PLANETWISE

Module 03: Social Entrepreneurship with an Environmental Focus

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Social Innovation & Cohesion Institute

YOUTH AND LIFELONG LEARNING FOUNDATION

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Introduction

Welcome to Module 3 of the PLANETWISE learning series: Social Entrepreneurship with an Environmental Focus. This module explores how young changemakers can develop ventures that address ecological challenges while creating positive social impact. Through a blend of business strategy and environmental responsibility, social entrepreneurship offers a pathway for youth to lead initiatives that are innovative, sustainable, and community-focused. Drawing inspiration from the PLANETWISE project an Erasmus+-funded initiative for empowering youth through green education and entrepreneurship this module offers practical frameworks, real-world examples, and collaborative tools to help participants launch their own eco-social enterprises. We will delve into essential components like crafting a value proposition, identifying customer segments, choosing the right legal structure, designing green revenue models, and facilitating mentoring and hackathons. Get ready to turn your vision for a better world into an actionable business model.

What is Social Entrepreneurship?

Social Entrepreneurship is a form of enterprise that:
- Combines business strategies with social or environmental missions, using innovation and market-based approaches to address societal issues.
- Focuses on solving real-world problems such as poverty, climate change, education, or inequality while also ensuring financial sustainability.
- Empowers individuals and communities, especially youth, by giving them tools and platforms to create meaningful change.
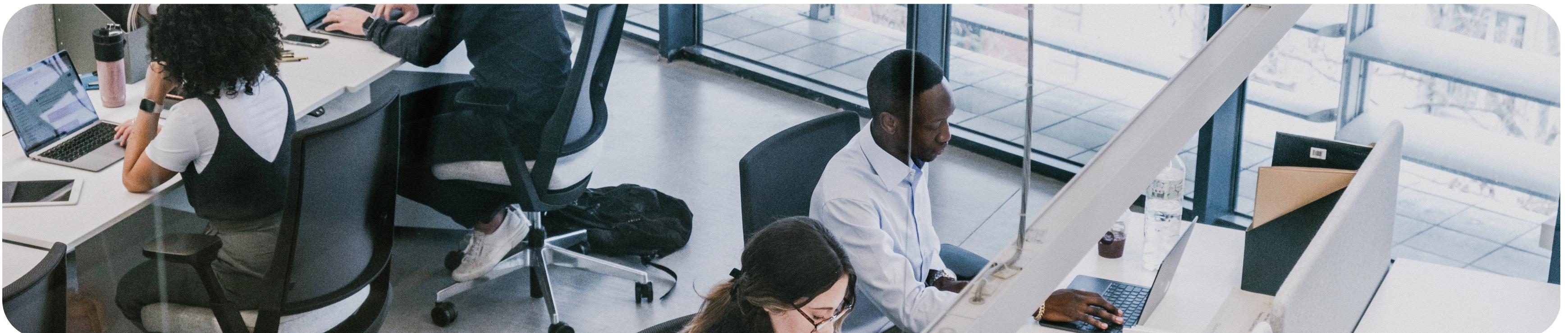
Why Focus on the Environment?

- **Urgent Global Challenges:** Climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss pose serious threats to our planet and future generations—demanding immediate, innovative responses.
- **EU Youth Goal #10 – "Sustainable Green Europe":** This goal emphasizes the need for environmental protection, climate action, and sustainability at all levels of society, especially youth involvement.

- **Catalyst for Systemic Change:** Environmental entrepreneurship offers scalable, sustainable solutions that can transform industries, policies, and lifestyles.
- **Youth as Changemakers:** Young people bring fresh ideas, energy, and a strong sense of urgencymaking them powerful drivers of innovation and environmental advocacy.

What is a Value Proposition?

A Value Proposition is a clear, compelling statement that communicates:

- What benefits your initiative offers
- Why people should care whether they are supporters, participants, or funders
- How your mission aligns with their needs, values, and expectations

Crafting the Value PropositionPLANETWISE Example:

➤ Empowers youth through eco-education

➤ Connects young people to nature via experiential learning

➤ Builds green job skills and fosters entrepreneurial thinking

➤ Enhances digital and outdoor education capacities

Who Are Your Customers?

