D4.4 | Policy Recommendations

One competence framework for recruitment, training and careers in public administration

Based on the INSPIRE PA competence framework for social innovation, the certified Social Innovation Officer curriculum and the Proof of Concept training course

INSPIRE PA – INtroducing Social Practices to Improve the REsilience of Public Administration

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Executive summary

Public administrations across Europe are asked to address complex social challenges: demographic change, inequalities, environmental transitions, declining public trust, through collaboration, co-design and a closer relationship with citizens. Yet the way they recruit, train and promote their staff still rewards procedural knowledge far more than the ability to frame problems, work across sectors and generate public value.

INSPIRE PA developed a competence framework for social innovation in the public sector and a certified curriculum for a new professional role, the **Social Innovation Officer (SIO)**. The curriculum was tested in Greece, Italy and Romania with 89 civil servants, 71 of whom completed the training path. Participants reporting good or high knowledge of social innovation rose from 12.1% to 80.8%, and all final respondents intend to apply what they learned. To our knowledge, it is the first time in Europe that an explicit professional profile for social innovation in public administration has been defined, with its own competence framework, curriculum and certification.

These Policy Recommendations use that framework to shape recruitment, training and career development in public administration: to attract and select the right talent for social innovation, to foster effective training policies, and to recognize these competences over time. They work on two levels: the Social Innovation Officer as a specialized professional profile, and a common base of social innovation competences for all civil servants. Together, the two levels can support a broader cultural change, in which social innovation thinking becomes part of how civil servants approach their roles and responsibilities. The recommendations address decision-makers at local, regional, national and European level, because each level controls part of the chain.

Eleven recommendations

A. Recruitment

1. Recognize the Social Innovation Officer as an explicit profile in workforce planning and recruitment
2. Assess social innovation competences in selection, with diverse and inclusive procedures
3. Attract new talent, open entry routes and build onboarding around real challenges

B. Ongoing training

4. Base training needs analysis and training plans on the competence framework
5. Provide a core social innovation module for all civil servants
6. Embed the certified SIO pathway in public-sector training systems
7. Support continuous development after certification

C. Career development

8. Create a career path for Social Innovation Officers
9. Recognize social innovation competences in performance evaluation and mobility for all staff

D. Conditions for cultural change

10. Prepare managers and create room to experiment
11. Secure stable funding, communities of practice and a shared evidence base

Key message

Social innovation becomes part of public administration when one competence framework guides how civil servants are recruited, trained and promoted. Recruitment brings in the right talent; training reaches serving staff, builds a common language across the administration and prepares the Social Innovation Officers who lead change; career paths make sure that these competences are valued over time.

1. Purpose: one competence framework for recruitment, training and careers

Policy recommendations can influence how public administrations are structured, how civil servants are trained and how resources are allocated. They help integrate **social**

innovation principles into the broader governance structure and create change at system level, not only in individual projects.

These Policy Recommendations apply one competence framework to three policies that are usually designed separately: recruitment, which decides which competences enter the administration; training, which reaches the people who already work in public institutions and builds a common language across departments and levels; and career development, which decides which competences are valued over time. If the three are not aligned, new staff adapt to existing routines, trained staff find no use for what they have learned, and the most capable leave.

The recommendations work on two levels. The first is the Social Innovation Officer: an explicit professional profile, with specific competences, a certified curriculum and a defined role inside the administration. The second is a common base of social innovation competences for all civil servants, so that social innovation is not delegated to a few specialists but becomes part of how public servants approach their roles and responsibilities. The aim is a broader cultural change, in which social innovation thinking is embedded in the everyday work of public administration.

Who these recommendations are for

→ **Local and regional authorities,** which recruit a large share of public servants working directly with communities and which act as laboratories for new forms of governance.

→ **National governments,** public employment authorities, civil service commissions and schools of public administration, which set the rules for recruitment, training and careers.

→ **European institutions,** which shape administrative capacity through ComPAct and allocate resources through ESF+, Erasmus+ and cohesion policy.

→ **Universities, VET providers and civil society organizations,** which prepare future public servants and support administrations as capacity-building partners.

