



Call for papers

2nd EMES International Conference on Social Enterprise 1-4 July 2009

Trento, Italy

I. Introduction

The development of economic activities in the framework of organizations with a social mission is not a new phenomenon. Private economic institutions supplying general-interest services have long been a crucial part of the social, economic and political history in advanced and post-communist countries, as well as in developing countries. However, only in recent years have *social enterprises* and social entrepreneurship been acknowledged as welfare actors and as initiatives providing a solution to a number of current problems and challenges induced by both global and regional trends. Their contribution appears all the more relevant as new needs grow and become more diversified, public policies face new challenges and, consequently, the two-pole paradigm centred around the "state" and the "market" proves to be unsustainable.

Against this background, social enterprises and social entrepreneurship have raised increasing interest, all around the world, on the part of scholars from different disciplines, including economics, sociology, management, political science, law, history and anthropology. Research networks aiming to valorise theoretical and empirical accomplishments in this field have been set up. New legal frameworks and public policies for social enterprises have been implemented in a number of countries with the goal of sustaining the development of these initiatives. Furthermore, increasing attention has been paid to social enterprises and social entrepreneurship dynamics as poverty reduction agents in countries that are affected by severe gaps in the provision of general-interest services and by rising unemployment among certain target groups.

Nevertheless, research on issues related to social enterprises and social entrepreneurship often appears to be very country and discipline-specific. For multi-disciplinary and more comprehensive approaches to be developed, more interaction among scholars with various backgrounds and coming from various countries is needed. Since the EMES European Research Network was set up, in the mid-1990s, such a twofold comparative perspective has always been its main distinctive feature.

With the goal of investigating the abovementioned themes, EMES has so far organized numerous events and scientific seminars, such as the scientific seminar hosted by the Centre for Social Entrepreneurship of Roskilde University (Denmark) in 2007 or the 1st EMES PhD Summer School in Corsica (France) in July 2008. In partnership with the newly created European centre EURICSE in Trento and the Italian IRIS Network, EMES is now pleased to announce the 2nd EMES International Conference on Social Enterprise, which will take place on 1-4 July 2009.

Hosted by EURICSE and the University of Trento, the Conference aims to gather scholars from all regions of the world - both senior and early-stage researchers - who have recently contributed to enrich the research and debate on social enterprise and social entrepreneurship, in advanced as well as in developing and transition countries.

II. Conference Scientific Committee

- Ash Amin, Durham University, United Kingdom
- Carlo Borzaga, University of Trento, Italy
- Jacques Defourny, University of Liege, Belgium
- Lars Hulgård, Roskilde University, Denmark
- Jean-Louis Laville, CNAM/LISE, France
- Ewa Leś, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland
- Alex Nicholls, Oxford University, United Kingdom
- Marthe Nyssens, Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium
- Roger Spear, The Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom
- Dennis Young, Georgia State University, United States

III. Research Themes

All topics related to social enterprises and social entrepreneurship are welcome. Nonetheless, the Conference will mainly focus on:

- 1) Conceptual aspects**
- 2) Legal frameworks and public policies**
- 3) Theoretical analyses across disciplines**
- 4) Innovation, entrepreneurship and social enterprise**
- 5) Management issues**
- 6) Governance models**

Theme 1: Conceptual aspects

Definitions of social enterprise at the international level vary considerably, and a number of authors use the notions of *social entrepreneurship*, *social enterprise* and *social entrepreneur* interchangeably. This complexity can be ascribed to the country-specific nature of this phenomenon, which is itself linked to the various socio-political cultures that prevail at the national level.

Contributors are encouraged to focus on conceptual aspects with the goal of identifying the main characteristic of social enterprises and promoting comprehensive conceptual frameworks that can overcome national specificities.

Theme 2: Legal frameworks and public policies

From a legal point of view, social enterprises are still poorly or not acknowledged at all in a considerable number of countries; this is particularly true in transition and developing countries. But despite this overall lack of regulations, some interesting practices can be found in various countries of all continents, where innovative legal frameworks and support policies specifically designed for social enterprises have been introduced.

Contributions should focus on relevant legal aspects and public schemes that can play a role in either favouring or jeopardizing the development of social enterprises.

Theme 3: Theoretical analyses across disciplines

Whereas traditional theoretical studies have so far paid little attention to the role played by organizations that pursue goals other than profit-maximisation in promoting the interests of stakeholders other than investors, innovative contributions have been provided by scholars who question the main assumptions of mainstream economic theory.

There is still a need for contributions seeking to synthesise the main findings of recent theoretical developments, including for instance the social, political and economic rationale of social enterprises and social entrepreneurship as well as their competitive advantages/limitations in comparison to alternative institutional settings (i.e. public and for-profit enterprises).

