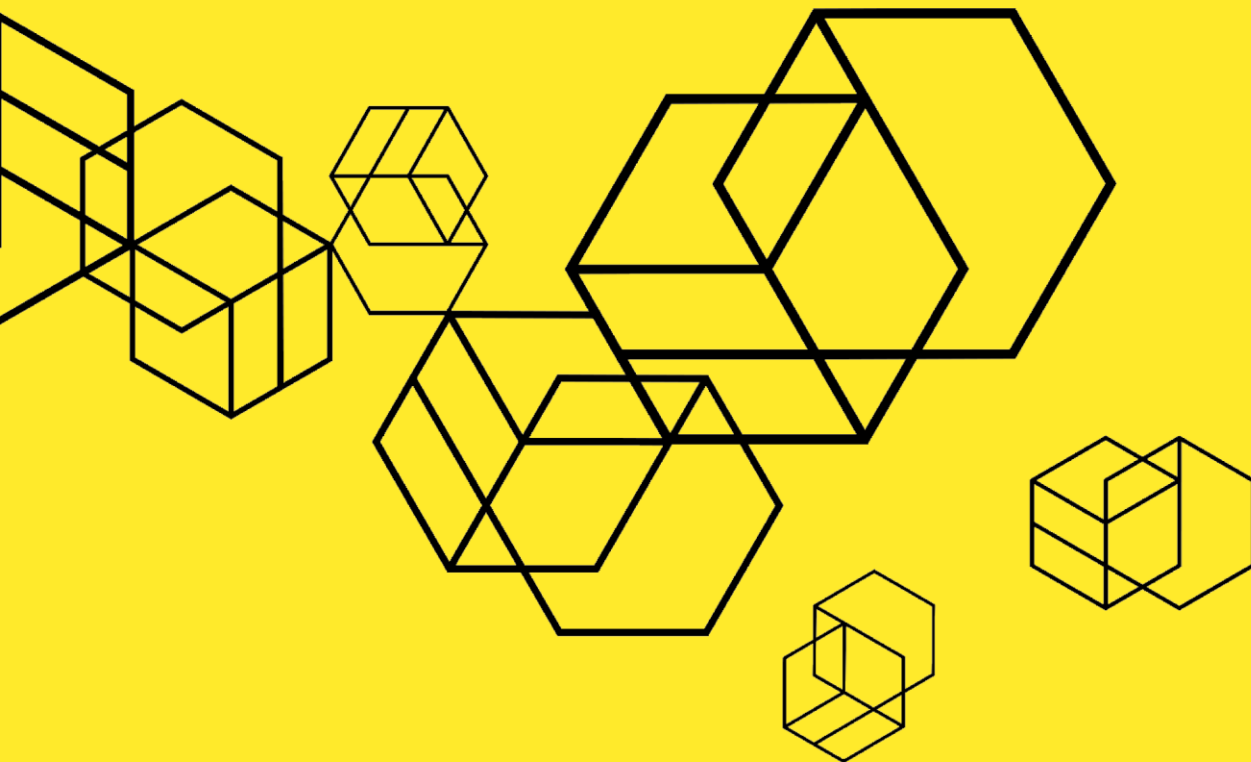




**SOCIAL
INNOVATION
COMMUNITY**

Social innovation policy in Europe: where next?

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1. SUMMARY

Over the last decade, policymakers worldwide have started getting interested in social innovation. It is seen as a way to help address some of the biggest challenges facing governments and the societies they represent, from tackling climate change to promoting inclusive economic growth.

In recent years our understanding of social innovation has deepened and we have seen increasing policy activity around social innovation. However, this has not yet been accompanied by a clear or comprehensive concept of 'social innovation policy'. We think this is needed. In this report, we outline what a field of social innovation policy could encompass.

Policymakers can promote social innovation by using some of the tools of innovation policy - intervening to support new initiatives to start up and scale, investing in innovation skills, creating a stronger market for social innovations and helping to create a more vibrant 'ecosystem' of support for social innovation.

But we suggest that social innovation policy should be broader in its scope than this. Policymaking, and the way that public administrations respond to policy challenges, can be transformed for the better by adopting social innovation principles - for example, by involving more people in the design of policies, or partnering with civil society organisations to address social problems in new ways, such as through co-creation processes. By considering creative ways to interact with citizens, social innovation may also open up new opportunities to respond to the crisis of legitimacy facing public institutions across Europe - and beyond.

Social innovation policy, we argue, therefore has two facets:

- 01** Public policy can enhance supply of and demand for social innovation, as well as creating a wider environment in which social innovations can thrive. We call *this* '**policy for social innovation**'.
- 02** Policymaking can in itself be socially innovative, when it adopts the principles and processes of social innovation. We call this '**policy as social innovation**'.¹

The European Commission (EC) has been a leading proponent of social innovation for over ten years. The concept is peppered across current EC policy frameworks. The Commission and its Directorates-General have used several of the policy levers at their disposal - from structural funds and public procurement to regulation - to promote social innovation at a European level and in Member States, as well as supporting international collaboration. And in recent years a number of social innovation experiments and policies have emerged.

The proposal for a more comprehensive concept of social innovation policy is not altogether new. Rather it seeks create a field of policy that brings adopts a more encompassing concept of innovation. In so doing it draws on seemingly distinct but related ideas from innovation studies, open innovation, and public sector innovation to reap the concept's fullest benefits for society.



While good progress has been made thanks to the support and investment given to social innovation to date, we challenge European policymakers to go further in forging this new field, in particular by:

- Creating a more joined-up approach to social innovation policy within the European Commission, as well as by policymakers at sub-EU level.
- Empowering policymakers to use the tools of social innovation to make better policy.
- Helping find ways to enable social innovation to flourish in those places where the concept is still new but could add great benefit.





2. INTRODUCTION

“Innovation is far too important to be left to scientists and technologists. It is also far too important to be left to economists or social scientists.” - Chris Freeman

The global challenges we face are resistant to conventional policy measures. Tackling issues like inequality, climate change and migration requires new thinking, new collaborations and new practices. Meanwhile, it is widely argued that to create an inclusive and cohesive society, we need more people to be involved in these processes.

This builds the case for policymakers to take a different perspective on innovation. Innovation has long been an interest for public policy, but mainly for the purposes of economic (or military) advancement. Now, however, policymakers are increasingly becoming interested in how innovation can be directed to broader social goals, and how innovation processes can be opened up to a much broader range of people and organisations.

A POLICY PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL INNOVATION

Researchers continue to debate the definition of social innovation. For some, the term implies a change in social relationships or practices - in the way that social media, for example, has transformed the ways that people communicate. Through this lens, social innovation is neither good nor bad, but simply different.

From a policy perspective, however, social innovation is more of a normative concept. Policymakers are interested in social innovation for its potential to make a positive difference to people's lives.

In this sense, social innovations can be distinguished first by their goals. While business innovations are (primarily) profit-oriented, social innovations aim (primarily) to create positive societal impact. For example, mobile money transfer is facilitating access to financial services for marginalised people. Community micro-grids offer poor communities access to reliable electricity whilst contributing to a transition to greener energy. Fair trade is tackling the mistreatment of workers and meeting a public desire to remove exploitation from the value chain.

Yet social innovation isn't only concerned with outcomes, but also with process. It is characterised by collaboration that crosses traditional roles and boundaries, between citizens, civil society, the state and the private sectors. This process of engagement is valuable in itself, since it creates new relationships and builds people's capacity to do things differently in future. Social innovations are therefore distinctive in being:

*"social in their **means** and in their **ends**. They engage and mobilise the beneficiaries and help to*





transform social relations by improving beneficiaries' access to power and resources."²

Social innovations can include new technologies, as well as new organisations, business models, products, services and processes, and often, any given example of social innovation will encompass several of these at once.

