

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

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NEWS ON 2026 CONFERENCE

CEFEC 2026: Where Inclusive Green Jobs Meet European Collaboration

Slovenia will host the 40th CEFEC Annual Conference on 4th and 5th of June 2026 in Bled, bringing together social enterprises, policymakers, financial institutions and practitioners from across Europe.

Under the theme “Reuse, Innovation and Green Jobs: Unlocking Inclusive Business Models for the Future”, the conference will explore how circular economy approaches and social innovation can drive inclusive employment and sustainable growth. It is not just a conference-it is a space where dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge exchange come together at the European level, connecting practice with policy and enabling new partnerships in the social economy.

The event is complemented by the CEFEC Academy (from 1st to 5th of June), offering hands-on learning in areas such as inclusive employment, funding opportunities and sustainable business models, bridging skills development with real impact.

The Vision for This Year's Conference

This year's conference takes place under the presidency of Marin Zver, who is currently working for Center Ponovne Uporabe (CPU), and whose vision and values are deeply reflected in the programme and overall direction of the event. Coming from a strong background in the circular economy and social enterprise, Marin brings a clear belief that sustainability must deliver both environmental results and tangible social benefits.

As President, Marin has emphasized the importance of moving beyond high-level discussion toward practical, implementable solutions. This is reflected in a programme that prioritizes real-life case studies, policy tools, and collaborative approaches that can be applied by institutions, businesses, and social enterprises alike. The conference is designed to be a space where ideas are tested, challenged, and translated into action.

Marin approaches the circular economy not only as an environmental framework, but as a powerful tool for social inclusion. Under his presidency, the conference highlights inclusive employment, improved working conditions, and opportunities for people with special needs - particularly in rural and less-developed areas. By showcasing innovative circular models, including sustainable agricultural initiatives, the event demonstrates how circularity can become a driver of social cohesion and regional development.



Marin also places strong emphasis on green procurement and responsible consumption, positioning them as essential tools for systemic change. The conference therefore brings together policymakers, practitioners, and young leaders to explore how sustainable purchasing and reuse can become standard practice rather than the exception.

Ultimately, Marin's presidency sets a clear tone for this year's conference: one that is forward-looking, inclusive, and action-oriented. It reflects a shared commitment to building a circular economy that is not only environmentally sustainable, but also fair, accessible, and beneficial to society as a whole.



REGISTRATION



[CEFECANNUALCONFERENCE.EU/](https://cefecannualconference.eu/)

SFE CEFEC AWARD

For decades, the SFE CEFEC Awards have been a recognition within the European social economy. As a long-standing tradition, the awards celebrate innovative social firms and enterprises that combine economic activity with strong social impact, inclusion, and sustainability.

Organised by Social Firms Europe in cooperation with CEFEC, the awards have been presented since 1998, highlighting outstanding initiatives from across Europe. Over the years, they have become a respected platform for showcasing best practices, inspiring collaboration, and giving visibility to social firms that are changing lives through meaningful employment.

The CEFEC Award 2026 continues this tradition and will be presented during the 40th CEFEC Conference, taking place in Bled, Slovenia, from 4-5 June 2026, under the theme “Reuse, Innovation and Green Jobs: Unlocking inclusive business models for the future.” This setting offers a unique opportunity to connect award recognition with forward-looking discussions on sustainability, circular economy, and inclusive employment.

We invite social firms and social enterprises across Europe to apply if their work:

- Creates real and measurable social impact
- Offers fair, meaningful, and inclusive jobs
- Supports people facing exclusion or discrimination
- Combines sustainability with entrepreneurship
- Inspires best practices beyond local or national borders

As an organisation with roots going back to 1987, Social Firms Europe represents over 80 members in more than 30 countries and has a long history of championing social firms and inclusive labour markets. The SFE CEFEC Awards are a reflection of this commitment-celebrating not only success, but values, innovation, and perseverance.

If your project is innovative and outstanding, this is your opportunity to become part of a well-established European tradition of excellence.

Social Firms Europe
CEFEC
AWARD 2026

DO YOU WORK IN A SOCIAL
ENTERPRISE OR RUN A SOCIAL FIRM?

IS YOUR PROJECT INNOVATIVE
AND OUTSTANDING?

