, public authorities, civil society organisations, and local communities**.

The case studies cover a wide range of **thematic areas** — including sustainability, health, digital inclusion, social services, education, environmental protection, and organisational transformation — and involve **actors of different sizes and sectors**, from SMEs and large corporations to municipalities, NGOs, and hybrid organisations.

While the format and level of detail of the national reports vary, they consistently provide insight into:

- the cooperation context in which participants operated,
- the actors involved and their respective roles,
- the social or organisational challenges addressed, and
- the design and implementation logic of proposed solutions.

The diversity of contexts is treated as **an analytical asset**, allowing this report to reflect the **adaptability of cooperation schemes** across different environments.

¹ More information about the SIM project: <https://simproject.eu/>

1.3 Relationship with D3.3 – SIM Training Handbook

Deliverable D3.3, the **SIM Training Handbook**² documents the **design and implementation of the SIM training programmes** across partner countries. It provides an overview of the curriculum, training methodology, learning objectives, and selected examples of participant projects.

While D3.3 focuses on the educational dimension of SIM — how the Social Impact Manager profile was developed, taught, and piloted — **D3.4 shifts the focus to the cooperation schemes within which participants operated**. It does not duplicate national descriptions or training content. Instead, it analyses the structural features of cooperation, the types of actors involved, and the practical conditions under which social impact initiatives were developed.

Together, D3.3 and D3.4 provide a complementary perspective:

- **D3.3 explains how the SIM profile was trained and piloted,**
- **D3.4 examines how cooperation schemes functioned in practice and what can be learned from them.**

This analytical consolidation is essential for informing policy recommendations, strengthening the relevance of the SIM profile, and supporting the transfer of results beyond the project consortium.

1.4 How to Read This Report

This report is structured **thematically and analytically** rather than by country. It does not present case studies in a country-by-country format. Instead, it moves progressively:

- **from an overview of the case study landscape (Chapter 3),**
- **to a typology of cooperation schemes (Chapter 4),**
- **to cross-cutting lessons on effectiveness and limitations (Chapter 5),**
- **and finally, to considerations on transferability and replication (Chapter 6).**

Country examples are used illustratively to support the analysis, but the primary objective is **to move from individual experiences to more generalisable insights**.

² The SIM Training Handbook is available in six languages and can be accessed at: <https://simproject.eu/training/>

02 | Analytical approach

2.1 What We Mean by “Cooperation Schemes” in the SIM Context

Within the SIM project, cooperation schemes did not emerge as abstract partnership models, but as concrete working arrangements developed around real **social, environmental, or organisational challenges**.

In practice, **participants entered existing or emerging cooperation environments** that typically involved:

- one or more companies or organisations,
- local authorities or public institutions,
- civil society actors or community representatives,
- and, in some cases, educational or research partners.

Participants did not operate in isolation. Their projects were developed within these cooperation settings, where they had to:

- understand the needs and expectations of different stakeholders,
- align organisational objectives with community challenges,
- clarify roles and responsibilities,
- and propose realistic and implementable solutions.

In many cases, **cooperation schemes were already partially established** (e.g., ongoing CSR initiatives, sustainability strategies, local development efforts). In other cases, **participants helped initiate new forms of collaboration**.

For the purpose of this report, a **cooperation scheme** is therefore understood as:

A structured interaction between organisations and community stakeholders aimed at addressing a defined challenge, within which SIM participants contributed to design, coordination, or implementation.

This practical understanding allows the analysis to focus on how cooperation functioned in real settings rather than on formal partnership agreements alone.



2.2 Common Analytical Dimensions Used

To compare diverse cases across five countries, the analysis applies a set of common practical dimensions derived directly from the final project reports:

1. The challenge addressed

What type of issue triggered the cooperation?

(e.g. sustainability, digital inclusion, health, organisational change, environmental protection)

2. Lead actor of the cooperation scheme

Who initiated or structurally anchored the cooperation?

(e.g. company-led, municipality-led, NGO-led, organisation-internal initiative)

3. Stakeholders involved and their roles

Which actors were involved and how were responsibilities distributed?

Was the cooperation consultative, co-designed, or jointly implemented?

4. Role of participants within the scheme

Did participants act as facilitators, analysts, designers of solutions, coordinators, or implementers?

Were they embedded within organisations or operating between actors?

