social**platform**

Social Platform's position on social innovation

Adopted by the Steering Group on December 3, 2013

Executive summary

The meaning of social innovation – is that it's meaningful. As the name suggests social innovation must ensure the well-being of people and bring added social value. Although there has been increased attention being paid to social innovation across the EU agenda, there is no clear common definition. Without clear criteria to define it you run the risk of limiting public financing to practices which are "innovative" but which are not meaningful or do not necessarily take a comprehensive or long-term approach to social policies and services.

Social Platform and its members have outlined nine criteria which must be (mostly) met in order for a social innovation to be considered meaningful. These range from the novelty of the needs being addressed, to its potential for upscaling, and that it goes beyond just technological innovation for the benefit of users.

Throughout the 4 step process of social innovation (as described by the European Commission) the importance of involving civil society organisations (including organisations representing users, users' associations and non-profit service providers) and social economy actors can-not be overlooked. These organizations can bring added value and have a specific role to play at each stage. Often they are on the frontline in identifying new social needs and understanding what does and does not work. They also play a crucial role in helping to assess the impact of a social innovation on social needs which can help authorities to decide which innovations should be scaled up along with the cost of implementing or not implementing them.

To ensure that the EU and other decision makers play their role in supporting social innovation it is essential that they commit to supporting, facilitating, spreading and making sustainable innovations which are meaningful. This paper also outlines a number of policy recommendations in this regard.

Introduction

Social Platform welcomes the growing attention that the EU's agenda has been paying to social innovation: in particular in the frame of the Europe 2020 Strategy and its Flagship Initiatives (the "European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion", "Innovation Union" and its pilot project "Social Innovation Europe"), the New Skills agenda, the Digital Agenda, the Social Investment Package, as well as in the next generation of EU funds 2014-2020 ("Horizon 2020" - the new research and development programme, the "European Social Fund", the "European Regional Development Fund" and the "European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation").

At the same time, we warn that such a high attention to social innovation may lead to limiting public financing only to those practices which are considered innovative. Without clear criteria to define it it risks jeopardising a comprehensive and long-term approach, including financing, to social policies and services.

Taking into account that there is no common EU definition of social innovation, we consider that it is important to point out what Social Platform understands of this concept and which criteria should be used to identify what is a meaningful social innovation.

The first paragraph of this paper intends to clarify what social innovation means, in order to ensure the well-being of people, and lists which criteria make a social innovation meaningful. The second paragraph describes the role that civil society organisations can play throughout the whole process of social innovation. The third and last paragraph provides decision-makers with policy recommendations.

What do we mean by social innovation? What makes a social innovation meaningful?

There are different definitions in different EU instruments[1].

Notwithstanding what definition is used[2], we consider that a social innovation has to be meaningful for the beneficiaries it is intended to address. It is important to stress that a social innovation has to be distinguished from approaches that are simply new but have no real social added value. In the short term, it is sometimes impossible to measure the social impact. Therefore it is essential that a medium / long-term approach is adopted in the evaluation and measurement of social interventions.

For us a social innovation is meaningful when most of the following criteria are met:

- **Novelty**: the novelty can refer to the new social needs that have to be addressed, to existing practices, approaches or solutions that are applied to a new context or a new social need; or to a new way of applying existing solutions (integration of services or policy approaches between different sectors, combination of existing solutions or approaches, etc.)[3]

- **Focus on unmet/inadequately met/new needs by reinforcing the implementation of human rights**: the innovation clearly identifies a social need that needs to be met in a specific context and is backed up by an analysis showing that existing responses are lacking or insufficient and / or do not adequately include a rights-based approach

- **Assessment sharing:** the innovation contributes to gathering more evidence in an area where evidence is limited or lacking and it is shared with all relevant stakeholders

- **Informs policy development**: the social innovation should also help decision-makers to improve existing approaches, practices, services or policies

