

More than profit: a collaborative economy with a social purpose

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Why did we select this research?

While for-profit companies in the sharing economy have actively sought to demonstrate their impact and lobby for favourable conditions, comparatively little has been said about the specificities of socially driven initiatives and platforms. These initiatives need more attention from policymakers, researchers and funders. The insights of this research are highly relevant as the authors identify key opportunities and challenges facing the social purpose sharing economy and propose recommendations to encourage social impact.

Key findings

Opportunities include reducing cost of delivering and increasing the scale and reach of initiatives that address social challenges. Alongside this, examples from our study have demonstrated how collaborative models can help develop more flexible solutions to niche or local needs, while involving new people, assets, and skills. The main challenge is to ensure access and equality in the collaborative economy, as online collaborative economy market places favour those with disposable income or assets as well as those who have digital skills.

The authors have identified a number of recommendations to support and encourage the development of Europe's social purpose collaborative economy. These include the following:

- Identify barriers to uptake of social purpose collaborative economy models, and consider how they can be addressed. Invest in infrastructure solutions that make it easier for organisations to engage with and use collaborative models to address social challenges.

- Capture and spread best practice across Europe and promote collaboration between collaborative economy practitioners and movements/organisations with a social mission. Building on this, invest in supportive infrastructures such as training and skills development common infrastructures, spaces and other forms of support to enable more people and organisations to develop the skills and capacity needed to make the most of collaborative economy models.
- Fund research and pilots that develop an understanding of both the social and financial impacts of social purpose models and establish metrics which measure impact more systematically.

Reference

European Commission (2016). *More than profit: a collaborative economy with a social purpose. Preliminary review of how collaborative economy models can help address social challenges in Europe and the characteristics of current activities*. Retrieved from: <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/18443>.
