Periodic Reporting for period 1 - SIC (Social Innovation Community)

**Reporting period:** 2016-02-01 to 2017-01-31

**Summary of the context and overall objectives of the project**

Developing an enabling environment for social innovation that links actions across the whole field and supports the full exploitation of their potential is vital to addressing societal challenges both in Europe and globally. While there is increasing interest for social innovation as a means of addressing societal challenges, there is also considerable variation in the extent to which different countries and regions have embraced social innovation. There are many research and policy projects and incubation and acceleration programmes with valuable outcomes, but these are still largely disconnected.

Thus, the overarching aim of this project is to create a ‘network of networks’ of social innovation actors, a Social Innovation Community (SIC), with the purpose to generate new social innovations, develop and scale up successful social innovations and to share and spread knowledge more effectively to improve research, practice and policymaking.

This SIC will identify, engage and connect actors including researchers, social innovators, citizens, policy-makers, as well as intermediaries, businesses, civil society organisations and public sector employees. The aim is to deepen and strengthen existing networks, forge new connections between networks, and create new links to actors and networks which hitherto have not been included in the field of social innovation. Through our cross-cutting Work Packages, we will deliver engagement, research, experimentation, learning and policy activities that engage with and support each of the networks. We will ensure that our cross-cutting activities are complementary and build on each other’s work, rather than operating in silos.

By creating an enabling environment for social innovation, the project will improve the overall framework conditions for social innovation. This in turn will support the creation of opportunities for growth and for overcoming the current social and economic crisis affecting much of Europe.

**Work performed from the beginning of the project to the end of the period covered by the report and main results achieved so far**

The SIC project started in February 2016, with a kick-off meeting in Brussels involving all partners. Since then, a lot has happened, with some flagship moments punctuating partners’ long-term and ongoing work, which has been reinforced by synergies and co-production among themselves as the project progresses. Cooperation and mutual learning, which has been carried out in a supportive, professional and friendly atmosphere, have proved to have a multiplier effect on the quality of work and results. The great diversity of geographical, background and experience among partners is an asset to be further capitalised upon.

The first semester was mainly dedicated to the launch of all activities, setting up coordination mechanisms, establishing all governance bodies, organising and developing internal communication, and supporting networks to plan activities to expand...
and bring in unusual suspects.

Having enough quality content was a precondition to officially launch the SIC website in September 2016. It was online and fully tested by the time of the official SIC launch event. The project also ensured a smooth transition from the previous SIE website, transferring most of its content to the new SIC website, ensuring capitalisation, and maintaining the SIE community which run for 5 years previous. SIC therefore started with a vast social media reach of more than 2000 registered members (all SIE users have become SIC users). The visual identity of the project has also been developed at that time to provide continuity from SIE to SIC (logo, leaflets, banners, newsletter and deliverables and presentation templates).

On September 26-27, the project was officially and publicly launched in Brussels, with a big event prepared collectively, that attracted around 160 participants from across Europe, including representatives of some of the leading social innovation projects, high-level policymakers and funders. Many known faces and organisations attended, but also a lot of ‘unusual suspects’ not connected to other EC social innovation projects.

Another key moment was the first edition of the SIC Summer School in Tilburg, the Netherlands (20-23 September 2016), organised in collaboration with the ‘European Social Innovation Week’ - ESIW 2016. The event included top-class lectures on Urban Social Innovation attended by 43 participants, and the design of the Learning Framework to address and fill the gap between the needs of practitioners, public actors and the private sector regarding specific Social Innovation skills and competences.

Many other activities were performed in parallel during the first year, some more long term and “underground”, such as the Social Innovation Research Landscape, taking stock of major research European projects and research networks, the first Social Innovation Community Policy report set out a future vision of what a distinctive field of social innovation policy could look like and made practical recommendations on how greater impact can be achieved on meeting EU policy objectives, while the SIC vision and strategy framework based on several reports laying its foundation.

5 Experimentation Centres were recruited in Estonia, Italy, Norway and Croatia, now testing and adapting the training curriculum (set of tools and methodologies) developed and conceived to support grassroots experimentation, tailored to local context and challenges. A total of 32 deliverables were co-produced and submitted.

Creating the coordination mechanism between the 12 partners, ensuring consistent links between all the interwoven tasks and objectives was one of the big challenge of the 1st year of implementation. All governance body meetings supported this process.

32 deliverables have been successfully submitted within that first year. Around a third of these deliverables, under the responsibility of WPL7 (PCO), were laying the foundations for a quality management and monitoring of the project, providing guidelines already up.

**Progress beyond the state of the art and expected potential impact (including the socio-economic impact and the wider societal implications of the project so far)**

Taking into account the current progress after the 1st year of implementation, all expected impacts identified at the beginning of this project, direct and indirect, are still anticipated in the four following fields:

01. Common understanding of social innovation as a tool and outcome

02. Effective measures and better use of resources

03. Policy uptake of research results and experience

04. Contribute to more social innovation initiatives from the ground, scaling-up

A specific Work Package “WP6 Strategy Development and Impact Measurement” is specifically working on this dimension. However, all social innovation networks and work packages under this project are already starting to reach impact even after one year.

**Related information**