- **Potential for up-scaling**: the social innovation could work, or be adapted, for different contexts (transferability) or on a larger scale and therefore could be mainstreamed; scaling-up does not necessarily mean transferring a social innovation from one country to another

- **Participation and involvement of users, promotion and respect of users' rights**: the innovation promotes and respects users' rights; users are associated in the identification of the social need, in the design of responses, and in their implementation and evaluation

- **Participation and involvement of all relevant actors in a specific context**: the innovation involves a partnership of public authorities, civil society organisations, social economy actors and all the actors that may be relevant for the specific innovation (such as researchers and academics, trade unions, where relevant businesses, IT providers, etc.)

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[1] For instance, the European Union Programme for Employment and social innovation defines "social innovations as innovations that are social both as to their ends and their means and in particular those which relate to the development and implementation of new ideas (concerning products, services and models), that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations, thereby benefiting society and boosting its capacity to act". The European Commission, in its Guide on social innovation, defines it "as the development and implementation of new ideas (products, services and models) to meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations. It represents new responses to pressing social demands, which affect the process of social interactions. It is aimed at improving human well-being. Social innovations are innovations that are social both in their ends and their means".

[2] Social Platform considers the definition from AVISE (Agence d'ingénierie et de service pour entreprendre autrement) a good one: "*L'innovation sociale consiste à élaborer des réponses nouvelles à des besoins sociaux nouveaux ou mal satisfaits dans les conditions actuelles du marché et des politiques sociales, en impliquant la participation et la coopération des acteurs concernés, notamment des utilisateurs et usagers. Ces innovations concernent aussi bien le produit ou service, que le mode d'organisation, de distribution, dans des domaines comme le vieillissement, la petite enfance, le logement, la santé, la lutte contre la pauvreté, l'exclusion, les discriminations… Elles passent par un processus en plusieurs démarches: émergence, expérimentation, diffusion, évaluation.*"

[3] Phils: "Although innovations need not necessarily be original, they must be new to the user, context or application".

- **Goes beyond technological innovation for the benefit of users, is guided by criteria of public interest and promotes social progress**: there is an evaluation showing that the innovation makes improvements for the users (e.g. in terms of promotion of human rights, well-being, quality of life, empowerment, employability, good health, social inclusion, equality, equity regarding gender and diversity etc.)

- **Has a bottom-up approach to innovation** that starts at the local level.

What is the role of civil society organisations throughout the process of social innovation?

Civil society organisations and social economy actors are essential players in social innovation processes. Developing new solutions or improving existing ones in order to adapt to social changes, better meet people's needs, and promote human rights is an intrinsic part of the daily work of civil society organisations.

Even if the concept of innovation comes from the business sector, social innovation is a feature of social economy and civil society organisations. It is addressed by social research and development.

It is important to note that civil society organisations often act as brokers between politicians and researchers or academics. They help bring research results to politics, as well as assist researchers in navigating complex political systems.

The Commission describes social innovation as a four-stage process[4]:

1. Identification of new / unmet / inadequately met social needs

2. Development of new solutions in response to these social needs

3. Evaluation of the effectiveness of new solutions in meeting social needs

4. Scaling up of effective social innovations.

Civil society organisations (including those representing users, users' associations and non-profit service providers) and social economy actors have a specific role to play and bring added value to each stage of the process[5].

Civil society involvement in research leads to demonstrated better, more relevant results[6].

First step: Identification of new / unmet / inadequately met social needs

Civil society organisations and social economy actors are often on the frontline of identifying social needs, new or unmet or inadequately met, because they are in direct contact with users on the ground (e.g. new typology of users coming to a service, users with multiple complex needs, reasons why new users come to a service, etc.) and on this basis they have a strong understanding of the needs and rights of users and beneficiaries. Furthermore, they are often able to collect data that is not available to authorities (for instance on undocumented migrants; on which sectors of the population are mostly affected by the economic crisis – in some countries the crisis has affected people that beforehand were not in need; on new groups experiencing poverty– e.g. men separated from their partner, the working-poor…).

