

RaiSE

***Enhancing social enterprises competitiveness through
improved business support policies***

9th interregional meeting

Project Meeting Report

11 March 2021

Online meeting

OVERVIEW OF THE ONLINE PROJECT MEETING

BACKGROUND

The 9th internal meeting of the RaiSE project took place online on 11 March 2021 from 15h to 17h CET. Originally, the meeting had to take place in Barcelona, together with the final dissemination event. However, the Covid-19 emergency altered the initial plans: the meeting had to be shortened and celebrated online. However, it did not alter the scheduled content: partners met online to exchange and draw conclusions on the two years of action plan implementation.

The meeting had the following agenda:

- Project closure (lead partner).
- Conclusions on the project (all partners).
- Extending RaiSE for one year: new call for additional activities approved (all partners).

Project closure

Paula Santarén and Montse Surrallés (ACCIÓ) welcomed the RaiSE project partners via Microsoft Teams meeting and explained them in detail the process of the project closure:

Financial management and reporting

PR7 and project closure



Reporting period	Deadline Submission to LP	Deadline Submission to JS (LP)
PR7 1 Jul 2020 – 30 Jun 2021	31 May 2021	30 June 2021

31/03/2021 - Activities of the project should be closed (including first level control). All related expenses (including staff costs and first level control costs) must be paid. This should be the real deadline for the eligibility of expenses.

The last three months of the project should be exclusively dedicated to the administrative closure.

To sum up...

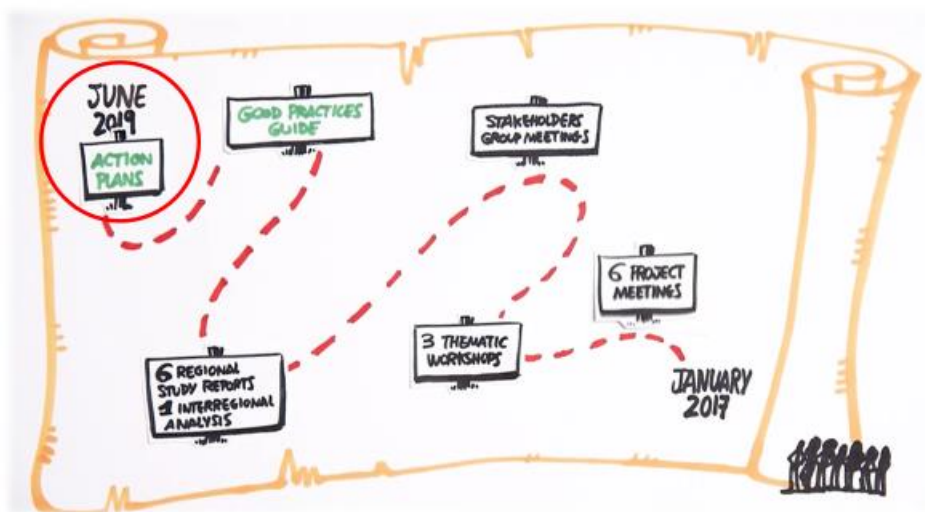
1. All activities finalised and costs paid by project end date.
2. All partners comply with the on-the-spot check requirement.
3. All expenditure linked to the project has been certified by a FLC and included in a PR.
4. All project documents are archived by all partners: in principle 2 years after 31 December 2021.
5. Keep updating the website with any results.

Interreg Europe's webinar on project closure ([link](#))

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Project management

Where are we?



7

Main activities



SUMMARISE THE LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT OF ACTION PLANS

- Template “Report on policy instruments for Progress Report 7”
send to ACCIÓ by 31 May 2021

REGULAR UPDATES OF THE PROJECT WEBSITE WITH INFO ON ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

when you can until 30 June 2021

8

The “policy change” issue

In case the PP did not manage to achieve a policy change:

- Explanation on the reasons why they could not reached any improvements in the policy instrument addressed in the application form / action plan and what are the next steps to get into this direction.
- Information on the current policy developments and the ways they found to ensure that the lessons learnt from the cooperation are not lost regardless of the policy framework concerned.

