

# Toolkit on Social Innovation

*December 2014*



**Eurodiaconia** 

Eurodiaconia is a **dynamic**, Europe wide **community** of organisations founded in the **Christian faith** and working in the tradition of Diaconia, who are committed to a Europe of **solidarity, equality** and **justice**. As the **leading network of Diaconia in Europe**, we connect organisations, institutions and churches providing **social and health services and education** on a Christian value base in over 30 European countries.

We bring members together to **share practices, impact social policy** and **reflect on Diaconia in Europe today**.

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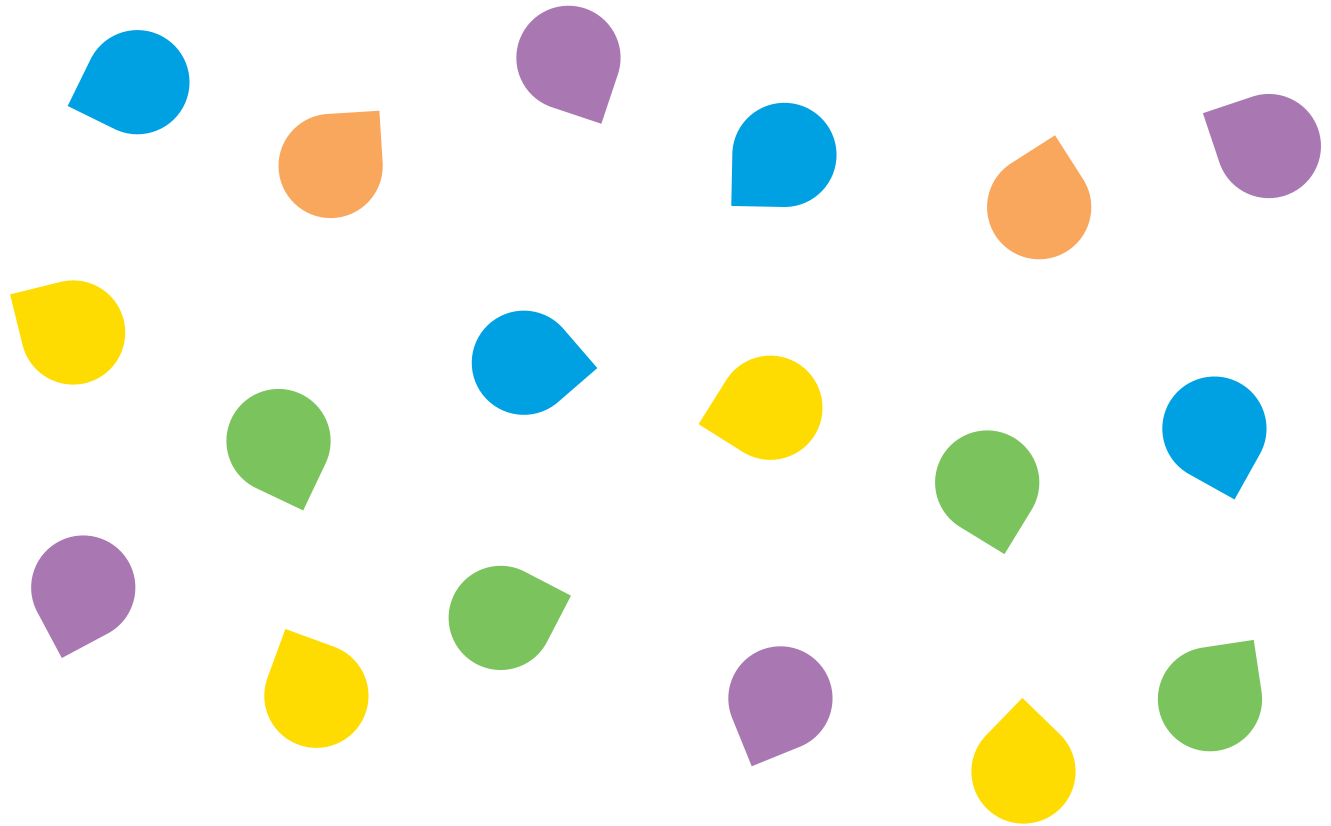


Eurodiaconia is supported under the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013). Views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the European Commission.

Eurodiaconia is a federation of organisations, institutions and churches providing social and health services and education on a Christian value base throughout Europe. Eurodiaconia is registered as an AISBL in Belgium.

