EUROPEAN
POLICYBRIEF

INTERNATIONAL ROUND TABLE

This Policy Brief provides a description of the results of the International Round Table (IRT) that was held on June 13th 2017 in Brussels (Belgium). The IRT provided a final assessment on policy recommendations in the SI-DRIVE project. Based on this assessment ten recommendations to develop supporting policies for social innovations were elaborated, taking into account that social innovators offer opportunities to tackle our major societal challenges and social demands.

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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 and upscaling of 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 different theoretical and empirical activities of SI-DRIVE are enriched and further developed through policy and foresight workshops within seven policy fields of SI-DRIVE. The International Round Table (IRT) is an important last step in assessing and evaluating these and the other results collected during the SI-DRIVE project. The final IRT led to three kinds of results:

- A better understanding of the relationship between policy and social innovation;
- The importance of policy support for social innovation;
- Recommendations for policy makers at the national and EU-level, taking into account the policy context.

The work of the IRT drew on the final analyses of the SI-DRIVE results. The IRT reflected on some core results of SI-DRIVE. Based on the insights gained in the different policy fields, the presentations by the SI-DRIVE team focused on the role of policy for fostering social innovations, with the ambition to tackle social problems. The discussion was conducted in such a way that a set of core recommendations for policy makers developed by the SI-DRIVE team could be evaluated

by the participants. The workshop finished with the role of EU policy in supporting social innovation.

This Policy Brief gives an overview of the conclusions of this IRT that was held on June 13th 2017 in Brussels with 19 renowned experts and leading senior (policy) practitioners from different parts of Europe - with the background of EU-policies and use of social innovation; domain knowledge about social innovation, possibilities for upscaling and future trends; and from the DGs of the European Commission. The participants to the IRT were engaged in an interactive discussion with the SI-DRIVE team. Using an electronic voting system, all participants could give and explain their opinions.

EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

The majority of the IRT members sees social innovation as an important means to achieve social change in the policy fields energy, mobility and transport, poverty reduction and sustainable development, employment, health and social care, education and life-long learning, environment and climate change. The results of 82 case studies helped the IRT understand that social innovations show quite different development paths and dynamics. Social innovations are heterogeneous, and their potential impact remains under-exploited. Social innovations exert an influence on the policy fields, but our understanding of how strong this influence as compared to other determinants is remains limited. The IRT insisted on even more impact assessment of these social innovations, in order to demonstrate more convincingly the significant role played by social innovation.

A second discussion round focused on which type of support would be needed for social innovations. The opinion of the experts was that currently too much attention is directed at start-ups, but too little at the scale-up phase. This requires a re-orientation of policy makers towards evidence building, but also towards a rethinking of their own role. Social innovations need breathing space.

If national policies should support social innovations, what is left to the EU-level? The conclusion of this discussion was that the EU certainly can help in delivering more resources to social innovators, but this role should not be limited to that. It is equally important that the EU helps to deliver better concepts, information and examples of social innovations. It should be clear that there are many barriers for social innovations, so elimination of these barriers for social innovations (for example regulations) is needed. This, however, is at best partly a responsibility of the EU. The participants advocated that the support therefore should be quite broad: social innovations should work within ecosystems (networks of stakeholders; systems of public-private partnerships). The EU has a privileged place to offer impact assessments and evidence development. For this, the EU should collaborate with national programmes on social innovation.

At the end of the meeting, the IRT discussed ten policy recommendations of the SI-DRIVE team, which are summarised below. To understand the coherence in these recommendations, it is important to consider the following paradox put forwards by our social innovation cases: most of them insisted on more funding, but this funding (and support) should not be tied to strict requirements and instead be used flexibly by the social innovators. Social innovators requested that policy makers keep their distance and do not interfere directly in social innovation initiatives. How can you shape policy recommendations with this paradox in mind? For this policy brief, we can point out that policy makers are always confronted with the challenge to treat all support to societal initiatives in an equal way: there can be no favouritism from policy side. Policy makers need to be transparent in their actions. Their actions need to be in line with what voters have asked and need to stand up to scrutiny and checks. Supporting social innovations will therefore always be a complicated matter. The Dutch approach towards social innovations can be helpful here: Dutch policy makers have shifted their attention from stimulating civic participation only towards equal attention to government participation. Policy makers have a role not so much to see what the social innovation is about, but rather to stimulate any activity by citizens in general. Policy makers need to function as a referee of the democratic process in social innovation.