9

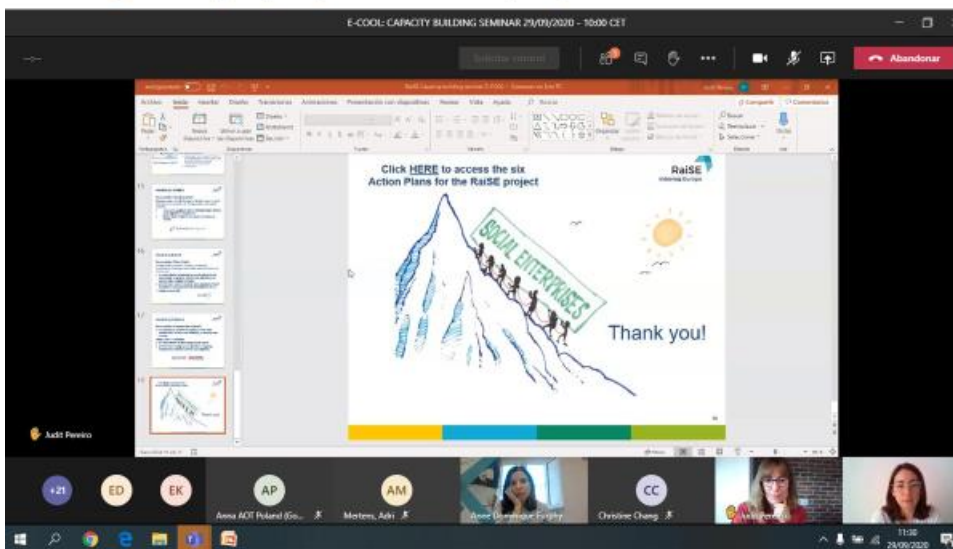
Communication

“Conference on social enterprises” Region Örebro County, September 2020



3

“Capacity building seminar on designing AP” Interreg Europe project E-COOL, September 2020



“Raising social economy through EU projects” European Social Economy Summit, November 2020



5

Conclusions on the RaiSE project

P7 – Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) – advisory partner

In general, from my perspective as an advisory partner I would like to say that the impacts achieved in RaiSE are exceeding the expectations one could have in such a project. All regions were highly motivated and engaged very well within their stakeholder ecosystems and between each other. This resulted in increased social and relational capital as well as policy learning and even the transfer and replication of ideas between the regions. These impacts are especially apparent in Örebro, Western Ireland and Emilia-Romagna. All three regions established the third sector, incl. social enterprises, as central elements in their development strategies. Örebro is now leading the development in the Swedish context, Western Ireland pushed and supported the development of a national Social Enterprise Strategy as a foundation for inclusion of support instruments in the next ERDF operational programme and Emilia-Romagna inserted social economy within the smart specialization strategy. While all six regions achieved significant improvements, these three examples will shape the regional sectors and support policies in the coming years. This success can be attributed to mainly two factors, 1) the consortium has been assembled in an excellent manner including actors that are not only in the position to either change or at least influence policy but were 2) also highly motivated to improve their regional contexts. The second factor, which unfortunately is not given in any European project, is the direct result of the excellent project coordination of the ACCIÓ team.

In regards to the process, I would like to share the following insights and stress that this is meant as a constructive feedback with the hope that some aspects of it could be taken up in

future programmes. Especially, as Interreg Europe is probably the most interesting programme in this family. In the original proposal we planned a more sophisticated research approach which unfortunately got cancelled by the JS during the application form process. I think that this more ambitious process would have benefited the regions and would have improved policy intelligence and evidence-base. Further, the application forms leave not much room for adaptation of approaches within the project. The criticism – while not new – that one basically needs to define specific actions (e.g. a workshop) years in advance, is true to some extent and does not fit the dynamics of a complex project like this. The regional study – as an example – built on a survey that was launched within the first weeks of RaiSE and no further research instruments were foreseen in final the application form. In this survey we learned that the regions are varying significantly in many ways and that their requirements towards this project were totally different. We as an advisory partner however, had a very limited capacity to adjust to these requirements in terms of actions and methods. In general, this in my opinion highlights the need for more flexible work plans during such a project. This is also closely related to the impact measurement in terms of the changes in the identified policy instrument. While it is obvious that the region of Western Ireland did achieve a lot in direct relation to the overall goal of the RaiSE project, they had to report that the policy instrument (ERDF OP from last period) was not changed. However, changing this instrument close before expiring would not have been an impact outside the programme logic. Finally, one cannot provide input about Interreg project implementation without criticising the reporting and FLC requirements and procedures – it is going beyond what is appropriate, constructive and ultimately the waste of resources it claims to avoid.

