

**Interreg**  
Baltic Sea Region



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# Social Impact: Measure what matters!

## Hands-on Guide for Beginners



# About this Approach

- Only focus on **social impact**, not counting the activities
- Quantitative data are important, but secondary
- Main task – identifying social change
- Target group: small social entrepreneurs, social innovators and NGOs



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# **Social Impact Measurement – Why Does It Matter?**

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# Why does it matter?

## Better, earlier decisions

- Forces clarity on the challenge, target groups, needs and intended outcomes
- Helps compare options (do nothing vs. alternatives) with transparent criteria

## Stronger accountability and legitimacy

- Creates a traceable line from strategy → activities → outputs → outcome
- Makes it easier to justify choices to leadership, elected officials, funders, and citizens

## Learning, Refining, Scaling

- Supports test-learn-adapt cycles
- Provides evidence for expanding successful initiatives and discontinuing ineffective ones

## Stakeholder engagement and co-creation

- Structures input from residents, service users, NGOs, businesses, and first-line staff
- Builds shared understanding of goals and success measures

## Stronger funding and partnerships

- Comparability
- Funders favour initiatives with clear logic models and credible evaluation design

# Closing the loop

- Effective impact measurement starts early in the process, not after the work is done.
- It should be built into every stage of business development.

# The Process

## Step 1

- Self-assessment – understanding the challenge
  - Provides the organisation with a clearer overview of its operations, enabling more focused decision-making

## Step 2

- Variables and indicators

## Step 3

- Identifying social change – case by case

# About your Organisation – Understanding the Challenge

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# Understanding the challenge – why is it essential?

- Impact starts with a deep, contextual understanding of the problem, co-defined with affected people — not only with data points.
- Collaborative processes must begin with mapping real problems together with the people who experience them
- Theory of Change asks for defining the long-term change before any metrics

Find this task  
in the  
worksheets!

# Practical approach: Understand the Challenge

## Describe the Challenge

- What challenge does your organisation address?
- For whom? Be specific, no abstract categories
- Where does the challenge occur?
- Why does it matter? Human, social, systemic dimension.

## Explore lived Experiences

- How does a good/bad day look for the affected group?
- What is currently missing?
- Which behaviours or systemic conditions block progress?
- How would meaningful improvement feel for the target group?

## Identify systemic barriers

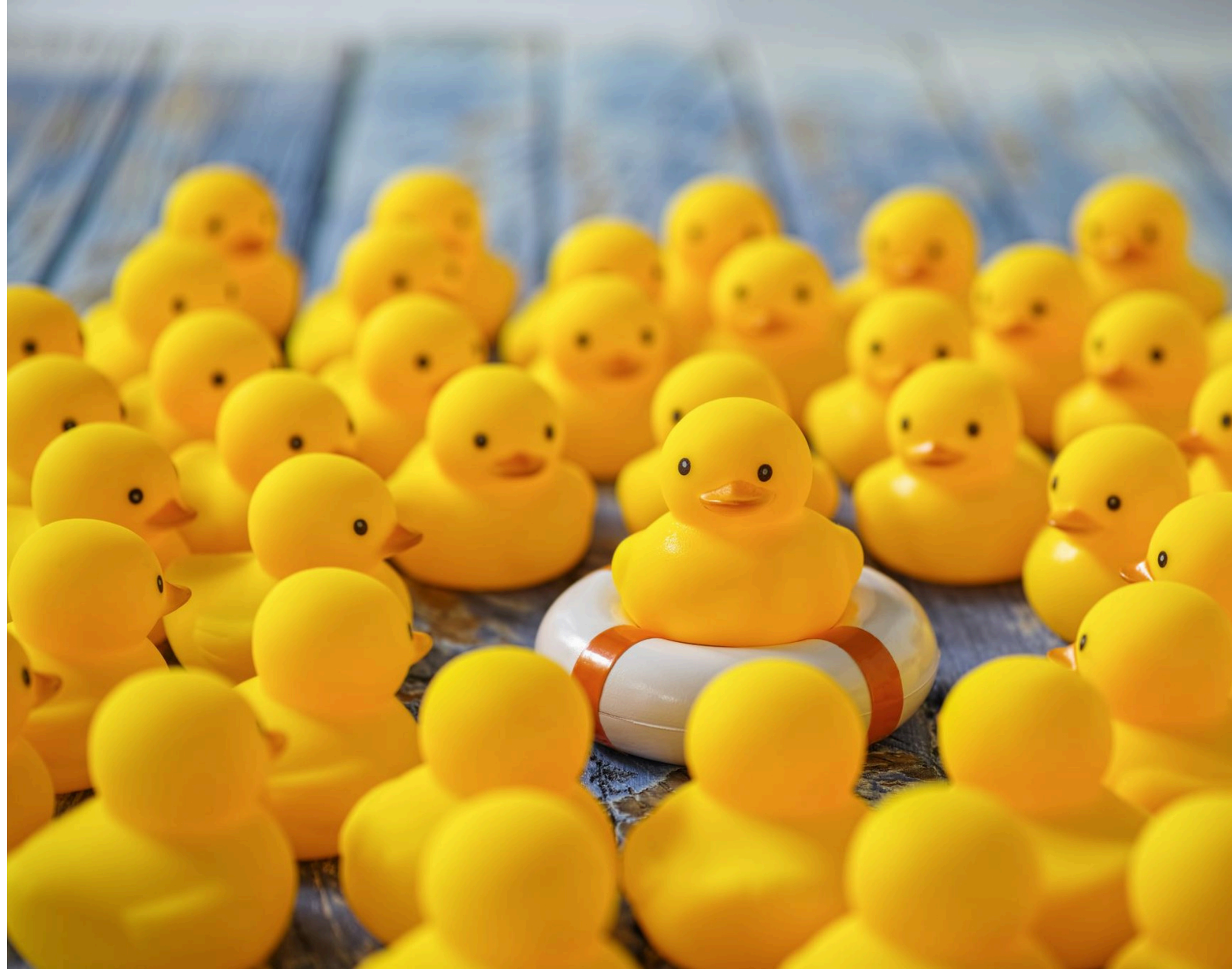
- Politics
- Institutions
- Resources/access
- Attitude