Regardless of its form, social innovation in the normative sense is an idea intrinsically concerned with meeting social need. Here the notion of 'scale' is useful. It suggests that social innovation aims to create positive impacts that better match the magnitude of the social need or problem it seeks to address. Meeting the magnitude and scale of a challenge in turn captures social innovation's concern with change at a systemic level. The work of BRAC in Bangladesh, for example, shows how social innovation can effectively solve the social problems they've set out to address by reaching transformative scale and changing entire systems or sectors.

While social innovation is directed to creating social value, its outcomes are not necessarily unanimously positive. Like business innovations, social innovation can create value for some while destroying it for others. For instance, while a collaborative economy platform might create new forms of value for a homeowner by enabling them to make use of the 'idling capacity' of spare rooms and entire homes, the cumulative effect of too many homeowners advertising their rooms in this way could have negative consequences on the housing market. This 'political' aspect of social innovation, and reality that social innovation's value creation doesn't necessarily guarantee redistribution of power or assets, is often overlooked.

Finally, social innovation is often conflated with related terms such as social enterprise and the social economy. Indeed the social economy has been an important forum for the development of many social innovations. However, the concepts are distinct from one another. The terms 'social economy' and 'social enterprise' refer particularly to organisational form and mission:

- A 'social enterprise' is an organisation that applies commercial strategies in order to maximise social impacts alongside profits. It is an element of the social economy.
- The 'social economy' is a term used to describe a plethora of organisations - including co-operatives, mutuals, non-profits, social enterprises and charities.

Social innovation should not be limited by our tendency to associate it with the social economy. It can and should be embedded in the public sector, the private sector, in new technologies and in the work of civil society.

UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTING SOCIAL INNOVATION: A MAJOR POLICY CHALLENGE

Public policy shapes the extent to which social innovation can flourish in a given country or region. If we accept that social innovation is essential for addressing today's challenges, creating a supportive environment for it becomes an important role for policymakers.





This report explores the next steps for social innovation policy, focusing on the role of the European Commission. It is intended as a short provocation to spark further conversations and joint working with the Commission over the course of the Social Innovation Community project.

First, we explore the evolution of social innovation policy to date, taking a global perspective. 'Social innovation policy' is far from being an established field, but we can start to map out how such a field could look.

Next, we look specifically at the activities of the EC in promoting policy for and as social innovation.

Finally, we make recommendations as to how social innovation policy could continue to evolve.

THE SOCIAL INNOVATION COMMUNITY

The Social Innovation Community (SIC) project is engaging with policymakers, social innovators, citizens, researchers, companies and others in order to help create a context where new ideas and new voices can more effectively contribute towards solving complex social problems and creating desirable social futures.

Taking areas of known social innovation activity - which we've organised around 'social innovation networks' - a central aim of the SIC project is to strengthen, connect and grow existing social innovation communities, including public sector innovation, digital social innovation, intermediaries, social economy actors and more.

We are developing a practical programme of support for policymakers to make better use of social innovation principles and approaches to solve public policy challenges with social innovators and others in their own contexts. Our aim is to create a learning community of social innovation policy practitioners, focused on better rather than best practice. Our work includes:

- Collecting and sharing examples of promising policy initiatives
- Building a repository of social innovation methods and tools for policymakers
- Hosting a series of practical policy workshops
- Creating practice guides, tools and multimedia content aimed at supporting policymakers to work on policy challenges in more socially innovative ways





3. SOCIAL INNOVATION POLICY: MARKING OUT A FIELD

Social innovation is becoming an object of interest for policymakers worldwide. Governments in countries as diverse as Australia, Chile, South Korea and the USA have set up dedicated units aimed at using social innovation processes to achieve policy objectives.³

The reasons for policymakers' interest vary. Social innovation is often promoted, for example, as a way to:

- Tackle persistent social challenges
- Create jobs, particularly for disadvantaged people
- Promote economic growth, particularly inclusive growth
- Improve public services, making them more responsive, and potentially, cheaper and/or more efficient
- Create greater legitimacy for public institutions
- Foster resilience in communities, giving people the means to solve their own problems
- Change relationships between state and citizens

As it is not yet a tightly defined concept, social innovation has proved attractive from a wide range of political standpoints. This is both a strength and a weakness, since it runs the risk of being seen as a panacea or duplicitous. Indeed, social innovation's "flexible credo" has led some to suggest social innovation is a product of 'neoliberal orthodoxy' that draws on the 'eclectic concept to dissimulate political choices, legitimated by the doctrine of budgetary constraints'.⁴ And if employed without due reflection, the concept's innate search for solutions can also itself become problematic, directing innovation towards symptomatic rather than structural issues where it will have limited ability to effect genuine, lasting change.

Overall, however it is social innovation's orientation towards the future that makes the concept particularly useful for policymakers. Social innovation is not simply about 'quick fixes' or maintenance of current (sometimes failing) systems and, but about opening up a collective vision of a better future and devising the strategies to achieve it.⁵ And yet the bureaucratic 'control and command' model of governance - valued for its stability, predictability and risk-aversion - is not well-regarded for its openness to change or open innovation processes.⁶ It is in this regard that the underlying principles of social innovation can open up opportunities for a more relational, participatory mode of governance and policymaking.

Realising and deriving benefit from social innovation's transformative potential makes some big demands of policymakers: it asks that the voices of marginalised groups be inserted into civil society, electoral institutions and the policy-making process⁷; that due consideration be given to how power and assets will be shared and redistributed; and efforts be taken to understand and direct innovation towards the underlying structural factors of societal challenges be they social, political or economic.



SO WHAT ROLE CAN POLICYMAKING PLAY FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION - AND VICE VERSA?

This report argues that there are two main roles that policy can play with respect to social innovation. Public policy can enhance supply of and demand for social innovation, as well as creating a wider environment in which social innovations can thrive. We call this ***'policy for social innovation'***.

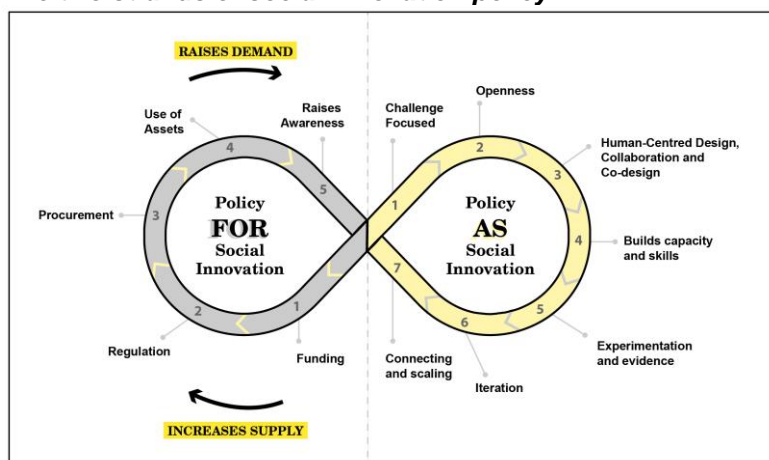
Meanwhile, policymaking can in itself be socially innovative, when it adopts the principles and processes of social innovation. We call this ***'policy as social innovation'***.

We call these two strands 'policy for social innovation' and 'policy as social innovation' – and argue that both should be considered part of 'social innovation policy'.

At present, there is some separation between these roles. On one hand, governments across the world have started to explore ways in which policy can support social innovation. Largely, these efforts have been concerned with putting in place the supports and conditions needed for a thriving social market economy. These might be called 'horizontal' measures, designed to encourage social innovation in society at large (with a particular focus on the social economy, social entrepreneurship and social enterprise). There are also numerous examples of public officials engaging directly with social innovators to meet citizens' needs in new ways, for example by commissioning, funding or partnering with social enterprises to deliver public services.