P6 – Region Örebro County

The RaiSE-project has been of great importance for Region Örebro County. When the RaiSE project started in 2017, Region Örebro County was a beginner in terms of supporting social enterprises. This was definitely not a prioritized topic on the political agenda. The current regional development strategy did not mention social enterprises at all. Compared with other regional authorities in Sweden, Region Örebro County was not unique in any way. The vast majority of regional authorities in Sweden did not acknowledge social enterprises as important components in the different regional innovation systems. Also, the Swedish government was extremely silent on this topic at the time. In parallel with the RaiSE project, Region Örebro County had begun the development of a policy on civil society and social economy and also started the revision of the regional development strategy. In 2018. Based on the experiences from the RaiSE-project, social enterprises were introduced in these two policies. The policy change has been important for Region Örebro County. Now there are official policies stating that social enterprises are important corner stones in the development of the county. Region Örebro County has succeeded in bringing social enterprises on the agenda and given them a political priority. And the support system for social enterprises is being developed in different ways, where the Partnership for social innovation in Örebro County plays an important role.

P5 – ART-ER

From ART-ER side, the success of RaiSE is linked to the established and strengthened collaboration, since the very beginning of the project, with the public and private representatives of the Emilia-Romagna social economy ecosystem. The stakeholders actively supported the selection of the social enterprises to be included in the mapping and gap analysis exercise, helping ART-ER in the identification of the main obstacles that prevent their competitiveness. The field research activity (more than 20 vis a vis interviews were organized) highlighted the liveliness of social economy fabric in Emilia-Romagna, which is constituted by several interesting case studies. Within the RaiSE project, ART-ER and the project stakeholders selected three good practices related to working inclusion and circular economy (Agriculture is social: employment & environmental strategies lead to the birth of a market oriented social enterprise), collaboration between social enterprises and for-profit companies (“How the application of the Emilia-Romagna Regional Law n. 17/2005 for the employment of disabled people promotes a virtuous relation between profit & no-profit sectors encouraging social enterprises competitiveness”) and research and social needs (When social needs merge with research, innovation and environmental sustainability).

Beside the identification of success stories, and their valorization at Regional and European level, the project’s Action Plan has been the starting point for the launch of the ROP ESF call “Skills for Social Innovation”. For the first time, the Emilia-Romagna Region published a call specifically dedicated to social innovation and social enterprises were clearly mentioned among the beneficiaries. 1.5 million euros have been devoted to training and tutoring activities on different topics related to social innovation (sustainability of products and processes, innovative services for elderly and vulnerable people, digitalization and development of managerial skills in social enterprises) and 22 operations were approved.

Moreover thanks to the RaiSE results and spillovers the Working Group has been involved in the elaboration of the Regional S3 where Social Innovation social economy has been included and it is now contributing to the elaboration of the ERDF and ESF + Operational Plans.

RaiSE generated a multiplier effect also in the creation of new partnerships, events, and projects. From 2017 to 2021, ART-ER has been involved in three European projects: ESSI project (Horizon 2020), IMPACT AGENCIES (Horizon 2020) and RESET (COSME) and published three reports (Social enterprises ecosystem in Emilia-Romagna, Cohesion policy: promoting a social innovation ecosystem and Emilia-Romagna: people and enterprises make it social).

The project allowed the creation of a pan european community of practice among the partners and the respective stakeholders creating a solid base for present and future effective collaboration.