REUSE, INNOVATION
AND GREEN JOBS:
Unlocking inclusive business models
for the future.

BLED,
SLOVENIA
4-5 June 2026

APPLY NOW !
WWW.SOCIALFIRMS EUROPE.EU/AWARDS

WHO WE ARE
European network since 1987
80+ members in 30+ countries
Organisers of the Social Firms Awards
since 1998

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR ?
Innovative social firms that:
✓ Create real social impact
✓ Offer fair and meaningful jobs
✓ Support people facing exclusion or discrimination
✓ Combine sustainability + entrepreneurship
✓ Inspire best practices across Europe

Apply now:

www.socialfirmseurope.eu/awards

Recognising the Strength of Our Network

World NGO Day, celebrated on 27 February, was an important opportunity to acknowledge the essential role that non-governmental organisations play in creating positive social change across Europe and beyond.

At Social Firms Europe – CEFEC, we would like to take a moment to recognise and sincerely appreciate our members and partners. Your commitment, expertise, and shared values form the backbone of our work and enable us to promote inclusive employment and strengthen social firms throughout Europe. Every day, our members create meaningful and sustainable job opportunities for people who face barriers to the labour market.

Through collaboration, innovation, and the social firm model, you translate principles of inclusion into practical action, making a real difference in local communities.

Your continued cooperation, willingness to exchange good practices, and engagement at European level strengthen our network and enhance our collective impact. We extend our sincere thanks to all our members, partners, and collaborators for their ongoing dedication, and we look forward to continuing this important work together.

Social Firms Europe
CEFEC

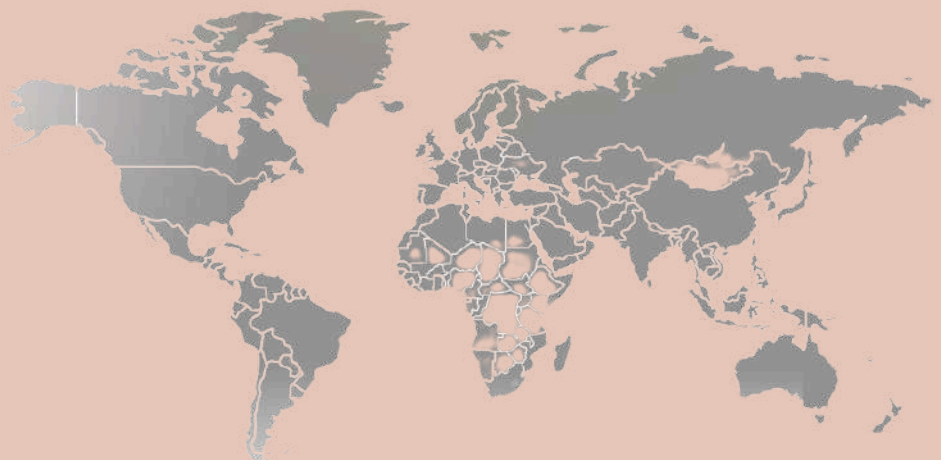
27TH FEBRUARY

WORLD
NGO
DAY!



Thank
You 😊

May your mission continue to inspire and create positive change worldwide!



Empowering the Future: National Piloting of the Green Leaders Programme

The Green Leaders project, funded through the Erasmus+ programme, is anchored by three transformative objectives. First, it aims to develop social-ecological entrepreneurial thinking and creative skills that enable young people to design innovative solutions for disadvantaged communities. Second, the project focuses on creating an innovative non-formal learning programme that equips participants with hands-on experience in running sustainable businesses in a digital context. Third, it seeks to strengthen the capacity of green entrepreneurship by empowering at least 100 young workers, specifically including persons with disabilities, to become leaders in the field.

The project has now reached an important milestone in its mission to cultivate a new generation of socially responsible and environmentally conscious entrepreneurs across Europe. Between January and March 2026, project partners implemented the national piloting phase of the training programme “Empower the Future: Training for Young Green Social Entrepreneurs.”