# CONTENTS

<b>Why this toolkit?</b>	4
<b>An Overview – What is social innovation?</b>	5
Concerns about social innovation	7
<b>The seven stages of innovation</b>	8
Stage One: Identification of new, unmet or inadequately met social needs	8
Stage Two: Developing a solution in response to the social needs	9
Stage Three: Supporting implementation of a concrete project	9
Stage Four: Evaluation	10
Stage Five: Scaling up	10
Stage Six: Mainstreaming	11
Stage Seven: Cross border transfer	11
<b>Barriers to social innovation and how to overcome them</b>	12
<b>Themes for research in innovation in social services</b>	17
<b>Examples from our members</b>	19
<b>Further information and links</b>	21



## WHY THIS TOOLKIT?

Diaconal organisations are often at the forefront of new methods to meet social needs and seek to innovate to find ways of service provision that are more effective. One of Eurodiaconia's three overarching priorities is to support members in their work on the ground and facilitate mutual learning. This toolkit aims to support Eurodiaconia members in developing a culture of innovation or service development through internal processes or structures. The primary goal of service innovation and development for Eurodiaconia members is that services better meet social needs and service users' quality of life is improved. This toolkit is designed to be a resource to contribute to these goals.

The toolkit also aims to provide solutions to barriers and challenges that organisations might face when implementing innovation or service development processes. Further-

more, it provides best practice examples from Eurodiaconia members who are active in supporting social innovation and service development for other members to learn from or to be inspired by. It outlines the stages of innovation or service development and for some stages shows what tools Eurodiaconia members have used to support them. In order to equip members with ideas for research on social innovation for them to improve their knowledge on the successful models of service delivery, the section on research themes provides ideas, which were partly collected from the results of the INNOSERV project<sup>1</sup>. The toolkit is based on research carried out among members via email and from input at a seminar in Vienna in May 2014 on "Innovation and service development for quality social services"<sup>2</sup>.



1. [http://www.inno-serv.eu/sites/default/files/INNOSERV\\_Summary\\_EN\\_0.pdf](http://www.inno-serv.eu/sites/default/files/INNOSERV_Summary_EN_0.pdf)

2. <http://www.eurodiaconia.org/images/stories/social%20innovation%20study%20visit%20and%20workshop%20meeting%20report.pdf>

## AN OVERVIEW – WHAT IS SOCIAL INNOVATION?

The European Commission defines social innovations as innovations that are social in both their ends and their means. They are new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations. They are innovations that are not only good for society but also enhance society's capacity to act. Social innovations take place across boundaries between the public sector, the private sector, the third sector and the household<sup>3</sup>. As of yet, little agreement exists about the definition of social innovation, about cause-and-effect relationships, or about the specific policies to follow so as to foster social innovation<sup>4</sup>. Broadly speaking, social innovation in social services can be described as

the process by which new responses to social needs are developed in order to deliver better social outcomes and address new social challenges. They are considered to be innovative by their novelty, ability to improve the efficiency of pre-existing solutions and environmental, economic and organisational sustainability<sup>5</sup>.

Many practitioners working in social service provision would argue that social innovation as a concept is not new as social service providers have been innovating and re-inventing themselves for a number of years. What is a rather recent development though is that social innovation is high on the political agenda at EU level as policy makers are searching for new responses to current and emerging

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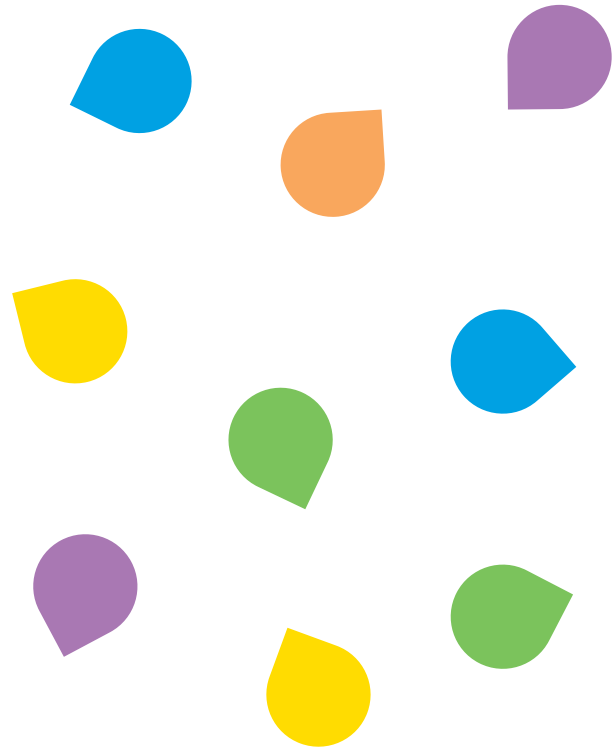
3. [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/innovation/policy/social-innovation/past-editions/definition\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/innovation/policy/social-innovation/past-editions/definition_en.htm)

4. European Commission: Social innovation research in the European Union (2013):  
[http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/social\\_innovation.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/social_innovation.pdf)