The lesson learned from RaiSE, and to be implemented in future collaborations, is to keep the focus on social enterprises. A dialogue with the associations of cooperatives and third sector entities is essential for a context overview, but one-to-one relations with social enterprises is strategic for a more concrete approach able to meet their real expectations.

P4 – Scottish Enterprise

The RaiSE programme significantly helped us to focus and structure stakeholder engagement to ensure dialogue and co-production of the Scottish action plan was inclusive and thorough.

The study visits were incredibly valuable. The international exchange of experience, opportunities and challenges were very important in developing an understanding and appreciation of the sector both during our visits to the range of projects across our partner regions and also through the feedback and questions of our international partners when we were hosting our visit in Edinburgh.

The opportunity to fully engage stakeholders through the RaiSE programme of requirements has had longstanding benefits for the Scottish sector. Positive feedback and ability to showcase our good practice has confirmed the value and appeal of key funded actions and secured further investment and commitment from the public sector.

The programme was mutually beneficial (I hope). Both to share the more mature elements of our policy landscape with other programme partners but also to gather information from other environments regarding policy and practice, and to feed that back into our own micro and macro evaluations.

The Good Practices that we put forward benefitted from the positive feedback and the research done helped to inform improved practice and objectives

On the improvement side, I feel that the paperwork did not add significant value. Reporting is systems-led and, rather than reflect a true account of the experience and developments experienced as a result of the rich experience, requires those experiences to be fitted to size and reshaped to meet the expectations of the JS, even if the account ends of being diluted or inaccurate.

P3 – Innovation & Management Centre Limited (WestBIC)

The application to become part of the RaiSE consortium and its subsequent approval coincided with a movement within Ireland to finally recognise the excellent work of the Social Enterprise sector and enshrine it within a policy framework at national level. To develop a policy substantial consultation with the sector took place together with much inter-departmental consultation at Government level. All this culminated in the publication of Ireland's first ever "National Social Enterprise Policy" and the assignment of the SE sector to a specific Government Department. The consultation process included a lot of discussion re definition of SEs, understanding SEs and their roles vis a vie standard enterprises and it highlighted in particular the lack of information available on how many SE's were actually in existence.

This environment provided an opportunity for RaiSE to engage with the key stakeholders who were helping to formulate policy, undertake a comprehensive mapping exercise for the North West Region of Ireland and provide Regional Stakeholder Group members with the opportunity to visit partner regions and learn the state of play in each. This internationalisation aspect was completed with the partner meeting in Westport where partners and stakeholders were able to

present to the Irish Government representative a comprehensive picture of what was happening in their respective regions. This has all led to everyone involved having a greater understanding of the SE ecosystem in other countries.

An important aspect of this ecosystem is to have an understanding of the way SEs are financed. The 2 Good Practice submissions from Ireland dealt with financing through Government support (Pobal CSP programme) and Social Financing via religious institutions (Clann Credo) and proved to be an inspiration for other partners to investigate the feasibility of similar models in their own regions.

On an administrative level the management of the RaiSE project by ACCIÓ was excellent both financially and operationally. Communication was regular, clear and highly supportive leading to a very positive engagement between partners and LP and across the partnership.

P2 – IFKA Public Benefit Non-Profit Ltd for the Development of the Industry

The RaiSE project provided several specific tools to the partners ensuring the direct learning from the cooperation:

- Project meetings
- National Stakeholder meetings
- Interregional exchange activities
- Reports on key findings resulting from interregional exchange activities
- Project meeting reports
- Regional study reports
- Interregional analysis report of SE policy instruments and support infrastructure

On national level IFKA identified specific policy gaps in the Regional Study Report (Study on the social enterprises ecosystem in Hungary) which could be filled through the development of the targeted policy instrument:

- Access to finance is still limited in case of SEs in Hungary. Social enterprises are still in need of both financial and non-financial assistance in order to establish their financial sustainability that is still questionable.
- Social enterprises are closely linked to the EU funding cycles, that further weakens the sector in terms of financial sustainability in the long-run as the distance between social enterprises and the market is still considerable.
- New types of financial support are missing. Social banking is only in its initial phase, SEs are hardly prepared and capable for impact investment, financial instruments allocated by public-private collaborations, foundations, angel investors, venture capital and private equity investors are immature, crowdfunding is barely known and used for financing social business activities.