A last remark about the recommendations is that the policy context matters. If social innovations require a distance from policy makers, then this implies that policy makers should not be in control of what social innovators are up to and want to achieve. From our international cases, we understand that in some countries having such a distance is unacceptable. Cases from Russia, Turkey and China show that policy makers are very much involved in selecting and (co-)developing social innovations. In such policy systems, the social innovators need to operate very cautiously towards policy makers. Our analysis shows that there are at least four policy contexts that are characterised by different relations between policy settings and social innovations:

- The Western-European context in which policy makers accept that the opinion of the minority is important. Social innovations arise in corners of society to deliver new solutions for societal challenges. Policy makers keep their distance, but at the same time give sufficient support.
- The Eastern-European context is one in which a lot of social innovators have a lot of distrust about policy making in general. Social innovators are confronted with corruption and small funding. These social innovators have developed means and technologies to develop their own fate.
- Policy contexts (non-EU) in which one political party is dominating all spheres of public life. In such contexts, social innovations are very much under control of the policy makers. Social innovations are in conformity with the interests of these parties.
- Policy context (non-EU) in which minorities do have the possibility to air their concerns. In such international contexts (e.g. South-America), policy can be supportive of social innovations. These countries do experience a lot of political change and less consistent policies towards social innovations.

Our recommendations in the final report for this work package take these differences into account. In this policy brief, we limit ourselves to highlighting the core ten recommendations for policy makers in Western-European countries and the relationship between the EU and national policy makers towards social innovations.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The IRT brought a final assessment of the policy recommendations formulated by the SI-DRIVE team. The following recommendations are formulated with a view to the situation in most of the Western-European countries. The first three recommendations are focused on the relationship between social innovators and policy. The next two recommendations deal with the type of social innovations that policy makers are confronted with: differences in phase of development and focus on market or public value. Recommendations 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 look at the resources policy makers can use: education, funding, regulation, networking and knowledge.

1. Support for social innovation requires dedicated policy approaches. Social innovation is not covered by current general social and other policies in the EU-member states. This is likewise the case at the national and EU-level.
2. Support for social innovation requires a governance approach, less a ‚government‘ approach. It requires developing broader support from more stakeholders to social innovations. The end-result will be a more inclusive, participative and co-creative support from policy makers.
3. In a governance approach, national policy makers should be focused on a moderator role, mainly enabling co-operation and partnerships between different stakeholders. This does require policy makers to have a vision on the role of social innovations, and maybe even include the social innovations in their actions.
4. The nature of social innovations is different between the start-up, scaling-up and sustainable phase. In all phases, policy support will be quite different. Policy makers should allow for experimentation by social innovators in each of these phases. In such supporting policies, most attention should be given to the scale-up phase. Currently, for as far countries do support social innovations; such support is mainly focused at the start-up phase. Most social impacts are however achieved in the scale-up phase.
5. Social innovators grow in many different ways. This is clear from the SI-DRIVE case study results. One important way is that social innovations can evolve into market-based solutions. For social innovation to become such solutions, dedicated and specific measures are needed

in order for social innovations to bring their ideas to new business models. If social innovations go this path, most countries have sufficient policy instruments to guide these social innovators. Even so, policy makers should remain attentive to the fact that most social innovations also reflect public goals and public value. Policy makers should build-in checks that these goals and value are achieved.

6. Social innovations are new approaches to achieve social change. Support for social innovation requires a (cultural) climate that helps to understand the function of social innovations. This climate needs to be developed in the schooling system, but should also be supported with top-level policy support for social innovation. Without this common understanding, any policy is bound to fail. It is equally important that for each of the societal challenges the social innovations aim to improve, the needs of citizens are clear and there exists sufficient freedom for the social innovations to evolve independently of vested interests.

7. More funding is needed, but such funding should be tailored to the phase the social innovation is in and to the needs from the social innovator.

8. Next to funding, an important support for social innovations is in changing the rules of the game. Vested interests can be an important barrier for social innovations to scale-up. Policy makers should understand the need to shift the balance between social innovations and these vested interests. Achieving the goals of the societal challenge at hand should guide the policy makers in their choices for support or not. For understanding which rules are up for change, policy makers should just learn from the social innovators. These social innovators show which changes are needed.

9. To enhance the impact of social innovations on society, policy makers should focus on supporting (or even supplying) the bridging measures: awareness and support platforms, networks and infrastructure for social innovations to diffuse.

10. Our final recommendation stresses the need for knowledge support for social innovations. Currently, social innovations lack support from knowledge partners such as universities. Underpinning the development of social innovations with sufficient expert knowledge and professional models is needed to make social innovations successful.

The final recommendations are about the role of EU-policy makers can have for developing social innovation. Currently, social issues are seen as a national responsibility, and only through the open method of coordination, countries are able to learn about what works. This approach has as side-effect that many EU-policy makers are absent from discussions about social innovation. This does not automatically result in the need to have a lot of convergence in social innovation policies, because diversity in such policies may actually be instrumental. However, the IRT was in favour of more EU in the social innovation domain. For the EU, the following recommendations are of importance:

1. In the policy making process itself, the EC is a victim of its organisational silos: the different directorate-generals of the European Commission need to start cooperating on the subject of social innovation. Possibilities for policy integration are significant, but then action is needed to direct the funds towards social investments.