5. Social Services Europe Briefing on Social Innovation:  
[http://www.eurodiaconia.org/files/other\\_soc\\_policies/Social\\_Services\\_Europe\\_062012\\_Briefing\\_on\\_Social\\_Innovation.pdf](http://www.eurodiaconia.org/files/other_soc_policies/Social_Services_Europe_062012_Briefing_on_Social_Innovation.pdf)

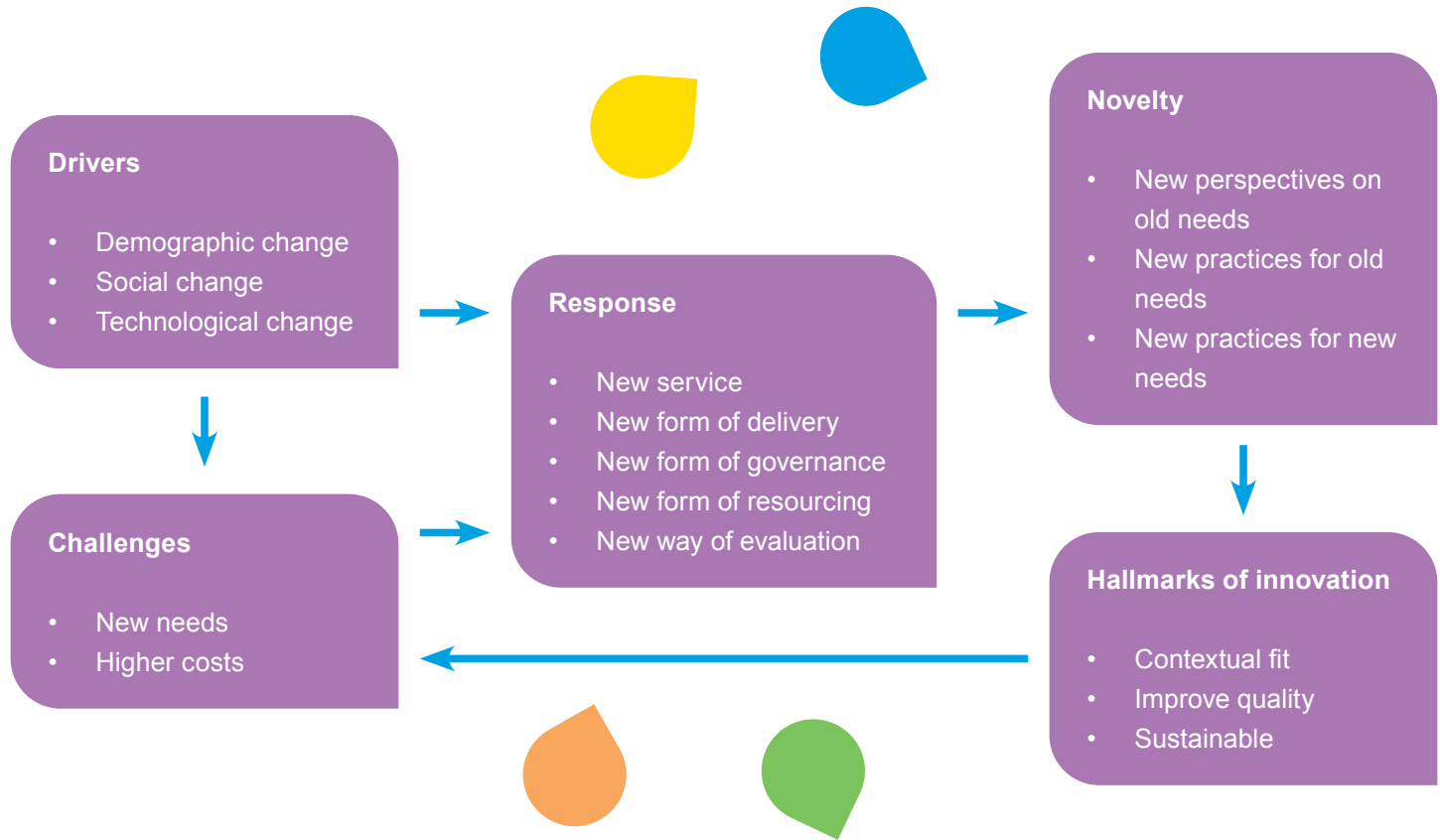
social needs and challenges, resulting from the repercussions of the financial crisis and social phenomena, such as demographic change.

The following graphic is an example of a framework for social innovation, including drivers, challenges and responses, developed by the Innoserv project<sup>6</sup>. It illustrates the cause-effect relationship and interconnectedness of the different factors. According to this example, the repercussions of the financial crisis and partly therefore new, emerging social needs as well as the resulting challenges all trigger new and innovative responses from governments, services providers and other stakeholders. These often break with conventional services in one way or the other, which means they create something new (novelty). If an innovation proved to be sustainable and to improve the quality, it can then tackle the challenges that lead to creating something new in the first place.



