

Social Services Europe

Social Innovation: The Role of Social Service Providers



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
KEY MESSAGES.....	4
I. WHAT IS SOCIAL INNOVATION?.....	5
1. The current EU policy context.....	5
2. Concepts and definitions.....	5
3. Success criteria for social innovation.....	6
II. SOCIAL INNOVATION IN THE SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR.....	8
1. Identification of new or unmet social needs.....	8
2. Development of innovative solutions in response to social needs.....	9
3. Evaluation of the effectiveness of innovative solutions.....	10
4. Scaling up of effective social innovations.....	11
III. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	12
1. Preconditions.....	12
2. Involvement of social service providers at all stages of the innovation process...	12

Social Services Europe brings together seven Europe-wide networks of not-for-profit providers of social and health care services who each have a track record in providing value-driven services for the most vulnerable in our societies. The network aims to strengthen the profile and position of social services, and promote the role of not-for-profit social service providers in Europe. For more info: www.socialserviceseurope.eu

INTRODUCTION

Social Services Europe represents 100,000 social and health services active across Europe promoting social inclusion and social cohesion. The sector, employing 10% of the EU workforce, has a long-term commitment to vulnerable people and is constantly searching for innovative and cost effective solutions to providing services.

Social innovation has become a “buzz-word” and an increasingly central area of policy and research in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The organisations represented by Social Services Europe have a strong tradition of innovation and are constantly searching for ways to provide better quality, more effective and sustainable services. This way of working stems from the need to develop new strategies, concepts, principles and partnerships in order to meet existing social needs and respond effectively to new ones.

This paper presents social innovation from the perspective of social service providers. It highlights the important role that social service providers play in social innovation and makes recommendations as to how the sector can best be supported in developing, testing and scaling up innovations in order to overcome social, economic and organisational challenges and best respond to social needs.

The paper first provides an overview of the current EU policy and research context regarding social innovation. Social innovation is then defined and analysed from the perspective of social service providers. Finally, Social Services Europe puts forward concrete recommendations on how to support social service providers in the area of social innovation in order to deliver on the Europe 2020 Strategy.

KEY MESSAGES

ONE –

Broadly speaking, social innovation in social services can be described as the process by which new responses to social needs are developed in order to deliver better social outcomes and address new social challenges. They are considered to be innovative by their novelty, ability to improve the efficiency of pre-existing solutions and environmental, economic and organisational sustainability.

TWO –

With their long-term experience and commitment, Social Services Europe members play a key role in making each stage of the social innovation process a success. They can maximise the social impact of innovation policy and can help to ensure that resources allocated to social innovation are best used to make progress towards the headline targets of Europe 2020 Strategy for ‘smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’.

THREE –

In order to involve social service providers in all stages of the innovation process and maximise the impact of their contribution, Social Services Europe calls on policymakers at EU level to set up and sustain an appropriate legal, political and financial environment. The following recommendations are made (and further developed) in this paper:

- Social service providers should be supported – including through access to funding streams such as the EUPSCI Programme and Structural Funds – to play a full role in identifying social needs and in ensuring that social innovations are developed and scaled up in order to improve the quality, sustainability, availability and affordability of social services.
- Social service providers should be able to access capacity building opportunities to strengthen their participation in social innovation (i.e. through the Social Innovation Europe Programme, EUPSCI programme, PROGRESS).
- The key role and expertise of social service providers should be recognised at EU, national, regional and local level and they should be involved as partners in various programmes to support social innovation, inter alia, through developing social policy experiments, scaling-up of effective strategies, gathering evidence on effective approaches and participating in transnational exchange and mutual learning. This includes participating as key stakeholders in the EU instruments to support social innovation: the PROGRESS and forthcoming EUPSCI programme, FP7 and Horizon 2020 as well as Cohesion Policy.

A full set of recommendations are available on page 12.

I. WHAT IS SOCIAL INNOVATION?

1. The current EU policy context

While the concept of social innovation is not new, it has only recently become a priority in the EU policy arena. The Europe 2020 agenda¹, which was agreed by Member States at the June 2010 European Council, sets out the EU's strategy for 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' over the period 2010-2020. Social innovation is a major concern within this new strategic framework, although there is not a common EU definition.