5. Degree of formalisation

Was the cooperation structured and embedded in organisational processes, or primarily project-based and temporary?

6. Signals of continuity and transferability

Did the initiative show potential for continuation, scaling, or replication?

What enabling or limiting conditions were visible?

These dimensions allow the report to move beyond individual narratives and identify structural similarities and differences across contexts.



2.3 A Learning and Experimentation Context

It is important to underline that the case studies analysed in this report emerged **within a learning and experimentation environment**.

Participants **developed and tested their projects as part of the SIM training programme**. As a result:

- some initiatives reached implementation stage,
- others remained at advanced design level,
- and some functioned as pilot concepts within existing organisational structures.

The analysis therefore **does not aim to measure long-term impact or systemic change**. Instead, it focuses on **understanding cooperation dynamics** as they unfolded during the SIM programme.

This learning context is not a limitation, but a strength. It provides insight into:

- how cooperation is initiated,
- where friction points emerge,
- how roles are negotiated,
- and what conditions enable more structured and sustainable collaboration.

These insights form the basis for the typology and conclusions developed in the following chapters.



03 | Landscape of SIM case studies

This chapter provides an overview of the case studies developed within the SIM project. Rather than presenting them country by country, **the analysis highlights recurring thematic areas, types of lead actors, and the roles participants** assumed within cooperation schemes. The diversity observed across the five countries demonstrates the **adaptability of the SIM profile** across different institutional and territorial settings.

3.1 Thematic Areas Addressed

The case studies addressed a broad spectrum of social, environmental, and organisational challenges. While each initiative was rooted in its local context, several recurring thematic areas can be identified:

1. Sustainability and environmental protection

In several countries, projects focused on circular economy practices, responsible resource management, environmental awareness, or ESG-related internal processes. For example, some company-based initiatives examined how sustainability commitments could be operationalised beyond communication strategies and embedded into daily operations.

2. Health and wellbeing

Certain projects addressed preventive health measures, awareness campaigns, or improved accessibility of services, often in cooperation with local stakeholders and corporate actors already active in the health sector.

3. Social inclusion and vulnerable groups

In Austria, Greece, and France in particular, several case studies focused on labour market integration, support for marginalised groups, or improving access to services for vulnerable populations. These initiatives often required coordination between NGOs, local authorities, and companies.

4. Digital inclusion and technological innovation

Some projects explored digital tools and services to improve accessibility, communication, or operational efficiency, particularly in contexts where digitalisation was linked to broader social impact goals.

5. Organisational transformation and ESG governance

In company-led cases, participants frequently worked on strengthening internal governance processes, clarifying stakeholder engagement mechanisms, or aligning CSR practices with ESG requirements. These initiatives often emerged in larger organisations where sustainability strategies were already partially formalised but required further structuring.

In some countries, projects were strongly linked to **corporate sustainability strategies** (e.g. ESG integration within companies). In others, initiatives were more **territory-driven**, addressing local development, community resilience, or service accessibility. For example:

- In Croatia, several initiatives were connected to structured corporate sustainability agendas and long-standing CSR practices.
- In France, cooperation schemes frequently emerged in relation to territorial governance, urban regeneration, and community-based initiatives.
- In Austria and Greece, projects often focused on social inclusion, labour market integration, and local service innovation.
- In Italy, initiatives combined organisational innovation with broader community and sustainability challenges.

This thematic breadth highlights that the SIM profile was not confined to a single policy domain but operated across multiple sectors where social impact and cooperation intersect.

3.2 Types of Lead Actors

Across the case studies, different actors assumed leadership or structural anchoring roles within cooperation schemes. Three broad categories were observed.

1. Company-led initiatives

In these cases, companies initiated or hosted cooperation schemes. Examples include projects where participants worked within corporate sustainability frameworks to:

- structure ESG-related initiatives,
- design community engagement models linked to corporate strategy, or
- strengthen transparency and impact orientation in CSR activities.

In Croatia, for instance, several initiatives were embedded within established corporate environments where sustainability and social responsibility were already part of strategic discourse.

2. Territory- or community-led initiatives

In other contexts, municipalities, NGOs, or regional actors played a central coordinating role. Cooperation schemes were embedded in broader territorial challenges, such as:

- improving local service delivery,
- enhancing social cohesion,
- or addressing specific community needs identified through stakeholder dialogue.

