

Atlantic Social Lab

Cooperation for the promotion of Social Innovation

We are pleased to bring you the final number of the Atlantic Social Lab (ASL) newsletter. It highlights the conclusion of this INTERREG Atlantic Area project and the main contributions towards fostering social innovation and digitalization in the public sector in the participating regions. Throughout the project, we have witnessed the transformative power of these social innovative approaches in addressing contemporary challenges and creating a more inclusive society.

Atlantic Social Lab Final Conference Held in Glasgow

The final conference of the extension phase of the ASL project took place in Glasgow on 18-19 May and was organised by Glasgow Caledonian University. The conference was integrated into the "Second Changemakers and Pioneers: Social Innovation Fair".



*Atlantic Social Lab Partnership
at Glasgow Caledonian University*

During the ASL presentation session, different partners presented and discussed the project results and the implementation of the pilot actions. The Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra (CES) closed the session by presenting the preliminary impact assessment and evaluation of the implementation of social innovation pilot actions. In addition, four stakeholders were invited by ASL to take part in roundtable discussions aimed at deepening the understanding of social innovation within the existing networks and regional communities. The discussions focused on exploring different forms of collaboration that could be used to increase the impact of social innovation initiatives. More information on the final conference can be found [here!](#)

Project Pilot Actions

ASL has been a catalyst for positive change, implementing several pilot actions that have made a tangible difference in communities. Let's take a closer look at some of the key initiatives:

Youth Compass in Info Jeunes Toulouse (CRIJ) - a digital platform that connects young people with local experts. This initiative has played a crucial role in promoting social inclusion and empowerment among youth.

"No Lo Pierdas, es tu Derecho" in Avilés - The pilot action in the Municipality of Avilés used innovative media formats to provide direct communication about available social services and their physical and web sites. This has facilitated access to essential support systems and ensured that people in need receive the help they deserve.

Improving the communication policy of social services in Gijón - The Gijón social services pilot action focused on improving access to key services for vulnerable populations through digital tools.

Community Wealth Building in Enterprise North West - The ENW pilot established the NW - Community Wealth Building community to promote a fairer and more equitable society in this region.

The Art of Straw in CIM Ave - This social entrepreneurship initiative combined local tradition and innovation through the economic exploitation of straw art. It has empowered individuals and strengthened the local economy by creating employment opportunities and additional sources of income.

[Social Innovation and Digitalisation of Public Services: An Impact Assessment of Atlantic Pilot Initiatives](#)

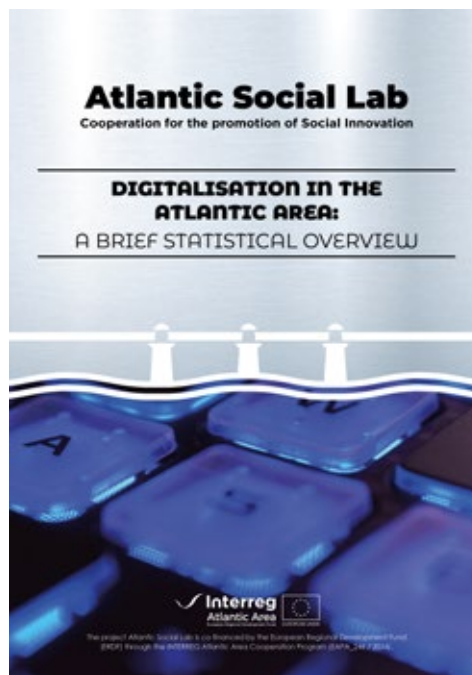
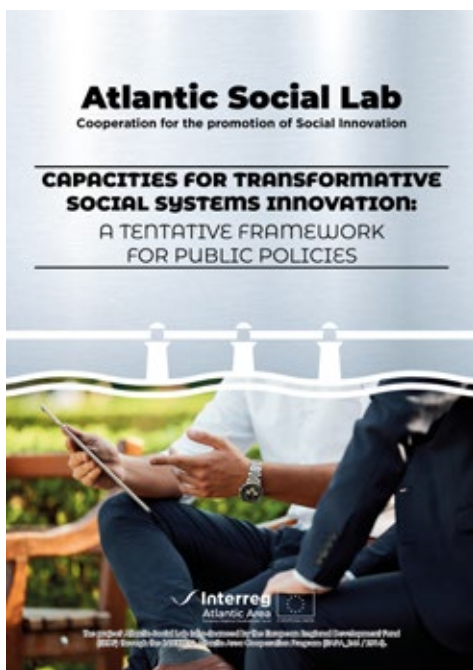


Technical Reports and Observatory Updates

ASL has also produced three insightful technical reports, offering valuable frameworks, impact assessment, and statistical overviews. These reports include:

[Capacities for Transformative Social Systems Innovation: a Tentative Framework for Public Policies](#)

[Digitalisation in the Atlantic Area: A Brief Statistical Overview](#)



Furthermore, [the project's observatory](#) has been updated to include recent figures about key the Atlantic Area and also new entities in the project's repository about social innovation and digitalisation

within the Atlantic Area. The addition of updated information, its dissemination, and a sustainability report ensures the possibility of the ASL observatory's continued operation.