Therefore, public authorities should always involve civil society organisations in a partnership approach, to more effectively identify a new or unmet or inadequately met social need. The actors concerned by that specific social need (future beneficiaries) also need to be associated in the identification of the need, as well as other relevant actors present in a specific context.

Second step: Development of new solutions in response to the social needs identified

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[4] European Commission, *Guide to social innovation,* February 2013, p. 6

[5] The following considerations have been inspired by the grid of criteria developed by AVISE to detect a meaningful social innovation and by the *Briefing on social innovation in social services* by Social Services Europe.

[6] http://www.livingknowledge.org/livingknowledge/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/STACS_Final_Report-Partic.research.pdf

Civil society organisations and social economy actors are also on the frontline in the development of responses to social needs and reinforcement of human rights. They have an understanding of solutions that work, that do not work, or that need to be improved. This is embedded in their social objective that is manifested in their statutes and mission statements. As social needs change rapidly in society for different reasons, they are naturally confronted with situations where they need to give answers to new or insufficiently met needs. Therefore they often find themselves in the position of developing new and creative solutions at ground level.

For this reason, it is important that institutions involve civil society and social economy organisations, as essential actors who can contribute to the development of new responses, beginning from their design to their implementation, as well as in the governance processes. At this stage the involvement of users and other relevant stakeholders is also crucial. Institutions should provide funding opportunities for social experimentations which are accessible to all relevant actors, including civil society organisations, and that require the involvement of users.

Third step: Evaluation of the effectiveness of new solutions in meeting social needs

Social experimentations and innovations need to be assessed to identify if their impact is positive and meaningful. Depending on the experimentation / innovation, evaluations should be qualitative and / or quantitative. Universities and research centers can be involved at any stage, but it might be particularly valuable for them to be involved in this stage.

Civil society and social economy organisations should be involved to ensure that the evaluation process assesses the pertinence of the response to the identified social need, so that it is not only driven by efficiency gains and goes beyond pure technological innovation. Of course meaningful experimentations / innovations can prove to be sustainable in the longer term, but economic sustainability should not be their sole driving force as for some responses public financing will always be essential.

Users and all relevant stakeholders have to be involved in evaluations. It is worthwhile for evaluations to assess other direct or indirect impacts on other social needs and on other factors, such as economic development in a specific area and the impact on job creation, on the environment and ecological transitions, on new forms of work and of enterprises.

Fourth step: Scaling up of effective social innovations

Once it has been assessed that experimentations are potentially suitable to be transferred or scaled up[7], civil society and social economy organisations should assist policy-makers in the decision on which experimentations could and should be scaled up, taking into account users' needs and the costs of implementing or not implementing innovative solutions. This involves also readapting existing legislation and regulation, if needed.

Policy recommendations

Decision-makers have a role to play in supporting social innovation, throughout the whole process, but in particular the third and fourth stage.

It is essential that decision-makers and institutions commit to supporting, facilitating, spreading and making sustainable innovations which are meaningful. In particular, the EU has a role to play when it comes to the promotion of exchanges of good practices, funding projects (research and development, social experimentations, evaluations, assessment of transferability and scaling-up), transferring social innovations in services or policies, and promoting a shift from a project-based approach to long-term strategies. The EU should also support the development of environments favourable to social economy, such as support structures that can provide different forms of advice to project leaders.

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[7] AVISE suggests as indicators the capacity of project leaders to set up new actors in other areas (e.g. *essaimage, consortia*), the willingness of other actors to develop the project in another area, the fact that the project is mainstreamed in a bottom-up approach and institutions intend to transpose the project into policy interventions.

- The primary aim of social innovation is not to save public money: social innovations can contribute to promoting efficiency and effectiveness in social services and policies, but it's not their *raison d'être.* If a reduction in costs implies a decrease in the quality of the service or the policy intervention, it cannot be considered a social innovation. Especially in the case of social services - which contribute to the enjoyment of human rights - social innovation should not aim at replacing the state responsibility for ensuring high standards of living and working conditions.