In France and parts of Greece and Austria, projects frequently operated within multi-actor territorial governance settings, where companies were one of several stakeholders rather than the primary drivers.

3. Organisation-internal initiatives

Some cooperation schemes were primarily internal to an organisation and focused on improving internal structures, communication channels, or governance processes. Participants in these cases worked on:

- clarifying responsibilities for social impact activities,
- improving cross-department coordination,
- or formalising processes that had previously been informal.

These cases illustrate how the **SIM profile can contribute not only to external partnerships** but also to **internal organisational development**.

3.3 Role of Participants within Cooperation Schemes

Participants assumed different roles depending on the maturity and structure of the cooperation scheme. Across countries, participants most frequently acted as:

- **Facilitators** of stakeholder dialogue
- **Translators** between organisational and community perspectives
- **Analysts** of needs and structural gaps
- **Designers** of cooperation models
- **Coordinators** of pilot activities.

In company-led contexts, participants often worked closely with management or sustainability departments, contributing to the structuring of initiatives and clarification of roles.

In territory-led contexts, participants frequently operated between actors, mediating expectations and helping transform broad community needs into structured proposals.

In organisation-internal initiatives, participants supported process clarification and governance strengthening, contributing to greater continuity and formalisation.

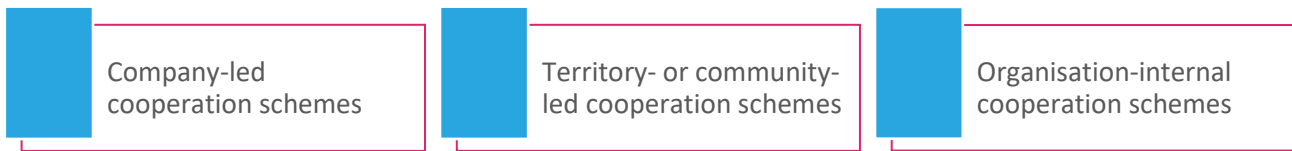
This diversity of roles reflects the flexibility of the SIM pilot and the variety of contexts in which participants operated.



04 | Typology of cooperation schemes

Chapter 3 mapped the diversity of themes and actors involved in the SIM case studies. Building on that overview, this chapter looks more closely at **how cooperation was structured in practice**.

Across the five countries, three recurring cooperation logics became visible:



These are not rigid categories. In reality, **several initiatives combined elements of more than one type**. However, distinguishing **these structural patterns** helps us **move from individual projects to more generalisable models** of how cooperation around social impact actually unfolds.

4.1 Company-Led Cooperation Schemes

In **company-led schemes**, the company served as the main anchor of the cooperation. The initiative typically emerged from within the organisation — often linked to sustainability strategies, ESG commitments, innovation processes, or long-standing CSR practices.

This was particularly visible in Croatia, where several initiatives were embedded in structured corporate environments. In such cases, participants worked closely with management or sustainability departments to clarify stakeholder engagement processes, strengthen impact orientation, or translate strategic commitments into more operational forms.

What characterises this type of scheme is **a relatively clear internal mandate**. Decision-making structures already exist, and access to resources is often more straightforward. When properly embedded, **these initiatives show strong potential** for continuity.

At the same time, this model is not without challenges. In some cases, **CSR activities risk remaining communication-driven rather than fully integrated into governance structures**. The effectiveness of cooperation often depends heavily on internal leadership support and the willingness of departments to collaborate across silos.

In this context, the **SIM profile often functions as a bridge** — connecting corporate strategy with external social realities and helping organisations move from intention to structured action.

4.2 Territory- or Community-Led Cooperation Schemes

In **territory- or community-led schemes**, the starting point lies outside a single company. The **cooperation** is embedded in broader local or regional challenges and is often **coordinated by municipalities, NGOs, or regional actors**.

This type was particularly visible in France, as well as in parts of Austria and Greece, where projects were connected to urban regeneration, labour market integration, service accessibility, or broader community development efforts.

These cooperation environments are usually more complex. **Decision-making is distributed**, responsibilities are shared, and trust-building plays a central role. Participants frequently operated between actors — facilitating dialogue, aligning expectations, and translating community needs into structured proposals.

The strength of this model lies in its **strong community grounding and inclusive character**. When successful, it can lead to **more systemic territorial impact**.

However, it also comes with **higher coordination demands**. Without clear ownership or a committed implementing body, initiatives risk remaining conceptual. Progress can be slower, and the negotiation of roles more delicate.