At the core of this phase is the Digital GREEN LEADERS programme, developed by ACDC. This innovative model combines e-learning with interactive, practice-oriented methods to create a blended experience tailored to diverse needs. Following an inclusive approach, each partner selected 20 participants from vulnerable or marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities. Across the consortium, 115 young people participated in these sessions, which were delivered through a flexible mix of online, face-to-face, and hybrid formats adapted to each local context.



The piloting was carried out in all partner countries, including Germany (GPE), Slovenia (CPU), Romania (ACDC), Italy (DMLAS), as well as through the wider European network of CEFEC, ensuring broad outreach and diverse participation.

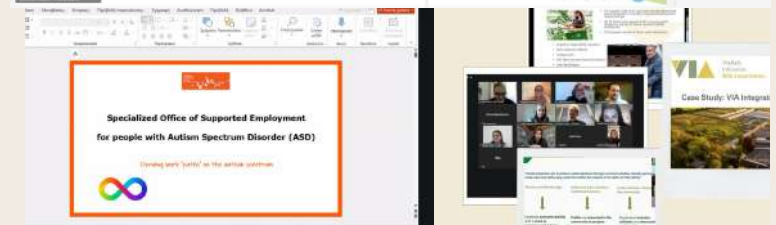
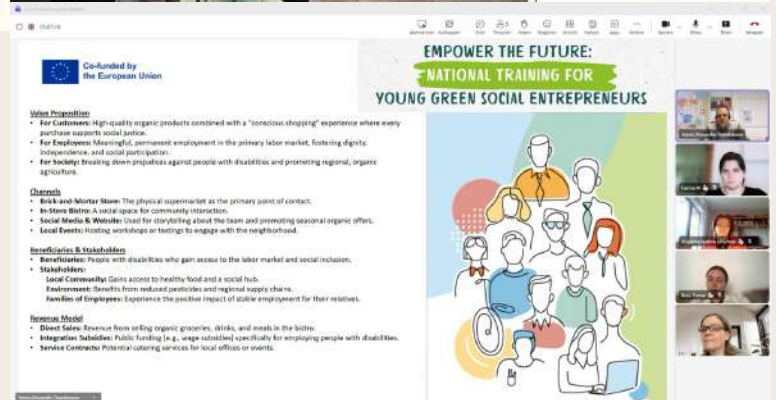
A defining element of the pilot was the involvement of previously trained Green Leaders, who had participated in an earlier blended learning activity in Germany. Acting as mentors and facilitators, they guided participants throughout the training process, supported their engagement with the digital platform, and contributed to creating an accessible, inclusive, and supportive learning environment.

This initiative strongly reflects CEFEC's mission to promote social inclusion, empowerment, and sustainable development. By equipping disadvantaged groups with green entrepreneurial competences, the project contributes to building more resilient, inclusive, and environmentally responsible communities across Europe.

As the piloting phase concludes at the end of March 2026, the insights and feedback collected will be used to further refine the training programme and enhance the digital tools.

Looking ahead, three participants from each partner organization, selected based on their motivation and strong interest in green social entrepreneurship, will take part in the 6th SFE CEFEC Academy in Bled, Slovenia, from 1 to 5 June 2026. They will also participate in the 40th CEFEC Conference, gaining valuable opportunities for learning, networking, and active engagement within the European social economy community.

Project partners will continue to disseminate results and build on the achievements of the Green Leaders initiative, supporting more young people to become active drivers of sustainable change in their communities.



Networking & Projects

Let her in – International Networking Event 2026

CEFEC was presented at the Let Her In – International Networking Event 2026 (22-23 January), a dynamic gathering focused on inclusive leadership, equality, and sustainable change.

Vasi Gafiuc and Marin Zver presented the CEFEC network, highlighting our commitment to collaboration and inclusive leadership across Europe.



Through interactive workshops and inspiration zones, participants explored inclusion, sustainability, and innovation, turning shared ideas into concrete actions.



**LET HER IN
INTERNATIONAL
NETWORKING EVENT**

✓ 22- 23 January 2026, Reus Spain
✓ Inspirational speakers, many opportunities to have thought provoking discussions!

WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOME OUR PARTICIPANTS SOON!