Communication Activities and Capitalisation Efforts

Throughout the project, the ASL team has been actively engaged in communication activities. Regular newsletters, press releases and updates on the [project's website](#), [Observatory](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) platforms have facilitated knowledge sharing and awareness raising in the field of social innovation and digitalisation.

The project's capitalisation efforts have extended its impact beyond the Atlantic Area. Participation in international conferences and the publication of technical and scientific products have showcased the achievements and lessons learned, inspiring future initiatives.

Recent Events Participated by Atlantic Social Lab

Social Innovation Fair (Glasgow): as part of the final conference of the Atlantic Social Lab. In this event, the main results of the pilot actions were presented as well as roundtable discussions that involved our invited stakeholders.



2023 RSA Annual Conference Transforming Regions: Policies and Planning for People and Places (Slovenia): with the communication entitled "Digital transition and social innovation in the post-pandemic context: exploring pilot solutions in the Atlantic Area to emerging social needs".



Column "Our Partners' Perspectives"

Near the completion of this remarkable journey, it is essential to acknowledge the integral role that our partners have played in shaping the vision, significance, and evolution of the project. Below we can find testimonies from project partners' representatives.

"I have always considered that participation in European projects was a way of exploring new solutions to the same problems that affect people in different territories. Several study visits later, we are better prepared to face the challenges. Actually, that was the goal. Atlantic Social Lab has been a long journey interrupted by a global pandemic, which has made the social challenges even more intense. Special thanks to all those who dedicated their time and effort to show us their work. Without them, none of this would be possible" (**Francisco Javier Val Campos**, General Administration Technician in the Area of Social Promotion, Municipality of Avilés, Lead Partner)

"Through Enterprise North West's involvement in the Atlantic Social Lab programme, the organisation has gained access to a wealth of resources, expertise, and networking opportunities. We were able to tap into a diverse network of like-minded organisations and individuals, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing. This exchange of ideas has already sparked creativity within Enterprise North West and our partner organisations, leading to the development of innovative solutions to address pressing social challenges in the North West of Ireland" (**Brian O'Neill**, Director of Development & Enterprise, Enterprise North West)

"For CIM Ave, participation in the Atlantic Social Lab project was very relevant to promote social innovation in the Region. It was extremely interesting to work together with different partners, sharing challenges and exploring new solutions for the same problems. The Atlantic Social Lab partnership was very strong and dynamic and we look forward to maintaining this cooperation in the future. Thank you all." (**Marta Coutada**, First Executive Secretary of CIM Ave)

"During this project, the CRIJ had the opportunity to support the promotion of one of its so-called innovative actions. However, the main added value did not lie in the action developed, but in the discovery of other practices and other working methods that

were observed during the collaboration intrinsic to the project. Whether good or bad, all these experiences were rich in lessons." (**Marc De Roeck**, Quality Manager, CRIJ Occitanie)

"Atlantic Social Lab is an example of the need, importance and effectiveness of addressing the social challenges of local territories from a different and innovative perspective. The ASL has been an accelerator of changes and progress in the Social Services of Gijón thanks to the opportunity it has given us to develop collaborative work with other professional sectors, other territories and other inspiring experiences of good practices. Thanks to this project and the people who have formed it, in Gijón, the most vulnerable people now have easier knowledge and access to resources and services that will help them have a more dignified and autonomous life." (**Marco A. Luengo Castro**, Direction of the Municipal Foundation of Social Services of Gijón)

"The Covid-19 pandemic has shaken global structures around the world. The health, economic and political impact of Covid-19 has been significant across Atlantic regions. The pandemic especially exposed the challenges faced by vulnerable communities and deepened social inequalities. Atlantic Social Lab provided opportunities for local organisations and municipalities to recover from the pandemic and supported them to take steps towards more inclusive, sustainable and resilient societies. It was really inspiring for GCU to participate in the project and observe the development of pioneering pilot actions by our partners. The project demonstrated the value and importance of Universities and local authorities working together to drive social change. Furthermore, Atlantic Social Lab encouraged and supported a wide array of dedicated and committed stakeholders to engage more closely with the social innovation ecosystem and support social entrepreneurship and social enterprise." (**Natalia Popielska**, **Geoffrey Whittam** and **Fiona Henderson**, Glasgow Caledonian University)

"The Atlantic Social Lab has been a long journey. It started in 2017 with the preparation of the project proposal. It ends now, after so many results, events, reports, articles, study visits, and even the actual implementation of innovative pilot projects. After a global pandemic, the world is so different from the first moments of ASL. But social innovation is as relevant as ever. For CES, this project was an opportunity to deepen cooperation in this field. ASL expanded our interest in social innovation and

understanding of its capacity to transform society. After more than six years of intense collaboration, we can say that this partnership has helped to raise the visibility of social innovation, ideas and practices, in the Atlantic Area. We hope that this joint effort can continue. Exploring the accumulated learning of the Atlantic Social Innovation Observatory.”
(Hugo Pinto, Researcher at the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra)

Moving Forward

The farewell to the Atlantic Social Lab project offers a moment to reflect on the transformative journey we have embarked together. The significance of social innovation and digitalisation in addressing contemporary challenges cannot be overstated. We are confident that the lessons learned during this project will continue to shape and guide future endeavours, promoting inclusive communities, specially in the partner regions.

Thank you for the continued support and dedication to creating a positive change!

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Partners

