



**WILCO**

Welfare innovations  
at the local level  
in favour of cohesion

## **Social Innovation at the Local Level:**

Lessons from the WILCO project

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# Design of WILCO



- International comparative project: 10 countries
- Time period: 2010-2014
- Funded by the 7th European Framework Programme (2.4 million Euro grant)
- Coordinated by Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands



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Welfare Innovations  
at the Local level  
in favour of Cohesion



**Radboud University Nijmegen  
(Coordinating Institution)**

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Universität Münster**

**Politecnico di Milano**

**Université de Genève**

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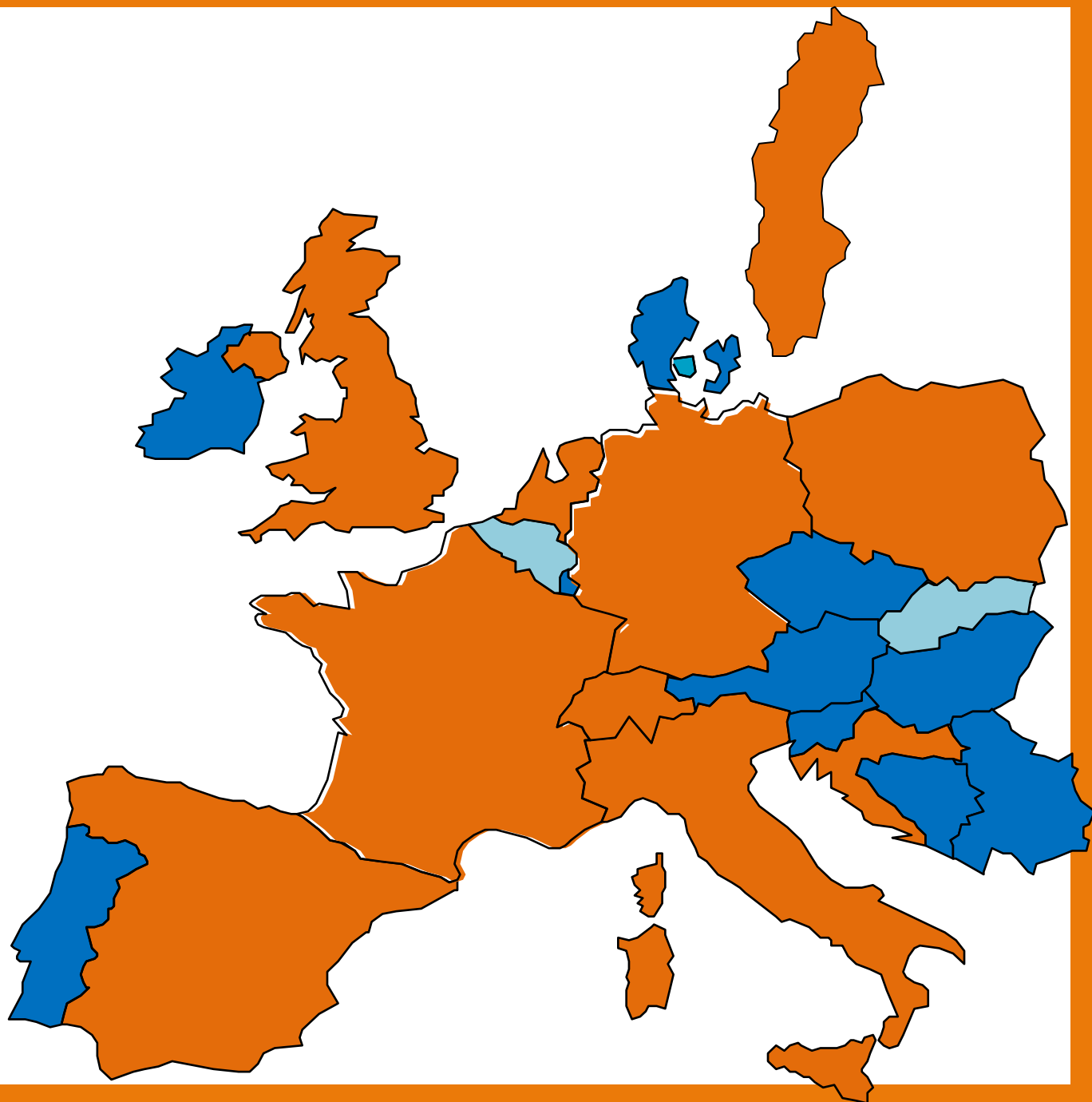
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**EMES European Research  
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**European Research Services  
GmbH (ERS)**

**The Network of Institutes and  
Schools of Public  
Administration in Central and  
Eastern Europe (NISPACEE)**



# Background



- ⊞ Strong social exclusion, perpetuated across generations and geographical areas
- ⊞ Despite years of public programmes these wicked problems remain
- ⊞ Social innovations as part of the solution



# Goals of the WILCO project

- ③ To identify innovative practices in European cities and the factors that make them emerge and spread
- ③ To set them against the context of current social problems and urban policies
- ③ To make recommendations how to encourage local social innovation

# Selected fields

Policy fields:

1. Child care
2. Housing
3. Employment



Groups: young unemployed; single mothers; migrants



# Social innovation and growth

- ⊞ An assumption of several studies and public statements is that economic growth and social innovation in cities are part of a single strategy to make cities more attractive, competitive and liveable.
- ⊞ Our evidence bears out that this is only partially the case.
- ⊞ Social innovation does not necessarily complement strategies for economic growth, nor is it necessarily an adequate substitute for existing welfare policies

# Scaling social innovations

- ⊞ There is a tendency in publicity on social innovation to discuss only successful cases and those that are scaled up to a system-wide level.
- ⊞ Yet most social innovations are short-lived and remain small in scope.
- ⊞ Public policy should not focus singularly on the selective group of innovations that can be mainstreamed.
- ⊞ Instead, it should pay more attention to the capacity of cities to continue generating new initiatives.





# Diffusing social innovations

- ❏ Diffusion, again, often misrepresented, as a straightforward transfer of best practices
- ❏ Approaches or projects will in some way need to be adapted to the context into which they are adopted.
- ❏ The concept behind a social innovation is less important than the collaborative relationships needed to implement it in a local context.



# Governance

- ④ Innovations can more easily gain recognition and sustainability where there is an open governance style
- ④ To some extent such openness derives from structural features of administrative systems, but policymakers and officials in all types of systems have proven capable of achieving it.

# More information

[www.wilcoproject.eu](http://www.wilcoproject.eu)