More information at info@letherin.org

The event also brought together several CEFEC members, including:

- UPI - Ijudska univerza Žalec,
- Asociatia ACDC Romania,
- European Development Foundation,
- VšĮ Žmogiškųjų išteklių stebėsenos ir plėtros biuras,
- Kilcooley & Ards North Down Womens Centre,
- DomSpain,
- Go-Woman Alliance Europe

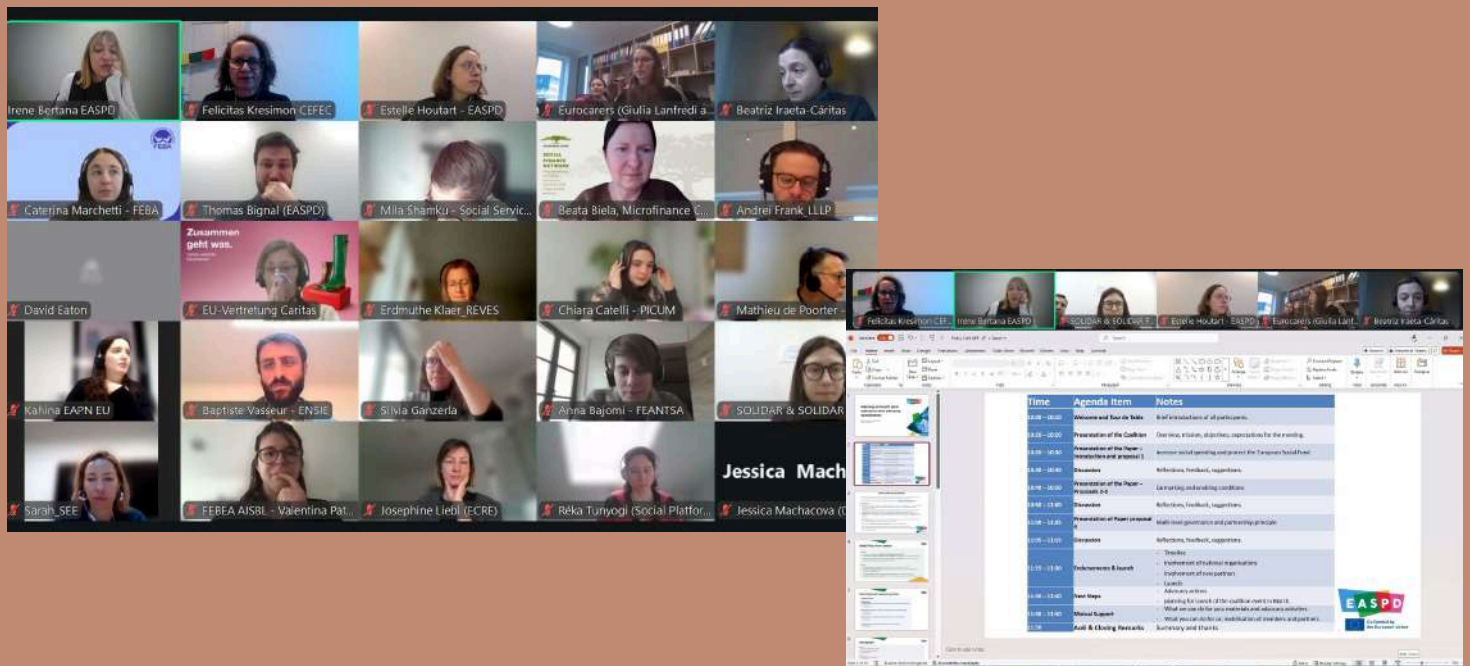
Strengthening European Social Investment: Strategic Coordination Meeting Convened by EASPD

On 21 January, EASPD convened a strategic coordination meeting bringing together around 30 European networks, including SFE CEFECE, as part of a broader coalition of European social actors.

The meeting marked an important step in strengthening a shared European voice ahead of the next EU budget cycle. Participants reaffirmed the urgent need to maintain a strong focus on investment in robust social funds and long-term social strategies, ensuring that inclusion, quality employment, and social cohesion remain central to future EU priorities.

A key part of the meeting was dedicated to the presentation and discussion of a joint statement, which addresses several critical policy priorities, including:

- earmarking of funds to protect social investment,
- strong enabling conditions for implementation, and
- the partnership principle and multi-level governance, ensuring meaningful involvement of civil society and social economy actors at all levels.