Based upon the experiences of Scottish and Irish partners, the Hungarian action plan intended to improve the EDIOP Priority 8 NSO 17.1 policy instrument through the development of the EDIOP-8.8.1-17-2017 financial instrument. Based on the challenges and gaps detected and

mapped by the RaiSE project in Hungary regarding the operation of social enterprises in the country, the Hungarian regional action plan aimed at achieving the following goals:

- On the demand side of the EDIOP-8.8.1-17-2017-00001 financial instrument the plan intended to improve the financial instrument related knowledge, financial management capacities and credit-openness of the target group (non-profit, mission driven social enterprises, social cooperatives and SMEs with remarkable social impact).
- On the supply side of the financial instrument the plan targeted the increase of the openness of banks, credit institutions and financial intermediaries being responsible for the financial instrument towards social enterprises

Both interventions served the better access of non-profit, mission driven social enterprises, social cooperatives and SMEs with remarkable social impact to the EDIOP-8.8.1-17 financial instrument in order to increase its absorption, employment efficiency and social impact, that is the general objective of the action plan.

LP – Catalan Agency for Business Competitiveness (ACCIÓ)

Social economy has a strong tradition in Catalonia. Over the last 30 years, many foundations, associations, cooperatives and work integration social enterprises have been created in Catalonia. Today social economy accounts for 2.2% of the GPD of Catalonia and comprises almost 10,000 organisations, employs more than 180,000 people and has 2.1 million users. Social enterprises (SE) have played a vital role in the Catalan economy, working in partnership with the public sector in order to provide social services to vulnerable groups while also producing goods or services with a social objective.

Thanks to the Study on the SE ecosystem in Catalonia, carried out in the frame of the RaiSE project, we figured out that the constant efforts to improve the rate of new social entrepreneurial activity have been unsuccessful: only 12.5% of the Catalan SE were born in the last two years. Most SE in Catalonia (more than 50%) are mature organisations operating for 10 years or more, which have proven resilient to the economic crisis. However, the new dynamics after the economic downturn have highlighted the need for accessing new markets and the revision of their business models in order to ensure sustainability. In fact, the main drawbacks that Catalan SE identify are the harsh conditions of the market (45% of them state that) and competitiveness in the market (40%). To smooth these difficulties, it is important that the public sector offers tailored-made services to SE to facilitate their internationalisation process and boost their competitiveness.

In the policy instrument (the Support Plan for the Third Social Sector) some training and business advisory services are missed, considering the specific barriers and constraints to the development of social enterprises. Thanks to the exchange of experiences within the RaiSE project, that led to the elaboration of the Action Plan for Catalonia, the stakeholders involved in the policy instrument (especially, on the part of the Government of Catalonia, the Directorate-General for the Social Economy, Third Sector, Cooperatives and Self-employment and

ACCIÓ) will carry out new initiatives and reformulate existing programmes to enhance social enterprises competitiveness in Catalonia, inspired in the learnings from the other partnering regions, in particular, new financial support for social enterprises inspired by the Irish good practice for RaiSE “Clann Credo” and an improvement of the internationalisation services from ACCIÓ inspired by the Scottish support system for social enterprises.

Besides, a very important effect of the RaiSE project in Catalonia is that it has contributed to a better governance in the ecosystem of stakeholders dealing with social economy competitiveness in Catalonia: sharing study visits, meetings, workshops and, basically, spending time together focusing on the topic of the project has made coordination smoother and has led to proposing new initiatives and outcomes that without RaiSE wouldn't have been possible.

On the coordination aspect of the project, for me it has been a pleasure coordinating such a committed and proactive partnership. It was always easy to work together and the slogan “we RaiSE this project all together” was perfectly true every day. I hope that there will be more opportunities to work together in the future.