In such settings, the **SIM profile emerges as a mediator** — someone capable of navigating complexity and making cooperation more structured and actionable.

4.3 Organisation-Internal Cooperation Schemes

A third type of cooperation scheme focused primarily on **internal transformation within an organisation**. These initiatives were less about building new external partnerships and more about **strengthening internal processes related to social impact**.

In several cases, organisations **recognised gaps** in how CSR or sustainability activities were coordinated. Responsibilities were unclear, processes informal, and impact measurement fragmented. Participants were therefore tasked with mapping existing practices, identifying structural bottlenecks, and proposing clearer governance arrangements.

While the external visibility of these initiatives may be lower, their structural importance should not be underestimated. By **formalising roles, clarifying procedures, and strengthening internal coordination**, these schemes **create the foundation for more sustainable cooperation in the future**.

The main limitation of this type lies in its **dependence on internal leadership commitment**. Without continued support from management, internal improvements may remain recommendations rather than becoming institutionalised practices.

In this context, the **SIM profile acts as an internal catalyst** — helping organisations professionalise their approach to social impact from within.

From projects to models

Looking across the three types, it becomes clear that cooperation in the SIM project did not follow a single pathway. Instead, it adapted to different institutional entry points:

- through corporate strategy,
- through territorial governance,
- or through internal organisational reform.

This typology allows us to move beyond individual case descriptions and identify structural patterns that can inform future training, policy development, and replication efforts.



05 | Success Factors, Challenges and the Role of the SIM Profile

The case studies reveal that cooperation does not succeed or fail randomly. Across countries and sectors, **certain enabling conditions repeatedly supported more structured and sustainable initiatives, while recurring constraints limited progress.** Rather than presenting abstract success factors, this chapter reflects on practical conditions observed during the SIM pilot and examines how the Social Impact Manager profile interacted with them.

5.1 What Enables Cooperation?

1. Clear organisational ownership

Where initiatives were anchored in a **clearly defined organisational structure**, cooperation tended to progress more smoothly. For example, in Croatia, projects embedded within established corporate sustainability agendas benefited from access to internal decision-makers and clearer reporting lines. Participants were not working in isolation but **within a framework** that already recognised **sustainability as a strategic priority.**

Similarly, in organisation-internal cases across several countries, when management openly supported the initiative, proposed structural improvements had a realistic chance of continuation.

✓ **Clear ownership reduces ambiguity and provides legitimacy to cooperation efforts.**

2. Early alignment of expectations

Many challenges in cooperation stemmed not from lack of goodwill, but from misaligned expectations. In territory-led contexts, particularly in France and parts of Austria and Greece, participants had to navigate different understandings of goals among municipalities, NGOs, and companies. When **time was invested early in clarifying objectives and roles**, cooperation became more stable.

✓ **Participants who actively facilitated expectation alignment helped prevent later friction and confusion.**

3. Dedicated coordination capacity

One recurring insight across the reports was the importance of **having someone responsible for coordination.** Where participants were able to dedicate time to structuring dialogue, mapping stakeholders, and clarifying responsibilities, cooperation schemes were more coherent. Conversely, when engagement depended on “whoever has time,” initiatives often remained fragmented or informal.

✓ **This was particularly visible in SME contexts, where a lack of internal capacity was frequently mentioned as a barrier.**

4. Embedding cooperation into existing processes

Cooperation proved more sustainable when **linked to existing strategies** — such as ESG reporting, innovation processes, or municipal development plans — rather than operating as a standalone project. In Italy, for instance, initiatives that combined organisational innovation with community-oriented objectives showed stronger integration potential because they aligned with ongoing internal reforms.

✓ **Embedding initiatives reduces the risk that cooperation remains temporary.**

5.2 What Constrains Cooperation?

1. Ambiguity of roles and responsibilities

Several case studies revealed that **unclear allocation of responsibilities** slowed down progress. In multi-actor environments, it was sometimes unclear who had decision-making authority or implementation responsibility.

✓ **Without clarity, initiatives risked remaining at the proposal stage.**

2. Limited time and human resources

Across company interviews and focus groups, **lack of time** was one of the most frequently mentioned barriers. Especially in SMEs, CSR and community engagement were often handled alongside core operational tasks. This limited the depth and continuity of cooperation.