Overall, the meeting was a strong example of collective European mobilisation, demonstrating how coordinated action among social actors can help secure inclusive, well-funded, and sustainable social policies for the future.

E-LOCUM PROJECT

CEFEC AT THE E-LOCUM FINAL EVENT IN BRUSSELS !

From 28-30 January 2026, CEFEC participated in the E-Locum – Local Compacts of the United Mates of Europe Final Event in Brussels, bringing together young people, youth workers, and organisations from across Europe.

The event marked the culmination of several months of cooperation, dialogue, and learning. A key outcome was the presentation of the Youth Compacts on Migration-youth-led policy recommendations based on lived experiences and a shared commitment to inclusive values.

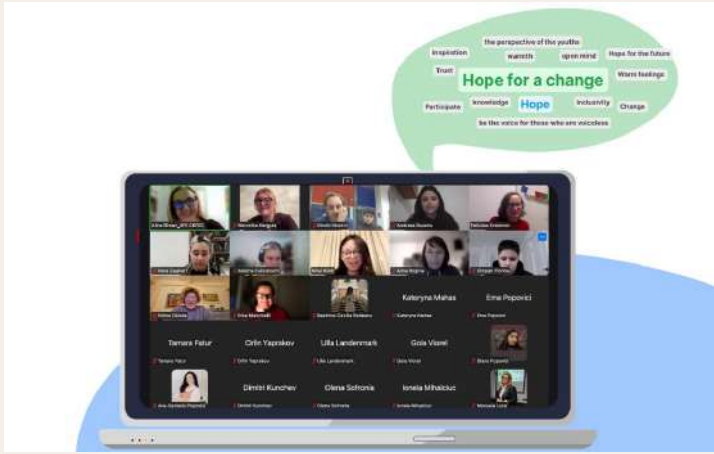
The programme also included visits to the Parliamentarium and the Migration Museum, as well as meetings with local organisations working in the fields of youth engagement and social inclusion. The event highlighted the important role young people play in contributing to dialogue on migration and in shaping more inclusive societies across Europe.



Many thanks to our CEFEC member from Bulgaria - European Development Foundation for helping us identify some great participants!



On 24 February 2026, CEFEC hosted the online event From Ideas to Action: Youth Promoting Inclusive Narratives, bringing together young people from different countries for an interactive exchange. Participants shared ideas and experiences, while exploring practical ways to promote responsible, inclusive, and evidence-based narratives both locally and online. The discussion also highlighted the role of social media as a tool for encouraging positive change and fostering more inclusive digital spaces. The event demonstrated the value of youth engagement in shaping constructive dialogue and strengthening inclusive communities. CEFEC thanks all participants for their active contributions and commitment.



[Project's website](#)

Networking & Projects



Co-funded by
the European Union



Project Number: 2024-1-IT03-KA220-YOU-000248804

ALL4Jobs

In March our team and partners came together again in another productive meeting hosted recently, where we focused on advancing the next phases of our project activities and strengthening collaboration across countries and organisations. The session provided a valuable opportunity to discuss progress, exchange insights, and align on upcoming deliverables that will support our shared mission to create real, paid and inclusive employment opportunities.



[Project's website](#)

Stay tuned for further updates as we move forward!

2026 Charity Ball by Zachodniopomorski Uniwersytet Ludowy



Zachodniopomorski Uniwersytet Ludowy, CEFEC's Polish member based in Mierzyn (Szczecin), Poland organized its 3rd Charity Ball, bringing together the local community for an evening of celebration and social impact.

The event offered guests the opportunity to network, enjoy entertainment, and support meaningful causes, with all proceeds contributing to initiatives that strengthen the local community.

This successful gathering highlights the important role of education, community engagement, and partnerships in fostering positive change and inclusive communities.

All funds raised were donated to local hospice - Stowarzyszenie Hospicjum Królowej Apostołów, providing support to patients and families in need.



MORE INFO ABOUT THE EVENT





Social Firms Europe CEFEC is proud to present the updated Part B of the Linz Appeal, first launched at our 2007 Conference in Linz.