- Public authorities, foundations and the EU should financially support social experimentations and social policy experimentations, whilst recognizing that experimentations can also fail. Failure should not mean that finance is automatically withdrawn or not disbursed.

- Public authorities, foundations and the EU should not finance the scaling-up of social innovations without first assessing that they benefit users and people. Funding opportunities from the EU and public authorities should include support for gathering evidence concerning a social experimentation or innovation (qualitative and quantitative analysis), research and evaluation of results.

- Funding opportunities from the EU, public authorities and foundations should strike a balance between the experimentation of new innovations and ensuring the sustainability in the medium and long term of proved meaningful innovations. For this reason, it is important that funding is ensured not only to support experimentations and projects, but along the whole chain, including evaluations and transferability. Finally, public authorities should have the ultimate responsibility for the sustainability of social innovations.

- Social experimentation and social service innovation should lead to social policy innovation. In particular, in the social service sector it is important that innovation is mainstreamed through policies and not through short-term projects, as this can jeopardize the continuity and comprehensiveness of the services provided.

- Processes that lead to social innovation should also be considered part of social innovation: for example, social innovation should also encompass the design of health and social care systems and how care is delivered, including for example alternative housing concepts, as they trigger innovation. This should extend to best practices for training and the retention of health and social workforces.

- The EU should give priority to funding social experimentations and social innovations that contribute to the achievement of EU strategies, such as the Europe 2020 strategy, the Active Inclusion strategy, and the Social Investment Package.

- The European Commission should promote a collaborative approach between the different DGs (Employment and Social Affairs, Enterprise, Internal Market and Services, Research, Regional Affairs, Public Health, Justice, Communication networks, content and technologies), as well as a partnership with civil society organisations, social economy actors, national, regional and local authorities, universities and research centres and other relevant actors in the development of social innovation programmes and policy.

- The European Commission should ensure that civil society organisations have access to all funding programmes that support social innovation (research and development, employment and social affairs, cohesion policy funds, competitiveness and innovation framework programme), including in the capacity of lead partners.

- The EU should play a role in supporting the transfer of social innovations from one context to another beyond national boundaries: including a thorough examination and assessment of the feasibility, to avoid one-size-fits-all approaches. In fact transferring a social innovation from one country to another is not always feasible.

- The funding of social innovation at EU level is often linked to the social and economic return on investment. This is an important but very delicate process. In measuring the social impact, it should be possible to choose among the existing methodologies and tools, the ones which suit best the specific innovation. Public authorities and investors should avoid supporting financially only those social innovations whose results can be easily measured, while neglecting meaningful initiatives that address very complex needs and whose impact can be assessed

only in a medium or long term. Any project should be given sufficient time to be able to demonstrate its social impact.

- While transferring innovations to a different context, where relevant use the existing mechanisms that protect the intellectual property rights of innovators (patents) and balance the public interest of having access to essential innovations, in line with EU commitments under the Millennium Development Goals and the Doha Declaration on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and Public Health. Facilitate the transferring of innovations, where relevant, by favoring "*essaimage*", creation of partnerships or consortia[8], which are more suitable to social economy actors.

- The EU should play a role and encourage the dissemination of results of social innovation projects, e.g. by developing a proper and lively tool (database, repository) to facilitate dissemination, exchange of practices, synergies and link-up between relevant actors.

- As part of the social innovation exploration at EU level, Horizon 2020 offers an excellent opportunity for the EU to explore new models of innovation that ensures research results in affordable and accessible services and technologies. This programme allows the experimentation of research models that prevent socializing the risks of investment while privatizing the profits of innovation by ensuring the public receives a return on its investment.

- The EU and Member States should recognise that market-driven research and development (R&D) must be supplemented with additional incentives for needs-driven R&D, as well as initiatives to ensure that these advances are affordable and accessible[9].