- **Direct Beneficiaries:** Youth (18–30), youth workers, NGOs

- **Indirect Stakeholders:** Parents, local governments, funders

- **Supporters:** Donors, environmental advocates, Erasmus+ bodies

- **Tip:** Segment by demographics, needs, and level of engagement

Value Proposition Canvas Tool

- **Customer Jobs:** Education, employment, community impact

- **Pains:** Unemployment, exclusion, climate anxiety

- **Gains:** Skills, inclusion, green career pathways

- **Product & Services:** Workshops, digital tools, mentorship

Importance of Green Revenue Models

- **Ensure Long-Term Sustainability:** Relying solely on grants or donations isn't enough green ventures need reliable income to grow and endure.
- **Align with Environmental Values:** Revenue generation should respect and reinforce ecological principles no greenwashing, just genuine impact.
- **Blend Mission with Money:** A strong green revenue model balances financial viability with social and environmental purpose.

Product-as-a-Service (PaaS)

What is Product-as-a-Service?

Instead of selling a product outright, PaaS offers users access to a product or service for a fee usually through subscriptions or rentals. This model shifts the focus from ownership to usage.

Why is this important for green ventures?

- By leasing or sharing products, PaaS encourages reuse, repair, and recycling rather than single-use consumption, reducing resource waste.
- Since products are maintained and returned, fewer items end up in landfills, and companies are incentivized to make durable, eco-friendly designs.
- Users can access high-quality tools or services without the high upfront cost, making sustainability more inclusive.

Micro-Donations

- **What are Micro-Donations?**

Small, easy-to-give contributions often linked to clear, tangible actions like "€1 plants 1 tree" or "€0.50 supports a youth workshop."

- **How are they used?**

Integrated seamlessly into websites, events, apps, or digital platforms, making it simple and engaging for people to donate spontaneously or regularly.

- **Why do they matter?**

They empower supporters by letting them contribute meaningfully without financial strain, turning many small actions into big collective impact.

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Subscription Models

- Monthly/yearly access to:
  - Online green entrepreneurship courses
  - Exclusive mentoring sessions
  - Webinars, toolkits, and digital resources

- Recurring revenue supports scaling

PLANETWISE Revenue Mix Example

Grants
- e.g., Erasmus+, national or local sustainability funds
- Support for youth education, cross-border collaboration, and innovation projects

Workshop Fees
- Fees from schools, community groups, or NGOs for tailored sustainability workshops
- Helps fund materials, trainers, and outreach

Donations & In-Kind Support
- Micro-donations from individuals
- Partnerships with local businesses or sponsors providing materials, venues, or services

Digital Content Monetization
- Sales or subscriptions for eco e-books, toolkits, lesson plans, or online courses
- Scalable income aligned with the educational mission

Why Legal Structure Matters

Key Reasons Legal Structure Matters:

- Some grants or investors are only available to certain entities (e.g., nonprofits, social enterprises, cooperatives).
- Legal status affects who can partner with you governments, schools, or corporate sponsors may require formal registration.
- Legal form determines tax obligations, reporting requirements, and eligibility for exemptions or benefits.
- Structures like nonprofits or limited liability companies can shield founders from personal financial risk.

NGO Model

What is it?

A non-governmental organization (NGO) is a non-profit, mission-driven entity focused on creating social or environmental impact rather than profit.

Key Features:

- Operates with a clear social or environmental purpose at its core
- Ideal for accessing public and private grants (e.g., Erasmus+)
- Perceived as credible, community-focused, and transparent
- Common among PLANETWISE partners and youth-led initiatives

Limitations:

- Restricted Profit Use: Cannot distribute profits to founders or shareholders
- Scaling Challenges: Revenue-generating activities are often limited by regulations or lack of business flexibility

B-Corp (Benefit Corporation)

What is it?

