



# EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF

## INTERNATIONAL ROUND TABLE



This Policy Brief provides a description of the results of the International Round Table (IRT) that was held on April 20<sup>th</sup> 2016 in Brussels (Belgium). The IRT provided an intermediary assessment of the progress on policy advice in the SI-DRIVE project.

Steven Dhondt (TNO), Matthias Weber (AIT)

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## INTRODUCTION

The SI-DRIVE project is aimed at developing a theory of social innovation. This theory helps to underpin policy action of the EU and of national and other policy makers. The understanding of the concept and framework of social innovation leads to targeted policy support for social innovations and for upscaling social innovations. To bridge the step from theory to policy, the SI-DRIVE project works with a policy and foresight work package (WP11) exploring future perspectives for social innovation (foresight) and identifying policy options for different policy levels. This means that the research results of the first theoretical and empirical phase of SI-DRIVE were enriched and further developed through policy and foresight workshops within seven policy fields of SI-DRIVE. The International Round Table (IRT) was an important step further in assessing and evaluating these and the other results collected during the SI-DRIVE project so far. The IRT led to three kinds of results:

- A validation of the first round of policy and foresight workshop results within the seven policy fields. This means that the IRT looked at the results (in the form of central questions) and gave external expert judgement on these results.
- The IRT helped to identify cross-policy field and cross-country/continent issues and trends in these results.
- The IRT helped to identify which other kind of policy action is needed to create a cross-sectoral ecosystem that fosters social innovation, unlock the potential of social innovation, empower citizen engagement, and evaluate where and how upscaling is possible

The work of the IRT drew on first analyses of the SI-DRIVE results. They led to an assessment of possible futures with a significant uptake and upscaling of social innovations, as well as of the drivers and barriers to get there, and to advice to policy makers on how to deal with these drivers

and barriers in seven different policy fields (education and lifelong learning, employment, environment and climate change, transport and mobility, health and social care, poverty reduction and sustainable development).

This Policy Brief gives an overview of the conclusions of this IRT that was held on April 20th 2016 in Brussels with twelve renowned experts and leading senior (policy) practitioners from different parts of Europe - with the background of EU-policies and integration of social innovation in European and policy field related strategies; national policies; and domain knowledge about social innovation, possibilities for up-scaling, future trends.

## EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

Five main questions were discussed: (1) the aims of Social Innovation, (2) the policy approach needed to support Social Innovation, (3&4) the impact of Social Innovation and the societal support for Social Innovation and (5) the international differences in supporting social innovations.

- (1) The IRT developed a nuanced view on the aims of Social Innovation. Social innovation tends to start locally, but while some social innovations remain deeply embedded in their respective local context, others are sufficiently flexible to scale up and diffuse more widely. Moreover, the development of Social Innovation often requires connecting with other complementary initiatives, and to be aware of relevant technological innovation that are very often closely tied to Social Innovations. Up-scaling of Social Innovations is, however, not a neutral process, but tends to change the nature of the initiative itself. This makes the subject complicated and difficult to handle for policy makers: a flexible and adaptive approach is suggested, combining bottom-up processes with a limited degree of regulation and support, in order to avoid too early institutionalisation, which may block the development of alternative social innovations. The participants acknowledged that current political environments still have great difficulty in finding the right balanced support for Social Innovation.
- (2) The second question deals with the right policy approach to support Social Innovation. In general terms, public policy should follow the action in the field and not take a too 'directive' position. While locally embedded Social Innovation is best supported by conducive framework conditions that enable the emergence of Social Innovations, the upscaling and diffusion of Social Innovations can also benefit from more targeted measures to facilitate knowledge exchange, mutual learning, professionalization and (timely) institutionalisation. The IRT insisted on using and strengthening network building at local level and beyond for Social Innovation. Policy makers should mainly be 'additive' to actions from social innovators, for instance by supporting the building of a shared understanding among stakeholders to enhance Social Innovation, or by strengthening the absorptive capacity of public administration to draw on Social innovations more substantially in its initiatives. This rather 'ancillary' role for policy means that sustainable Social Innovation cannot be the responsibility of policy makers alone (although in some regions of Europe this may be the case), but should be in the actions of the social innovators themselves. Of course, social innovations are not standard solutions and require broader support and development systems, *ecosystems*.
- (3&4) The impact and the societal support questions were dealt with in one discussion. The general opinion is that societal support for Social Innovation should be quite comprehensive. It can range from various forms of financial and in-kind support to the provision of a 'playground' for experimenting with Social Innovations. A simple and straightforward approach is certainly not easily available, in particular in view of the noteworthy differences across policy fields. Supporting Social Innovation requires considerable funds, the right knowledge, capacity building, specific funding possibilities, and innovative environment and support structures.
- (5) Social innovations are context specific, which is why there is no simple recipe for supporting their emergence and upscaling. There are major global differences between different kinds of social innovations and supporting them. In particular, the extent to which well-established public institutions can play a supportive role for Social Innovation matters a lot for the balance between private sector and civil society initiatives on the one hand, and public sector initiatives on the other hand. In both cases, a long-term policy approach is needed to first understand the patterns and context conditions of Social Innovation, and second to develop a differentiated