Evidence base

The recommendations are grounded in the results of INSPIRE PA: the Mapping of 30 social innovation practices led by public administrations in Italy, Greece and Romania (D2.2); the Skills Gap Validation Report, which reached professionals from 179 public institutions (D2.3); the SIO certified curriculum and certification scheme (D2.4, D2.5); the evaluation of the Proof of Concept training course (D3.4); and the Replicability Guidelines (D4.3).

2. The challenge

The 30 practices mapped by INSPIRE PA in Italy, Greece and Romania show municipalities acting as laboratories for new forms of governance. They also show that most of these experiences remain local, depend on individual champions and are exposed to legal rigidity, fragmented governance, political discontinuity and short-term funding.

The skills gap study found gaps in five domains: **evidence-based problem framing** and stakeholder analysis; **strategic planning and foresight**, suppressed by a procedural ethos; **cross-sector collaboration** and **facilitation of co-creation**; **change leadership**, especially among execution-level staff; and social impact assessment. Participants also described structural barriers (bureaucratic rigidity, few mechanisms for piloting), cultural barriers (risk aversion, a compliance-driven mindset, disregard for bottom-up ideas), leadership barriers (political discontinuity, limited managerial support) and resource barriers (workload, understaffing, restricted access to training). Across the three countries, **coordination across departments** was one of the most persistent challenges.

These competences are rarely assessed in recruitment, rarely developed in ordinary training and not recognized in careers. The gap is therefore not only individual: it is reproduced every time public servants are selected, trained and promoted on criteria that ignore it.

3. The INSPIRE PA competence framework

INSPIRE PA has defined an explicit professional profile for social innovation in public administration: the **Social Innovation Officer (SIO)**. The SIO is a public servant whose role is to enable social innovation from inside the institution: connecting departments, facilitating collaboration with citizens, civil society, research and business, mobilising stakeholders and introducing new approaches to policy design and service delivery. To our knowledge, it is the first time in Europe that such a profile has been defined with its own competence framework, curriculum and certification.

A role of this kind requires a specific profile and specific competences, which cannot be assumed from general administrative training. At the same time, the competence framework is useful well beyond the SIO: its basic elements (framing problems with the people affected, collaborating across sectors, measuring social value) are relevant to any public servant. The framework therefore supports two levels of policy: a specialised profile for Social Innovation Officers and a common base of competences for all staff.

Dimension	Core learning outcomes
Knowledge	Concept and types of social innovation; EU framework and ESF+ instruments; systems thinking and leverage points; impact assessment tools; design for policy; hybrid funding and public procurement for social impact; governance of social innovation (5R Framework).
Skills	Framing and analysing complex problems (Problem Tree, stakeholder mapping, Cynefin); co-designing solutions and impact goals; managing innovation risks; cross-sector collaboration and facilitation; impact storytelling; participatory tools such as participatory budgeting and regulatory sandboxes.
Attitudes	Openness to systemic change; ability to work with uncertainty; ethical commitment to public value and inclusion; collaborative mindset and trust building; reflective practice.

Source: SIO competence profile, as summarised in D4.3.

The curriculum develops these competences through eight modules, from problem exploration to solution design and institutional action, using experiential, peer-to-peer, problem-based and reflective learning. Each participant works throughout the course on a real challenge from their own institution. The standard format is 80 hours: 16 hours of synchronous sessions and 64 hours of self-study.

The course prepares for certification under ISO 17024, the international standard for the certification of persons. The scheme, developed by ACTA (Aristotle Certification Training and Assessment), defines knowledge domains, task descriptions and assessment criteria. Eligibility ranges from a secondary school diploma (EQF 4) with at least two years in public administration to university degrees (EQF 6–8) with at least six months to one year in public administration. The profile is therefore open across the public workforce and is linked to actual experience of public service.

4. What the Proof of Concept showed

The pilot course was delivered between February and May 2026 in Greece, Italy and Romania. It enrolled 89 civil servants against a target of 60, and 71 completed the training path. Among final respondents, 96.2% reported at least a moderate improvement in knowledge and 88.5% found it useful for their daily work. The share reporting good or high knowledge of social innovation rose from 12.1% to 80.8%, and the use of practical tools increased markedly: for example, the Problem Tree went from 27.6% to 73.1% of respondents.