6. Solidar PPT: INNOSERV - An FP7 project on innovative social services. Access: [http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/solidar\\_-\\_eesc-round-table-8-oct.pdf](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/solidar_-_eesc-round-table-8-oct.pdf)

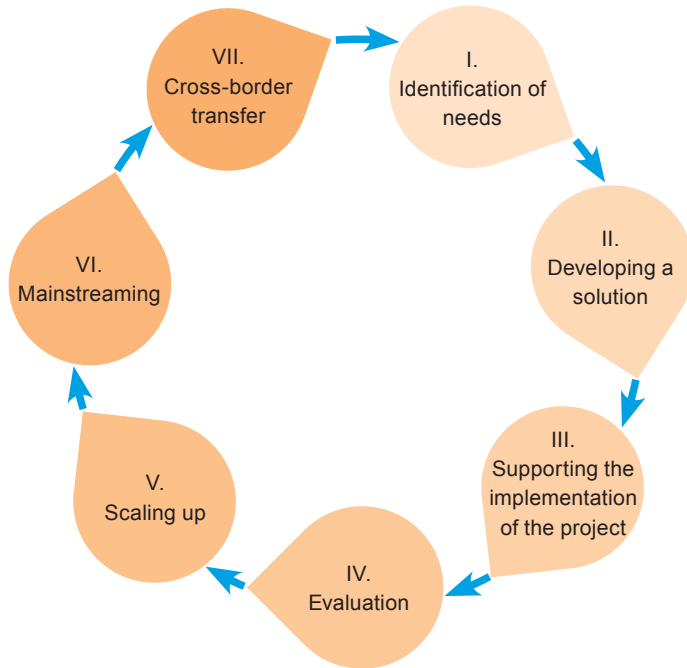
## Concerns about social innovation





# THE SEVEN STAGES OF INNOVATION

At Eurodiaconia we have discussed the division of the innovation process in seven stages with our members. This section is looking at the different stages and summarises the discussions we had during a meeting on social innovation and quality in social services in May 2014.



## Stage One: Identification of new, unmet or inadequately met social needs

All levels of an organisation should be kept informed about changes in context and territory: when a member of staff or group in the organisation becomes aware of, for example, new groups in need, relevant local developments or legislation, the whole organisation should be made aware. Street retreats can be organised at different levels but the general aim is for staff to spend time experiencing life on the streets, to better understand the challenges and situations of people experiencing social exclusion. The exposure approach – developed by Diak and its partners in the CABLE network (including Helsinki Deaconess Institute), aims to assist people to experience and analyse a situa-



tion, such as the everyday life of a disadvantaged group in a particular neighbourhood, in a way that is as free from assumptions and prejudices as possible and which leads to innovative practice.

## Stage Two: Developing a solution in response to the social needs

Research should be carried out both nationally and internationally to see if there are solutions or approaches that could be relevant to the context. It is important to ensure sufficient time is dedicated to this stage: it is too easy to run ahead with an idea without proper consideration of it or possible alternatives. An “Ideas Scout” can pro-actively seek proposals or approaches among staff that are either just implemented locally or in one service, or that have not been implemented. Kerk in Actie runs a yearly summer school project for innovative ideas: anyone from

the organisation can submit ideas and a committee of five persons chooses three ideas that will be supported. Experts then work with the chosen proposals to develop them. The Di-



aconia Valdese has created a working group on innovation and training. Project proposals are encouraged from the organisations working at grassroots level which are evaluated by the working group. Certain projects are then selected for development and supported to do so. Ongoing communication and cooperation among staff and with partners is key to ensure all expertise and experience is taken on board. The environment needs to be ready for a new approach: organisations should consider their operating environment and what could work in that context; what could be acceptable. The concept is then developed into an operational project or service; typically with technical or financial support.



## Stage Three: Supporting implementation of a concrete project

This stage sees the project or service implemented as a pilot project and monitored and supported as it develops. From this stage onwards, press and PR work is important to



gain public support and awareness, and in turn facilitate the support of public authorities. During the service or project implementation those involved should continue to be open to new elements or ideas; to keep on “thinking outside the box”.



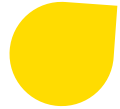
### Stage Four: Evaluation

In this stage the effectiveness of the project in meeting the needs identified is assessed and a decision is made whether to continue to run it. Eurodiaconia can facilitate the sharing of knowledge of different evaluation methods used by Eurodiaconia members and results of evaluations. Quality management processes can facilitate ongoing evaluation and both outputs and outcomes should be evaluated. Impact, rather than performance reporting

should also be prioritised. (Eurodiaconia is developing guidelines on social and economic impact measurement in a separate piece of work). Evaluation and research that simul-



taneously develop knowledge about social challenges, attempt to mitigate those consequences and efforts to fight the root causes should be prioritised. Following a positive evaluation publicising the impact and outcomes becomes important.