approach to fostering Social Innovation in a network of public, private and civil actors and stakeholders.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The IRT brought an intermediate assessment of the progress in formulating policy recommendations for Social Innovation. This first IRT was therefore not focused on delivering final recommendations for policy makers. These results can only be expected during the fourth year of SI-DRIVE, in 2017.

The IRT has however led to a confirmation of the current SI-DRIVE results. The policy field reports and data analyses showed that Social Innovation is a multidimensional phenomenon, not easily channelled into standards and policies. Social innovators are wary of top-down support measures, but they are at the same time quite dependent on financial and other institutional support. The IRT supported the nuanced view on the Social Innovation concept developed in the SI-DRIVE project and the multi-lateral policy approach suggested by the policy and foresight workshops.

The separate discussion brought several suggestions to the forefront that need to be investigated in the 70 in-depth case studies (second empirical phase of SI-DRIVE). Social Innovation is an unclear and sometimes ambiguous phenomenon, and this should stand out in the case studies. The interplay between the activities of social innovators, the use of technology, the role of financial and other support, factors of success and failure as well as mechanisms leading to social change should be central in the case studies. Also the global differences should appear when looking at the cases: the cases should show how social innovators act differently in different contexts. Broad support systems are needed to help social innovations become sustainable and up-scaled, requiring an ecosystem approach from policy. Maintaining successful social innovations needs considerable support (infra)structures and ecosystems, the right knowledge, capacity building and appropriate and specific funding possibilities.

The recommendations coming out of the International Round Table, together with all the other results of the project, will be fed into the next seven policy field workshops and a second International Round Table in 2017.

## RESEARCH PARAMETERS

**Social Innovation – Driving Force of Social Change**, in short **SI-DRIVE**, is a research project aimed at extending knowledge about social innovation (SI) in three major directions:

- Integrating theories and research methodologies to advance understanding of social innovation leading to a comprehensive new paradigm of innovation.
- Undertaking European and global mapping of social innovation, thereby addressing different social, economic, cultural, historical and religious contexts in eight major world regions.
- Ensuring relevance for policy makers and practitioners through in-depth analyses and case studies in seven policy fields, with cross European and world region comparisons, foresight and policy round tables.

SI-DRIVE involves 15 partners from 12 EU Member States and 10 partners from all continents, accompanied by 13 advisory board members, all in all covering 30 countries all over the world. Research is dedicated to seven major policy fields: (1) Education (2) Employment (3) Environment and climate change (4) Energy (5) Transport and mobility (6) Health and social care (7) Poverty reduction and sustainable development.

The approach adopted ensures cyclical iteration between theory development, methodological improvements, and policy recommendations. Two mapping exercises at the European and the global level are carried out in the frame of SI-DRIVE: Initial mapping captures basic information of about 1000+ actual social innovations from a wide variety of sources worldwide, leading to a typology of social innovation. Subsequent mapping will use the typology to focus on well documented social innovation, leading to the selection of 70 cases for in-depth analysis in the seven SI-DRIVE policy areas. These case studies will be further analysed, used in stakeholder dialogues in seven policy field platforms and in analysis of cross-cutting dimensions (e.g. gender, diversity, ICT), carefully taking into account cross-sector relevance (private, public, civil sectors), and future impact.