The strategy sets five headline targets in employment, R&D/innovation, climate change, education and poverty. The target on poverty is to reduce the number of people living in poverty by 20 million. The target on innovation is to invest 3% of the EU's GDP (public and private combined) in R&D/innovation. In addition to the headline targets, a number of "flagship initiatives" are introduced to boost change and progress in key policy areas. Social innovation is mentioned in relation to the "European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion" flagship which commits to "design and implement programmes to promote social innovation for the most vulnerable"².

Social innovation is also promoted through the "Innovation Union" flagship, which aims to improve conditions and access to finance for this purpose.³ Horizon 2020, the 8th EU framework programme for research and innovation, commits to addressing societal challenges, including making progress towards 'inclusive, innovative, secure societies'. In this context, it commits to integrating funding for social innovation with support for research and technological development.⁴ The Commission has also launched a pilot called Social Innovation Europe⁵ to provide expertise and a networked "virtual hub" for social entrepreneurs, the public and third sectors. The Commission will also support a substantial research programme on public sector and social innovation, looking at issues such as measurement and evaluation, financing and addressing barriers to scaling up and development.

On the 6th October 2011, the Commission adopted a draft legislative package on cohesion policy for the period 2014-2020.⁶ This includes proposals for the European Social Fund (ESF) regulation⁷, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) regulation⁸ and a new EU Programme for Social Change and Innovation (EUPSCI).⁹ The EUPSCI will promote evidence-based social change and innovation. It will support policy coordination, sharing of best practices, capacity-building and testing of innovative policies through social policy experimentation, with the aim of scaling up the most successful measures addressing social needs.¹⁰ Scaling up will be supported by the ESF which will also facilitate capacity building for social innovation. Social innovation is also one of the investment priorities of the ERDF, including innovative actions in the area of sustainable urban development.

¹ COM(2010) 2020 final

² COM(2010) 0758 final

³ In this context, the Commission has launched a pilot called Social Innovation Europe to provide expertise and a networked "virtual hub" for social entrepreneurs, the public and third sectors.

⁴ COM(2011) 808 final

⁵ See <http://www.socialinnovationeurope.eu/>

⁶ See http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/proposals_2014_2020_en.cfm#2

⁷ COM(2011) 607 final

⁸ COM(2011) 614 final

⁹ COM(2011) 609 final

¹⁰ Of the EUR 574 million proposed for the Progress axis in EUPSCI in the 2014-2020 period, EUR 97 million is to be allocated to experimental projects. In addition, the draft package mainstreams social innovation within the structural funds.

2. Concepts and definitions

For a long time, the concept of innovation has mainly been linked to economic processes. Most prominently, Joseph Schumpeter referred to innovation as “creative destruction” of old patterns of production, driven by entrepreneurs. In contrast, innovation in services and policies has been a relatively small field of interest and research.¹¹ Only in the 21st century have some branches of academic research started to look at the non-economic aspects of the innovation such as the quality of social policies and practices as well as the need to adapt services to cultural changes, social challenges and new behavioural models. A new paradigm has emerged in recent years that takes into account economic, social, technological and scientific components in a more holistic understanding of innovation that goes beyond a focus on production.¹²

There is no official EU definition of social innovation and the term is used to describe a number of overlapping concepts. However, some key elements of social innovation are emerging at EU level in the context of increased policy attention and a growing academic literature. Broadly speaking, social innovations are “new ideas that work in meeting social goals”¹³. According to the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA) “innovation refers to the capacity to create and implement novel ideas... proven to deliver value”, whereas “social refers to the kind of value that innovation is expected to deliver: a value that is less concerned with profit and more with issues such as quality of life, solidarity and well-being” .

Social innovation thus describes the process by which new responses to social needs are developed in order to deliver better social outcomes. This process is composed of four main elements (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of the social innovation process

1.	Identification of new or unmet 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

This linear account of social innovation provides a framework for analyzing the process. However, it is important to note that the stages are not always consecutive and there are multiple feedback loops between the different stages.

