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Ioannis Nasioulas

[REPORT #6: SOCIAL BUSINESS INITIATIVE AND SOCIAL INNOVATION EUROPE]

Social Innovation Europe has proven to be a tool of invaluable impact to the dissemination and visibility of social innovation and its practical significance for Europeans and their communities. It can act as an incubator for a variety of Social Business Initiative projects. This is a concise report on the untapped potentials and capacities that can expand and extent the existing portfolio of Social Innovation Europe in light of the Social Business Initiative and GECES policy orientations.

Potentials of Social Innovation Europe project

The full life-cycle of Social Innovation Europe has yet to be completed. In fact, the initial launch of the SIE platform (www.socialinnovationeurope.eu) has acted as an incubator itself, since it is now obvious that emerging decentralized or local social economy agendas can be linked to SIE in a variety of ways. SIE can be expanded to cover the plurality of social innovation and social entrepreneurship activities throughout Europe. It can be easily extended, since its mainframe features wide adaptability and an open-end rationale.

SIE and national spin-offs

SIEC can be expanded towards linking to national modalities and spin-offs such as social economy observatories. Social economy and social innovation have a local root and it is impossible to include information (see: MEANINGFUL data) in so many different languages. Yet the need for local initiatives to go international is more evident than ever. A modular architecture should be our next step.

SIE and the mapping of social actors

We are in need of a set of prior actions for the identification of the social economy in the European Union, before even attempting to strictly identify the population of social undertakings. "Social undertakings" is a term featured in the recent proposal for European Social Entrepreneurship Funds. Its inner constitution needs further clarification, as is the case for the terms "social enterprise", "social business" and "social bank/fund". The set of prior actions I am talking about involves the grounding of technocratic and academic discourse to existing and emerging trends in all member-states. Along with the work we are now doing in the Sub Group on Social Impact Measurement, I believe it would be of great practical value to include an open-end statistical aggregator in SIE, that would soon be able to present a cost-effective and real-time mapping of the social economy national varieties in an internationally compatible manner. As will be fully elaborated to my #7 REPORT, the validity of this modality lies on its inherent methodological construction which abides not by arbitrary definitions, but on the basis of national-accounting specifications as set by the European System of National and Satellite Accounts (ESA 95) currently at force.

SIE and the investment community

SIE can accommodate a first pilot-action for data pooling and contributions of user-created content that would enhance the visibility, accountability and open access to information crucial for potential investors in the social economy. In light of introducing the European Social Entrepreneurship Funds, we would be greatly benefited in the GECES Sub Group had there been an initial pool of data especially featuring economic and banking attributes such as:

- Number of employees and volunteers per social actor
- Capitalization
- Facilities and establishments
- Economic activity
- Non-profit activity
- Fields of action
- Spatial distribution throughout the EU
- Social and economic turnover

Going institutional

The overall discussion about online pools of information and networking inevitably leads to the question of institutionalization. In fact, it is now evident that we need a modular architecture of information and accountability hubs open to public dialogue where a more colorful and out-of-the-box depiction of social economy and innovation realities will be featured.

Sincerely yours

Ioannis Nasioulas

Member of the GECES & GECES Sub Group

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Thessaloniki, GREECE