



Innovating innovation by research - 100 years after Schumpeter  
19 - 21 September 2011  
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## Vienna Declaration:

### The most relevant topics in social innovation research

*“For most of human history, reality was nature...  
Then reality became technics, tools, and things made by men...  
Now reality is primarily the social world experienced through  
the reciprocal consciousness of self and others.”*

Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973)

#### Rationale of the Declaration

In response to major societal challenges the Europe 2020 strategy sets measurable targets such as **Employment** of 75% of the workforce, investment of 3% of the EU GDP in **Research, Development and Innovation** (RDI), adapting to the challenges of **Climate Change** (20% less greenhouse gas emissions, 20% increase in energy efficiency, 20% of energy from renewable resources), reducing school drop-out rates below 10% and enabling 40% of age cohorts to complete third level **Education**, and reducing the number of people in or at risk of **Poverty and Social Exclusion** by 20 million.

The fulfilment of such specified targets will require novel technologies and economic measures, yet to an unprecedented extent also social innovations. The necessary co-ordination of scientific as well as practical activities in the wide domains of employment, RDI, climate change, education, and social inclusion will be impossible without major changes in social practices in the domains of business, the civil society, and the state. The tracks of international research on innovation demonstrate that the technology-oriented paradigm – shaped by the industrial society – does not cover the broad range of innovations indispensable in the transition from an industrial to a knowledge and services-based society: Such fundamental societal changes require the inclusion of social innovations in a **paradigm shift of the innovation system**.

The new innovation paradigm is essentially characterised by the **opening of the innovation process to society**. Alongside companies, universities and research institutes, citizens and customers become relevant actors of innovation processes. Terms and concepts such as open innovation, user-led innovation, customer integration and innovation networks reflect aspects of this development. Innovation becomes a general social phenomenon and increasingly influences all walks of life.

Further innovations in technology and business are imperative; yet in order to reap their full potential, and at the same time creating social development that is beneficial to cultures as inclusive as diverse, **social innovations will make the difference**: There is a lot of evidence that social innovation will become of growing importance not only with regard to social integration and equal opportunities but also with regard to preserving and expanding the innovative capacity of companies and society as a whole.

The most urgent and important innovations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will take place in the social field. This opens up the necessity as well as possibilities for Social Sciences and Humanities to find new roles and relevance by generating knowledge applicable to new dynamics and structures of contemporary and future societies.

#### **14 prioritised research topics voted by the conference Challenge Social Innovation**

In light of the increasing importance of social innovation, the conference looked at the theoretical concepts, areas of empirical research, concepts and developments in the field of social innovation. What is required here is to redraw boundaries (both in terms of differences as well as overlaps and interactions) between business innovations and new technologies on the one hand, and social innovations on the other hand. Increasingly, innovation blossoms where sectors, systems and concepts converge.

The Vienna Declaration is a **key result of the conference**, created and established during the event by joint efforts of all participants.

The 14 prioritised topics selected from a total of 56 (identified in 14 thematic sessions) do not represent the completion of the process of determining research issues. In fact, the whole operation was built on being *courageous enough to start the process* of getting there, while at the same time remaining *modest enough to know that this is just a beginning*. The Vienna Declaration shall be read, commented and considered as a **starting point to specify crucial research topics** in Social Sciences and Humanities, **aiming at the identification, development and implementation of the most needed social innovations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**.

The results of the debates and the voting procedures can be summarised under two headings:

**(1) Overall scientific advancement required to meet expectations and developments in social innovation practices**

- Elaboration on the particular features of the concept and clarification of definitions
- Embedding the concept of social innovation in a comprehensive theory of innovation
- Development of coherent methodologies to identify and measure social innovations

**(2) Prioritised research topics**

- The potential of social innovation in the social economy, civil society, business firms, and the state
- Multi-level governance and receptivity of governments to social innovations
- The role of social processes in varied collaboration formats and organisational structures in business innovation
- The relationship between service innovations and social innovations
- Workplace innovations for smarter and better working
- Value creation by social innovations and measuring different sorts of value
- Monitoring, assessment, and measurement of social resources for innovation and of social impact of technology
- Approaches and competencies of social sciences to actively contribute to the practical implementation of social innovations
- The distinctive contributions of Humanities-based knowledge and methods of enquiry (time: history; ideas and concepts: philosophies and worldviews; communication: linguistics ...) to social innovations
- Establish a multi-national evidence-base of promising practices for inclusion and integration
- Conditions of participation and self-management in social innovations aimed at overcoming poverty and pauperisation
- Indicators of short-term and long-term effects of the educational system on quality of life, well-being, innovativeness
- Lifelong learning, work and intergenerational solidarity as components of socially engaged ageing
- Opportunities and risks of social media for enabling large scale and systemic social innovations

## **Utilising the Vienna Declaration in the development of Social Sciences and Humanities**

There are three main ways to build on the results of the conference captured in the Vienna Declaration:

### **(1) Suggested input to include social innovation topics in research programmes**

The core intention of the conference was to establish for the first time a large international convention of researchers concerned with social innovation, reaching out to all continents. Accordingly, the great majority of the **350 participants** were scholars and researchers from the wide realms of Social Sciences and Humanities across Europe and the world. Thus scientific background and manifold research competencies are reflected in all research topics proposed, and discernible degrees of agreement expressed in the 14 prioritised topics.

