

## Social Entrepreneurs: Have Your Say Report of the Workshops – Strasbourg, 16th – 17th of January

Last January, Forum d'Action Modernités, as part of "The European Network" (TEN), brought about twenty young people to Strasbourg to host workshops on their expectations regarding the European policies on Social Entrepreneurship. Several ideas and recommendations came out from these workshops; here is a synthesis of these outputs.

**Young facilitators:** Jonathan Alix, Anais Amazit, Lucie Argeliès, Marius Bienvenot, Elsa Colonna d'Istria, Floriane Dumoulin, Adrien Fabre, Cyril Gollino, Benoît Guyot, Boris Marcel, Mélanie Marcel, Marine Rognone, Eloïse Szmatala, Alberic Tchobli, Léa Zaslavsky

### Main expectations for EU policies:

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#### SUPPORT:

EU already allocates funds for Social Entrepreneurship. Young participants pointed out the importance of keeping this dynamics running, and defined few priorities through a collective brainstorming:

- Keep financing **local initiatives**;
- Finance **international networks** to change scale and improve international cooperation. Also help local networks to connect with these international networks to improve practice and knowledge exchanges;
- **Support actions of youth** by:
  - o Financing specific and adapted education and/or mentoring to make young people learn business competencies
  - o Facilitating mobility with exchange programs for social entrepreneurs and not only for students,
  - o Settling financial support for business launching.

#### ORGANIZE THE DIALOGUE:

EU policies should encourage social and economic actors to get more involved in social entrepreneurship and Europe's future. Public institutions are certainly best positioned to foster dialogue among all stakeholders:

- Organizing **regular meetings** between private sector actors, social entrepreneurs, NGOs, local institutions, European institutions, banks, citizens, etc.;
- **Connecting European institutions with citizens:** Social entrepreneurship deals with issues closely related with citizens' concerns and could be a great lever of mobilization, by making them participate actively in the European governance
- Creating an **easy-to-access tools** like a digital platform to allow European citizens to have their say and have direct interactions;
- Europe could create a **unique and innovative place** that would be as much a technological cluster as an ideation place. Moving forward precise goals, its scientists, experts and guests will collaborate to create bold innovation with tremendous impact on the citizen life

## INFORM AND VALUE:

EU role and actions are not legible and visible enough for citizens. EU has a key role to play to make citizens aware of new solutions and opportunities and to encourage them to take action.

- Ordering **regular studies and investigations** on new forms of economy and cooperation. Broadcasting and valorizing the results in all the European areas.
- **Promoting entrepreneurial spirit at school:** create a common educational program on social entrepreneurship, give good examples to inspire people and show what is possible.
- Media have a great role to play to inspire people to change. EU should communicate on a wide range of media, support empowering media and, why not, **create its own European media.**

## Details of the workshops:

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The sessions were prepared with the young facilitators before the meeting. The aim was to encourage dialogue and to produce the maximum of ideas during workshops. Each workshop focused on a lever of improvement of Social Entrepreneurship in Europe.

All the participants followed the same methodology: first, they collectively identified the brakes and challenges that Social Entrepreneurs are facing in Europe, and then they imagined the solutions European institutions could put in place:

### **1) How to leverage scientific and technical innovation towards social and environmental impact?**

These last 5 years have seen the digital world take possession of its own social impact and the emergence of a new movement on the Internet combining technological developments and the urge to help others.

This search for sense is slightly reaching the scientific world as well. Science, often seen as a distant actor working in the realm of pure knowledge, has a key role to play in tackling the current social and environmental crisis.

### Brakes for responsible research:

- Young scientists often envision their work's goal as making humanity go further. However, rapidly caught in the industrialization of the scientific world, they lose their goals and feel more and more disconnected from society. This lack of purpose is harmful to our scientists' imagination and creativity. It endangers our ability to find meaningful answer as well as our ability to create any kind of scientific breakthrough.
- Scientific research laboratories gather together experts in one specific field. Even if this organization allows to deeper fundamental research, it was not made to take on real and current challenges. Those challenges are so complex that there is a need for diverse competencies and a strong purpose. Scientific innovation with a social and environmental impact will only appear from the encounter of diverse fields and of a meaningful goal.

### What the EU could do:

- Europe could create a unique and innovative place that would be as much a technological cluster as an ideation place. Moving forward precise goals, its scientists, experts and guests will collaborate to create bold innovation with tremendous impact on the citizen life.

Scientists from every field, economist, health experts, could be invited on precise research topics to collaborate on responsible research projects. This place would be a high-tech cluster with a goal for social and environmental impact.

#### A US example: Global Good

Global Good is part of the American company Intellectual Ventures Lab. It focuses its work around thematic areas where invention can have the greatest possible impact on life. Global Good combines the knowledge of engineers, scientists, and health experts with the expertise of leading humanitarian organizations, forward-looking governments, and commercial partners.

#### A French example: SoScience!

SoScience! is a French start-up working on responsible research: scientific innovation that will create social and environmental impact. In order to tackle on-fields scientific problems encountered by social entrepreneurs, SoScience! launches programs gathering scientists and researchers from public laboratories, private laboratories, employees of big businesses, social entrepreneurs and engineering students

## 2) Social entrepreneurship in Europe regarding youth and intergenerational dynamics

Young people have a new perception of society and economy and have a huge potential for innovative business. Misunderstanding and lack of relationship between the generations waste with potential. For example, companies are reluctant to hire young people because it implies a cost for their formation. But their innovative spirit and their dynamism are also key assets for companies

#### Brakes for young social entrepreneurs:

- Awareness: the social entrepreneurship sector lacks of visibility. The topic is not often talked about along education paths, so that young students cannot be aware of what enterprises with social impacts are.
- Skills: young people in Europe may not hold the necessary skills to feel (or be) able to launch their own social business. Entrepreneurship culture is not widespread and skills needed, have to be learned
- Opportunities: The conditions are harder for young people who want to start a business: the old generation scepticism, the lack of family support, but also the fear not to succeed, the reluctance to long-term projects, the financial pressure on young people, who may have student's loans and other better-paid job opportunities...