Source: D3.4 Evaluation Report, as reported in D4.3.

Lessons for training, recruitment and career policy

→ **There is demand for this kind of work.** The call exceeded its target by 48.3%, and 84.5% of participants considered social innovation highly relevant to their job. Administrations that present these roles clearly will find candidates.

→ **Motivation is high, readiness is low.** 46.6% of participants had never used a social innovation tool. Recruitment can look for the right attitudes and potential, but it must be followed by structured development.

→ **A practice-based selection model works.** The pilot rubric combined professional relevance, motivation grounded in a real institutional challenge, diversity and digital competence. It produced a diverse cohort from many governance levels and policy fields.

→ **Organizations must be ready.** After training, internal resistance remained the main barrier (39.7% before, 32.7% after), and the need for leadership support rose (17.2% to 25.0%). Participants with formal institutional endorsement engaged and completed more than those who enrolled on their own.

→ **Training must continue after the course.** Participants asked for more real-life case studies, interactive exercises, peer learning and time for applied work, and long-term application in the workplace is not yet measured.

Limits of the evidence

The pilot results are self-reported and were collected immediately after the course, with response rates of 65.2% at baseline and 58.4% at the end. The pilot tested a training and selection model for serving staff; it did not test recruitment or career reforms directly. The recommendations on recruitment and careers therefore apply the validated competence framework and the pilot's experience, and should themselves be evaluated as they are implemented (Recommendation 11).

5. From competence framework to policy: recruitment, training and careers

The same competence framework can guide three decisions that are usually made separately: how to develop staff, whom to hire and what to reward. The table below shows, for each of the five competence domains identified by the skills gap study, what administrations can look for at recruitment, where the curriculum develops it and what career systems can recognize. The correspondence with modules (M) is indicative.

Competence domain	At recruitment: what to look for	Through training: curriculum	In career: what to recognize
Analytical and decision-making	Ability to frame a problem and identify who is affected	M2–M3: Problem Tree, stakeholder mapping, Cynefin	Evidence-based problem analysis in real projects
Strategic and innovation	Openness to systemic change; capacity to question routines	M1, M5: types of social innovation, Six Conditions for Systems Change, hybrid funding	Contribution to strategic and long-term planning
Relational and communication	Collaborative mindset; experience of working with citizens or partners	M4, M6–M7: co-creation, participatory budgeting, trust building, impact storytelling	Facilitation of cross-sector and participatory processes
Leadership and management	Initiative; ability to work with uncertainty	M4, M7: 5R Framework, anticipating resistance, organizational leadership	Leadership of pilots and cross-departmental teams
Reflective and lifelong learning	Reflective practice; ethical commitment to public value	M6, M8: Impact Logic Model, indicators, evaluation and learning	Measurement of social impact; continuous learning

Elaboration based on D2.3 competence domains and the SIO curriculum modules (M1–M8).

The logic is simple. Training develops the structured tools and methods of social innovation, both for all staff (a core module) and for Social Innovation Officers (the full

certified pathway). Recruitment looks above all for attitudes and potential: openness, collaboration, the ability to frame a problem. Career systems recognize what has been learned and applied, so that the competences developed in training and sought at entry remain valued throughout working life.

6. Recommendations

The eleven recommendations are organized in four groups: recruitment, ongoing training, career development and the conditions that make cultural change possible. Together they apply one competence framework to recruitment, training and careers, and distinguish, where relevant, between Social Innovation Officers and all civil servants.

A. Recruitment: attracting and selecting talent for social innovation

Recommendation 1 - Recognize the Social Innovation Officer as an explicit profile in workforce planning and recruitment.

WHY IT MATTERS

Public administrations cannot recruit for competences they have not defined. The skills gap study shows that social innovation competences are widely recognized as essential yet rarely described, trained or assessed: at the start of the pilot, 46.6% of participants had never used a single social innovation tool.

INSPIRE PA now provides a validated reference. The SIO competence profile sets out the knowledge, skills and attitudes required, and the certification scheme developed by ACTA under ISO 17024 defines knowledge domains, task descriptions and assessment criteria. This makes it possible to recognize the SIO as an explicit profile, with its own title, purpose and tasks, and to use the same framework to describe social innovation competences in other posts.