✓ **Even where motivation was strong, structural capacity was not always sufficient.**

3. Dependence on individual champions

In several cases, initiatives were strongly tied to **one motivated individual**. While this often enabled initial progress, it also created vulnerability. If that person changed roles or priorities shifted, continuity became uncertain.

✓ **This was visible both in company-led and territory-led schemes.**

4. Complexity of multi-actor environments

Territorial cooperation schemes often involved multiple stakeholders with **different mandates and constraints**. While this inclusiveness can be a strength, it also increases coordination demands.

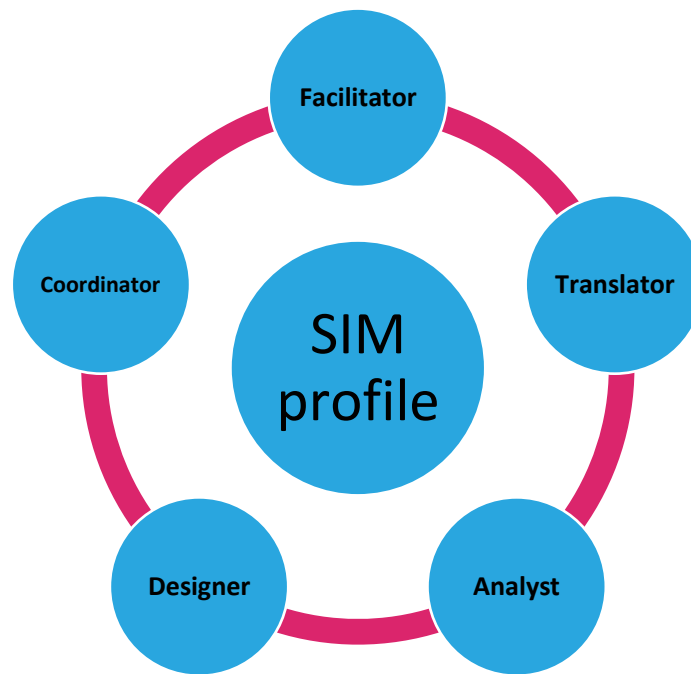
✓ **In some cases, the complexity of governance structures slowed down implementation or diluted focus.**

5.3 The Role of the Social Impact Manager Profile

Across the case studies, the Social Impact Manager profile did not function as a fixed job description but as a relational and structuring role.

Participants frequently acted as:

- **Translators** between organisational and community perspectives
- **Facilitators** of structured dialogue
- **Analysts** identifying structural gaps
- **Designers** of clearer cooperation models.



In company-led contexts, the SIM role often helped move CSR activities beyond communication and towards more structured governance.

In territory-led contexts, the SIM role contributed to mediation and expectation alignment.

In organisation-internal initiatives, the SIM profile supported process clarification and formalisation.

However, the cooperation schemes also revealed that the effectiveness of the SIM role depends strongly on the surrounding structure. Without organisational mandate, time allocation, or leadership support, even well-designed proposals faced limitations.

This observation directly informs the discussion on transferability in the next chapter.



06 | Transferability and replication

One of the key questions emerging from the SIM pilot is whether the cooperation schemes developed within the project can be transferred or replicated in other contexts.

The case studies show that **while many elements of cooperation are transferable, their success often depends on local institutional conditions, organisational cultures, and the availability of coordination capacity**. Rather than assuming that entire models can be copied, it is more realistic to distinguish between elements that travel easily and those that require adaptation.

6.1 Elements with High Transfer Potential

Several elements observed across the case studies proved **relatively adaptable** across countries and organisational contexts. One such element is **the facilitation role** performed by SIM participants. Regardless of the thematic focus or organisational setting, participants frequently **helped structure dialogue between actors, clarify expectations, and translate broad ideas into more concrete cooperation proposals**. These coordination and mediation functions proved relevant in both company-led and territory-led environments.

Another transferable element is **the use of structured stakeholder mapping and problem analysis**. In many cases, participants began by identifying the actors involved, clarifying their interests, and analysing existing gaps in cooperation. This approach proved valuable in organisations as well as in territorial governance settings.

Finally, **the integration of social impact considerations** into existing organisational processes showed strong transfer potential. When cooperation initiatives were connected to ongoing sustainability strategies, innovation processes, or municipal development plans, they were more likely to continue beyond the pilot phase.