Social innovation is defined by various actors in the field as involving social processes, as well as social outcomes:

“Social innovations are innovations that are social both in their ends and in their means...new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations. In other words they are innovations that are both good for society and enhance society’s capacity to act.”¹⁴

¹¹ UNECE (2011), *Promoting innovation in the services sector*, United Nation, New York and Geneva.

¹² Hochgerner, J. (2009), *The Analysis of social innovation as Social Practice*, published in original German language under the title „Die Analyse sozialer Innovationen als gesellschaftliche Praxis“ in: Zentrum für Soziale Innovation (ed.). 2011. Pendeln zwischen Wissenschaft und Praxis. ZSI-Beiträge zu sozialen Innovationen, Vienna and Berlin.

¹³ Mulgan, G (2007), *Social Innovation: What it is, why it matters and how it can be accelerated*, The Young Foundation, London, available at: http://www.youngfoundation.org/files/images/03_07_What_it_is_SAID.pdf

¹⁴ Social Innovation Exchange & the Young Foundation (2010), *Study on Social Innovation*, available at: <http://www.socialinnovationexchange.org/node/4959>

3. Success criteria for social innovation

The Europe 2020 Strategy and its flagship initiatives provide a framework for evaluating of social policy interventions, which can help orientate and evaluate social innovation. To be considered a social innovation, Social Services Europe stresses that an intervention needs to be evidence-based and to meet the following criteria:

- **Novelty:** although innovation is not necessary something completely new, it must be innovative with regard to the user, context or application. Innovation may involve applying existing ideas in new contexts, overcoming sectoral boundaries or combining existing ideas in new ways;
- **Improvement:** Social innovations must meet social needs more effectively than pre-existing alternatives.
- **Sustainability:** Social innovation must be environmentally, economically and organisationally: sustainable. This means it must provide long-term solutions and not produce negative externalities.¹⁵

With these criteria in mind and taking into account the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy as a framework to evaluate the improvement of living and working conditions in Europe, Social Services Europe considers that social innovation in the area of social services must:

- Increase the quality of life of service users/beneficiaries by strengthening outcomes
- Empower service users/beneficiaries;
- Make services more accessible to users;
- Overcome sectoral boundaries in the context of a holistic approach;
- Involve the participation of service users
- Have potential to be scaled up
- Respect ethical principles in order to ensure that the human rights and dignity of social service users are guaranteed respected and promoted
- Be sustainable and cost effective

The need for cost effectiveness is often cited as one of the key drivers of social innovation. Social Services Europe recognizes the need to provide cost effective social policies and services and acknowledges that the efficient use of financial resources is one important element of innovation. However, it must be underlined that this is a secondary consideration to the positive impact on and empowerment of beneficiaries. A measure which saves costs but reduces the quality of outcome for service users cannot be considered social innovation. Furthermore, reductions in the quality of responses to social needs are likely to lead to increased public expenditure elsewhere in by pushing people into crisis situations.

¹⁵ Phills J., Deiglmeier, K., Miller ,T., (2008), *Rediscovering Social Innovation*, Stanford Social Innovation Review.

II. SOCIAL INNOVATION IN THE SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR

In general, an innovative practice can be a product, a process, a new technology, a principle, a piece of legislation, or some combination of them.¹⁶ In the social service sector, the interventions carried out consist mainly of practices or policies to improve the quality, efficacy and availability of an existing service or to create a new service to better meet users' needs.

In recent years there has been a growing focus on innovation in social services. Amongst the forces driving this are:

- Demographic changes (ageing, migration, changes in family structures);
- New social needs resulting from economic and social change, including the current economic and financial crisis (poverty, exclusion, unemployment, precarious health);
- Lack of financial resources, particularly in the context of the financial and economic crisis and austerity measures;
- Staff shortages and/or lack of qualified staff due to lack of resources and/or ageing workforce;
- Limits to continuing the expansion of existing solutions for cost, sustainability and infrastructure reasons (e.g. given the ageing population, it will not be possible to expand the number of residential homes in line with growing demand in some Member States);
- Increasingly cross-border nature of service provision;
- Respond to (fast changing) technological developments.