WHAT TO DO

→ **Include SIO** posts in multi-annual workforce and recruitment plans, and recognize the SIO as an explicit profile in job classification systems and organizational charts.

→ **Use the SIO** competence profile and the five competence domains as a reference when drafting job profiles and vacancy notices, both for SIO posts and for other posts with high social innovation content (service design, social and welfare policy, planning, community engagement, local development).

→ **Describe competences** in terms of tasks (framing a problem with stakeholders, facilitating co-design, measuring social impact), drawing on the task descriptions of the certification scheme.

→ **At European level**, propose the inclusion of the Social Innovation Officer as an occupation in ESCO, the European classification of skills, competences, qualifications and occupations, linked to its competence profile.

Addressed to: *Public administrations at all levels (HR and recruiting units); national public employment authorities; civil service commissions; European Commission (ESCO)*

Recommendation 2 - Assess social innovation competences in selection, with diverse and inclusive procedures.

WHY IT MATTERS

Traditional public competitions mainly test knowledge. The competences that matter most for social innovation (framing complex problems, collaborating across sectors, facilitating co-creation) and the attitudes of the SIO profile (openness to systemic change, ability to work with uncertainty, ethical commitment to public value, collaborative mindset, reflective practice) can only be observed when candidates work on a problem.

The pilot offers a tested model. Its selection rubric weighted professional relevance (40%), motivation (30%), diversity and inclusion (20%) and language and ICT competence (10%), and asked candidates to describe a concrete challenge in their own institution. The pilot also showed that access cannot be assumed: accessibility needs and digital gaps, particularly in smaller and rural institutions, must be addressed by design.

WHAT TO DO

→ **Complement knowledge tests** with practice-based methods: analysis of a real local challenge, problem framing, stakeholder mapping, observed group tasks.

→ **Train selection panels on the competence framework** and include members with experience of co-design or social innovation.

→ **Set diversity objectives for outreach and panel composition**, collect accessibility needs at the application stage and ensure that selection tools meet at least WCAG 2.1 AA standards.

→ **Offer online or blended selection steps**, and shared recruitment for smaller and rural administrations.

Addressed to: *Public administrations; national public employment authorities; civil service commissions; regional authorities*

Recommendation 3 - Attract new talent, open entry routes and build onboarding around real challenges

WHY IT MATTERS

Many people with the competences the SIO requires work outside public administration, in civil society organizations, social enterprises and research. The pilot showed that demand exists: the call reached 89 enrolments against a target of 60, and 84.5% of participants rated social innovation as highly relevant to their job.

Certification requires between six months and two years of experience in public administration, depending on the level of education. A coherent pathway is therefore needed: preparation before entry, recruitment, onboarding and certification after a period of service. INSPIRE PA has identified recent graduates preparing to enter public service as a priority target group for an extended version of the curriculum.

WHAT TO DO

→ **Present public service in vacancy notices** and employer communication as a place where social innovation is possible: collaboration with citizens and partners, work on real social challenges, a development path after entry.

→ **Value relevant experience gained in civil society**, the social economy, research and other adjacent fields in selection procedures.

→ **Develop pre-entry programmes with universities** based on the extended format of the SIO curriculum.

→ **Give each new recruit a real institutional challenge** to work on during the first year, with a mentor, following the challenge-based approach of the curriculum.

→ **Offer the full certified pathway** once new staff meet the experience requirement.

Addressed to: *National public employment authorities; public administrations; universities; national schools of public administration*

B. Ongoing training and professional development

Recommendation 4 - Base training needs analysis and training plans on the competence framework

WHY IT MATTERS

Training policies are effective when they start from the competences an administration actually needs. Most administrations already have annual training plans and statutory

training obligations, but these rarely include social innovation competences, and needs are rarely assessed against a shared framework.

INSPIRE PA has tested a needs assessment method that any administration can use: focus groups with at least ten public officials each, lasting about 90 minutes; an online survey; and an integrated analysis that triangulates qualitative and quantitative results to identify competence gaps and priorities. The five competence domains provide a common reference for this analysis.