### Stage Five: Scaling up

In this stage a decision is made whether the project could be effective outside of the specific context in which it has been implemented, and if so it is implemented in other geographical situations. To do this effectively, to be sure that an organisation is not imposing a solution on a new context that is not suitable, it is important to involve all of the key actors and decision makers in the potential new sites. It is also important to ensure a system is in place

to protect the quality of a service or approach when implemented in multiple sites. This could take the form of mandatory training, certifications or guidelines.



## Stage Six: Mainstreaming

This stage occurs when the approach is accepted by public authorities or other funders as a key approach or “the” approach to meet specific needs and is therefore widely promoted and supported. To facilitate this stage, networks and partnerships with all affected are important, as is advocacy and intense networking with politicians, including inviting them to visit projects. Maximum visibility should be ensured through press work and publications. EHO in Serbia is moving from this stage to stage seven after having proved the success of their Roma housing model.

## Stage Seven: Cross border transfer

This stage is reached when the approach or project is successfully implemented in another country. To ensure that the approach or project is suitable and to facilitate the process it is important to carefully consider the context, particularly the culture in new the country. A similar culture facilitates the transfer of approach; an example given was

the transfer of an approach to Macedonia from Serbia. Careful consideration should be given regarding whether and how the approach should be adapted to the local context. Eurodiaconia provides the natural environment for facilitating exchange about the cross-border potential of a project or approach. Regarding PR at this stage is it important to make information available about project outcomes available at least in English beyond the original language. This stage can be complex so much determination and commitment is necessary

Together with members, Eurodiaconia has furthermore identified those elements, which are important throughout the lifecycle. Awareness-raising through publicising results and ideas, PR and advocacy are important throughout the process. Discussions about long-term sustainability with funders or potential funders should be integrated from the start. The involvement of and testimonies from service users are essential in every stage of the cycle.

# BARRIERS TO SOCIAL INNOVATION AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

Eurodiaconia has, together with its members, identified a number of external and internal barriers to social innovation, both of which are explained in this section, and solutions to these barriers:

## Barriers on the macro level (external)

- 1 Risk averse and cautious organisational structures in public sector
- 2 Lack of political support for a comprehensive welfare state
- 3 Lack of understanding and recognition of the structural causes of poverty and injustice at political level  
- no impetus to seek solutions or finance given to seek such solutions
- 4 Cuts in public funding for social services and increasingly financial pressure  
→ priority may only be given to existing services
- 5 Public finance often gives no room for manoeuvre with little or no scope for employees to develop or try new ways of doing services, since finance goes entirely to fulfilling predefined tasks
- 6 Project or service may start up with for example donations, but then is unable to find long-term funding from public authorities, despite being successful – sustainability is a challenge
- 7 Funding not being available at all stages of development or funding availability does not correspond to the emergence/ development of service user or provider needs
- 8 Lack of data on the social innovation sector
- 9 Few opportunities for high quality training and skill development particularly for social innovation practitioners

## Solutions to external barriers

- 1 Develop strong relationships with the public sector, show the impact of services
- 2 Convince the public authorities to invest in social services in order to increase economic growth, but also to increase quality of life – make arguments based on a social investment approach
- 3 + 4 Lobby local authorities about the need for new services, proposing a solution; Publicise best-practice examples and positive results through PR and advocacy
- 5 Cooperate with unions to establish common and comparable wages for social workers
- 6 + 7 Diversify funding, including corporate fundraising, foundations, and other private means
- 8 More work on showing impact, evidence basis and testimonies from service users
- 9 Academia should address not only innovation in technical terms but also social policy innovation



## Barriers on a micro level (internal)

- 1 Staff have no or limited resources or time to think about new or improved ways of working or providing services
- 2 Staff may not be used to re-thinking ways of work
- 3 Organisational structure may itself be a barrier to innovative or different ways of thinking and doing
- 4 Difficult to involve staff in a service development or innovation process, perhaps because bureaucracy or hierarchy make it time consuming
- 5 Service users may have predefined ideas of what they want from a service provider and are not open to new proposals
- 6 Theological/ideological barriers to partnerships – not used to cooperation; cultural – cross-faith dialogue not systematised
- 7 Innovation may threaten existing services/jobs
- 8 Innovation is treated as a closed process excluded from the rest of the organisation



