



Learning how to fight social vulnerability from local Social Innovations across Europe

Nijmegen/Liege, Wednesday, January 29th, 2014 - Recently, some international organizations have celebrated the positive macro-economic indicators that suggest that some of the countries in Europe most hardly hit by the crisis are leaving it behind. However, the majority of European citizens are far from feeling that the worst lays behind and, through collaboration of public and private actors, have developed innovative solutions to social challenges.

Be it citizens' regaining participation in how their city is governed in Spain, parents teaming up to offer support to lone mothers in Poland, or new schemes for fighting youth unemployment in Germany, social innovations are abundant in Europe. And yet, why is their impact so geographically limited? Could they be replicated in other contexts for the benefit of other citizens?

Based on statistical evidence, the WILCO project examined in detail urban social problems during the last years of economic crisis. In addition to an overall increase of social exclusion as a result of the crisis, social vulnerability has also been on the rise, characterized by permanent instabilities in people's lives. Different dynamics come together: growth of temporary employment, lack of affordable housing, changing family relations, increasing migration within Europe. This hits an increasingly broad range of people, beyond groups that are traditionally weak. Existing instruments of local welfare are insufficiently able to address this.

The WILCO project has studied 77 social innovations in 20 European cities addressing these problems. The majority of social innovations are new service arrangements, making a difference in terms of organizations, processes and types of service offers. For instance, they can involve a more participative role for citizens or build surprising alliances. The project discerns several patterns of innovations, which are reflected across Europe.

Although there is a tendency in public communications on social innovation to discuss successful champions and system-wide innovations, the reality is that the majority of initiatives remain local and last only a limited number of years. According to Taco Brandsen, Coordinator of WILCO, "this points to the importance of capacities of cities to continually generate new innovations and to disseminate experiences effectively." Innovations have a relatively good chance of survival when they involve a broad range of parties and when the city authorities have an open governance style.

In addition to national, city and comparative reports, a free e-book describing the 77 social innovations and a transversal analysis will be available for free download on the WILCO Project website. In addition, a full documentary has been produced to bring to life and familiarize a wider audience with some of the issues covered by WILCO. Both will be launched in the course of the WILCO Closing Event taking place in Brussels on Friday, January 31st, 2014.

The WILCO Final Event will take place at La Tricoterie (Rue Rue Théodore Verhaegen 158, 1060 Brussels) on Friday, January 31st, 2014 from 9:30 to 16:00. For media contacts and inquiries please contact WILCO Communication Coordinator Rocio Nogales (info@emes.net). All the project results are available at www.wilcoproject.eu.

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WILCO

Welfare innovations
at the local level
in favour of cohesion