



PRESS RELEASE: Social innovations to fight social exclusion? European researchers determined to find out how

Liege (Belgium), 29th February 2012. What is the missing link between social innovation at the local level and the reduction of inequalities within countries and across Europe? This is the key question that the pan-European research project WILCO will investigate over the next two years.

WILCO - Welfare Innovations at the Local Level in Favour of Cohesion - brings together researchers and universities from across Europe in ten European countries. They will examine how social cohesion can be enhanced (or hindered) via local welfare systems. The project will focus on identifying good practices and on working with policy makers and practitioners to describe the most relevant initiatives and share lessons based on practical experiences.

Although WILCO was officially launched a year ago, the first year has laid the groundwork to conduct the bulk of the research in 2012. Taco Brandsen, Professor of Public Administration and WILCO's Coordinator, states that "the novelty of WILCO is to examine how innovative actions taken at local level to address social exclusion can be implemented effectively elsewhere".

WILCO is aware that the time of academic research restricted to scientific circles is simply over. As a matter of fact, and considering the topic of social innovation, a major goal is to have a clear societal impact: "We are committed to making WILCO a relevant initiative for society. Not only the issues it deals with (childcare, access to jobs, immigration, etc.) are connected to European citizens' everyday life but our aim is to open spaces for any citizen to participate in nationally organized events", states Rocío Nogales, WILCO's Communication Coordinator. In this context, actions through the most popular social media, synergies with other social innovation projects and initiatives, and ongoing discussion with the media will be actively promoted.

There will also be a series of events and conferences, as well as publications, all of them open to the public. All the information about the project and how to participate in it is available at www.wilcoproject.eu.

Researchers, policy experts and practitioners interested in links between social innovation, welfare and the reduction of inequalities may contact Project Coordinator Taco Brandsen (t.brandsen@fm.ru.nl) or Communication Coordinator Rocío Nogales (info@emes.net).

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WILCO

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