## Solutions to internal barriers

- 1 Ideally, time should be invested in the invention process and thought should be given to innovating internal ways of working, this includes good communication, identifying people responsible for innovation and facilitating collaboration
- 2 Training staff in the skill or competence of innovation; Recruit people with vision and willingness to be flexible; Ensure structures are in place for easy access of staff to management; forums could be created
- 3 Re-organise structure to facilitate change and analysis of new or changing needs
- 4 Interaction with different groups from the organisation is essential
- 5 + 8 Involve staff and users from the start to ensure understanding about why new approach is necessary, reallocate across services, change management
- 6 Cooperation between universities, social scientists, government and diaconal organisations in order to ensure research is oriented to developing innovations that improve quality of life; Increase dialogue with non-diaconal organisations; forums Explain and train leaders within churches, diaconal organisations and government about topics such as user participation and empowerment, citizens' rights and raise awareness of the structural causes of poverty
- 7 Innovation can also create jobs. By changing a structure or creating something new, new job opportunities may arise

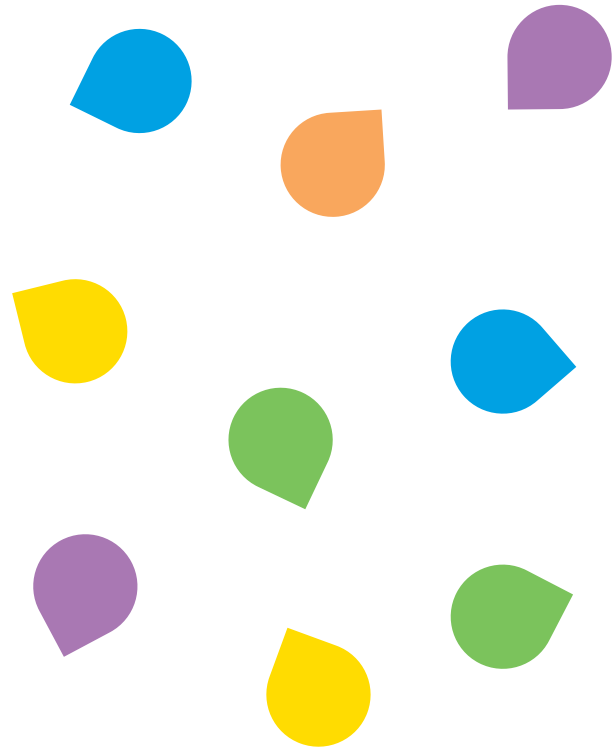




The European Commission has identified the following barriers to social innovation:

- Insufficient knowledge of needs of sector
- Fragmentation of efforts and resources
- Lack of transparency and visibility
- Limited financial support and insufficient technical skills to develop
- Poor evaluation and diffusion
- Little scale-up of good practices
- Poor methods of impact evaluation of actions and policies

These confirm some of the areas identified by Eurodiaconia and its members, and also emphasize the need for sound research, evaluation methods and impact measurement.



## THEMES FOR RESEARCH IN INNOVATION IN SOCIAL SERVICES

One of the barriers mentioned both by the European Commission and by Eurodiaconia is the lack of sufficient knowledge and data of the sector, which makes it more difficult to justify spending for social innovation. It is therefore imperative to conduct research in this area as a way to demystify the term and what it entails. A number of research projects have been developed in order to identify the future potential of innovative social services, such as the Innoserv project. The Innoserv project focused on social and health services and aimed to implement a multi-level dialogue process on innovation in those sectors involving a wide range of stakeholders from research, policy making and practice communities, produce short visual examples combined with theoretical case studies of 'innovative' practices, produce publications to summarise the results of the debate and formulate future research needs. Innoserv used a bottom-up approach in collecting

the views of the stakeholders in order to assess the major drivers and challenges of social innovation. In their final report key areas for future research were identified.

Below you can find an example of some of the key research areas identified by the Innoserv project relevant for practitioners and users<sup>7</sup>:

**User-centered services and approach:** Social innovation asks for cross-sector cooperation and increasing interaction between practitioners, users and volunteers, which results in a paradigm shift towards involving users in shaping processes. This requires a rethinking and developing competences of all stakeholders involved in order to adapt to flattened organisational structures. Researchers can investigate the relationship of practitioners, users and volunteers to provide valuable advice for practice.

