

Tilburg Turnaround: Europe needs Social Innovation Infrastructure

The Tilburg Turnaround is an open call for action to establish new connections between different levels of policymakers and societal sectors to collaboratively make progress in Social Innovation. It originates from the European Social Innovation Week held in Tilburg from 15-19 September 2014 and has been signed by representatives of social innovation organizations from The Netherlands and other European countries. We invite readers to sign this open letter at http://www.petitions24.com/tilburg_turnaround_europe_needs_social_innovation_infrastructure

1. Vision

It is clear now that governments and markets cannot solve urgent problems on the social agenda by relying on old solutions for new problems. Increasing inequalities, mass youth unemployment, unsustainable production and consumption and the crisis in the health care sector are striking examples.

Transition processes in public and private sectors require an inclusive approach of Social Innovation (SI), and Civil Society itself has to be rediscovered and reinvented as a major source of innovation. Technological and social innovations are profoundly interrelated. One may distinguish between both, but they are virtually inseparable. We need a turnaround in thinking and acting in order to get out of the doldrums. The different levels of governance and actors in Europe have to redefine their interactions and connections. Knowledge institutions and innovators should redefine their complementary transdisciplinary relationships.

We need a common understanding of competencies needed to set out our contribution to innovative societal developments.

2. Challenges

- Acknowledging the significance of SI for solving complex problems
- Involve institutions working on SI on an equal level in existing innovation systems
- Creating infrastructures and instruments to promote the SI-capacities of local and regional communities
- Mobilizing and alerting all stakeholders in the co-creation of SI
- Enhancing and strengthening the methods and theory of SI

3. Priorities

- To create a political agenda for Social Innovation on a local/regional level and transversally introduce Social Innovation in existing policies with regard to complex issues like unemployment, inequality, poverty, education, irresponsible consumption and depletion of resources, health and demographic change
- To create a programme for interregional cooperation specifically dedicated to Social Innovation
- To activate existing networks and infrastructures and raise awareness for Social Innovation (e.g. the Committee of the Regions, Eurocities, Assembly of European Regions, and others)
- To organise research programs on the relationships between technological and social innovation, and in particular to establish adequate methodologies to identify and analyse varieties of innovation according to an extended paradigm of innovation

4. Recommended actions

Social Innovation is crucial to mobilise and unleash the innovative capacity and potential of our society. The turnaround can take place only if stakeholders at local, regional and European levels collaborate in truly innovative settings. These include the utilisation of existing networks of local communities, municipalities and regions, Member States, agencies, EC services, and knowledge institutions, including universities.

In order to create new learning opportunities, the European School of Social Innovation can serve as a key platform for promoting competencies in the field and to be part of the emerging infrastructures for Social Innovation.

We invite all the actors and institutions concerned to sign the Tilburg Turnaround and thereby express their willingness to promote Europe's regional and local innovation capacity and create the framework conditions needed to better solve Europe's most pressing societal challenges.

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