WHAT TO DO

→ **Use the five competence domains of the INSPIRE PA framework** to assess training needs at organizational, unit and individual level.

→ **Include social innovation competences explicitly** in annual and multi-annual training plans, with objectives, target groups and resources.

→ **Link training to real challenges of the administration**, so that it produces applied results.

→ **Review training plans every year** on the basis of evaluation results.

Addressed to: *Public administrations (HR and training units); regional training bodies; national authorities for public administration*

Recommendation 5 - Provide a core social innovation module for all civil servants

WHY IT MATTERS

Cultural change cannot be delegated to a few specialists. The SIO competence profile is designed for a specialized role, but its basic elements (framing problems with the people affected, collaborating across departments and sectors, measuring social value) are relevant to any public servant, at any level, depending on their position and levers for action.

A shared basic module creates a common language between Social Innovation Officers and their colleagues, helps reduce internal resistance (the main barrier reported after training, at 32.7%) and makes it easier for new practices to spread across the administration.

WHAT TO DO

→ **Develop a short core module based** on the foundations of the SIO curriculum (Module 1 and the problem-framing tools of Modules 2–3).

→ **Include it in induction programs for all new recruits** and offer it to serving staff through regular training plans.

→ **Adapt it to different roles and levels**, with case studies from the national and local context.

Addressed to: *National schools of public administration; regional training bodies; public administrations*

Recommendation 6 - Embed the certified SIO pathway in public-sector training systems

WHY IT MATTERS

The pilot showed that the certified curriculum works. Among final respondents, 96.2% reported at least a moderate improvement in knowledge, 88.5% found it useful for daily work and 94.2% rated quality good or excellent. Participants supported by their institutions engaged and completed more than those who enrolled on their own.

National schools of public administration control the main training catalogues, and inclusion is usually an administrative rather than a legislative decision. The curriculum embeds the EQAVET quality cycle, which allows recognition within national VET systems without renegotiating quality assurance from first principles.

WHAT TO DO

→ **Map the SIO learning outcomes** against the national qualifications framework and the EQF, so that the qualification is recognized and portable across administrations and Member States.

→ **At European level, support the referencing and portability** of the SIO qualification through the EQF and Europass.

→ **Include the certified pathway in national and regional training catalogues**, using existing statutory training obligations and budgets.

→ **Make institutional endorsement and protected working time** standard conditions for participation, with a completion threshold of 70–80% of training hours.

→ **Preserve the core of the model** (competence framework, certification pathway, multi-layered assessment, challenge-based learning, community of practice) and adapt language, case studies, format and timetable.

Addressed to: *National schools of public administration; regional training bodies; VET providers; public administrations; European Commission*

Recommendation 7 - Support continuous development after certification

WHY IT MATTERS

A single course is not enough to sustain a new professional practice. Participants in the pilot asked for more real-life case studies, interactive exercises, peer learning and time for applied work, and without a structured plan the energy generated by training tends to dissipate within weeks.

The INSPIRE PA Replicability Guidelines identify ways to deepen the model for those already trained: advanced or thematic modules for certified SIOs, coaching and tutoring on live institutional challenges, and the Community of Practice, which already has more than 500 members.

WHAT TO DO

→ **Offer advanced and thematic modules** for certified Social Innovation Officers.

→ **Provide coaching and tutoring** on real challenges after certification.

→ **Recognize participation in communities of practice** as professional development and allow it within working time.

→ **Link the maintenance of the SIO certification** to continuous professional development.

Addressed to: *National schools of public administration; VET providers; public administrations; communities of practice*

C. Career development

Recommendation 8 - Create a career path for Social Innovation Officers

WHY IT MATTERS

A profession without a career does not retain people. The Mapping of 30 practices shows that social innovation is often tied to individual champions and exposed to political discontinuity, and the skills gap study adds that execution-level staff rarely receive formal support for the informal leadership roles they take on.

If the competences sought at recruitment and developed through training are then ignored in progression, the system sends a contradictory message and the most capable officers leave or disengage.