- For many civil society organisations that conduct or use research, limited access to studies represents a barrier. This requirement applies to research supported in whole, or in part, by EU funds. Open access to results and data, or additional exploitation, and dissemination should be promoted. This will allow research to address societal challenges. In many areas there is an overwhelming public interest for swift and broad dissemination of results and in universal accessibility products. Open access allows the results of publicly-funded research to be made more accessible and available, improving research information systems through fostering collaboration and interoperability.

Contact person for this paper:

Valentina Caimi – Policy and Advocacy Adviser
Telephone +32 (0)2 5081636 – email: valentina.caimi@socialplatform.org

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[8] "*essaimage*" of social innovation consists in a geographical extension of social innovations without having recourse to a company group, consortium or holding. Every social enterprise "essaimée" keeps its juridical independence and its own governance models. Only the adherence to a Charter and to the principles which are defined by the trademark guarantees that the social enterprise "essaimée" complies with the initial social innovation. The word "consortia" is used in general terms, without referring to any existing national definition.

[9] For example, the World Health Organization initiative on Consultative Expert Working Group on Research and Development: Financing and Coordination

Examples of meaningful social innovations
from Social Platform's members

From FEANTSA - European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless

Sector	Homelessness
Title	**Housing First**
Aim	Moving homeless people to permanent housing avoiding "staircase system"
Target Group	Homeless people with complex support needs
Country	Various projects: Europe/ North America.

Housing First is an innovative way of tackling homelessness amongst people with complex support needs, usually relating to mental health and/or addiction. The main elements of the **Housing First** approach have to be seen in contrast to approaches requiring "treatment first" and/or moving homeless people through a series of stages (staircase system) before they are "housing ready". These approaches have been criticized for limited effectiveness in actually ending homelessness for many homeless people with severe and complex needs.

Housing First seeks to move homeless people into permanent housing as quickly as possible with on-going, flexible and individual support provided as long as it is needed, privileging service user choice. **Housing First** has gained particular attention in the US and Canada, where robust longitudinal research has demonstrated impressively high housing retention rates, especially for the pioneer model of "Pathways to Housing" in New York. The eight principles of this model, which focuses on homeless people with mental illness and co-occurring substance abuse, are: housing as a basic human right; respect, warmth, and compassion for all users; a commitment to working with users for as long as they need; scattered-site housing in independent apartments; separation of housing and services; consumer choice and self-determination; a recovery orientation; and harm reduction.

Housing First projects achieve impressive rates of housing retention for homeless people (above 80% in a range of projects in Europe and internationally) and good outcomes in a wide range of quality of life domains. There is growing evidence, including from the PROGRESS funded social experimentation **Housing First Europe**[10] that **Housing First** is ground-breakingly successful in addressing homelessness amongst people with complex support needs. Comparative studies show that **Housing First** is more effective than traditional services and can also be more cost-effective: achieving better outcomes for the investment made and in some cases generating cost offsets and even savings.
Evaluation at European level related to the costs and financial effects of implemented Housing First projects varies considerably and information about costs was not available for all projects[11]. However,

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[10] **Housing First** has rapidly become a proven social innovation and has been promoted by the European Commission in the context of the *Social Investment Package*. Find further details online.

[11] It was also agreed that a more detailed comparison of the costs of the local projects with each other would not make sense, as these not only reflected the enormous variance of salary costs in different European locations but would also need a much more sophisticated frame of detailed information and analysis to make any sense.

calculations from Amsterdam and Lisbon indicate that the costs of the Housing First projects compare favourably with other existing services at local level.

In Amsterdam different types of financing mechanisms were used within the Discus Housing First project. The average annual amount paid per user is 25,400 Euros per year (or 69.60 Euros per day), which according to the evaluation report is still less than the costs for hostels with 24 hours support for homeless people in Amsterdam[12].

