



PRESS RELEASE:

Getting together to strengthen the key role of social innovations in the fight against social exclusion

Liege (Belgium), 24th May 2012. It is always a tough call to address social inequalities in urban contexts. Recently, the much discussed notion of social innovation is casting some light on how innovation processes focused on social aspects of development can contribute to the wellbeing of European citizens. Academic research at the European level is also committed to understanding social innovation and specifically the WILCO project (*Welfare Innovations at the Local Level in Favour of Cohesion*) looks at how social innovation develops in local contexts. Social innovative processes and ideas are the result of very specific contexts and they seem to thrive when they originate in and evolve from the grassroots level. This is known as “the bottom-up nature” of social innovation.

Halfway through the WILCO project an interesting gathering of key people working with social innovation will take place in Brussels next week. This mixed group will include people as diverse as **Pervenche Berès**, Chair of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the EU Parliament; **Louise Pulford**, the Head of Social Innovation Exchange; **Masha Ru**, an Amsterdam-based artist; or coordinators of social experiment projects and social innovation labs. The idea is to take a moment to look at and discuss some key issues raised in the course of the project such as: what innovative strategies are being developed by fragilized groups to fight exclusion? What cities can be considered as pioneers in the implementation of innovative policies fighting exclusion of migrants? How is the notion of segregation evolving in Europe from an ethnic to a financial perspective? The overarching question is how are social innovative initiatives addressing social innovation in Europe, what is their transferability potential; and how can they be supported by policy-makers at all levels.

According to **Taco Brandsen**, Professor of Public Administration and WILCO’s Coordinator, “there is a major challenge to be faced by European policy-makers and public administrators in terms of how we fill the gap between local successful experiences in terms of welfare to fight social exclusion and their transfer to other contexts in need of those social innovations”.

Considering the focus on the local context as departing point, the Committee of the Regions will be hosting this event. Twenty cities are examined in WILCO in order to identify good practices of how social cohesion can be enhanced (or hindered) via local welfare systems. This practical experience will then be shared with policy makers and practitioners in the form of recommendations and other formats.

The WILCO Midterm Seminar will take place at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels on Wednesday, 30 May 2012 from 13:00 to 17:00. For media contacts and inquiries please contact WILCO Communication Coordinator Rocío Nogales (info@emes.net). All the information about the project and how to participate in it is available at www.wilcoproject.eu

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Welfare innovations
at the local level
in favour of cohesion