Meanwhile, the use of social innovation tools in policymaking falls mainly into the realm of 'public sector innovation'. This involves "creating, developing and implementing practical ideas that achieve a public benefit", and has developed as a field somewhat separately from the social innovation discourse. This movement aims to bring innovation methods and tools into government to support the design and development of public services and public policies themselves.

The two strands of social innovation policy





POLICIES FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

In most countries and regions that have promoted social innovation so far, policy has to a large extent focused on creating a supportive environment for the social economy, social enterprises and/or social entrepreneurship. In this sense, the tools of social innovation policy have to some extent mirrored those of innovation and entrepreneurship policy more widely. Broadly speaking, policy for social innovation to date has been largely concerned with:

FUNDING AND INVESTMENT

Policymakers at both European and national government level have led a range of initiatives designed to provide suitable funding for social innovations, including access to grants (widely seen as important for early-stage social innovations) and investment. Examples include:

- Direct provision of grants or loan schemes open to social innovators or socially innovative organisations. In [Portugal](#), for example, the government has started to look at ways in which European Structural Funds can be used to support stage social innovations, including through grants, debt and equity investments. The Irish Government-backed Social Innovation Fund provides investment and support [programmes](#) tailored to early or later stage social innovations. While in 2015, the French Public Bank of Investment created [FISO \(Fonds d'Innovation Sociale\)](#) - a Repayable advance or zero rate loan.
- Measures to stimulate growth of a social investment market, such as the UK's establishment of [Big Society Capital](#) as a 'wholesale' social investor (it provide funds to other investment intermediaries) and introduction of [Social Investment Tax Relief](#)
- Experimentation with new forms of financing instruments, such as [social impact bonds](#) and [community shares](#) and other forms of crowdfunding (for example, the UK government has recently launched a [matched crowdfunding](#) scheme for arts and heritage projects, in association with Nesta and Crowdfunder)

BUILDING SKILLS AND CAPACITY AMONGST INNOVATORS AND SOCIAL VENTURES

Alongside funding, some policymakers have looked to build broader systems of support for social innovators. Examples include:

- Supporting intermediaries, such as incubators and network organisations
- Promoting social entrepreneurship training and education (e.g. Scottish Government's [Just Enterprise](#) training programme for social entrepreneurs, or the partnership between the Higher Education Funding Council for England and UnLtd, which has aimed to get English universities supporting social entrepreneurship)
- Providing funding for capacity building in particular areas, such as the UK government's [Investment and Contract Readiness Fund](#) for social enterprises
- Funding research on social innovation theory and practice, such as impact measurement frameworks





REGULATION AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS

Socially innovative organisations often don't fit traditional institutional forms well, which can cause problems - for instance, not all social economy enterprises can access Horizon 2020 and COSME funding. In places like Estonia and [Ireland](#), social innovators have expressed a need to have legal frameworks that better meet their needs, and some national governments have already taken steps to do this. Examples of this include establishing the [Community Interest Company \(CIC\)](#) model in the UK, while in France the [Loi Economie sociale et solidaire \(ESS 2014\)](#) brought about a number of different commercial frameworks for social or solidarity-based businesses.

Regulation can both stimulate or inhibit social innovation, for example around new forms of financing (like crowdfunding) and new business models being developed in collaborative economy initiatives. People in these sectors have called for 'smart regulation' that allows space for innovation while still protecting consumers and citizens. An example of this type of approach is the UK Financial Conduct Authority's '[regulatory sandbox](#)', which provides a 'safe space' for innovators to test out the impacts of new models without immediately incurring the usual regulatory requirements.

USING PUBLIC PROCUREMENT AND COMMISSIONING TO CREATE A MARKET FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

In their role as commissioners, funders and providers of public services, public agencies have the ability to help social innovators develop and test solutions, get them working and take them to scale. However, social innovators often find it hard to access public sector markets. Examples of policies to address this include:

- Requiring social value to be considered as part of procurement decisions; the European Commission itself has played a key role here by issuing a public procurement directive to this effect
- Initiatives to make procurement processes easier for SMEs generally to access
- Commitments to bring socially oriented suppliers into public sector supply chains, such as the UK parliament's commitment to '[Buy Social](#)'
- Challenge-based procurement models, like the [Barcelona Open Challenge](#)

AWARENESS RAISING, CHAMPIONING AND CONNECTING

Policymakers can help to improve the legitimacy and visibility of social innovation through initiatives that map and measure activity, and attempt to measure its impact and contribution. The EC-funded TEPSIE project, for example, set out a [blueprint for measuring social innovation](#) that would give national or regional policymakers a good evidence base to inform new policy measures.

Other examples include directly running or supporting competitions and awards (such as Colombia's global "Ain't No Need We Can't Solve – Challenge 2014"8), events (like Chile's Social Innovation Festival, or SIC's Summer School on 'Urban Social Innovation', which was hosted as part of Tilburg





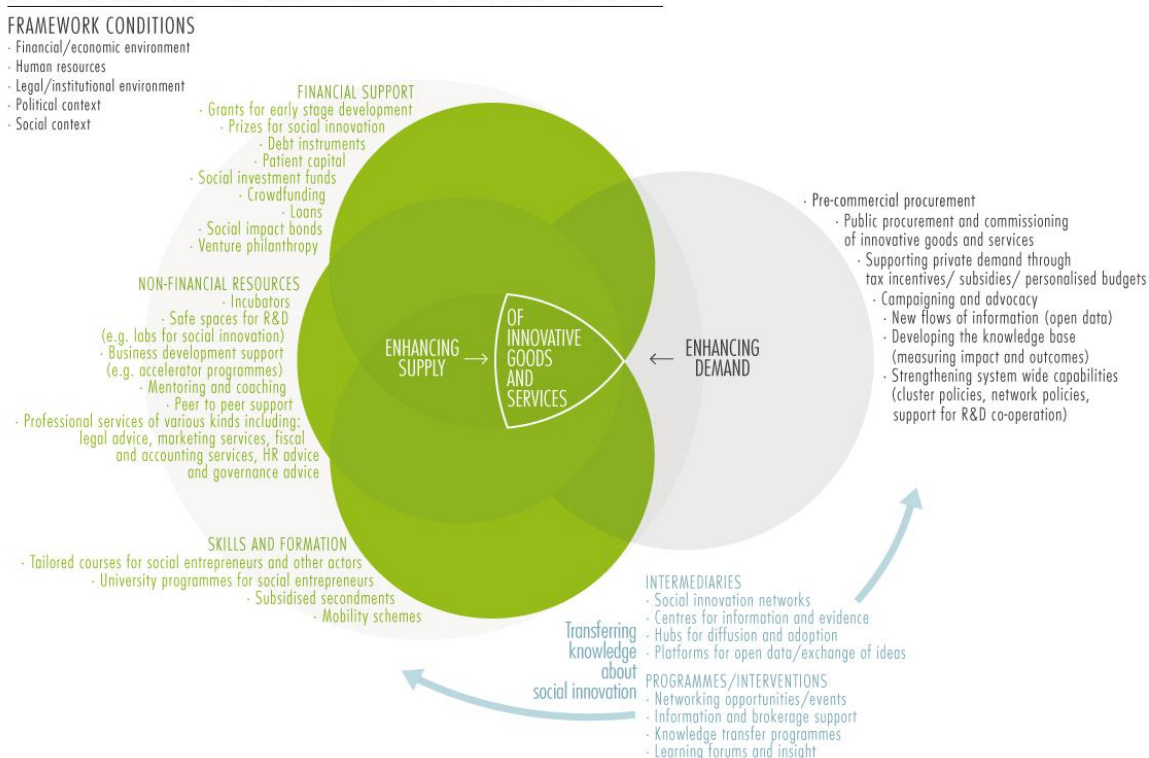
University's European Social Innovation Week 2016 in the Netherlands).