Extending RaiSE for one year: new call for additional activities approved

The partnership decided unanimously to submit a proposal to the JS to extend the project for one year, with the following objective: further exchange experiences on the impact of Covid-19 on business support policies to social enterprises, in coherence and continuity with RaiSE project's results. Our proposal will be to frame it as "resilience in and through the sector" - why it is important to support social enterprises competitiveness and how to build a fitting support system.

PARTICIPANTS LIST (Project partners)

LP – Catalan Agency for Business Competitiveness (ACCIÓ)

1. Paula Santarén Rodríguez
2. Montse Surrallés

P2 – IFKA Public Benefit Non-Profit Ltd for the Development of the Industry

1. Áron Jakab
2. Anna Mészáros

P3 – Innovation & Management Centre Limited (WestBIC)

1. Seamus McCormack
2. James Donlon

P4 – Scottish Enterprise

1. Darah Zahran

P5 – ART-ER

1. Roberta dall'Olio
2. Alessandra Medici

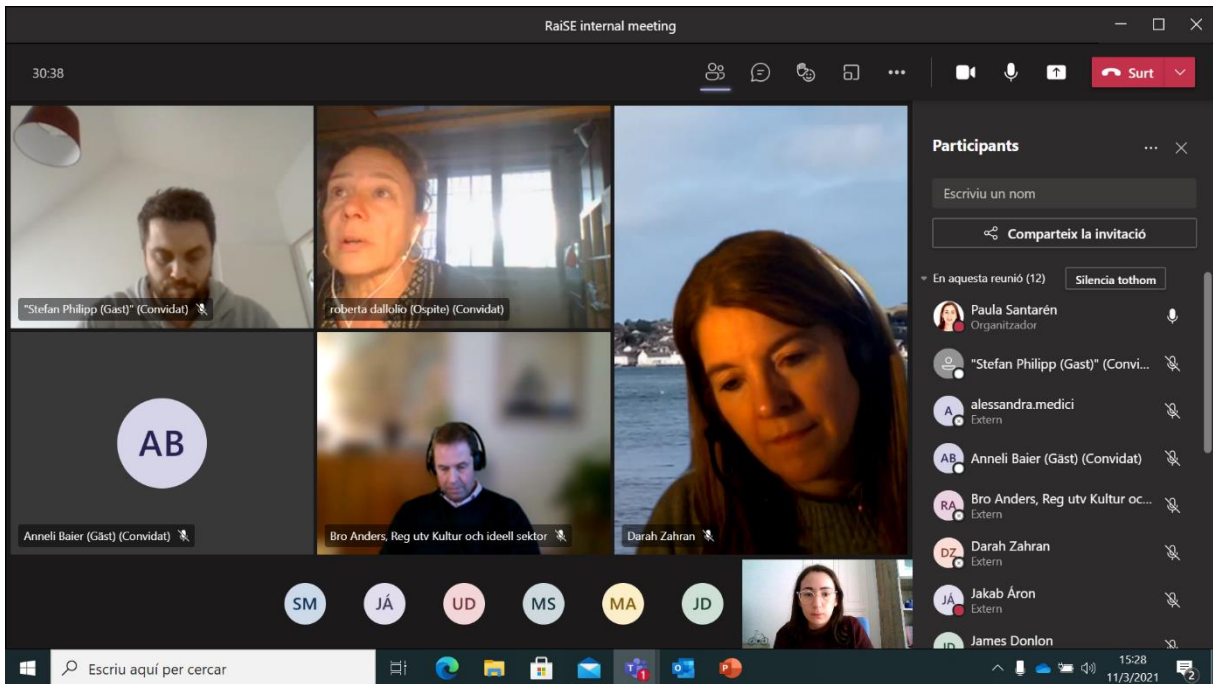
P6 – Region Örebro County

1. Anders Bro
2. Anneli Baier

P7 – Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI)

1. Stefan Philipp





RaISE internal meeting

30:38

Stefan Philipp (Gäst) (Convidat)

roberta dallolio (Ospite) (Convidat)

Anneli Baier (Gäst) (Convidat)