At each phase of the social innovation process (see table 1), the established social service sector has a specific role to play and a unique added value, which is explained in detail below.

1. Identification of new or unmet social needs

According to Paul Spicker¹⁷, a social need is a claim for service. It takes shape when a problem experienced by a person emerges and requires a response. New needs emerge in society and require new responses. In addition, needs change and responses have to adapt in order to better meet them. There may also be gaps between existing needs and the available response. In this paper we consider a social need as: a new need emerging in society; a need that is not sufficiently met by the existing responses; or a gap in the provision of a service.

Social service providers have a key role to play in identifying social needs. They are often on the frontline as new needs emerge; new groups of people come to their services or they meet people who have needs that their service cannot meet fully. They are able to identify gaps in existing provision and the actual or possible unintended consequences of policy and practice on vulnerable service users. Lifting people out of poverty and guaranteeing access to high quality, sustainable and inclusive social services for all are key objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Social service providers clearly have a strong role to play in identifying the needs that must be taken into account and addressed in order to reach these objectives.

Other actors that should be included as key stakeholders are¹⁸ social service users, researchers, and policymakers. Including these actors reduces the risk of oversimplifying or misdiagnosing needs by providing a concrete link to the social realities that should underpin policy and practice objectives.

Social service providers can play a particularly valuable role as a link between service users

¹⁶ Murray, R., Caulier-Grice, J., Mulgan, G. (2010), *The Open book of social innovation*, The Young Foundation, London.

¹⁷ Spicker P.: Social Need, available at: Public Policy at Robert Gordon University website, An introduction to social policy, <http://www2.rgu.ac.uk/publicpolicy/introduction/needf.htm>

¹⁸ These groups have been identified by the Young Foundation in a research project aiming at identifying the changing and unmet needs in Great Britain; O'Sullivan, C., Mulgan, G., Rushanara, A., Norman, W. (2009) *Sinking and swimming: understanding Britain's unmet needs*, Young Foundation, London.

and other stakeholders.

The established social service sector, because of its long-term engagement with social needs, can add value by helping to ensure that financial resources allocated by the European institutions and local, national and regional authorities to promote social innovation are best used and help make real progress towards social goals, including the headline targets of Europe 2020 Strategy. The added value of the established sector in maximising the social impact of innovative services can be summarized as follows:

- Social service organisations are locally based: they have a unique relationship with service users and they can drive their users' involvement in the process of identification of needs;
- They have specific expertise and represent a source of precious information on social needs;
- Most of the organisations represented by Social Services Europe are deep-rooted in society and have a long-term commitment to meeting social needs and promoting the wellbeing of service users.

2. Development of innovative solutions in response to social needs

The development of new solutions may be considered the second step of the innovation process. Once a gap in social service provision has been identified, organisations usually start innovating to develop solutions.

One of the specificities of social services is that social innovation often takes place on a daily basis and may happen incrementally. Frequently, it is the only way to meet the providers' objective of providing accessible, quality responses to the needs of service users. In some cases a provider may not be aware of the significance of a new approach it is taking so it is important to improve networking and mutual knowledge of services and projects to ensure innovation is recognised; in order for others to be able to tap into its potential.

Social service providers can feed into the design of useful experimental interventions by contributing evidence and experience on what is likely to work. Social innovation is likely to be most successful when there is a close involvement of those actors with strong understanding of the social needs to be addressed. This is why social service providers are uniquely well placed to develop innovations in the area of social services. There is a strong tradition of developing innovative approaches in the social service sector. Often these innovations inspire broad social change through a bottom-up process whereby effective ideas become best practice and are gradually scaled up. The example below illustrates the key role that social service providers play in developing policy-relevant innovations.