USING PUBLIC ASSETS TO FOSTER SOCIAL INNOVATION

An interesting, but (so far) less frequently explored type of policy intervention is opening up access to public assets to stimulate social innovation. Examples include:

- Opening up public datasets and platforms to innovators to spur innovation, such as NASA's Office of the Chief Information Officer open.Data and open.Gov or Open Government Partnership's Toolbox for Open Government
- Policies to encourage 'Shareable Cities', such as allowing residents to lease residential parking spaces for shared vehicles, designating lanes for ridesharing, creating incentives for urban farming on vacant or unused land, and facilitating the temporary use of empty commercial spaces.

AN ECOSYSTEM FOR INNOVATIVE SOCIAL PURPOSE ORGANISATIONS



Source: Boelman et al. (2014). *Growing Social Innovation: A Guide for Policy Makers*. A deliverable of the project: "The theoretical, empirical and policy foundations for building social innovation in Europe" (TEPSIE), Brussels: European Commission, DG Research





POLICY AS SOCIAL INNOVATION

Policy makers at various levels of government have been embracing social innovation principles to support the achievement of their respective policy goals – sometimes without ever referring to their actions as social innovation.

Policy innovations are often part of a wider effort to innovate democracy itself. Though, in many respects their emergence can be understood as a response to some of the shortcomings of conventional policy processes: specifically, decision-making systems based on the belief that government experts can identify the best solutions to problems on their own.⁹

Table 2: Key challenges with traditional policymaking approaches

<p>How policy challenges are defined and formulated</p>	<p>Policy challenges, particularly those aimed at addressing complex social challenges, are often difficult to define and multi-causal. Political short-termism, departmental silos and the shifting nature of how policies are prioritised and defined mean that policymakers often only have a partial or inaccurate image of the policy challenge at hand. Lack of incentives to take risks and experiment can result in policy solutions can focus on 'quick fixes' to manage complex social challenges.</p>
<p>How open the policymaking process is to those outside government</p>	<p>Implicit in conventional policy approaches is an assumption that policymakers and decision-makers can arrive at policy solutions on their own. A lack of awareness about when and how the input of citizens, social innovators and others can be integrated into existing policymaking processes can mean vital feedback and knowledge can be missed.¹⁰</p>
<p>How policies are legitimised</p>	<p>Conventional policy approaches can result in policies being implemented that are not reflective of citizens' opinions or needs. Citizens who feel their votes and voices are irrelevant in shaping the decisions taken that affect their lives will likely lose confidence and trust in democratic institutions.</p>
<p>How the policy process is designed</p>	<p>Policy that appears good on paper may not be viable to implement, and policymakers often fail to take into account the likely behaviours of those whose actions the policy is designed to affect or benefit. Policy is often designed in a fixed or static way, and so is unable to adapt to the changing realities of social challenges.¹¹</p>
<p>The distance between policy theory and practice</p>	<p>Representations of the policymaking 'lifecycle' are often highly idealised and overlook a) the extent to which policy is subjugated to the interests and influences of certain stakeholders and b) thus presents an oversimplified notion of where and how the policy process might be innovated.</p>
<p>How policy impacts are measured and evaluated</p>	<p>Changes take place throughout the policy process: the object of evaluation is a moving target. Policy dealing with complex, 'wicked' social challenges is unlikely to produce effects that are easurable and attributable to a particular policy intervention. Policy processes need to take into account the cumulative impact of many different initiatives in a particular area, or consider how the wider system can be effectively managed.¹²</p>



In response to a number of challenges associated with conventional, top-down approaches to policymaking, policy innovation trends are emerging in Europe and beyond, many of which embrace the ideals of social innovation. These include:

FINDING SOLUTIONS TO POLICY CHALLENGES

The political and professional domination of users of services and policy programmes often leaves the greater population with little say on innovation.¹³ The success of open innovation at driving value creation for firms has been emulated by public institutions too - with the belief that sharing information (e.g. open data, or sharing learning about good practice between policymakers) and inviting input from citizens will tap into the populations distributed knowledge and capabilities to help find solutions tackle complex policy challenges. Examples include:

- Presenting complex policy challenges as open innovation opportunities - e.g. challenge prizes (Innovate UK's [Innovation Challenges](#); and the US Government's [Challenge.gov](#)) and challenge-based procurement ([Barcelona Open Challenge](#))
- Inviting "citizen experts" input through citizen science platforms (US government's [Citizenscience.gov](#))

BOTTOM-UP, PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES TO INVOLVE A BROADER RANGE OF ACTORS

Bottom-up or participatory approaches involve a broader range of actors - such as citizens, civil society, and service providers – in the policy process to participate in decision-making about the strategy and in the selection of priorities to be pursued in response to a policy topic. The integration of these approaches into the policy process can support policymakers a number of way key ways: It can help policymakers better understand and adapt policy responses, by accessing citizens, social innovators and others' specialist local knowledge and information about their needs and priorities.¹⁴ Engaging citizens, particularly 'passive citizens', in public policy issues can also help create greater understanding of the aims of political policy; greater trust of the political system; and can improve the quality of governance and decision-making.¹⁵

Overall, these more participatory and collaborative approaches mitigate against some of the political risks associated with top-down policy initiatives, and improve their likelihood of success.¹⁶ Examples include:

- Using participatory action research methods invite dialogue around contentious political questions e.g. Citizen Juries and Citizens Assembly (The Irish Citizens Assembly was seen to play a key role in Ireland's decision to legalise same-sex marriage¹⁷)
- Democratising budgetary priorities through participatory budgeting (city-level examples include Seville, Spain and Freiburg, Germany, whilst Portugal has recently announced it will be one of the first countries to roll-out participatory budgeting nationally).
- Using "[lawsourcing](#)" to crowdsource legislation - e.g. use of crowdsourcing platforms to shape [Iceland's constitution](#)



- Using e-petitions to enhance the effectiveness of digital democracy - UK Government Petitions Committee, and the US Government's [We the People](#) initiative.

CREATING MORE CITIZEN-CENTRED POLICIES

A variety of innovative methods have been used to support policymakers to design policies with people and not only for them. Taking a more human-centred design approach to policy asks that policymakers start to approach public policy challenges with 'professional empathy'.¹⁸ A number of tools have emerged that aim to do this: such as storytelling, citizen panels and co-creation workshops. Meanwhile, tools such as 'citizen stories', used by Welsh Public Services Management provide deeper insight into citizens' individual experiences to equip policymakers with improved awareness and understanding of the personal impact of policy decisions.¹⁹ Examples include:

- Using human-centred approaches to develop better policy solutions with and for citizens e.g. Denmark's Climate Consortium
- Using government innovation labs as a way to create spaces to meet and collaborate with citizens around policy challenges e.g. La 27e Région (France), MindLab (Denmark), Policy Lab UK (United Kingdom)

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN POLICY CONCEPT AND POLICY DELIVERY

Conventional approaches to policy making assume the process is linear and draw a distinction between policy formulation and policy delivery. Research has found however that the two processes are intrinsically linked and the outcomes of policy may even change significantly during the implementation phase.²⁰ Adopting an iterative, user-driven approach which applies the principles underpinned by behavioural sciences and tests out the real-world impact of policy ideas before they are scaled up can bridge the gap between policy concept and policy delivery.²¹ Examples include:

- Using behavioural insights to consider citizens behaviours when developing policy e.g. Behavioural Insights Team (United Kingdom)
- Using experimental methods to guide social policy development e.g. Fonds d'expérimentation pour la jeunesse, or the Experimental Fund for Youth (France)
- Applying agile approaches to policy development e.g. the UK Government Digital Service and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) redesigned the Carer's Allowance using an iterative approach

CREATING COMMUNITIES OF CHANGE TO ADDRESS POLICY CHALLENGES

Conventional guidance presents policies as discrete interventions to tackle specific challenges, whose effects can then be reliably measured and evaluated. However, it may not be appropriate to look at policies as discrete interventions that can achieve a particular goal on their own.²² A number of public sector-led initiatives have emerged which are involving multi-actor and cross-departmental working. They are inviting more input from a broader range of actors, and which are coalescing support around a





particular policy challenge in the hope of deepening and sustaining impact. Examples include:

- Working to build a community of practice that can drive innovation inside and outside a particular public sector context - US DigitalGov Communities
- Appealing to a wider community to take action on specific challenges - The US Government's Call to Action campaign appealed to the U.S. private sector to make measurable and significant commitments to address the refugee crisis.
- Building and sustaining policy goals - NHS Health as a Social Movement
- Gathering open government digital solutions [online](#), and leading hackathons with involvement from governments, civil society, cities, parliaments that make up the international OGP community

SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF SOCIALLY INNOVATIVE POLICYMAKING

'We organise government vertically, but people live horizontally.' - Stephen Goldsmith, Director of Innovation in Government at Harvard Kennedy School

'Individuals and interactions over processes and tools.' - The Agile Manifesto

In response to many of the constraints and challenges associated with conventional policymaking, the emergence of these policy innovations spells out an incorporation of the ideals of social innovation into the policymaking process. Through our analysis of the various policy innovations identified as part of this report, we have identified seven key principles of socially innovative policymaking.²³

- 01 CHALLENGE-FOCUSED:** Policy discourse presents social innovation as an effective “problem-solving” mechanism, being repeatedly cited as a means and end to meeting social needs within the context of resource scarcity.²⁴ Socially innovative policymaking therefore draws on social innovation processes and partnerships to address policy challenges.
- 02 OPENNESS:** To effectively design and deliver better solutions, socially innovative policymaking is open to new insights, new methods and approaches, and new forms of knowledge, experiences and expertise often overlooked in the policy process.
- 03 HUMAN-CENTRED DESIGN (HCD), COLLABORATION AND CO-DESIGN:** Policymaking is often developed in a public agency with an emphasis on administrative rather than user needs. HCD is a process which attempts to invert this logic, by having policymakers approach a policy challenge with empathy for users' and citizens' needs. Socially innovative policymaking also goes a step beyond consulting users and citizens to meaningfully involve them in the policy process.
- 04 BUILDS CAPACITY AND SKILLS:** Working in new ways will also require that policymakers, citizens and other stakeholders have the supports in place to acquire and develop the skills and capabilities needed to find innovative ways to solve challenges. A number of options are available to public sector agencies - such as co-sourcing or partnerships - but the aim should be to deepen, sustain and embed the organisation's social innovation competences, while also working with citizens and other stakeholders to do the same.





- 05 EXPERIMENTATION AND EVIDENCE:** Socially innovative policymaking is ultimately outcomes-focused, and seeks to identify whether a policy intervention is achieving its intended goal in a real-world setting. Designing experimental and evidence-informed policies supports policymakers with a framework to make better decisions, to monitor and evaluate what is working – and stop what isn't.
- 06 ITERATION:** Socially innovative policies seek to adopt an agile approach to policy development where policy solutions are designed to have a series of learning loops so that the solutions being developed are continually refined and revisited to see they are meeting their specified goals. In this sense, an iterative policy development approach is at odds with traditional 'waterfall' or 'big bang' policy approaches.
- 07 CONNECTING AND SCALING:** Scaling up of policy refers to the expansion, replication, adaptation and sustaining of effective policies, programmes or projects in geographic space and over time to reach a greater number of people.²⁵ Ongoing policy scaling requires political support, and regular monitoring and evaluation to assess a policy continues to create impact as it grows. Embedding and sustaining change also requires creating synergies with other policies and programmes, while forging connections and alliances with others affected by or working on the policy challenge.

SOCIAL INNOVATION POLICY: WHERE NEXT?

As this section shows, policymakers are already using a wide variety of policy instruments and initiatives to foster social innovation. Yet there are also several opportunities for further policy exploration. They include:

- **Making clearer links between policy for, and policy as, social innovation.** This might mean, for example, employing more of the techniques of socially innovative policymaking when developing initiatives to support social innovation, and emphasising the value of participatory aspects of public sector innovation (which can sometimes be dominated by more technical elements such as data analytics, behavioural insights and experimentation).
- **Fostering stronger connections between social innovation policy and innovation policy and adopting a more comprehensive, holistic approach to innovation and innovation policy.** Social innovation as a field has a great deal to learn from innovation studies, but equally mainstream innovation can also profit from understanding how to draw out and amplify the social benefits of the field, sharing lessons learnt i) on how collaborative societies / cities / initiatives can work and ii) on technological innovations' and large-scale societal projects' need for social innovation competences.
- **Taking a wider perspective on the policy levers that can be used to support development of the social market economy.** Policy for social innovation has largely focused on supporting the development of social enterprise and the social economy, and within this, the greatest emphasis has been on financing and investment. There are a number of policy instruments that have been relatively poorly explored in supporting social enterprises – even for example, legal frameworks, despite the fact that lack of suitable legal forms for hybrid enterprises is a well-known barrier in many jurisdictions.
- **Taking a wider perspective on what it means to foster social innovation – beyond social enterprise, social entrepreneurship and the social economy.** Future policy development could explore ways to promote social innovation in other forms – for



example, within 'mainstream' SMEs, large firms, established NGOs and the public sector. In doing so, policymakers could take inspiration from broader innovation policy to think about the range of approaches that might be used. Some possible areas for exploration are set out in Table 3.

Table 3: Potential goals and approaches for social innovation policy

Policy goal	Potential areas for exploration
<i>Increasing inputs to social innovation</i>	'Social' R&D tax credits Opening up public assets and data for use by to a wider range of social innovation actors
<i>Increasing non-financial capabilities</i>	Support to exploit academic research for social innovation practice Technical support services Education and skills training for social innovators Schemes to promote access to first employees, or employees with particular skillsets and experience (e.g. scaling up social innovation)
<i>Exploiting connections and complementarities</i>	More coordinated support for: and networks, intermediaries, and collaborative R&D between (e.g.) technology developers and social innovators
<i>Enhancing demand for social innovation</i>	Public procurement policies (including challenge-based procurement), pre-commercial procurement of R&D interventions to address market failures
<i>Improving framework conditions for social innovation</i>	Using regulation and standards to create 'pull' factors for social innovation
<i>Improving discourse and preparedness</i>	Foresight and horizon scanning

Adapted from Nesta's Innovation Policy Toolkit (2014)



4. SOCIAL INNOVATION POLICY WITHIN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

EU policy *for* social innovation

In 2010 the EU's Bureau of European Policy Advisors (BEPA) advocated for social innovation as a way of fostering smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Since this time, the EC has emerged as one of the most progressive backers of social innovation and a number of experiments and policies have emerged aimed at assisting and fostering this trend.²⁶

A recent review of EU public policy found that social innovation features 'prominently' across several key policy frameworks, including Europe 2020 and some of its flagship initiatives (particularly Innovation Union and the EU Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion), as well as the Social Investment Package and the Social Business Initiative.²⁷ Meanwhile, the EC has used a range of policy instruments both to support social innovation directly, and to encourage Member States to do the same.