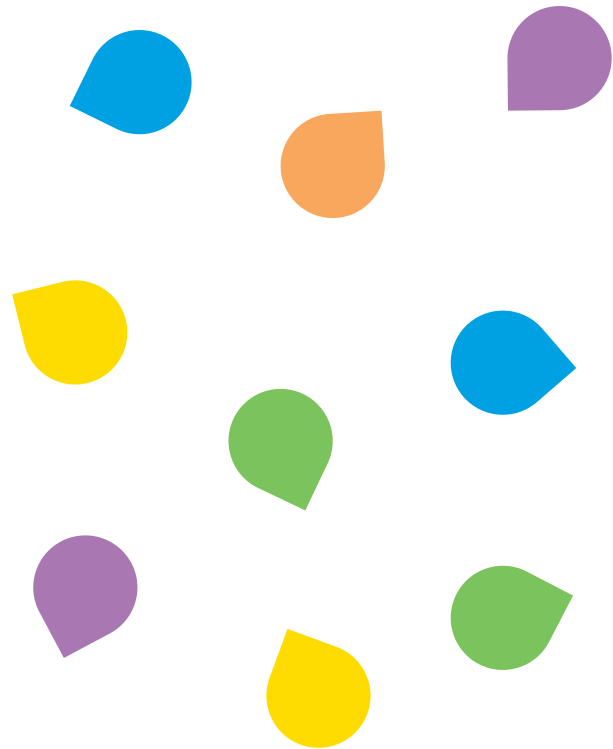
7. INNOSERV: Shaping Social Innovation in Social Services – The Research Agenda. Stakeholder Brief for Practitioners and Users, September 2013. [http://rudar.ruc.dk/bitstream/1800/15435/1/First\\_Draft\\_of\\_the\\_Research\\_Agenda.pdf](http://rudar.ruc.dk/bitstream/1800/15435/1/First_Draft_of_the_Research_Agenda.pdf)

An example research question Innoserv identified is: Which approaches are used to reshape services to be more user-centered and what kind of impact do they have on practices? Do they lead to improved services?

### **Framing social services in relation to innovation:**

Researchers can investigate how policy and social discourses affect the perception and legitimation of social service innovation. They can also analyse the effect that actors and processes have over stimulation or prohibition of innovation. This would allow to understand the extend to which policy talk frames innovation and to identify who decided how services should be designed.

Eurodiaconia has set up a working group on research and practice in Diaconia to promote an equal dialogic between researchers, practitioners and service users. One of our aims is it to make research relevant to practice and to create a strong evidence base for policy work. Please contact [theresa.schlage@eurodiaconia.org](mailto:theresa.schlage@eurodiaconia.org) if you are interested in the link between research and practice and would like to learn more about this initiative. It will provide the opportunity to further discuss themes for research in innovation in social services.



## EXAMPLES FROM OUR MEMBERS

**Helsinki Deaconess Institute** reorganised their structure in order to promote service development and innovation. The open departmental structure promotes mutual learning and creativity and innovation takes place through interactions across the organisation. The management is not said to “own” the innovation process but provides tools and research to support service development. The system features a flatter structure, cross-departmental working, regular review of services and how they meet needs and a strong emphasis on external partnerships.

**Diaconal organisations in Austria** do a lot of “innovation work” along the way in regular meetings (e.g. jour fixes, etc.) and daily conversations with different stakeholders and clients. Diakoniewerk Gallneukirchen has a superior management board, followed by six regional management boards. They are crossed by so called competence-centers (e.g. for old people, for people with disabilities), where service innovation is amongst many other tasks one activity pursued.

In October 2011 the **Commissione Sinodale per la Diaconia** (CSD) formed a group called GLIF (Gruppo di Lavoro sull’Innovazione e Formazione) and appointed a coordinator. The engine for generating ideas is the people working in the various structures of the organisation. A lot of the creativity and initiative is generated from “the bottom up” rather than “top-down” process. Project proposals are submitted from people working on the ground to the GLIF, which reviews the proposals, tries to check the details and then takes decisions as to priorities. Then it submits the project plans it has selected to the CSD for final approval. Finally, the CSD submits those chosen proposals which require funding to the Commission for Otto per Mille. The creativity and skills of employees have been the source of many excellent new ideas and initiatives in recent years. The Diaconia Valdese wants to ensure that these good ideas, coming from young people working in the field, won’t be lost by the wayside but rather elaborated and transformed into carefully planned projects. The GLIF supports the innovation process by guiding the de-

velopment of project ideas, by helping to find funding and by monitoring the implementation.

**Diakonie Düsseldorf** has created an Office for Social Innovation in January 2014 to make innovation a more “normal” activity for employees. The launch saw a strong interest from employees, partners and the city council. For three years they have had the following strategic objective: Growth through focused innovation. In particular, the Fundraising Department supports the development of innovative concepts and interacts with foundations and sponsors. A steering group evaluates ideas and projects and recommends whether they should receive funding. Diakonie Düsseldorf also has an annual reception award which prizes innovative projects and employees. They have set the task of annually investing 500.000 Euros in innovation.

**Kerk in Actie** use around 10% of their budget to develop innovative projects. In their key areas of work they look to facilitate innovation with the staff responsible. The ideas come from visiting people on the ground, monitoring

websites, political and social developments and reacting to trends in society. Kerk in Actie use the “exposure method” when visiting visit projects or services (also from non-church related organisations) and seek to understand how organisations react to challenges. A lot is learnt from the UK and the approaches used by churches there as it is felt that they are a trendsetter in this area. Kerk in Actie work to support a project for 1 to 3 years and then the project must be developed in its own way and be strong enough without their support or the project ends because the goal is reached or the project wasn’t successful.