#### What the EU could do:

- School and media have an essential role to play to inspire and drive young people to become entrepreneurs. EU could take part in the valorization of the sector
- Exchange and mentoring programs as Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs should keep developing.

#### How the Medias can leverage our citizen actions?

The "impact journalism day", launched by Sparknews and the world's leading newspapers and aiming to present optimistic topics and inspiring solutions to today's social issues, is a good example of how to raise awareness about social entrepreneurship.

#### **Idea!**

##### A double-mentoring implying two nationalities, two generations, two "sectors"

In order to share different experiences and visions about European social business, a system of double-mentoring could be implemented. Participants could share their views through frequent meetings along a year or through an entire week in the life of the other. Mutual mentors have to belong to different categories and countries.

#### **Idea!**

##### An Erasmus for Young Social Entrepreneurs or "wannabe" social entrepreneurs

In order to promote social entrepreneurship toward young Europeans and to enhance sharing of best practices from different countries in the social business sector, an exchange for social entrepreneurs could be implemented. On the same path than Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs but adapted and focus on social business

### 3) How could European citizens have their say in social entrepreneurship project financing by the EU? How could they participate in the EU legislative level (be more implied) in this respect?

European citizens are not connected with European institutions. It is crucial for European construction to get them involved. Social entrepreneurship deals with issues closely related with citizens' concerns and could be a great lever of mobilization, by making them participate actively in the European governance.

#### Brakes for citizens' involvement:

- Bureaucratic burden
- Poor knowledge and understanding of the role and actions of the EU institutions
- Lack of visibility concerning the practices in other European countries

#### What the EU could do:

- Settle a digital platform to make citizens interact with institutions: this tool could allow them to ask questions, make propositions and thus contribute to a innovative kind of participative democracy
- Broadcast information on various media to make Europe "real". Generally, there is a clear lack of pan-European information about initiatives from other European countries.
- Use the social entrepreneurship and citizen initiatives to connect people and institution around tangible projects and get in an operational cooperation.

#### **Idea!**

##### A European Channel on TV

This channel could help people to understand how EU works but also what happens in other European countries and how people live. All programs could be broadcasted in original version with chosen subtitle

#### **Idea!**

##### New participatory financing system:

[Adrien Fabre](#) is working on a new platform to imply citizen in social business financing. EU would give a vote to each citizen allowing him/her to choose a social enterprise he/she wants to finance. Projects who gather enough votes obtain a proportional part of the financing

### 4) The relationship between society and the economy has changed, what does it mean for social entrepreneurship in Europe?

New relationships come out between economy and society. To fit these evolutions, new forms of enterprise will develop. Social businesses could take different shapes but all of them are built to give more meaning to the economy and establish a more positive relationship between society and the economy.

#### Brakes for building new enterprises:

- Lack of legibility and visibility of social enterprises for citizens and EU institutions
- Poor cooperation between classic enterprises, public actors and social enterprises
- Lack of communication from innovative businesses

#### What the EU could do:

- Order regular studies and investigations on the new forms of enterprises and make them public
- Encourage all the forms of social business to communicate and gather within networks by financing and meetings
- EU could take part in new model of investing at local level and then spreads these practices at a bigger level

#### Example of Hybrid enterprise from Italia:

Benefits generated by private companies are made available for social entrepreneurs or local public institution. They use these benefit to develop their project on energy, health or other social issues.

## 5) Eradicate the poverty in the world thanks to social businesses

This workshop pointed out the difficulty for social business to change scale. The local scope tends to be the most pertinent and the most economically viable.

### Brakes for scaling up:

- Social businesses resolve very local problems and are anchored on a territory.
- It is hard to exceed specific local characteristics and find a universal model, social entrepreneurs have to face very complex issues involving various factors: economical, social, cultural, environmental ...
- Human and financial resources are often limited for social entrepreneurs

### What the EU could do:

- Help local networks to connect with networks from other countries and then allow practice and knowledge exchanges
- Keep financing local initiatives with public funds in order to maintain social entrepreneurs autonomy
- Find new hybrid models bringing large companies in the process. EU should facilitate links between social entrepreneurs and companies to encourage financing and competencies transfer in both ways.

## About us:

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The  
European  
Network

**The European Network (TEN)** is an initiative launched by Forum d'Action Modernités together with other European members of the [Clinton Global Initiative](#). We aim to develop new relations between business and society in Europe. We are concerned with youth unemployment, which directly ties to Europe's capacity to innovate and embrace new social and economic configurations. We wish to connect innovative social entrepreneurs, young people, universities, companies and philanthropists. With them, we aim to develop dialogue and cooperation at the European level to better understand change levers and contribute to reopen Europe's future.



**Forum d'Action Modernités** is a Think and Action Network. Its ambition is to contribute in the imagination of the modernity of the 21st century. The Forum envisages positive collective representations. Sharing ideas, public debates and pilot-actions are some of its ways of action.

**Methodology.** Opening ZIP – “Zones d'Initiatives Positives” in French – for Positive Initiative Zones on a specific issue enables to articulate these major principles at the roots of the Forum approach: alliances between actors belonging to different environments (entrepreneurs, artists, NGOs, researchers, etc.), decompartmentalisation, and collective intelligence.

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