Bro Anders, Reg utv Kultur och ideell sektor

Darah Zahran

Participants

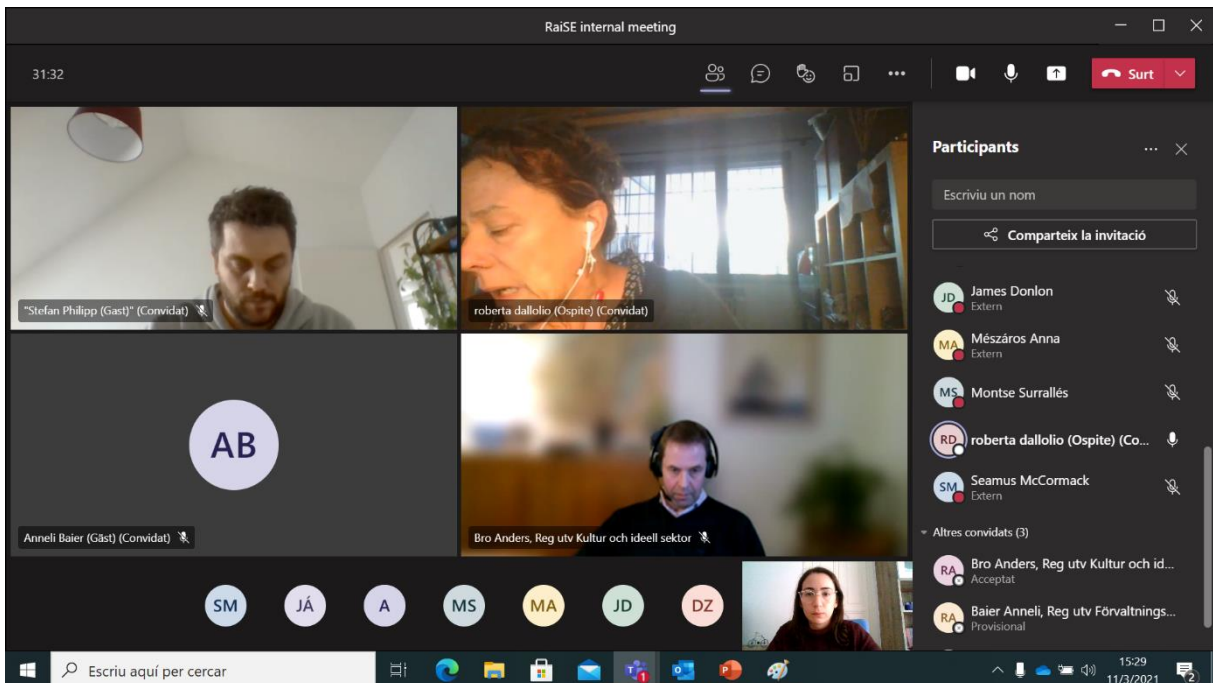
En aquesta reunió (12)

- Paula Santarén (Organizador)
- "Stefan Philipp (Gäst)" (Convi...)
- alessandra.medici (Extern)
- Anneli Baier (Gäst) (Convidat)
- Bro Anders, Reg utv Kultur oc... (Extern)
- Darah Zahran (Extern)
- Jakob Áron (Extern)
- James Donlon

SM JÁ UD MS MA JD

Escriu aquí per cercar

15:28 11/3/2021



RaISE internal meeting

31:32

"Stefan Philipp (Gäst)" (Convidat)

roberta dallolio (Ospite) (Convidat)

Anneli Baier (Gäst) (Convidat)

Bro Anders, Reg utv Kultur och ideell sektor

Participants

En aquesta reunió (12)

- James Donlon (Extern)
- Mészáros Anna (Extern)
- Montse Surrallés
- roberta dallolio (Ospite) (Co...)
- Seamus McCormack (Extern)
- Bro Anders, Reg utv Kultur och id... (Acceptat)
- Baier Anneli, Reg utv Förvaltnings... (Provisional)

Altres convidats (3)

SM JÁ A MS MA JD DZ

Escriu aquí per cercar

15:29 11/3/2021

ACCIÓ



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ZENTRUM FÜR SOZIALE INNOVATION
CENTRE FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