## Hands-On Guide for Impact Measurement



Understand the Challenge		
Step 1. Describe the challenge	Step 2. Explore lived experiences	Step 3. Identify systemic barriers
<p>What challenge do you address?</p> <p>What's your target group? Be specific!</p> <p>Where does the challenge occur?</p> <p>Why does it matter? Human, social, systemic perspectives.</p>	<p>How does a good/bad day look for the target group?</p> <p>What is currently missing?</p> <p>What blocks progress?</p> <p>How would meaningful improvement look like?</p>	<p>Politics</p> <p>Institutions</p> <p>Resources/access</p> <p>Attitude</p>

# Indicators and Variables



# Where quantitative indicators fit – without dominating

- To review your organisations performance/activities
- To track trends or compare across time
- Financiers ask for some numeric evidence

# Qualitative-first approach: social change itself becomes the indicator

- Direct indicators – deriving directly from the challenge addressed  
Example: The social entrepreneur serves a warm meal for elderly people in their homes  
Indicator: Number of people/households served
- Indirect indicators - deriving from unintended/unforeseen effects  
Example: The elderly people are eating their meal together in a community centre.  
Indicator: Social interaction, less loneliness, ...





## Identifying Social Change – Case by Case

- Social change is situational, non-linear and often qualitative
- Social impact includes, among others, wellbeing, connectedness, empowerment, trust, identity, ...
- The impact across stakeholders will vary widely and can rarely be pre-boxed into a fixed metrics.

Therefore, identifying and measure social change is not difficult, it is demanding



Find this task  
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worksheets!

# Practical approach: Identifying Social Change

## Change for people – individual level

- What should be different in people's lives?
- What behaviours, emotions, opportunities or access improved?

### Examples:

- I feel confident speaking Norwegian
- I have someone to talk to if I need help
- I am back in a daily rhythm

## Change for relationships – community level

- What will improve relationships?

### Examples:

- Trust between youngsters and local authorities increases
- Women in the sewing program form supportive networks
- Landlords are more willing to rent to migrants

## Change in the system – structural level

- What shifts in rules, practice, or attitudes would show meaningful progress?

### Examples:

- Schools adopt novel collaborative routines
- Municipalities offer co-creation as form for stakeholder engagement
- Local companies open for internships

Download this template!



## Hands-On Guide for Impact Measurement

Identify Social Change: Case by Case				
Where quantitative indicators fit	Qualitative-first approach	Identifying social change		
	Direct indicators	Individual	Community	Structural
		Indirect indicators		



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