



Summary of the context and overall objectives of the project

European welfare states were designed to offer support against Twentieth Century social and economic risks. But European societies are changing in a number of interlinked areas including demography, globalisation, ecological sustainability, family structure, employment, poverty and social inclusion. The economic crisis of 2008 and its aftermath have emphasized that EU Member States will have to adopt distinctive social welfare reforms to improve their resilience and prepare for future economic and social risks. Social investment involves strengthening people's current and future capacities and, in contrast to a straightforward redistributive approach to social policy, it uses welfare as a way of investing to improve prospects for future economic and social participation. It is the idea of having a lasting impact that gives such policies the characteristics of an investment by offering some returns over time.

However, to date, implementation of Social Investment approaches has been uneven across Member States and much remains to be learned, especially with regard to the regional and local realities of Social Investment. Many models of Social Investment are possible depending upon how policy, social and managerial roles are distributed between the public, private and third sectors and the specific legal and financial frameworks that are used.

The question we address **is how to design robust social investment strategies** which can deal with emerging socio-economic challenges and the aftershocks of the 2008 crisis. Our investigation of innovative approaches to implement social investment covers a number of dimensions:

- regional and local implementation of social investment policies;
- financial and regulatory innovations designed to promote social investment;
- the role of social innovation in the design and implementation of social investment policies;
- the potential for social investment strategies to encourage early intervention and life-course perspectives within welfare; and
- the development of more personalized approaches to the deliver of welfare.

Our project aims are as follows:

1. **Identify** and evaluate existing innovative and strategic approaches to social welfare reform which utilise social innovation at a regional and local level.
2. For those socially innovative and strategic approaches to welfare reform identified during Aim 1, we will explore the **social and psychological impact** of welfare reform on individuals and communities:
3. For those interventions considered in Aim 2 to be successful, we seek to identify **ways of implementing** effective innovative and strategic approaches to welfare reform (including social financing) and establish pathways to impact for knowledge created during the project.