Example: Housing First

The 'Housing First' model of homeless service provision is an innovation that has proved to be particularly effective in tackling long-term/chronic homelessness. The approach was originally developed by social service providers in the United States to meet the housing and support needs of people with mental illness and co-occurring substance abuse. It has been broadly supported by the Federal government and mainstreamed into homeless policy in the USA, notably with the introduction of the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009.¹⁹ In contrast with 'staircase' approaches, which require homeless persons to show evidence of being 'housing ready' before they are offered long-term stable accommodation, Housing First projects place homeless people directly into long-term self-contained housing with no requirement that they progress through transitional programmes. A specific package of substantial and multidisciplinary social support is also offered. Further, evaluation has shown that Housing First services can be very cost effective. Being housed in a Housing First programme leads to considerable reductions in the use of expensive emergency services (e.g. accident and

¹⁹ The current phase is one of ongoing implementation, evaluation, adaptation to different target groups within the homeless population and transfer to other policy contexts.

emergency departments, ambulances, psychiatric hospitals, criminal justice system, shelters etc). This engenders savings, which can offset or even exceed the costs of providing Housing First.

3. Evaluation of the effectiveness of innovative solutions

A new solution cannot be a guaranteed success from the outset. The development of innovations should be based on evidence and experience of “what works” but there is always an element of risk where innovation is concerned, especially if an approach is entirely new. Therefore, once developed, solutions need to be evaluated on the basis of their effectiveness, sustainability and cost-effectiveness. It must also be understood that some approaches may be found to be unsuccessful; this is the risk when developing innovation and must be taken into account.

Social policy experimentation provides a means to test innovations before implanting them widely. It is a specific tool within the field of social innovation designed for this purpose. Social policy experiments have been conducted since the 1970s in several countries. The European Union currently facilitates social policy experimentation projects through the Progress programme. The EUPSCI programme will support social policy experiments in the new programming period (2014-2020).

Social policy experimentation provides an opportunity for rigorous testing of social innovations that can inform scaling-up of effective approaches by providing evidence. Key actors in social policy experiments include public authorities, social service providers, evaluators, Civil Society Organisations, and beneficiaries/users.²⁰ Stakeholders should be involved in selecting the social need(s) to be addressed, in designing, implementing and evaluating the policy experiment as well as in building consensus on the methodology, the ethical framework and the indicators applied.

The long-term providers of social service have a key role to play in evaluating social innovations. They can count on a sort of “black box”, of acquired experience and expertise. They are also in a privileged position to involve users, to build consensus between partners and to help identify which outcomes should be measured. Furthermore, social service providers have useful insight into the situation of the potential beneficiary population and can help to ensure that planned experiments are appropriately adapted.

One option for social policy experimentation is assessing the impact of innovative practices on a ‘test population’ against the situation of a ‘control group’. This methodology can provide very robust evidence on effectiveness. However, for some policy measures, strict experimental methodologies such as randomized control trials may not be the most appropriate evaluation method because they are resource-intensive and can in some cases raise ethical objections.

“Non or quasi-experimental” techniques to test innovative solutions may be more appropriate in these situations. These “softer” evaluation methods allow social service providers and other stakeholders to strengthen learning processes, drawing on past experience and acquired know-how as well as sharing practices and policies with other organisations and stakeholders. One example is peer review which is used to facilitate the process of mutual learning and policy exchanges. In general a peer review is hosted by an organisation which presents a good practice to a group of experts including all relevant stakeholders. This group of experts produces a report assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the policy presented and evaluating the transferability of good practices to other contexts. Peer reviews are useful to enable open discussion among stakeholders and to diffuse knowledge of the existing tools and strategies. The method is used, inter alia, in the Social OMC for the evaluation of countries’ policy initiative in the field of social inclusion and social protection²¹. Another example of “softer” evaluation methods are longitudinal

²⁰ J-Pal Europe (2011), *Social experimentation, A methodological guide for policy makers*, European Commission.