2. An important role of EU policy is seen in facilitating scaling up and institutionalisation of social innovation, mainly through information and knowledge exchange. This should entail collecting systematically evidence of good and successful practices, assessing the impacts of social innovations across countries and comparing them, learning about the shaping of framework conditions, etc. - while taking into account the context-specificity of social innovations. The results can easily be integrated into the policy recommendations at the national level.

3. Social innovation should become an integral part of thematic policies. It needs to be taken more seriously, as an efficient approach to tackle societal challenges. For policy makers, the prospect is that investing more in social innovation helps to better achieve their objectives.

4. Currently, the formal competencies on social topics in the EU are limited. Knowledge about best practices and policies remains quite limited. The EU would need to invest in developing this knowledge, so acting in the future may be possible.

5. It all requires a better view on how EU policy can support and frame national policies. Ultimately, the key question is how to change societal patterns at the national level with the help of EU policies. In essence, the same fundamental problem of horizontal policy coordination with regard to social innovation policies applies as well as across policy levels. How to construct multi-level environment to enable social innovations, and create better

tailored frameworks composed of instruments from different policy "silos"? Platforms and intermediary organisations might be a way to involve partners from different levels and silos in a problem- or issue-centred policy approach. Research should deliver more insight into how such multi-level support could work.

The conclusion is that the EU can help in directing more resources to social innovators, but not only that. It is equally important to deliver better concepts, information and examples of social innovations. It should be clear that there are many barriers for social innovation, so elimination of these barriers for social innovations (for example regulations) is needed. Also, for maintaining social innovation, there should be ecosystems to support and govern them in a broad way. The EU should offer impact assessments and evidence of the benefits of social innovation. This should be done together with the national governments.

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RESEARCH PARAMETERS

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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 initiatives, thereby addressing different social, economic, cultural, and historical contexts in twelve 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.
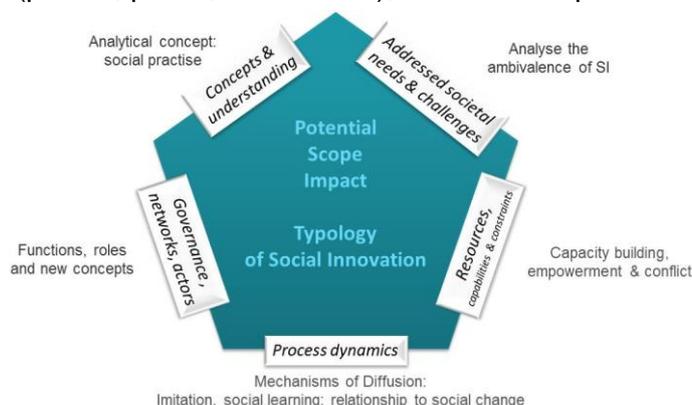
SI-DRIVE involves 14 partners from 11 EU Member States and 11 partners from other states of all continents, accompanied by 13 advisory board members, all in all covering 30 countries all over the world.

Research is dedicated to seven major policy fields: (1) Education and Lifelong Learning (2) Employment (3) Environment and Climate Change (4) Energy Supply (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 were carried out in the frame of SI-DRIVE: Initial mapping captures basic information of more than 1,000 actual social innovations from a wide variety of sources worldwide, leading to a typology of social innovation. Subsequent mapping focused on well documented social innovation, leading to the selection of 82 cases for in-depth analysis in the seven SI-DRIVE policy areas. The results of the global mapping and the in-depth case studies were analysed on the ground of the developed theoretical framework, further discussed in policy and foresight workshops and stakeholder dialogues - carefully taking into account cross-cutting dimensions (e.g. gender, diversity, technology), cross-sector relevance (private, public, civil sectors), and future impact.

Beneath the comprehensive definition of Social Innovation and defined practice fields, five key dimensions (see figure) are mainly structuring the theoretical and empirical work.

The outcomes of SI-DRIVE will cover a broad range of research dimensions, impacting particularly in terms of changing society and empowerment, and contributing to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME

SI-DRIVE - Social Innovation: Driving Force of Social Change.

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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)
Dhondt, Steven / Weber, Matthias 2016: POLICY BRIEF international Round Table, Deliverable 11.4 of SI-DRIVE, available at www.si-drive.eu
Dhondt, Steven / Weber, Matthias / Rhomberg, Wolfram / Peter Oeij 2017: Policy Support for Social Innovations. Final Report of the Policy and Foresight Work Package of SI-DRIVE 11.8 of SI-DRIVE, available at www.si-drive.eu (forthcoming)