Table 4: Examples of EC policy instruments used to promote social innovation

Policy instrument	Examples
<i>Structural and investment funds</i>	ERDF (in particular funds like INTERREG IVC and URBACT) and European Social Fund have been used in practice to fund social innovation projects, and in the current programming period (2014-2020) ESF Regulation has been used to promote social innovation through all areas of action supported by the ESF, in particular with the aim of testing, evaluating and scaling up innovative solutions to address social needs. ²⁸
<i>Provision of investment financing</i>	The Social Impact Accelerator , an initiative of the European Investment Fund, invests in social venture funds and is the EU's first public-private partnership supporting social enterprises. Under the Employment and Social Innovation programme (EaSI) the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship programme has made loans and guarantees to some 20,000 entrepreneurs since 2010.
<i>Research and innovation funding</i>	Under Framework Programmes (FP) 5 to 7 , some 34 social innovation research projects were funded. Several more have been funded under Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 6. Launched as actions of the Innovation Union flagship initiative in 2015, European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs) an innovative, challenge-



	<p>driven approach to EU research and innovation, acting across the whole research and innovation chain and streamline, simplify and better coordinate existing instruments and initiatives. EIPs have been formed on active and healthy ageing; agricultural sustainability and productivity; water; smart cities and communities and raw materials.</p>
<p><i>Legislative and regulatory frameworks</i></p>	<p>The Social Business Initiative has proposed amendments to regulations on European venture capital funds and European social entrepreneurship funds, which aim to improve social enterprises' access to private capital.²⁹</p> <p>The REFIT Programme (Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme) works to simplify EU laws and ensure they deliver their intended benefits for citizens, businesses and society while removing red tape and lowering costs. "Fitness Checks" form part of the programme to assess whether the regulatory framework for a particular policy sector is 'fit for purpose'.³⁰</p> <p>The EC has implemented or explored new legal statuses for cooperatives, mutuals and foundations working across EU Member States.</p>
<p><i>Putting in place innovation competitions</i></p>	<p>RegioStars and the Social Innovation Tournament recognise and reward innovative social innovation projects while the European Social Innovation Competition is a large open innovation competition, inviting applicants from across Europe to submit ideas that could contribute to solving big challenges (like problems associated with migration).</p>
<p><i>Funding capacity building and networking</i></p>	<p>Initiatives include the Social Innovation Europe and Social Innovation Community platforms, FP7 social incubation projects TRANSITION & BENISI, support for digital social innovation networks through CAPSSI and urban development networks through URBACT.</p>
<p><i>Public sector innovation</i></p>	<p>The Commission has provided grant funding for the OECD's Observatory of Public Sector Innovation to help foster theoretical and practical learning on innovative approaches; enhancing the sharing of ideas and co-creation of innovative solutions; and building the innovative capacity of public servants. Meanwhile, the pilot European Public Sector Innovation Scoreboard (EPSIS) sought to benchmark the innovation performance of the public sector in Europe in a similar</p>



	<p>way to the innovation performance rating of countries in the Innovation Union Scoreboard (IUS).³¹,</p> <p>The Open Innovation Strategy and Policy Group was created to identify the friction points and suggest measures to industry regarding what 'to prioritise in the new innovation system as interesting and remarkable.' To enable open innovation to be implemented in practice, the group has established Living Labs. They are an experimental integrated, user-centred approach to innovative economic and social developments.³²</p>
<i>Policy Directives</i>	<p>The 2014 <u>public procurement directive</u> enables public authorities in the EU to consider social value in their procurement decisions. In 2003 the directive on the reuse of public sector information (PSI) led many countries to begin implementing open data policies. The directive has since been revised to include greater levels of transparency.³³</p>

The Social Business Initiative

The Social Business Initiative (SBI) was launched in 2011 and seeks to create and enhance conditions conducive to the development and growth of social enterprises. The initiative emerged out of the Europe 2020 strategy and the European Commission's broader aim to engineer more inclusive, sustainable economic growth that provides employment opportunities for all, by deploying innovative vehicles for social impact.

The SBI aims to strengthen the social economy, which already constitutes an important pillar of the European economy, representing around 10% of GDP, employing more than 11 million workers (4.5% of the economically active EU population), and in which one in four new businesses set up each year are social businesses³⁴. SBI provides support to social enterprises via three key channels: (1) Improving access to finance, (2) Providing more visibility to social enterprises, and (3) Optimising the legal environment.

Among the SBI's actions and achievements have been:

- Supporting the development of the social investment market with €85 million of public funds and creating quasi-loan instruments to facilitate social enterprises' access to finance from 2014-2020.
- Public procurement reform adopted in early 2014, which encourages and enables public authorities to take into account social criteria linked to the production process and the



specificities of social enterprises in their decisions.

Actions to promote social innovation have been spread across several Directorates-General. For example:

- **DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion's** Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme aims to address the lack of high quality employment and social protection.
- **DG Growth** is setting up a challenge platform to encourage collaboration between SMEs and social enterprises in solving social problems.
- **DG Regional Policy** has celebrated social innovation projects through the RegioStars Awards
- **DG Research and Innovation** has funded social innovation research and networking projects through Framework Programmes 5 to 7 and Horizon 2020, while the European Innovation Partnerships promote interaction all sections of society to tackle big European challenges.
- **DG Connect** (Digital Single Market) has funded a number of research and development projects through the Collective Awareness Platforms for Sustainability and Social Innovation (CAPSSI).

Using EC funding to test and replicate social innovation: Advance Care Planning

For patients with serious illnesses, having a clear plan about the care they want if the worst happens can help improve quality of life, reduce unnecessary hospitalisations, and increase satisfaction with care.³⁵ But hospitals, patients and families often find it difficult to have these discussions until it's too late.

Initiated in 1991 by the Gundersen Lutheran Health System in La Crosse, Wisconsin, Respecting Choices sets out to engage patients and families in formalised conversations about end-of-life care preferences. Non-physician facilitators guide patients and families in advance care planning and use common policies and practices to collect, maintain, and use advance care directives across all healthcare settings. Respecting Choices has emerged as the favoured model of advance care planning for more than 130 health systems and medical centres, having been successfully replicated in communities across the U.S. and internationally. As well as improving patients' well-being, the Respecting Choices model of advance care planning can also reduce healthcare costs.

The Respecting Choices model is now being tested in Europe through the ACTION project, funded by FP7.³⁶ The \$8.5 million study launched in late 2013 and involves 1,360 advanced-stage cancer patients in six countries: Belgium, Denmark, England, Italy, the Netherlands and Slovenia.³⁷ The trial is taking place at 22 hospitals - half of them adopting the programme and the other half acting as the control group. The five-year study is expected to continue until the end of 2018.



EU policy as social innovation

The Commission's approach to promoting innovation in the public sector has largely centred on influencing external and sub-EU actors to make use of and exploit innovation, rather than attempting to apply socially innovative methods to its own work. To date, the Commission has prioritised public sector innovation at a national, regional and city level.³⁸ For example, research such as the EU Policy Lab's policy lab mapping exercise (undertaken in collaboration with La 27e Region³⁹) and JRC's IESI research both took the Member States as their unit of analysis.

Nevertheless, there are also some examples of EC initiatives that draw on principles of social innovation.

- **Openness:** The EC has also experimented with crowdsourcing, for example through the Futurium platform, which invites citizens to contribute ideas about future policy, and the Social Innovation Competition, a challenge prize that invites social innovators across Europe to submit solutions - including products, services or projects - to broad challenges set by the Commission.
- **Building capacity and skills:** The EU Policy Lab works across DGs to promote innovative policy making, drawing on methods from behavioural insights, design thinking and foresight.
- **Connecting and scaling:** Joinup is a collaborative platform created by the European Commission and funded by the European Union via the Interoperability Solutions for European Public Administrations (ISA) Programme. It offers several services that aim to help e-Government professionals through peer learning, and 'support them to find, choose, re-use, develop and implement interoperability solutions.'

