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Social Innovation. The Concept and its Potential

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Zentrum für Soziale Innovation



BASIC FACTS OF THE ORGANISATION

Legal status

Private Non-Profit research organisation, established 1990
Self-governed association, no external board; no base funding

Financial sources: ≈ 4 mio. € in the years 2009, 2010 – **Staff:** ≈ 60

Clients are ministries, municipalities, EC, OECD, ILO, other public bodies and NGOs

Types of projects include research, education and training, coordination of networks, advisory services to public institutions (in Austria, EU and beyond)

Key areas of activities:

- Work and Equal Opportunities – Head of Unit: Anette Scoppetta
- Research Policy and Development – Head of Unit: Elke Dall
- Technology and Knowledge – Head of Unit: Ilse Marschalek

Executive Board and people participating in the meeting:

- Heads of units
- Josef Hochgerner, Scientific Director
- Klaus Schuch, Business Director
- Michael Förschner, implemented Territorial Employment Pacts in his former position as Director of the ESF-Department in the Austrian Ministry of Labour



MISSION STATEMENT

All innovations are socially relevant

Alongside with the economic relevance of innovations in technology social innovations shall receive equally high attention in the public, politics and research.

Acting as a social-profit organisation, ZSI conducts research on any kind of socially embedded innovation, making innovation processes apparent and pliable.

ZSI is an independent institution, acting globally by deployment of innovative research, education, advisory services and co-ordination of networks, to

- support socially appreciated forms of innovations,
- develop, research and disseminate social innovations,
- analyse, promote and evaluate scientific collaboration,
- strengthen an open and solidly united society, and thereby
- help to implement the visionary prospect of a better world.



Definition of „Social Innovation“ *)

**„Social innovations are
new concepts and measures
to resolve societal challenges,
adopted and utilised
by social groups concerned.“**



*) Zentrum für Soziale Innovation (Centre for Social Innovation) 2008:
„Stimulating Social Development“ (p. 2), available for download at
<https://www.zsi.at/object/publication/1390>



Main features of this definition

- **Distinction between idea and dissemination:** an idea becomes an innovation *in the process of social implementation* – it changes and improves *social practices*.
 - **The „3-i process“:**
 - Idea
 - Intervention
 - Implementation (sometimes formal institutionalisation)
 - **The scope of social innovations:** the new practice does not need to be affect to the whole of society; yet it may apply to all sectors – the public (state), private (business), and civil society (‘third sector’)
 - **Social innovations compete** with traditional or other novel solutions to social issues – and they have a **life cycle** (a social innovation ceases to be innovative in case of full adoption) .
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Towards a comprehensive innovation paradigm

In general, innovations aim

- primarily either on economic or on social **objectives**,
- they may be **technology**-based or not;
- in the social sphere they may require formal **regulation** or not.

Innovations, addressing primarily economic objectives¹⁾, include

- **products**
- **services**
- **organisational measures**
- **marketing**

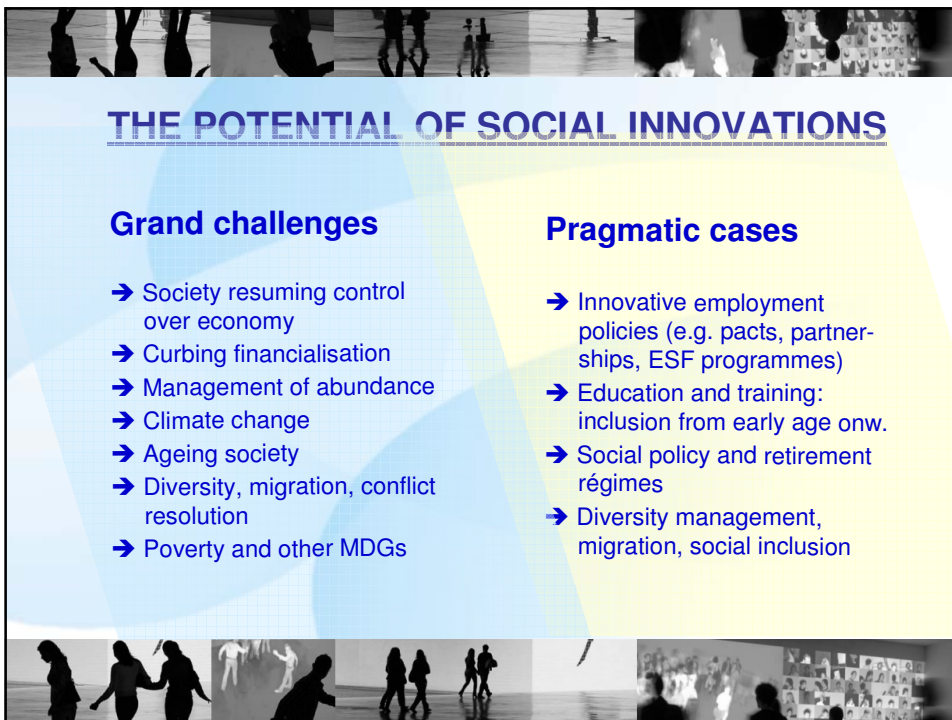
Innovations, addressing primarily social objectives²⁾, include

