

**Dutch Knowledge
Network for Social
Entrepreneurship**

(<https://kson.nl>)

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KSON



Introduction

A unique initiative of researchers/lecturers from different Dutch universities, who share a **common interest in promoting social entrepreneurship** and have joined forces because the **extent and complexity of present-day societal challenges** goes beyond the capacity of individual organizations and **calls for collaborative action**

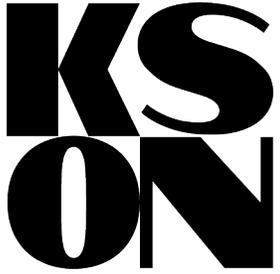
- **Sharing of knowledge and experiences**
- **Exchanging educational materials**
- **Formulating joint research projects**
- **Reaching out to social entrepreneurs across the Netherlands (and beyond)**



Background

By **2017**, it became increasingly apparent that numerous Dutch universities were developing research and/or educational activities on social entrepreneurship

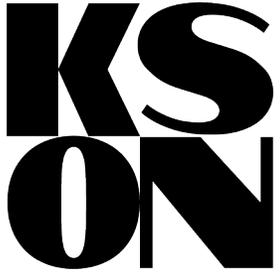
- An initial meeting with **twenty researchers/lecturers** from **five different universities** was organized to explore the possibilities of sharing resources to jointly advance social entrepreneurship initiatives in The Netherlands
- Since then, the network has grown to around **fifty members** from **20 universities**, with multidisciplinary backgrounds such as Psychology, Business Studies, Economics, Social Work and Law



Organisation

The network typically meets **three or four times a year**, at different locations. Most meetings are hosted by one of the universities involved, but sometimes the host is a social enterprise

- Meetings are aimed at **sharing information related to recent developments** in research projects, educational programs and national policy. Sometimes meetings are combined with a national or regional event on social entrepreneurship
- With the growth of the network, **activities have become more coordinated** with the installment of a core team (including the authors) —which takes the lead in preparing and organizing the meetings— and the launch of a website in early 2021



Goals

KSON's main objective is to **bring together researchers, lecturers, students and entrepreneurs** who are engaged in social entrepreneurship initiatives. They share their experiences in both research and educational activities related to social entrepreneurship, thus establishing connections between entrepreneurs, research and education

- 1) Inspiration:** meeting colleagues, knowing what everyone is up to
- 2) Knowledge:** sharing knowledge, in order to be able to use complementary knowledge
- 3) Cooperation:** building connections and networks in research and education
- 4) Strengthen:** improve the social entrepreneurial ecosystems in The Netherlands



Activities

The network meetings has, for example, has resulted in:

- Several **joint research projects** that have been awarded with national research funding (e.g. *'Scaling social enterprises'*; *'Social impact rewarded'*; *'Future-proof social entrepreneurship'*)
- **Exchange of teaching materials**, such as the case study on social enterprise *Tony's Chocolonely*, developed by Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, which is also used by other universities
- **'Thinktank'-sessions** for social entrepreneurs who ask for specific advice on a particular topic



Lessons learned

- 1) **Shared goal:** intrinsic motivation for social entrepreneurship; content is leading
- 2) **Collaboration:** willingness to share information; collaboration instead of competition
- 3) **Equality:** open atmosphere; no hierarchical relations within the network
- 4) **Resources:** members and their institutions need to be willing and able to spend time and (limited) resources on the network
- 5) **Transdisciplinarity:** acknowledge the value of working with multiple disciplines and professionals in social entrepreneurship



Future prospects

KSON is moving from an internal focus towards a **more active participation in national and international networks**, for example:

- *'City Deal Impact Entrepreneurship'*, a government-funded initiative bringing together all relevant actors in this field
- Building international links, e.g. through participation in this and other conferences and networks (e.g. *'Social Entrepreneurship Incubation Program'*)