EU Policy Lab

The EU Policy Lab has been experimenting with creative facilitation to help reframe Commission policy challenges. In October 2016, it led [Lab Connections](#), an event that brought policy labs from across Europe to share, learn and co-create responses to policy challenges presented by various DGs. The challenges identified ranged from improving youth employment policy and practice (DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations) to countering segregation in mainstream education (DG for Justice and Consumers) and connecting digital, physical, natural and social solutions for cities (DG Research).

While it remains to be seen how many of the policy ideas were considered viable by the DGs and how willing different parts of the Commission will be to try out such innovative methods again in the future, the initiative showed promise in the Commission's willingness to try innovative and experimental approaches to framing and defining policy challenges.



Challenges and opportunities for EU social innovation policy

A recent review of EU policy relating to social innovation described progress to date as “**rich but scattered**”.⁴⁰ The language of social innovation is reflected in many of the EC’s most important policy strategies, and policymakers have been creative in using a wide variety different policy instruments to promote social innovation. The EC has shown strong leadership in promoting social innovation among Member States.

Yet social innovation is not yet securely embedded in EU policy. Challenges include:

- **Reliance on individual champions, amongst staff and politicians:** Social innovation has benefited from active support by key individuals, including former EC president Barroso and various Directors-General, as well as policymakers in different roles who have advocated for social innovation within their own areas of influence. However, when roles change, commitment to social innovation can weaken.
- **Inconsistent engagement by DGs:** While some DGs have enthusiastically promoted social innovation, it is less central in others’ work. Even those DGs who actively support social innovation for some purposes do not make the most of its potential to help in achieving other policy goals. Nevertheless, there are also indications that the logic of innovation itself is changing and is increasingly encompassing technological and market and social challenges. Carlos Moedas (Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation) for instance, has called for Europe to embrace “Open innovation, open science, [and become] open to the world”.⁴¹ Currently, though, the communities (both inside and outside the Commission) who coalesce around singular innovation concepts (such as ‘social innovation’ or ‘innovation policy’) risk working in isolation, thereby limiting learning between DGs about how innovation can best be supported.
- **Variable capacity and interest of Member States to engage with social innovation:** The EC has played a considerable role in spreading social innovation to new geographical contexts through capacity-building and structural and investment funding. Nevertheless, large geographical disparities remain in the extent to which social innovation is fostered and facilitated across Europe.
- **Limited impact of short-term projects:** While the Commission’s investment in research and support for social innovation has been useful in deepening our understanding of social innovation, there are problems with ‘projectization’ of social innovation. It is unclear how long term benefits can be retrieved from short-term funded projects. Currently responsibility on project deliverers to create impact, exploit results - sometimes with little involvement or risk-sharing from Project Officers and other Commission staff. The focus on ‘excellence’ in research and innovation funding may also have an unintended consequence in that arguably, the countries most able to benefit from social innovation are those where existing activity is lowest - so these are also the countries where there are fewer organisations skilled up to participate successfully in funding bids.



There has also been relatively limited adoption of social innovation principles in the way that EC initiatives themselves are designed and implemented. The Futurium example neatly illustrates some of the challenges facing the Commission in transitioning towards socially innovative approaches to policymaking and governance. Futurium was launched by DG Connect as part of its foresight project, Digital Futures.⁴² The platform invites citizens to ‘co-create’ ideas for future EU policies and to communicate the kinds of policy changes needed to make such envisaged futures a reality. Citizens can also announce their own ‘brainstorming events’ about life in 2050, and participate in workshops, debates on online community discussions.⁴³

The platform is still being used to crowdsource ideas from citizens and others around a range of policy areas. However, it has had limited reach so far, and highlights the need to develop the Commission’s internal competences related to bottom-up and participatory processes, and in particular, to establish more user-centred engagement strategies that clearly articulate the value of participating and delivers on them in order to reach a critical mass of citizens and other key stakeholders.⁴⁴

While ambitious in its aim, the shift towards the more socially innovative policy principles required to make initiatives like Futurium an outright success will continue to prove challenging until the Commission a) encourages more widespread adoption of these kinds of policy practices across the different DGs and b) creates a mandate for change within the Commission which actively adopts participatory rather than delegated styles of leadership, involving a longer-term strategy to involve citizens in the policy process through online and offline channels.



5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Social innovation policy in Europe should set out to create the supports and structures needed to grow social innovation in Europe, and channel social innovation to Europe's most pressing societal challenges. It should look to social innovation not only as a policy object, but as a way of achieving public policy objectives.

Below we set a number of action points which would support the European Commission to put this vision for a future field of social innovation policy into practice:

01 CHANNELLING SOCIAL INNOVATION MORE INTENTIONALLY TO GENERATE LONGER-TERM IMPACTS TO ADDRESS EU CHALLENGES

Europe's 2020 Strategy encapsulates some of the highest priority challenges facing Europe. Social innovation practices could help sustain impact beyond the Europe 2020 targets, and as a new European Strategy takes its place, social innovation should be looked upon from the earliest points to help flexibly address any such new priorities that arise, such as migration and future governance; whilst linking more explicitly to the UN's 2030 sustainable development agenda, and particularly the new Sustainable Development Goals.

Transitioning from the random, disconnected support approach for social innovation to a coherent, cross-departmental support for social innovation as a systemic phenomenon⁴⁵ requires that a cross-cutting social innovation policy unit be developed to connect up policy between Directorates-General, encourage collaboration that cuts across departments, and draw connections between the work of the EC, other EU institutions, and Member States.

This unit could:

- I. Look to social innovation not only as a policy object, but as a way of achieving public policy objectives by seeking opportunities for the Commission to harness social innovation principles and partnerships to achieve public policy objectives:** working to anchor a more nuanced understanding of innovation for the public good - which includes social innovation, frugal innovation, open innovation (etc.) at the heart of all "mainstream" EU and sub-EU policymaking processes.
- II. Taking an ecosystems approach to social innovation policy:** This would require using the policy instruments at the EC's disposal in a more joined-up, strategic way. While intermediaries and funding mechanisms should still play an important role in supporting early-stage social innovation, efforts should also focus energy on creating systemic innovations. Instruments like the Social Innovation Competition and the European Innovation Partnerships could be used to channel innovation towards cross-cutting public policy challenges. Doing so would involve creating a three-pronged social innovation strategy to then 1) create supportive environments for promising social innovations with follow-up funding, incubation and scaling support 2) raise social innovation demand by actively looking to build partnerships between those innovations, relevant actors in the Commission, the Member States, civil society and industry and 3) in so doing



identify policy barriers that thwart their spread and put supports in place that can help them achieve transformative scale.

- III. **Incorporate social innovation policy into existing policy frameworks:** There are clear examples of initiatives and departments that could benefit from making use of social innovation principles and partnerships to support their policy efforts. These include the Innovation Union initiative, the EU Urban Agenda, and the initiatives of DG Regio.
- IV. **Ensuring funding calls capitalise on the lessons learnt, and the experience and knowledge generated through H2020 projects:** The projectization of EC-funded programmes means that even where project participants are required to consider enlargement and sustainability strategies, the likelihood of sustaining long-term impact and beyond shorter-term projects is challenging. Meanwhile a lack of built in flexibility in project design and resources may make it difficult to respond to emerging needs, lessons and opportunities that arise. Alternative models to embed learning back into the EC could involve having Project Officers take a more hands-on approach in managing projects deemed particularly relevant to the Commission's own strategic priorities, or co-sourcing - an alternative commissioning process to outsourcing which would enable Commission staff to learn and retain new knowledge and skills generated as a result of funded projects and service contracts. A cross-cutting unit could encourage more cross-departmental funding calls and encourage reflection to ensure there is a strong rationale for seemingly similar but disconnected projects such as BENISI and TRANSITION (DG RTD) or CAPSSI and DSI4EU (DG CONNECT), and where similarities remain, ensure it is because they are similar by design, to for instance explore A/B testing of particular research methodologies.