WHAT TO DO

→ **Define progression levels for the SIO profile**, for example from practitioner to coordinator of social innovation processes.

→ **Recognize the ISO 17024 SIO certification in professional development records** and in progression.

→ **Give Social Innovation Officers a formal mandate**, a reporting line to senior management and dedicated time.

Addressed to: *HR directorates; civil service commissions; social partners; national public employment authorities*

Recommendation 9 - Recognize social innovation competences in performance evaluation and mobility for all staff

WHY IT MATTERS

What is evaluated shapes behavior. As long as performance evaluation rewards only procedural compliance, civil servants will have little reason to frame problems with citizens, work across departments or measure social impact, whatever training they receive.

The integration of social innovation competences into job descriptions and performance evaluation is one of the recommendations that emerge from the INSPIRE PA Mapping and Skills Gap studies.

WHAT TO DO

→ **Integrate the five competence domains into public-sector** competence frameworks and performance evaluation criteria, at a level appropriate to each role.

→ **Include applied social innovation results**, such as a co-designed service or an impact assessment, among the achievements that count for evaluation and progression.

→ **Create non-financial incentives**: visibility for applied projects, opportunities to lead internal pilots, participation in cross-departmental teams.

→ **Use the competence framework in internal mobility**, to match people with social innovation competences to the posts that need them.

Addressed to: *HR directorates; civil service commissions; public administrations*

D. Conditions for cultural change

Recommendation 10 - Prepare managers and create room to experiment

WHY IT MATTERS

After training, the main obstacles were organizational, not individual. Internal resistance remained the most frequently reported barrier (32.7%), and the share identifying leadership support as the main barrier rose from 17.2% to 25.0%. Impact measurement is weak: at baseline only 10.3% of participants reported that their institution measures impact consistently.

Managers also decide on training, recruitment and evaluation. If those who approve training plans, sit on selection panels and evaluate staff do not understand the value of social innovation competences, no reform of training or recruitment will hold.

WHAT TO DO

→ **Offer managers a condensed format of the curriculum** focused on Modules 4, 7 and 8 (self-leadership, organizational leadership, evaluation and learning).

→ **Provide formal room for experimentation**: regulatory sandboxes, participatory budgeting and protected pilot phases.

→ **Create cross-departmental structures for specific challenges**. Coordination across departments was the most persistent challenge in all three countries.

→ **Introduce simple routines for measuring social impact** that capture both tangible results and intangible value such as trust and empowerment.

→ **Integrate social innovation objectives and the role of Social Innovation Officers** into the strategic and organizational planning documents of the administration, so that they become part of how the administration is governed.

→ **At European level, use the implementation of ComPAct**, including support through the Technical Support Instrument, to promote managerial training, experimentation spaces and social innovation competences in national administrative reforms.

Addressed to: *Political and administrative leadership of public administrations; national authorities for administrative reform; European Commission (ComPAct)*

Recommendation 11 - Secure stable funding, communities of practice and a shared evidence base

WHY IT MATTERS

The Mapping shows that EU funds enable experimentation but raise sustainability questions once funding ends, and that short-term project cycles are among the main barriers. European instruments already provide channels: the ESF+ and its Social Innovation Initiative, the National Competence Centers for Social Innovation, Erasmus+, and the Commission Communication on Enhancing the European Administrative Space (ComPAct, COM(2023) 667), which treats the professional capability of public servants as a precondition for the green and digital transitions.

Professions and cultural change are sustained by communities and by evidence. Innovators inside administrations often work in isolation; the INSPIRE PA Community of Practice and national networks such as PUBBLICA in Italy show how practitioners can organize around a shared position. The pilot measured results immediately after the course, so long-term changes in practice are not yet known.

WHAT TO DO

→ **Fund recurring training editions, the core module, pre-entry pathways and certification** through a mix of core public budgets, ESF+, cohesion policy and Erasmus+.

→ **Fund a minimum structure for communities of practice** (a facilitator, a communication channel, a calendar of activities) and connect national networks with the European community.

→ **Evaluate training, recruitment and career reforms over time**, including follow-up from six months after certification, and share results, including partial or negative ones.

