

Social policy innovation: using the potential of the ESI Funds

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The questions to be raised

1. Why is there not enough social innovation in the ESI? Why does the ESI not contribute more to social innovation? Where are the bottlenecks?
2. What lesson can we learnt from the experience of implementing ESI in terms of innovation? Are there some keys for success? Can we get practical recommendations?

1. Four reasons for insufficient innovation and bottlenecks

- ➡ Insufficient connection between policies and funds
- ➡ Inertia and lack of forward vision
- ➡ Heavy administrative burden and narrow interpretation
- ➡ Little engagement of key actors in the process

Insufficient connection between policies and funds

- ➡ The owners of the policies and the owners of the funds are different bodies/departments
- ➡ Timing is not adjusted. The planning process of the policies follow a different timing than the planning process of the funds
- ➡ There are not adequate mechanisms of cooperation for supporting integrated long-term operations:
 - Horizontal cooperation between ministries
 - Vertical cooperation between the national, the regional and the local level

Inertia and lack of forward vision

- ➡ When planning, the trend is to think in the present and in the past, rather than in future needs
- ➡ When allocating resources, the trend is thinking in the actors, rather than in needs
- ➡ Insufficient use of mechanisms that could foster innovation: ex-ante conditionalities, mid-term review, adequate needs assessment, investment priorities....

Heavy administrative burden and narrow interpretation

- ➡ Simplification is intentional but does not happen in practical terms
- ➡ Payments are usually delayed
- ➡ Many funds are developed by annual/short-term allocations
- ➡ The trend of managing authorities and intermediary bodies is to avoid difficulties and risks: (multi-funds, locally-led initiatives, simplified mechanisms...)

Little engagement of key actors in the process

- ➡ The process is not transparent enough
- ➡ The code of conduct recommendations are not fully used
- ➡ The process of consultation still lacks sufficient participation
- ➡ The participation of the stakeholders does not happen in the whole policy cycle (planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating)

2. Lessons that we can learn from the Spanish ESF OP Fight against discrimination

- ➡ The programme
- ➡ The evaluation
- ➡ Institutional development
- ➡ Key elements

The Programme

- ➡ Aim: Socioeconomic integration of vulnerable people
- ➡ Activities: Training, intermediation, personal counselling, access to the employment
- ➡ Target groups: vulnerable people, specially people with disabilities, Roma, immigrants
- ➡ Main figures (2000-2010):
 - 350.000 participants
 - 122.000 trained
 - 136.000 got a job
 - 1.000 small business created

Key results of the external evaluation

- ➡ Economic impact: economic return is higher than investment: 140%
- ➡ Effectiveness: Despite current high rates of unemployment the programme continues to facilitate the access to jobs to 11.000 people annually
- ➡ Innovations: In the approach, in the tools, in the institutional capacity

Innovation and institutional developments

- ➡ Improvement and strengthening of the institutional capacity
- ➡ Creation of stable and long-term structures of partnership
- ➡ Increasing innovating: in the working methods, tools, synergies...
- ➡ Capacity building of civil society organizations

Key elements

- ➡ Partnership approach
- ➡ Specialization
- ➡ Adaptation to the individual needs
- ➡ Results orientation



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