Concerning the project in Lisbon, the costs of the whole project were calculated at 16.40 Euros per day and client. A night in a night shelter in Lisbon costs 18.60 Euros, in a hostel with some support it costs 30.77 Euros. The evaluation also points out that there was a drastic decrease in the number of psychiatric hospitalizations for Housing First clients. While 58% of the programme participants were admitted in a psychiatric hospital at least once during the year before joining the project, this happened only to 6% during their stay in the project. Psychiatric hospitalizations in acute wards have a one-time cost of 2,500 Euros per client, according to the evaluation report[13].

Evidence about the cost-effectiveness of Housing First is still emerging. The strongest evidence comes from the USA and Canada. Whilst this evidence is important, it is crucial that the potential for cost-savings is not overstated. Housing first is not a "cheap" option.

From SOLIDAR- European network of NGOs working to advance social justice

Sector	Active inclusion	Financial inclusion
Title	Abitare solidale	Financial Home Administration
Aim	Solidarity between generations, tackling consequences of demographic change	Preventing social poverty and exclusion
Target Group	Older people, people with economic difficulties	People unable to manage their financial and administrative work
Country	Italy	Netherlands

1) Abitare Solidale is a project carried out by AUSER[14] (member of SOLIDAR) together with the Municipality of Florence and the association ARTEMISIA[15].

The project aims at solving housing related problems faced by different categories of people in need. The project supports intergenerational cohabitation providing an integrated solution to people experiencing social difficulties. On one hand, to the elderly in need of help for household maintenance and household keeping; on the other hand, to people experiencing economic difficulties, who are in need of affordable and decent accommodation and furthermore, to people in need of temporary shelter (women victims of domestic violence for example).

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[12] Wewerinke, D., al Shamma, S. and Wolf, J. (2013*): Report of the Evaluation of Discus Housing First, The Netherlands* (Nijmegen: Netherlands Centre for Social Care Research) p.30.
[13] Ornelas, J. (2013): *Casas Primeiro, Lisboa. Final Report for Housing First Europe Project* (Lisbon)p. 33 and 44.
[14] AUSER is an Italian Association which supports the right of older people to continue to play an active role on a social and economic level. It promotes older people's work as volunteers in several areas of activity such as training and education, social utility and international solidarity. Find more on Auser's website.
[15] ARTEMISIA is an Association protecting women and child victims of domestic violence. Find more on their website.

The project facilitates the creation of interpersonal relationships and promotes the value of solidarity between generations as a way to actively participate in society and combat isolation. Moreover, **Abitare Solidale** is environmentally-friendly and a highly sustainable solution: it is based on the optimisation of existing housing stock and represents an alternative to retirement houses which are not sustainable in the long-term for structural and environmental reasons (it seems that the environmental impact of retirement houses is high). Social workers, public authorities and volunteers work together to provide tailor-made housing solutions as well as support and protection (through ad hoc legal tools) to users in all stages of the cohabitation.

How this project contributes to active inclusion:

- FOR OLDER PEOPLE: it represents a solution to the problem of isolation and social exclusion of older people. It allows them to stay longer in their homes improving their active participation in society, independent living and self-determination. The project intends to respond to the decreasing availability of informal caregivers (women, family networks) and offers an alternative to retirement homes.
- FOR PEOPLE IN NEED: it helps them to find an affordable and decent accommodation allowing them to actively participate in society. The project offers an innovative solution to new causes of poverty and social exclusion: precarious jobs, migration, people not entitled to public protection schemes and/or to public care services. Based on mutual aid, the project represents an alternative to the isolation and stigmatisation of people facing financial or personal difficulties and provides them with practical support for their (re)integration into society.

2) **Financial Home Administration** is a programme carried out by Humanitas[16] (member of SOLIDAR) to provide support to people unable to independently manage their financial and administrative work.