Addressed to: *European Commission; ESF+ and cohesion policy managing authorities; national and regional governments; public administrations; civil society organizations*

7. Recommendations by level of governance

Recruitment, training and resources are controlled at different levels. The table shows where each recommendation can be acted on.

Recommendation	Local	Regional	National	European
1. Recognize the Social Innovation Officer as an explicit profile in workforce planning and recruitment	●	●	●	●
2. Assess social innovation competences in selection, with diverse and inclusive procedures	●	●	●	
3. Attract new talent, open entry routes and build onboarding around real challenges	●	●	●	
4. Base training needs analysis and training plans on the competence framework	●	●	●	
5. Provide a core social innovation module for all civil servants	●	●	●	
6. Embed the certified SIO pathway in public-sector training systems	●	●	●	●
7. Support continuous development after certification	●	●	●	
8. Create a career path for Social Innovation Officers	●	●	●	
9. Recognize social innovation competences in performance evaluation and mobility for all staff	●	●	●	
10. Prepare managers and create room to experiment	●	●	●	●
11. Secure stable funding, communities of practice and a shared evidence base	●	●	●	●

What each level can do first

→ **Local level.** Municipalities and local authorities can base their training plans on the competence framework, offer the core module to their staff, endorse participation in the certified SIO pathway with protected time, designate Social Innovation Officers and introduce a practice-based step in selection.

→ **Regional level.** Regions can include the core module and the certified pathway in regional training catalogues, organize shared training and recruitment for smaller and rural administrations, and use regional and cohesion programs to fund them. This links social innovation competences directly to sustainable and inclusive regional development.

→ **National level.** Schools of public administration can include the core module and the certified pathway in their catalogues and map them to the national qualifications framework. Public employment authorities and civil service commissions can integrate the competence framework into recruitment rules, competence frameworks, performance evaluation and career progression.

→ **European level.** The European Institutions can include the Social Innovation Officer in ESCO, support the referencing and portability of the SIO qualification through the EQF and Europass, reference social innovation competences in the implementation of ComPAct, support recurring training, continuous development and pre-entry pathways through ESF+ and Erasmus+, involve the National Competence Centers for Social Innovation and support a European community of practice.

8. A suggested sequence

Pilot experience suggests working in sequence rather than through a simultaneous campaign. Each step makes the next one easier.

1. **Adopt the framework as a reference.** Map the SIO competences and learning outcomes against the national qualifications framework and existing public-sector competence frameworks.
2. **Start with training and recruitment together.** Introduce competence-based training plans and the core module in a small number of administrations, and pilot competence-based profiles and practice-based selection for community-facing roles.
3. **Develop and certify.** Offer the certified curriculum to new and serving staff, with endorsement and protected time, and document the results rigorously.
4. **Use the evidence to scale.** Open a dialogue with national schools of public administration, public employment authorities and civil service commissions on catalogue inclusion, recruitment rules and career recognition.

5. Throughout, **use communities of practice as the advocacy platform**. A visible network of practitioners is more persuasive than a project consortium, and it outlasts the project that convened it.

9. Conclusions

INSPIRE PA has shown that social innovation competences can be defined, taught and certified, and that public servants want them. The next question is whether public administrations will look for these competences when they hire, develop them when they train and value them when they promote.

Training, recruitment and career development are three moments of the same policy. Training reaches the people who already work in public institutions and builds a common language; recruitment brings in people who want to work on social challenges with citizens and partners; career systems make sure that these competences are valued over time. Used together, they can change how administrations are structured, how civil servants are prepared and how resources are allocated, turning social innovation from the work of isolated champions into a shared professional practice.

Social innovation in public administration is not a luxury but a democratic necessity. The capacity of public institutions to respond collaboratively and with systemic awareness is a condition for their effectiveness and for citizens' trust. That capacity depends on the people who work in them: how they are trained, recruited and supported over time.

Sources: INSPIRE PA D4.3 Replicability Guidelines (2026), drawing on D2.2 Mapping of Social Innovation Practices in the PA, D2.3 Skills Gap Validation Report, D2.4 Certification Scheme, D2.5 Curriculum for Social Innovation Officers in the PA and D3.4 Evaluation Report of the Pilot Training Program.

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