

8th ISTR International Conference and
2nd EMES-ISTR European Conference
in partnership with Cinefogo

**"The Third Sector and Sustainable Social Change:
New Frontiers for Research"**

hosted by CIES-University of Barcelona
Barcelona, Spain, July 9-12, 2008

Title: *"Comparing the sectors of the Social Economy, the different aspects of Social
Enterprising and their impact on Country's competitiveness, social cohesion and
sustainable development in 4 European Countries:
UK, Italy, Slovenia and Poland"*

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Keywords: Social Enterprise, Social Entrepreneurship, Social Economy, Organizational types, Needs, Skills and Competences

Abstract

Purpose – The paper intends to deep analyze and compare the sector of Social Economy in 4 Countries: UK, Italy, Slovenia and Poland and to detect, trough a set of tools and techniques, the level of existing competitiveness in Social Enterprising and its contribution to social cohesion and sustainable development; the main focus afterwards will be on competencies available/ missing and identification of the areas of improving those trough skill-up/start-ups policies of/for potential Social Entrepreneurs and/or policy community.

A refreshing of how a standard definition of “social enterprise” in the 4 Countries is understood will prepare the ground for our discussion; what it states has a great significance to avoid old style thinking about “Social Entrepreneurship”, only focusing on philanthropic and social issues, regardless efficacy and managerial-entrepreneurial attitude to operate to create much more (quantitative efficacy) and better (qualitative efficacy) goods and services with social impact, by involving/serving more disadvantaged groups (social inclusion efficacy).

Aiming to clarify once for ever that Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship does not consider only few activities, only the philanthropic or non-for-profit ones, a 4 Countries' research will step down a long list of activities which could generate positive social impact and consequently considered open to the sector of Social Economy; at the end a clear comparison will arise to drive the different level of maturity of Social Entrepreneurship in each Country.

Research Methodology– The proposed methodology will be based on a 5 Key Steps as follows:

- SLEPT
- Desk studies
- Stakeholders Analysis
- SWOT Analysis
- Surveys/Focus Groups

we intend to:

- highlight and compare the key SLEPT characteristics of the 4 Countries involved in the research and to address the issues gathered from each Country's SLEPT characteristics; detail and compare the Stakeholders identified in each Country, their positions, their relationship and their impact at each Country's level; summarize and compare the existing organizational types and the activities performing, with their numbers, data, income and job generated, which are directly or indirectly related to a larger definition of Social Economy, and Social Entrepreneurship in particular and a 4 Countries' SWOT analysis, where max 5 selected factors for each Country's SWOT analysis are defined for each Country, will contribute to complete the picture of each Country' characteristics and the comparison between the 4 Countries
- define and implement the survey methodology each Country's Team intend to apply to gather the data for the field research from focus groups by the sending of a newly designed questionnaire, in order to support the outcomes from the previous researches

Findings – The results of the questionnaires and their disaggregated data at both 4 Countries and at single Country's level will be pointed out and compared, aiming to identify and compare missing skills ad competence a Social Entrepreneurship should have, develop or improve in order to increase competitiveness and boosting up the development

Research implications – we expect concrete applicative actions to be designed from the research outcomes in terms of policy to improving competitiveness of Social Enterprising and increasing the weight of Social Economy (Social entrepreneurship) by:

- clearly compare Social Economies in the 4 Countries and their key success factor to be implemented, if and when feasible

- clarify missing skills and competences to be covered by formal education and LL learning programs
- define specific areas of improving trough learning and education processes proposing tentative list of learning programs

Originality/value – The unique expected outcomes from the research aiming to first detect and identify the best competitive advantages (including social cohesion & sustainability performance indicators) and the role of social economy sector as contribution to above in each Country, in order to define gaps and development opportunities the existing programs show in supporting the competence development for boosting up social enterprising in each of the County and after to match those to define an optimal original mix of suggestions to further improve competitiveness, social cohesion & sustainability indicators and to boosting up the social economy as an whole

Conclusions

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Annexes