

RE-InVEST Policy Brief

Issue 0/2015

Rebuilding an Inclusive, Value-based Europe of Solidarity and Trust through Social Investments

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RE-InVEST is a research project financed by the European Commission under the **Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Framework programme**.

RE-InVEST aims to have impact on the **societal challenges** accelerated by the crisis: we will provide building blocks for a renewed European project: a Europe where the **well-being of everyone** is at the core of its policies.

RE-InVEST will **reframe the social investment approach** as a strategy to humanise Europe.

The **capability approach** of Amartya Sen and a focus on human rights will be our theoretical guidelines.

What will we do?

The RE-InVEST project will rebalance the social investment model towards an effective promotion of human rights and capabilities and will suggest practical ways to apply this rebalanced model in the fields of active labour market and social protection and to public intervention in basic service markets. Moreover, RE-InVEST will discuss innovative funding sources and governance principles.

RE-InVEST will also examine how different member states deal with the crisis and the post-crisis trends, from the perspective of acquisition of capabilities and enhancing human rights.

By this, RE-InVEST sets out to make a significant contribution to an effective implementation of the Social Investment Package.

What's our aim?

Although 'inclusive growth' is one of the pillars of the Europe 2020 strategy, the social dimension of the strategy has lost momentum with the (Euro)crisis and the ensuing priority given to macro-economic stabilisation policies. Meanwhile, inequalities are growing, with unemployment and poverty reaching new records, particularly in the peripheral regions of the EU. In 2013, the Commission launched a major endeavour to



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 649447.

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rebalance economic and social progress with the Social Investment Package (SIP).

The ambition of the RE-InVEST research project is to contribute to a more balanced economic and social development model for the EU.

We will reformulate the economic and social development model based on human rights and capabilities. generate comparative knowledge on the main social investment policies, and encourage the implementation of this innovative model by bringing together a range of stakeholders, including people severely affected by the crisis, and policymakers with regard to policymaking.

Next to that, RE-InVEST shall invest in the empowerment of participants through training and a deliberative participation methodology. It will improve understanding of the role of capabilities on individual and collective level, translated as resilience of society, in relation to the social investment policy as well as in relation to the empowerment of people severely affected by the crisis.

So, RE-InVEST shall create knowledge to reconcile the progress of the economic and social development model of EU and individual well-being, and in this manner foster European integration.

Who are we?

The partners in the RE-InVEST-consortium are members of the network 'the Alliances to fight Poverty'.

'The Alliances to fight poverty' is an informal network of civil society organisations, trade unions, policy makers and academics co-ordinated by the Flemish Christian labour movement, Beweging.net, and committed to a more inclusive Europe.

This network group consists of members from different disciplines in the scientific, practice and policy spheres. They complement each other with their research and practical expertise.

The research is situated at the crossroads between economics, sociology, social policy and political science as well as in the practices of CSOs and trade unions. The NGOs, trade unions and some individual members of 'the Alliances to fight poverty' are experienced in policy dialogue and advocacy.

The consortium covers a broad range of European countries, both geographically (12 countries) and in terms of representation of different welfare and labour market traditions. At least five different European welfare regimes are represented in the consortium: Liberal (UK, IE, increasingly NL), Northern (NL), Conservative (BE, DE, AT, FR, SUI), Mediterranean (IT, PT) and Transitional (LV, RO).

How will we achieve our aim?

- RE-InVEST will **reframe the social investment approach as a strategy to 'humanise' Europe**: with the SIP rooted in a philosophy that prioritises the implementation of human rights and the multidimensional well-being of each citizen, the chances for all stakeholders to adhere to the strategy will hopefully increase. Our key drivers - human rights and capabilities- may sometimes conflict with purely financial motives, but not with a broader notion of welfare and economic growth - on the contrary.
- RE-InVEST will foster the participation of vulnerable people; to significantly contribute to the theoretical foundation of the SIP based on the capability approach and the ideas on 'resilience'.
- RE-InVEST will design **new lessons for active labour market policies**, based on advanced qualitative and quantitative empirical research - with a special focus on the most vulnerable groups. The social investment approach to Active Labour Market Programmes will be contrasted with workfare-like approaches that are focussed on short-term employment effects, whatever the quality of the jobs.
- RE-InVEST will elaborate **an innovative social investment theory of social protection**, distinct from the neoliberal 'making work pay' paradigm, which sees social transfers as resources for self-investment by recipients into their own (and their families') capabilities. Both theories (making work pay versus social investment) will be tested against each other, resulting in a more balanced vision - and more balanced social protection policies;



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- RE-InVEST will provide a **renewed framework for the regulation of basic service markets**: beyond the arguments of competition, free choice, responsiveness and cost efficiency that have driven the recent liberalisation measures, the social investment approach can elaborate arguments underpinning social minimum standards, such as effective universal implementation of basic economic, social and cultural rights, non-discrimination and the quality of social services;
- RE-InVEST will produce **policy recommendations** relating to the macro-level conditions for a successful social investment strategy: innovative **funding** strategies, improved **(democratic) governance** involving social and civil dialogue, and a retuning of the **subsidiarity** principle;
- RE-InVEST will also assist policy makers and practitioners to give more voice to vulnerable people, to learn from contrasting practices in different countries and to extract appropriate lessons on the EU level.

- last but not least, RE-InVEST will explore the best ways to make the SIP strategy more equitable and inclusive. The SIP strategy still needs to go a long way to achieve a **better distribution of investments** across various sections of society. At present, this distribution appears to be 'neutral' on average: i.e. the poorest do not benefit more than any other groups in society from social investments. A stronger redistribution effect can be achieved through gradual implementation of the principle of 'progressive universalism': this means that, while the access to public services remains universal, positive action should be taken in favour of target groups with the highest needs through a combination of anti-discrimination measures, outreaching, sensitisation, as well as preferential access and treatment.

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This electronic publication, as well as previous issues of RE-InVEST, is available at www.re-invest.eu. RE-InVEST, Brussels, March 2015