- A B-Corp (Benefit Corporation) is a for-profit business that commits to a social and/or environmental mission, combining profit with purpose.

Key Features:

- Operates like a business but with a legally embedded commitment to positive impact
- Undergoes B Corp Certification to ensure transparency, accountability, and sustainability standards
- Attracts impact investors and ethical consumers who value both financial return and social responsibility
- Offers the flexibility and tools to grow, while maintaining a values-driven approach

Cooperative Model

What is it?

A cooperative (co-op) is a member-owned, democratically controlled organization where profits and decision-making are shared among members.

Key Features:

- One member = one vote, regardless of investment
- Surpluses are reinvested or distributed fairly among members
- Members co-own the organization ideal for groups with shared goals and values
- Often focused on sustainability, social equity, and local empowerment

Choosing the Right Fit

Selecting the best legal and organizational model is crucial for your venture's impact, sustainability, and growth.

Key Considerations:

- Does the model support your core purpose—social, environmental, or both?
- Will it allow access to the grants, donations, or investments you're targeting?
- Do you have the skills and resources to manage a business, NGO, or cooperative structure?
- How will you report to stakeholders—funders, members, beneficiaries, or the public?
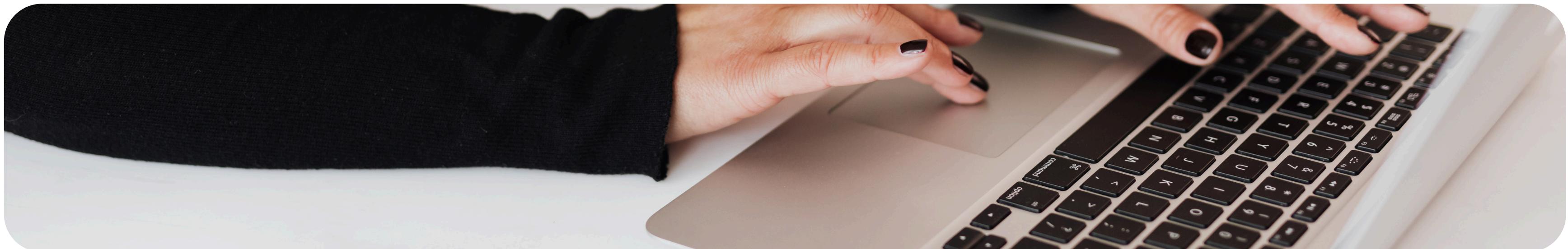
What Are Mentoring Circles?

- Peer-to-peer support groups

- Rotating facilitation and shared learning

- Builds community, trust, and practical skills

How to Run a Mentoring Circle

- Define purpose (e.g., eco-startups)

- Small groups (5–8 people)

- Structured meetings with rotating roles

- Tools: shared journals, flipcharts, reflection prompts

Best Practices

- Foster safe, inclusive environments

- Allow personal storytelling and vulnerability

- Incorporate feedback and co-design

- Celebrate small wins to build momentum

PLANETWISE Case

- Mentoring circles used to:
  - Support language-barrier participants
  - Foster inclusive leadership
  - Develop digital and eco-entrepreneurship ideas

Business Plan Hackathon

What Is a Hackathon?

- Intense collaborative sprint (24–72 hours)

- Multidisciplinary teams solve a challenge

- Outcome: prototype or business model

Running a Green Hackathon

- Teams tackle themes: circular economy, eco-tourism, zero-waste

- Include:
  - Mentor check-ins
  - Business canvas development
  - Final pitch session

- Awards or incubation for winning ideas

Conclusion

Social entrepreneurship provides a powerful framework for youth to tackle environmental challenges through sustainable and community-oriented solutions. By exploring tools such as value propositions, green business models, and legal frameworks, and engaging in interactive processes like mentoring circles and hackathons, young leaders can design ventures that create meaningful and measurable impact. The PLANETWISE project exemplifies how collaboration, creativity, and education can empower a generation of green entrepreneurs. Let this module be your first step in turning climate concern into climate action. Think green. Act social. Lead youthfully.

Thank You

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