

Social Innovations all over the Globe show new Practices for a better Future. An Atlas mapped 1,005 social innovation initiatives worldwide to get a better understanding of their drivers and impact.

Throughout the last decade, we have witnessed the emergence of an array of initiatives in a variety of policy fields that do things differently. Even though new social practices, such as car sharing, e-learning facilities, urban farming, and micro credits, may appear unrelated at first sight, they all can be grouped under the umbrella term “Social Innovation”. A social innovation describes a new combination of social practices addressing a societal challenge or social need in a better way than established practices. Thereby, social innovation builds on the desire of citizens to participate. Participating citizens strengthen established structures both of democracy and of peaceful and prosperous societies more generally. At the same time, these citizens contest the existing power relations, in government, in the market, in work organisation and in their local communities.

Partners of the [EU-project SI-DRIVE](#) mapped 1,005 social innovation initiatives worldwide to get a better understanding of their drivers and impact. The results of this extensive mapping, its analyses and a comprehensive collection of articles from international experts [can be accessed for free online](http://www.socialinnovationatlas.net) (www.socialinnovationatlas.net). This mapping proves that social innovations exert an influence on people’s lives in a variety of ways. They change the way we live together, work, handle crises and make the most of opportunities. Likewise, they are driving different societal sectors and cross-sectoral networks and individuals. A growing consensus among practitioners, policy makers and the research community shows that technological or business innovations alone are not capable of overcoming the social, economic and environmental challenges modern societies are facing.

In that sense, the mapping revealed a number of fruitful approaches in seven policy fields already successfully tackling societal challenges and fulfilling social needs. For example, social innovations in Education show economic ways in which extracurricular activities foster lifelong learning. In Employment we find initiatives that provide training to young entrepreneurs. Social innovations in the policy field of Environment show that food waste can be prevented and in Energy collectives of engaged citizen produce their own electricity. The field of Mobility provides examples of transportation facilities beyond personal cars. And in Health we find a range of apps helping patients to get the information they need. Ultimately, the policy field of Poverty Reduction centers on increasing the agency of poor and marginalized people by various means such as micro credits or improving worker’s rights.

The analysis of the policy fields highlights how the underlying resources, capabilities and constraints are related to the actors of the different sectors of the social innovation ecosystem (policy, economy, science and civil society). For social innovations to further flourish and respectively contribute to the much needed systemic change, public policy and government have to take on a new role in creating suitable framework and support structures, in integrating resources of the economy and civil society as well as in supporting measures by science and universities.