²¹ See <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/>

observational methodologies such as cohort studies that can combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Social policy experimentation requires financial means and time to be implemented and evaluated. Particularly in the case of social service, providers must ensure the high quality as well as continuity, accessibility, availability and comprehensiveness of their services. These factors could provide barriers to participation in experimental programmes and must be fully taken into account in the design of experiments.

More generally, assessing the impact of social innovation is challenging since the link between the impact of services and the achievement of objectives can be hard to demonstrate. Sometimes outcomes are only evident over longer timeframes and it is difficult to establish a causal relationship between interventions and outcomes. Social service providers experience this type of practical and methodological problem when trying to measure their social impact. A positive social outcome depends on diverse factors and conditions. Because of these challenges social service providers can fall under pressure to concentrate only on activities that are easily measured, quantified and/or externally recognised. Such an approach restricts the development of 'soft' outcomes such as social and emotional capacities which represent a keystone of the added value of these services.²² It is crucial to be thorough in defining evidence and avoiding positivist short-circuits. Social Services Europe believes that evaluation methodologies must take account primarily of the impact on the quality of life and empowerment of service users.

Given this context, social service providers welcome the opportunity to properly demonstrate the effectiveness, long-term engagement, richness, importance and the specificity of the added value they provide to society. Social Services Europe considers that this type of evidence provides a safeguard against unsubstantiated policy trends. Social service providers are ready to be committed partners in the process of developing results-oriented indicators assessing the accessibility, quality, effectiveness and sustainability of innovative practices as well as measuring the social return on investments and practices and the achievement of common societal goals. They have a central role to play in building evidence-based policy to respond effectively to social needs.

4. Scaling up effective social innovation

Scaling up effective solutions is to be considered the last step of the innovation process. Social policy experimentation demonstrates the effectiveness of a certain innovative solution. On the basis of this assessment, policymakers and other relevant stakeholders set up strategies to decide which solution to scale up in order to achieve the greatest impact on people's quality of life. In making this decision they have to consider the trade-off between the cost of implementing a solution and the cost of not implementing it, which is represented by the benefit that this program could provide to the user and society as a whole. Another aspect to be taken into account is the involvement of users in order to make it easier to reach a consensus on the decision.

Social service providers have a key role to play in the scaling-up of innovative approaches that prove to be effective. They can assist policymakers and other stakeholders to define the conditions for successful scaling up taking into account users' needs.

As the actors that actually deliver social services, social service providers can act as a promoter and incubator of effective practice with a huge capacity to reach beneficiaries and thus contribute to positive impact. Social Services Europe represents 100,000 social and health services active across Europe and 10% of the EU's workforce. It therefore has a huge potential to contribute to the wide-reaching scale-up of effective approaches.

Social services also have a valuable role in terms of ongoing learning, evolution and refinement of innovations that are scaled up. This is an important element for policymakers to consider as innovation is always an ongoing process with space for strengthening of effective policy and practice.

²² The Young Foundation (2012), *An outcomes framework for young people's services*, London.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Social Services Europe and its members are committed to playing a key role in defining social needs to be addressed through social innovation, proposing innovative solutions to meeting these needs, evaluating social innovations and scaling up effective approaches. In this context, social service providers should be fully involved as partners and stakeholders by policymakers responsible for implementing the social innovation agenda at EU, national, regional and local level.

Social Services Europe makes the following recommendations regarding the role of social service providers in delivering social innovation in the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy:

1. Preconditions

In order to play a full role in the social innovation process, it is important that social services function in an appropriate legal, political and financial environment where they are appropriately recognized and financed. Social Services Europe call on policymakers at EU, national, regional and local level to create and sustain such an environment in order to ensure they can carry out their mission to meet needs and facilitate the involvement of social service providers in social innovation.

2. Involvement of social service providers at all stages of the innovation process

The services of the European Commission have developed a typology of promotional instruments necessary to support social innovation²³. This typology defines seven stages of the innovation cycle and identifies promotional instruments that policymakers can use to support each stage. In table 2, Social Services Europe uses this framework to make specific recommendations about how social services should be involved at each stage in order to maximize impact.