This project represents social innovation as it fills a gap in the service provision by intervening at an earlier stage than classic debt relief services in the Netherlands and addressing new needs that have emerged in society as a consequence of the economic crisis.
The project aims at preventing poverty and social exclusion. In addition it contributes to the empowerment of users, improving their financial and administrative skills and abilities as well as promoting their active inclusion and (re-)integration into society. The support given by volunteers is mostly short term and is adapted to the specific needs of the users. Examples of users are: people experiencing financial difficulties (i.e. as a consequence of bankruptcy, indebtedness or displacement); young adults facing difficulties with financial management (i.e. as a consequence of illiteracy or low level of education); ex-prisoners in need of administrative support to reintegrate into society.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of this service and its impact on people's life, Humanitas commissioned an in-depth research by the University of Tilburg. This innovative method of evaluation represents a source of evidence-based information, which can be used to better allocate resources in the future development and implementation of Humanitas' projects.

How this innovative service contributes to active inclusion:

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[16] Humanitas is a non-profit association employing more than 11.000 volunteers across the Netherlands to support people in need of social and (health)-care services. Humanitas offers a broad spectrum of activities such as projects for (former) prisoners, addicts, homeless people, migrants, counselling and group support for people dealing with grief and loss. For further information visit Humanitas' website.

- As part of this programme, users acquire new financial skills and abilities and learn (step by step) how to independently manage their administrative work. This programme offers concrete help to overcome existing financial difficulties and to prevent problems becoming more serious.
- By learning new skills and acquiring new abilities as well as establishing a personal relationship with the volunteer, users improve their self-confidence and independence. Based on solidarity and independence, the support offered by volunteers is more than merely 'administrative' and contributes to the empowerment of the user and her/his (re-)integration in society.

More information can be found on this web site.

From AGE Platform Europe - European network of organisations of and for people aged 50+

Sector	Health-care	Housing accessibility
Title	POPP: Partnerships for Older People Projects	INNOVAGE: computer-based tool to assess housing accessibility
Aim	Evaluating different models of service	Improve housing accessibility and empower older people and people with disabilities in their housing choices
Target Group	Elderly, older people with health problems	Older people and people with disabilities
Country	UK	EU

1) **Partnerships for Older People Projects (POPP)** was launched in 2005 to develop and evaluate services and approaches for older people aimed at promoting health, well-being and independence and preventing or delaying the need for higher intensity or institutional care.

The focus of the **POPP programme** has been to test and evaluate different models of service through 29 local authority-led pilot projects. The aim of the projects was to create a sustainable shift from institutional and hospital based crisis care for older people towards earlier, targeted interventions for older people within their own homes and communities. Over 25.000 people have used one or more of the POPP services. These services meet low level to high level needs and have ranged from rapid response services, to mental health cafés with open door access for older people, to falls prevention services, telephone advice services and befriending schemes.
Within the context of Putting People First and the Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention agenda, the evidence and learning from the pilot projects is intended to support council-led partnerships to invest in preventative approaches which improve the quality of life of older people and are cost-effective.

Remark: some UK Age members very positively evaluated the POPP's projects as a good example of a participative approach.

2) **User driven housing: a computer-based tool to assess housing accessibility.** Since March 2013, the INNOVAGE project is developing and testing four social innovations that will have a solid impact on improving the quality of life and well-being of older people.
One of the four innovations aims at raising awareness of the need for appropriate housing in old age and for people with disabilities; it also wants to enable these users to self-assess their expectations and needs in relation to housing options, including accessibility issues. The project intends to actively engage users as active stakeholders in ensuring the accessibility not only of

housing, but also their surroundings (e.g. removing architectural barriers to ensure access to public transports and facilities).

Since March 2013, the project has been engaging older people, people with disabilities and public stakeholders involved in housing construction and provision, in the social innovation process, from different European countries (Italy, Sweden, Latvia and Germany). By developing, testing and implementing a computer-based tool based on a scientifically recognized methodology for accessibility assessment - the Housing Enabler Instrument - older people and people with disabilities will be empowered to describe their needs regarding housing accessibility. The use of this computer-based tool is meant also to facilitate the communication between users, constructors, researchers and other relevant stakeholders.
Thanks to the engagement of users and stakeholders, the project wants ultimately to have an impact on housing policies and housing provision practices across Europe.