If you have similar processes or projects in your organisation related to social innovation, please Email a short description to [theresa.schlage@eurodiaconia.org](mailto:theresa.schlage@eurodiaconia.org) and we will promote it on our website!



## FURTHER INFORMATION AND LINKS

DG Enterprise and Industry on social innovation:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/innovation/policy/social-innovation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/innovation/policy/social-innovation/index_en.htm)

(2013) European Commission's guide to social innovation:

<http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/10157/47822/Guide%20to%20Social%20Innovation.pdf>

Website of the INNOSERV project: <http://inno-serv.eu/>

(2013) Social Platform Position Paper on Social Innovation: [http://www.socialplatform.org/?attachment\\_id=3937](http://www.socialplatform.org/?attachment_id=3937)

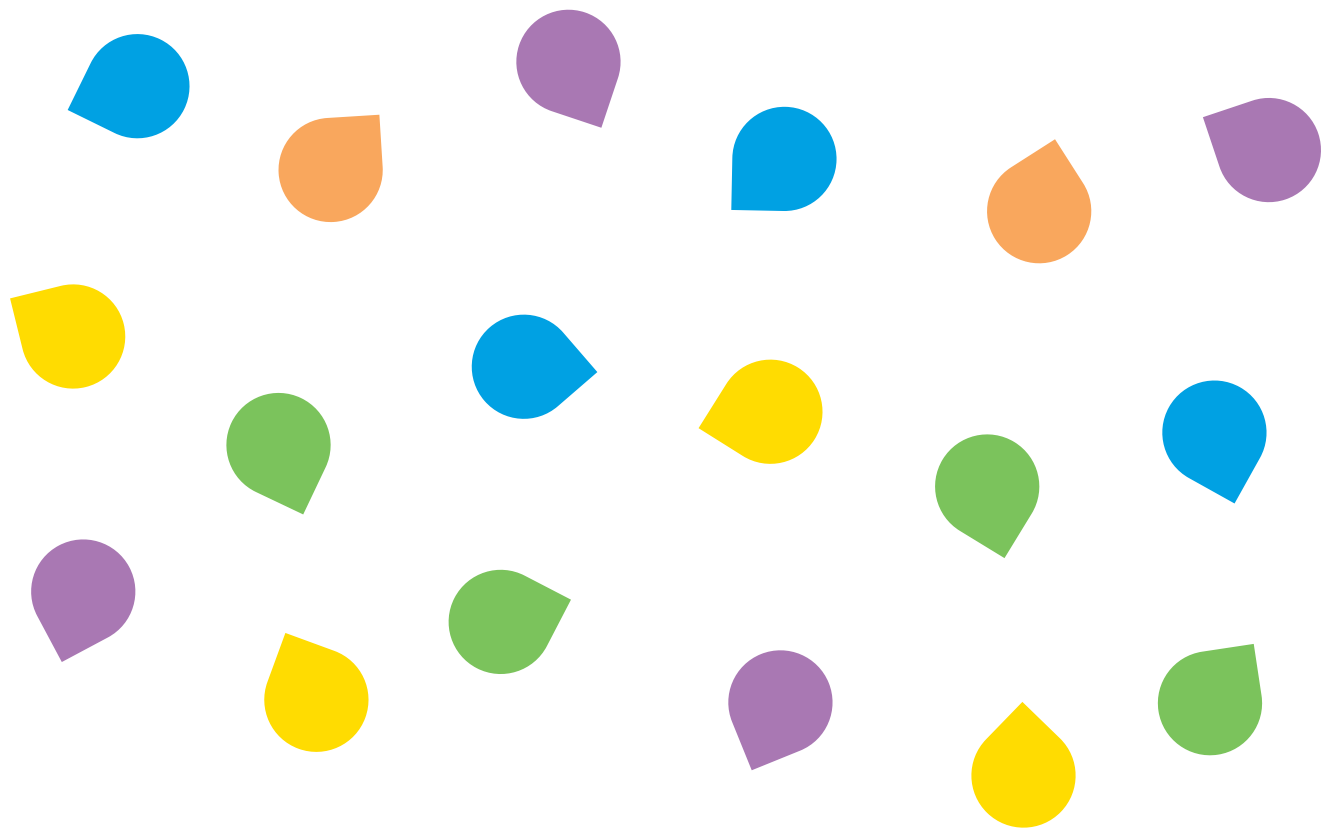
(2013) WILCO Social Innovation Research in Horizon 2020:

<http://www.wilcoproject.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/WILCO-Position-Paper-SocInnov2.pdf>

(2014) Eurodiaconia meeting report from seminar on innovation and development in social services:

<http://www.eurodiaconia.org/policy-areas/other-social-policies/2856-meeting-report-from-seminar-on-innovation-and-development-in-social-services-now-online>

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