Table 2. Social Services Europe's Recommendations

Stage of the innovation cycle	Promotional instrument	Social Services Europe Policy Recommendation
Generation of new ideas from the bottom-up and mobilising citizens for employment creation and social inclusion	Grants to local employment initiatives, NGOs, or organisations championing disadvantaged groups in society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social service providers should be supported, including through the Structural Funds and the PROGRESS and EUPSCI programme, to play a full role in identifying social needs to be addressed through social innovation. The Social Inclusion OMC and the European Platform against Poverty, as well as national, regional and local policy processes, must allow social service providers to contribute as key stakeholders in the identification of social needs and priorities for social innovation
Development, testing and validation of innovative approaches and	Project support to stakeholders and public administrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social service providers should have access to funding streams that allow them to formulate and develop innovations to best meet the social needs that they seek to address. This includes through the EU's Structural Funds.

²³ BEPA (2011) Empowering people, driving change: Social Innovation in the European Union, available at http://ec.europa.eu/bepa/pdf/publications_pdf/social_innovation.pdf

practices	with a view to mobilising and empowering them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social service providers must be facilitated to develop innovative approaches. This includes support through EU instruments such as the Social Innovation Europe programme, the EUPSCI, PROGRESS and supported at national level by the Structural Funds, for example, through earmarked funding in the ESF programmes. • In order to develop effective solutions, social service providers must be involved as stakeholders in transnational exchange and mutual learning to identify effective approaches. This includes participating in activities such as peer reviews, research, national reporting mechanisms and the activities of EU funded networks in the framework of the Social OMC and the EUPSCI.
Accumulation and consolidation of a body of good practice and success stories to be spread and transferred	Service contracts to set up suitable repositories of knowledge/information and the creation of facilities for its dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policymakers at EU level and in the Member States must recognize the key role that social service providers already play in gathering and disseminating evidence about effective innovation. This should be fully capitalized on and further developed in the contexts of both the EPAP and the Innovation Union flagships. • For example, social service providers should be fully engaged as stakeholders in the Social Innovation Europe initiative, which aims to provide networking for social entrepreneurs, the public and third sectors in order to strengthen social innovation. • In the framework of the EUPSCI, the European Commission should involve social service providers as sources of expertise on social innovation and involve them as partners in the accumulation, consolidation and dissemination of knowledge. • The Horizon 2020 programme should support the role of social services in gathering evidence.
Enabling social innovations and change by building bridges and exploiting synergies between unrelated systems, institutions or actions of support	Stimulating and facilitating the establishment of new forms of partnerships between key stakeholders and governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social services must be involved as partners at each stage of the innovation process in order to form new synergies and overcome sectoral boundaries. Social Services Europe can play a key role in this respect through their members at national, regional and local level.
Testing of hypotheses through experimentation	Support of social policy experiments, in particular the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social service providers should be involved as stakeholders in the design, delivery and evaluation of social policy experiments. • The specificity of social services and their

	methods and tools for sound evaluation, and for scaling up what has proven of value	<p>users/beneficiaries should be fully taken into account in the design of social policy experimentations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sufficient period of evaluation for experimental programmes funded under PROGRESS and the forthcoming EUPSCI programme must be given since the current project period of two years is unsuitable for many social service interventions whose impact can only be meaningfully evaluated over a longer period.
Increase of awareness; building capacities and mobilising for change amongst governmental administrators and decision-makers	Support of mutual learning platforms and networks, in particular peer-to-peer learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social service providers should be supported to take part in mutual learning activities to support scaling up and transfer of successful approaches. • Policymakers should make evidence-based decisions about scaling up and should demonstrate political commitment to follow up and support in order to generate change.
Supporting change in structures, organisations and institutional frameworks	Top-down support to replicate, adapt and scale up tested innovations which have a clear advantage over current practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social service providers should be enabled to act as key levers in the scaling up process, including through access to the EU's Structural Funds. • The Social OMC and the EPAP must support social service providers to participate as stakeholders in policy exchange and coordination to support the scaling up of effective approaches in relation to thematic priorities within the EU's anti-poverty policy.