Up to now, five key dimensions (summarised in the following figure) are mainly structuring the theoretical and empirical work:

The outcomes of SI-DRIVE will cover a broad range of research dimensions, in particular those dealing with changing society and empowerment, and with contributing to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

## PROJECT IDENTITY

<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	SI-DRIVE - Social Innovation: Driving Force of Social Change.
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	Antonius Schröder, Jürgen Howaldt, Technische Universität Dortmund, Germany schroeder@sfs-dortmund.de
<b>CONSORTIUM</b>	<p>Technische Universität Dortmund – Sozialforschungsstelle (Social Research Centre) - TUDO -, Dortmund, Germany (Coordinator)</p> <p>Applied Research and Communications Fund – ARCF -, Sofia, Bulgaria</p> <p>Australian Centre for Innovation - ACIIC -, Sydney, Australia</p> <p>Austrian Institute of Technology – AIT -, Vienna, Austria</p> <p>Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, University of Cape Town – UCT-, Rondebosch Cape Town, South Africa</p> <p>Brunel University – UBRUN -, London, United Kingdom</p> <p>Centre de recherche sur l'innovation sociale, Center for research on social innovation University of Quebec - CRISES -, Montreal, Canada</p> <p>Corporation Somos Más - SOMOSMAS -, Bogota, Colombia</p> <p>Heliopolis University - HU -, Cairo, Egypt</p> <p>Istanbul Teknik Universitesi - ITU –, Istanbul, Turkey</p> <p>Institut Arbeit und Technik / Institute for Work and Technology, Westfälische Fachhochschule Gelsenkirchen – IAT -, Gelsenkirchen, Germany</p> <p>Institute of Socio-Economic Development of Territories of the Russian Academy of Sciences - ISEDT RAS -, Vologda, Russian Federation</p> <p>International Organisation for Knowledge Economy and Enterprise Development, FORENINGEN - IKED -, Malmö, Sweden</p> <p>Kazimiero Simonavičiaus Universitetas - KSU -, Vilnius, Lithuania</p> <p>LABORATORIJ ZA DRUSTVENE INOVACIJE UDRUGE, social innovation lab - SIL -, Zagreb, Croatia</p> <p>Lama Development and Cooperation Agency - LAMA -, Florence, Italy</p> <p>Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research – TNO -, Leiden, The Netherlands</p>

Ryerson University - RU -, Toronto, Canada  
Tata Institute of Social Sciences - TISS -, Mumbai, India  
The Young Foundation – YF -, London, United Kingdom  
United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean - ECLAC -, Santiago de Chile, Chile  
Universidad de la Iglesia de Deusto o - UDEUSTO –, Bilbao, Spain  
University Danubius Galati - UDG -, Galati, Romania  
Zentrum für Soziale Innovation / Centre for Social Innovation Vienna – ZSI -, Vienna, Austria  
Zhejiang University Hangzhou - ZJU -, Hangzhou, China (People's Republic of)

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**FUNDING SCHEME**

FP7 Programme for Research of the European Union – Collaborative project Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities SSH.2013.3.2-1 Social Innovation – empowering people, changing societies?

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**DURATION**

January 2004 – December 2017 (48 months).

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**BUDGET**

EU contribution: 4 888 551.20 €

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**WEBSITE**

[www.si-drive.eu](http://www.si-drive.eu).

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Contact : Steven Dhondt (TNO), [steven.dhondt@tno.nl](mailto:steven.dhondt@tno.nl)  
Contact : Matthias Weber (AIT), [matthias.weber@ait.ac.at](mailto:matthias.weber@ait.ac.at)

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**FURTHER READING**

SI-DRIVE Policy Briefs on Social Innovation in Employment, Environment, Energy Supply, Transport and Mobility, Health and Social Care, and Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development <http://www.si-drive.eu/?p=1934>  
SI-DRIVE Newsletter ([http://www.si-drive.eu/?page\\_id=333](http://www.si-drive.eu/?page_id=333))  
Dhondt, Steven / Weber, Matthias 2016: POLICY BRIEF international Round Table, Deliverable 11.4 of SI-DRIVE, available at [www.si-drive.eu](http://www.si-drive.eu)