02 INCREASE REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TRANSFER AND USE SOCIAL INNOVATION POLICY TO BUILD INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS IN MEMBER STATES

- I. **Using the Commission's leadership to support desirable societal futures:** The Commission has a critical role to play in using EU Research and Innovation Agendas to address current societal challenges, but also in bringing Europe closer to desirable societal futures. In this regard, the Commission should expand its support for experimental, action research programme designs that explore 'next level' issues through practical R&I projects. Past and upcoming programmes showing promise in this regard include D-CENT (DG CONNECT, which piloted digital engagement tools in a number of EU locations), the SME Challenge Platform (DG GROWTH, which seeks to support re-industrialisation in Europe by encouraging cross-sectoral industrial collaboration), and the upcoming call, 'CO-CREATION-06-2017: Policy-development in the age of big data' (DG CONNECT). In terms of supporting social innovation policy objectives, this approach could be used to give some "steer" towards supporting social innovation to achieve transformative scale; developing responsible social innovation and social innovation governance frameworks; putting training and supports in place to improve the capacity of people, state agencies, and other stakeholders; as well as public financing and the creation of social innovation markets.
- II. **Creating programmes to embed social innovation in 'weaker' social innovation regions:** Future work around social innovation, in particular, structural funds and programmes like Horizon 2020, should look to build markets, infrastructure and capabilities for social innovation in those countries where this is currently weak. Doing this could be facilitated by practical R&I programmes that seek to build the social innovation capacity of certain Member States. Horizon 2020's Societal Challenges and Leadership in Enabling and Industrial Technologies already



emphasise research being complemented by certain innovation-related activities, such as piloting, demonstration, test-beds, and support for public procurement and market uptake. Building Europe's social innovation capacity also means that top-down and bottom-up approaches be adopted simultaneously. The Commission itself should lead by example - providing a clear, unified vision for social innovation in Europe, while adopting inclusive, participatory approaches to empower people, civil society, state agencies and others to build their social innovation capacity from the bottom up.

- III. Facilitating knowledge sharing amongst the Member States:** The EC has a role to play in ensuring better knowledge sharing and can do this by showcasing better practices within Member States and by advocating at a national level for social innovation through mechanisms like the Country Specific Recommendations and the ESF Transnational Cooperation Learning Networks. While existing directives such as the public sector information (PSI) reuse directive could be expanded to share data related to policy specific challenges - health; education - consideration should be given to supporting and building the capacity of public and private actors to make meaningful use of open data.

03 WORKING DIFFERENTLY: RETHINKING THE ROLE OF EU POLICYMAKERS AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS

- I. Policymakers as social innovators:** At national, city and local levels of government civil servants are being asked to champion new methods, tools and approaches in the name of public sector innovation.⁴⁶ European civil servants should equally be looking upon their profession with the same level of "professional curiosity"⁴⁷ that public servants at other levels of government are being encouraged to demonstrate. Reward and incentive systems, targets and performance management processes should be assessed to ensure they encourage Commission policymakers to adopt new social innovation principles in their work.
- II. Make social innovation a strategic priority of the European Economic and Social Committee:** In its important role as a bridge between EU Institutions and EU citizens to promote a more participatory, inclusive and democratic society in the European Union, social innovation capacity-building should be made a strategic priority of the EESC. This would mean shifting the EESC's focus from advisor to the EU institutions to strengthening civil society's social innovation capacity. Doing so would require equipping EESC representatives with the tools and methods of social innovation so that they could a) provide citizens from across the Member States with training and access to social innovation approaches and b) work differently – looking to try out socially innovative event formats, such as policy hackathons and pop-up town halls, and mainstreaming citizens' dialogues across EU policy, so that civil society can take a more empowered and informed position on where and how they can shape EU policy and legislation.
- III. The Committee of the Regions should adopt a more coherent and explicit approach to social innovation:** CoR has been recognised as an important incubator of social innovation, while examples like the Innovations Camp are demonstrate that innovation can and should be channelled to address societal challenges. The CoR should strengthen its support for and use of social innovation to achieve its objectives by: a) raising awareness and promoting socially innovative policymaking amongst its members, and b) adopting a cross-cutting social innovation policy strategy that spans it specialist commissions e.g. ECOS, CIVEX and ENVE.



WHAT SIC WILL DO

Making this future vision for social innovation policy a reality is at the heart of the SIC project's policy programme. Paving the way for policymakers to fully make use of social innovation processes and partnerships still points to a question of capabilities however. The relational skills needed are at quite a remove from most policymakers' current innovation capacity. These skills are better learned by experience and reflection than by formal pedagogy.

For this reason, SIC will be rolling out a series of practical workshops aimed at supporting policymakers to reflect on where and how they can make use of social innovation principles and approaches in their policy work. Our aim is to create a learning community of social innovation policy practitioners who can share and exchange their experiences of working to adopt the social innovation policy principles, as well as a series of other practical policy supports including:

- Collecting and sharing examples of promising policy initiatives in a variety of policy areas on the [SIC Policy Portal](#)
- Building a repository of social innovation methods and tools for policymakers to support better social innovation policy practice
- Hosting a series of practical policy workshops in a number of locations across Europe
- Creating practice guides, tools and multimedia content aimed at supporting policymakers at different levels of government to work on policy challenges in more socially innovative ways



6. ENDNOTES

¹ We've adopted the distinction between 'policy for social innovation' and 'policy as social innovation' proposed by the CRESSI project. Cited at: Edmiston, D. (2015). EU Public Policy, Social Innovation and Marginalisation: Reconciling ambitions with policy instruments. CRESSI Working Paper Series No. 18/2015. Oxford: University of Oxford.

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² This idea of scaling social impact is borrowed from the Center for the Advancement of Social at DUKE.

³ Examples of dedicated social innovation policy units include the The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) and the US Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation.

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⁵ Moolaert, F. (Ed.). (2013). The International Handbook on Social Innovation: Collective Action, Social Learning and Transdisciplinary Research. Edward Elgar Publishing.

⁶ Reynolds, S. (2015). An Introduction to Government Innovation Labs. *Public Sector Digest*, p. 63

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⁸ "Ain't No Need We Can't Solve – Challenge 2014" was the first global innovation challenge aimed at innovators who could come up with solutions based on collaborative economy, to address problems faced by vulnerable populations It is organized by Socialab and Pioneros, and driven by the National Agency for Overcoming Extreme Poverty (ANSPE)

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¹⁵ Carreira, V., Machado, J.R. & Vasconcelos, L. (2016). Engaging Citizen Participation—A Result of Trusting Governmental Institutions and Politicians in the Portuguese Democracy. *Social Sciences*, 5 (3), p.40.

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¹⁸ Clarkson, P.J., et al. (eds) (2003), Inclusive Design. Design for the Whole Population, Springer

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²³ Reynolds, S. & Gabriel, M. (2016). Seven Principles of Socially Innovative Policymaking. Available at: <https://www.siceurope.eu/sites/default/files/field/attachment/D5.1%20Seven%20principles%20of%20socially%20innovative%20policymaking.pdf>.

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