These elements suggest that the core competences associated with the Social Impact Manager profile — coordination, analysis, and stakeholder engagement — are broadly applicable across sectors and countries.

6.2 Elements Requiring Local Adaptation

While many cooperation practices proved transferable, their implementation often required **adaptation to local conditions**. **Institutional environments vary significantly across countries**. For example, **the role** of municipalities, NGOs, and private companies in addressing social challenges differs depending on governance traditions and policy frameworks. Cooperation models that worked well in one country, therefore, needed adjustment when applied elsewhere.

Organisational cultures also played an important role. In some companies, sustainability and CSR were already embedded in strategic planning, making it easier to integrate new cooperation initiatives. In others, these themes were still emerging, requiring more groundwork and internal awareness-building before structured cooperation could take place.

Local socio-economic conditions further influenced the design of initiatives. Challenges related to labour market integration, digital inclusion, or service accessibility differed across territories, shaping both priorities and feasible solutions.

For these reasons, successful replication does not mean copying a project design directly. Instead, it involves adapting cooperation principles to local realities.

6.3 Limits of Replication

Some aspects of the SIM case studies proved **difficult to replicate** directly because **they were strongly dependent** on specific individuals, institutional relationships, or organisational contexts.

Several initiatives benefited from the **presence of particularly committed actors** — whether within companies, municipalities, or civil society organisations. These individuals often played a decisive role in mobilising partners and maintaining momentum. **While such leadership is valuable, it also creates vulnerability** if initiatives rely too heavily on personal engagement.

Another limitation concerns **organisational capacity**. Smaller organisations and SMEs frequently expressed interest in structured cooperation but **lacked the time or staff** to sustain coordination activities without external support.

Finally, **complex multi-actor environments** sometimes **slowed down implementation**. While inclusive governance structures can strengthen legitimacy, they also require significant coordination efforts and clear distribution of responsibilities.

These observations highlight that transferability should be approached pragmatically. Rather than replicating projects as fixed models, future initiatives may benefit more from adapting underlying principles of cooperation and strengthening the organisational conditions that allow such cooperation to function.



07 | Conclusion

The case studies analysed in this report **illustrate the diversity of cooperation schemes** developed within the Social Impact Manager project. Across five countries and multiple sectors, participants worked in different organisational and territorial contexts, addressing a wide range of social, environmental, and organisational challenges.

Despite this diversity, several common patterns emerged. Cooperation initiatives tended to follow **three main structural logics**: company-led schemes embedded in corporate sustainability strategies, territory- or community-led initiatives addressing local development challenges, and organisation-internal efforts focused on strengthening governance and impact management practices. These patterns demonstrate that cooperation around **social impact can emerge from multiple entry points**, depending on **institutional context** and **organisational priorities**.

The analysis also highlights that effective cooperation depends less on the thematic focus of a project and more on structural conditions. **Clear organisational ownership, alignment of expectations among stakeholders, and dedicated coordination capacity** proved particularly important in enabling cooperation schemes to move beyond conceptual ideas and towards practical implementation. At the same time, several recurring challenges were observed, including limited organisational capacity, ambiguity of roles, and the complexity of multi-actor environments.

Within this landscape, the **SIM profile emerged as a facilitative and structuring role**. Participants frequently acted as **connectors between organisations and communities**, helping clarify objectives, structure collaboration processes, and translate broad intentions into more concrete initiatives. The pilot demonstrated that such coordination functions can play a valuable role in strengthening cooperation schemes and improving the strategic orientation of social impact initiatives.

At the same time, the case studies also underline that the effectiveness of this role depends strongly on its surrounding institutional environment. Without **organisational support, sufficient time allocation, or clear mandates**, even well-designed initiatives may struggle to achieve continuity. This observation highlights the importance of embedding the SIM profile within organisational and territorial structures rather than relying solely on individual initiative.

Overall, **the findings confirm the relevance of the SIM project's core objective**: strengthening the capacity of organisations and communities to work together on social impact challenges. By analysing cooperation schemes across different contexts, this report contributes to a better understanding of how such collaboration can be structured and supported.

The insights generated through the SIM pilot suggest that while cooperation models cannot be copied mechanically from one context to another, the underlying principles of **structured dialogue, stakeholder alignment, and coordinated action are broadly transferable**. Strengthening these capacities will remain essential for organisations seeking to address complex social and environmental challenges in a collaborative and sustainable way.