The topics on this list received support by the majority. They may therefore be considered a strong vote by the respective scientific community to address such issues in processes of drafting future research programmes in Social Sciences and Humanities. This could become relevant on European as well as on national levels wherever **social innovations should be analysed with a view to either their context, initiation, implementation or impact.**

We hope the Vienna Declaration, follow-up statements and papers can assist and inspire future discussions of research programmes in FP7 and Horizon 2020, as well as activities under the Flagship Initiative Innovation Union of the Europe 2020 strategy, and other European, national or international measures concerning science, research and innovation.

Beyond the EU and its Member States, the Vienna Declaration will be brought to the attention of the OECD LEED Forum on Social Innovation and the upcoming Social Innovation Programme of UNESCO.

### **(2) Scientific exchange among scholars**

The full documentation of the making and results of the Vienna Declaration (all topics proposed during the conference, the voting process and scores, comments contributed and debates stimulated) remain available at the CSI website [www.socialinnovation2011.eu](http://www.socialinnovation2011.eu). The **forum** is open for further provision of comments and dissemination through communication channels in science, the wider public, printed and digital media including Web 2.0. By and by continuing discussion and reflexion may create a **repository** of statements, thematic clusters, methodologies suggested and tested, as well as of research references, literature and statistical sources.

The conference organisers will serve as nodes in such communications, connecting participants and additional colleagues or institutes. Ultimately, stimulating discussions and collaboration across scientific disciplines, national and institutional borders shall facilitate trans-disciplinary research: Bridging of science and research on the one hand, and implementation and practice of social innovation on the other hand.

### **(3) Community building in the framework of the European School of Social Innovation (E.S.S.I.)**

The European School of Social Innovation, formally established (10 Oct. 2011) and based in Vienna, was launched in collaboration between the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) in Vienna and the Central Scientific Institute (sfs) of the Dortmund University of Technology. It is conceived as an international **competence network**, reaching out to European and global scholars and institutions involved in **social innovation research, academic education and vocational training**.

The School, comprising and co-ordinating activities in research and education, is not called a European School because it should be confined to European researchers, students and institutions. On the contrary, it will be open for inter-continental participation in research, courses and study programmes, yet with a specific focus on the conditions and sources of social innovations rooted in European social systems.

The debates during the conference and the selection of 14 prioritised research topics concerning social innovation clearly illustrated that until recently the area of social innovation has been virtually ignored as an independent phenomenon in socio-economic research on innovation, let alone research in humanities: Social innovation rarely appears as a specific and defined term with a clearly delineated scope. Mostly it is used as a sort of descriptive metaphor in the context of social and technical change. We have to admit that social innovation currently is a term that almost everybody likes, but a precise and broadly accepted definition is still missing.

The European School of Social Innovation shall help to correct this deficiency by **bringing together an international research community**, enabling increasingly prolific scientific cooperation, and advancing the development of a theoretically sound concept of social innovation. We see a growing number of renowned research institutes all around the world engaging in scientific research on social innovation. Many researchers from these institutes have been with us at the conference. Henceforth, much will depend on aligning competencies of Social Sciences and Humanities by joint efforts to analysing and lecturing on improved concepts, knowledge and research on social innovations.

The **56 research topics identified, and 14 of them prioritised** by the participants of Challenge Social Innovation, indicate **thematic guidelines for research and education activities** in the framework of the European School of Social Innovation. At the same time, participants of the conference represent a world-wide network of experts, researchers and communicators of social innovation to collectively improve scientific and research competencies in the field. Moreover, this community includes unfailing capacities to act as **faculty** of the European School of Social Innovation.

The proponents will organise a formal inaugural meeting to establish the Board and other Organs of the Association, and to kick-off first concrete activities to become implemented during 2012: A Summer School of Social Innovation, the development, announcement and inception of an M.A. curriculum for post-graduate professionals, to be followed by Ph.D. study programmes as well. However, as there is not yet institutional funding, E.S.S.I. needs to seek appropriate forms of private and public sponsorship, organisational connections on European and, where applicable, on national levels.

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Bonn, NET4SOCIETY – transnational co-operation among National Contact Points for Socio-Economic Sciences and the Humanities » [www.net4society.eu](http://www.net4society.eu)



All documents concerning the Vienna Declaration are available online at

<http://www.socialinnovation2011.eu/vienna-declaration-2011>