Research circles in four countries: a fundamental part of the development of the interactive and user-oriented product is the use of research circles to generate new knowledge that will be reflected in a specification of the requirements needed for this new product to be accessible to all. The research circles serve as a place for reflection on housing provision, on the built environment and the barriers impeding accessibility, and on the benefit of a computer-based tool.

From EPR – European Platform for Rehabilitation

Sector	Disability
Title	**Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre**
Aim	Supporting the vocational integration of people with disabilities"
Target Group	Unemployed people with disabilities
Country	Estonia

The **Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre**[17] was founded in 1995 and is the only public center in Estonia, which provides social and vocational rehabilitation to people with all kinds of disabilities.
The project's primary aim is to prepare people with special needs for work, support them in their search for suitable jobs and help them in adapting to their jobs. Usually employers do not consider people with disabilities as a resource; neither are they willing to hire or offer them internships due to a lack or poorly accessible information; they are also afraid of the burden that comes with hiring people with disabilities.
To find solutions to the problem, the Centre initiated a training format for employers where they are approached individually and introduced to the Centre, its users and ways of working.

The training aims to increase employers' awareness on the needs and resources of people with disabilities and encourage them to offer jobs and internship positions. With training days employers have a chance to expand their minds by: visiting the Centre and getting an idea of the kind of operations that people with disabilities could do in their companies; finding out more about disability related topics; having a chance to put themselves in the situation of people with disabilities; receiving information on the services and discounts offered by the state when hiring people with disabilities;

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[17] Find further details on the Centre website or on EPR.

discussing their fears, preconceptions, experiences with employers who have hired a person with disabilities; sharing their thoughts and experiences regarding hiring people with disabilities and possible future cooperation through round table discussions.

Results of the project: the training days help the Centre find new partners and reach companies who had previously refused to cooperate. This, in turn, means larger numbers of internships for people with disabilities who use the Centre. Moreover, participants share their good experiences from the training days with other employers; greater awareness of people with disabilities as a resource for employers; higher integration of people with disabilities in society; and higher employment rates.

Since the training has been effective in Astangu, they are working to make the training available to employers from all regions in Estonia in cooperation with local governments. The reason is that people come from all over Estonia and after learning working skills in Astangu will most probably go back to where they come from. Finding, informing and activating employers from their hometowns and villages will be the responsibility of the Centre.

From EPHA – European Public Health Alliance

Sector	Social inclusion/ health care
Title	Saheli Women's Centre
Aim	Economic growth and gender inclusion through health provision
Target Group	Asian community, mainly women
Country	UK

The **Saheli** **Women's Centre in Balsall Heath** (south Birmingham) delivers a number of programmes and projects aimed at supporting and encouraging the empowerment of young women (but also men) to get involved in the community, overcome barriers in the Asian community, and to connect with each other through outdoor activities.

The aim was to meet the need of local women for a women's health and fitness facility which had to be 'run by women, for women'. Saheli secured a space to allow women from the local community to access health and fitness facilities. It started as the Saheli Womens Group as local Asian women were not getting involved in local decision making processes.

The Saheli Centre has helped women to become more active, encouraging them out of their homes and involving them in community life. Most members – who pay £10 a month – have been referred for exercise aimed at preventing serious conditions such as diabetes, coronary heart disease and kidney disorders. If people live longer healthier lives, it reduces the cost of National Health System interventions. Thus the centre plays a role in addressing a societal challenge.

How it can be scaled up and used as a best practice: through commissioning new health services, jobs can also be created. Thus commissioning preventive services is an answer to austerity through job creation, and if it reduces the number of acute care interventions, it will dramatically reduce the pressures on the health budget.