The Linz Appeal is CEFEC's call to action for more Social Firms and Social Enterprises across Europe, creating meaningful employment for disabled and disadvantaged people. It sets out shared definitions and country-specific insights that guide policymakers and practitioners alike:

- Social Firm – a business created for the employment of people with a disability or disadvantage, combining market activity with a clear social mission.
- Social Enterprise – a business created primarily to promote the economic and social integration of disabled and disadvantaged people, often combining training, rehabilitation, and commercial activity.
- Social Cooperative – a legal structure for a company that is owned and managed democratically by its members.

Part B of the Appeal compiles country reports from our members, updated every two years. The 2025 edition highlights significant progress at cultural, social, and legal levels across Europe. While “Social Firm” remains the core guideline, many countries also embrace the broader term “Social Enterprise.”

Explore the updated Linz Appeal here: The Linz Appeal Research

Linz Appeal PART B **Country Reports - Update 2025**

This is an update of Part B of "The Linz Appeal 2007", brochure printed and online <https://socialfirmseurope.eu/social-firms/research/>, which gives an overview of the Social Firms movement, summing up aims, beliefs, strategies and serves as a manual to organizations and countries who wish to spread Social Enterprises.

At its Conference in Linz 2007, CEFEC promoted its core message in the so-called LINZ APPEAL.

The Appeal, which is in two parts, set out CEFEC's view on the reasons why there should be more social firms for disabled and disadvantaged people in Europe, produced good practice guidelines and collated overviews of the social firm/social enterprise sector in members' home countries.

Social Firms Europe CEFEC has a constant interest to clarify the most used terms from the social economy field and every two years is doing research to update the legislation and the information related with social firms among the European countries.

Part A

CEFEC members agreed on a clear definition of the terms **Social Firm** and **Social Enterprise** **Social Cooperatives** which has been and is still a guideline for creating work for the named target groups. CEFEC encourages the creation of work for its target groups in the open labour market and welcomes whatever actions and programmes lead to this aim:

Definition of a Social Firm

„A Social Firm is a business created for the employment of people with a disability or other disadvantage in the labour market.

It is a business which uses its own market-orientated production of goods and services to pursue its social mission.

A significant number of its employees will be people with a disability or other disadvantage in the labour market.

Every worker will be paid a market wage or salary appropriate to the work – whatever their productive capacity is.

Work opportunities should be equal between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged employees. All should have the same employment rights and obligations.

The term „cooperative“ should be confined to a legal structure for a company which is owned and managed democratically by its members.“

Definition of Social Enterprise

„A Social Enterprise is any business which is created primarily for the purpose of promoting the economic and social integration of disabled and disadvantaged people.

Its activities would include training and rehabilitation as well as commercial activity“.

Definition of Social Cooperative

„A social cooperative, is the legal structure for a company, which is owned and managed democratically by its members“.

Part B

This part contains the country reports of our members, which are being updated every other year. Here is the latest version of 2025!

There has certainly been progress at a cultural, social and legal level in most European countries regarding the status, spread and numbers of social firms/social enterprises.

We have found that the above given definition of a „social firm“ is the valid guideline.

However, in addition to the traditional use of the term „Social Firm“ other expressions are used, mostly the term „Social Enterprise“.

We have also found that there is growing awareness of more and more green economy within social firms for disabled and disadvantaged persons and two thirds are actively taking steps and measures to reduce their CO2 footprint.

We thank all contributors! Comments are welcome to the coordinators Christiane Haerlin, Alina Birsan & Weronika Margula, under socialfirmseurope@gmail.com



In 2024 and 2025 we managed to develop with support of Bucovina Institute team, a series of podcasts with several Social Firms Europe CEFEC members, and we are very happy to continue with this tradition in 2026. So, we are very excited to share with you these recordings, with:

- » Emanuel Butnariu, 5th edition of the Academy participant from Romania

- » Konstantinos Tsarosis , 5th edition of the Academy participant from Greece

- » Chibuzor Emmanuel Nzeh , 5th edition of the Academy participant from Germany

- » Marco Nachtsheim, 5th edition of the Academy participant from Germany

- » Jure Capl, 5th edition of the Academy participant from Slovenia

- » Maj Kotnik, 5th edition of the Academy participant from Slovenia

Click on the yellow button to view & listen!



Wishing You a
HAPPY EASTER

from

Social Firms Europe
CEFEC



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