- **roles** (of individuals, CSOs, corporate business, and public institutions)
- **relations** (in professional and private environments, networks, collectives)
- **norms** (on different levels, legal requirements)
- **values** (custom, manners, mores, ethic/unethical behaviour)

1) „Oslo Manual“, OECD/EUROSTAT 2005, re. Schumpeter

2) amended: ZSI 2011





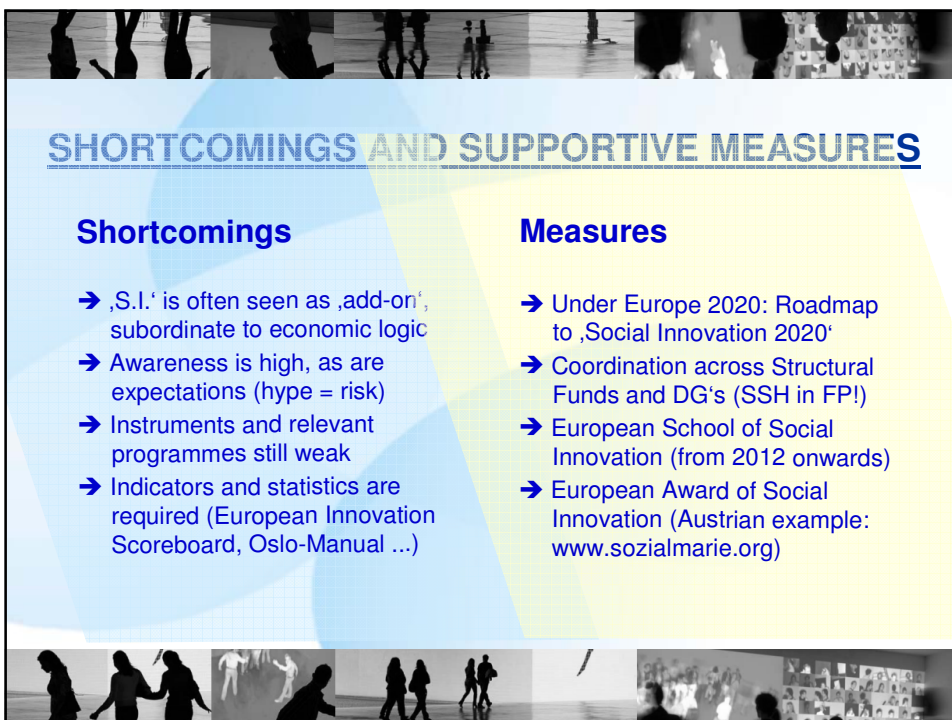
THE POTENTIAL OF SOCIAL INNOVATIONS

Grand challenges

- Society resuming control over economy
- Curbing financialisation
- Management of abundance
- Climate change
- Ageing society
- Diversity, migration, conflict resolution
- Poverty and other MDGs

Pragmatic cases

- Innovative employment policies (e.g. pacts, partnerships, ESF programmes)
- Education and training: inclusion from early age onw.
- Social policy and retirement régimes
- Diversity management, migration, social inclusion



SHORTCOMINGS AND SUPPORTIVE MEASURES

Shortcomings


- ‚S.I.’ is often seen as ‚add-on’, subordinate to economic logic
- Awareness is high, as are expectations (hype = risk)
- Instruments and relevant programmes still weak
- Indicators and statistics are required (European Innovation Scoreboard, Oslo-Manual ...)

Measures

- Under Europe 2020: Roadmap to ‚Social Innovation 2020’
- Coordination across Structural Funds and DG’s (SSH in FP!)
- European School of Social Innovation (from 2012 onwards)
- European Award of Social Innovation (Austrian example: www.sozialmarie.org)



How to assess social innovations?

- 1. Identification of the social issue ...**
at micro, meso, macro levels of society;
which sector: private, public, civil society
 - 2. Idea and solution proposed ...**
methods, procedures, capacity building
 - 3. Acceptance, adoption, adaptation ...**
of the solution by those concerned, resolution of potential conflicts
 - 4. Utilisation, impact and potential dissemination**
in wider areas and other sectors of society,
replications in other than original target groups
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