Theme 4: Innovation, entrepreneurship and social enterprise

Social enterprises have emerged throughout the world as innovative organizations, both in terms of services supplied and processes adopted. They are engaged in a number of fields of activity that are most often related to both market and government failures. Whereas social service provision and work integration are being developed in many regions, new fields of activity, such as fair trade, culture and environmental services are increasingly explored and are witnessing innovative practices of social entrepreneurship. In some developing or transition countries, the provision of general-interest services (such as water, electricity and gas supply) appears to play a crucial role.

Contributions may focus on the social innovation processes brought about by social enterprises and social entrepreneurship in their various fields of activity as well as on the specific characteristics of the services supplied. Analyses of early-stage entrepreneurship in the creation of these innovative services are also encouraged.

Theme 5: Management issues

Specific management theories and strategies, tailor-made for social enterprises and social entrepreneurship, have been developed in recent years in order to exploit the specific features that distinguish these enterprises from traditional firms.

Contributions are most welcome to foster the dialogue around management issues (i.e. human resources management, marketing and communication, etc.) as well as to discuss tools with the goal of improving the performance of social enterprises.

Theme 6: Governance models

In social enterprises, ownership rights and control power can be assigned to a single category of stakeholders (users, workers, or donors) or to more than one category at a given time - hence the existence of both single-stakeholder membership models and multi-stakeholder membership models. In some regions of the world, the state plays a central role in fostering social enterprise. In the latter the question of its influence in the governance cannot be avoided.

Contributions are expected to focus on governance models for social enterprises, including partnership structures open to external stakeholders.

The above list of themes is not exhaustive. Submissions that analyze other topical issues are also welcome (for instance, interactions between social enterprises and other third sector organizations such as cooperatives, non-profit organizations and foundations).

IV. Submission Formats

Paper sessions

Researchers worldwide are encouraged to send their submissions for scientific paper sessions. All abstracts for Paper sessions should be prepared in A4 MS Word format (Times New Roman, size 12 fonts, single-spaced) and be no more than 500 words in length. Authors' full title, name, address, organization and e-mail address should be included at the end of the abstract.

The Conference also welcomes PhD students interested in sharing their research ideas with the wider research community through:

PhD paper sessions

The aim of these sessions is to provide a specialized space to PhD students. Abstracts for PhD paper sessions should be prepared in A4 MS Word format (Times New Roman, size 12 font, single-spaced) and be no more than 300 words in length. Students' full name, university, address, e-mail address, thesis title and main research topics should be included in the abstract. Advanced PhD students may prefer to submit abstracts for regular paper sessions.

Additionally, a special session hosted by the EMES PhD Student Network (created after the 1st EMES PhD Summer School) will be organized during the conference. This special session, open to all PhD students, will include some parallel discussions led by EMES members with the aim of networking, sharing ideas, and interacting with professors and senior researchers.

V. Important Dates

The title of the communications and abstracts in English should be submitted (by e-mail only) by **30 January 2009** to the following e-mail address: emesconference@euricse.eu

Applications will be carefully reviewed by the Scientific Committee. Contributors whose applications are accepted will be notified by **28 February 2009**.

Final papers should be submitted by **30 May 2009**.

For more information about the Conference, please contact emesconference@euricse.eu.

VI. About the Organizers

About the EMES European Research Network - Created in 1996, EMES has developed into a leading research network focused on the study of social enterprises and third sector organizations. On the basis of a large European research project carried out over five years, the Network organized the 1st EMES International Conference, titled *The Social Enterprise. A comparative perspective*, at the University of Trento in 2001. This event and the first EMES book, *The Emergence of Social Enterprise* (Routledge, 2001), launched the topic of "social enterprise" as a research theme on the European scene. They also succeeded in promoting a more widespread knowledge of the concept of social enterprise, both in Europe and outside Europe, and pinpointed new research themes that have been thoroughly investigated in recent years.

EMES also promotes the development of innovative analytical frameworks on social enterprise among scholars engaged in third sector research through events such as the European conferences co-organized with the International Society for Third Sector Research in 2005 and 2008. As a founding member of the University Network for Social Entrepreneurship, EMES is also committed to strengthening an emerging community of researchers across the world via scientific publications, syllabi and other course materials as well as an on-line platform for exchanges. EMES has been publishing the results of its research in the form of seminal books and a Working Papers series (the latter is available at www.emes.net).

About EURICSE - EURICSE is a newly established research centre that is committed to further developing research and training activities carried out by the Institute for the Development of Non-profit Organizations (ISSAN – University of Trento). It was founded by the Federazione Trentina delle Cooperative, the University of Trento, Cooperatives Europe, the Province of Trento, and the Foundation Cassa di Risparmio of Trento and Rovereto. It is devoted to the study of co-operatives and social enterprises, along various disciplinary perspectives. EURICSE is a centre for analysis and debate with a high scientific profile open to collaboration with the scientific community and, in particular, young researchers. The Institute also interacts directly with cooperatives and social enterprises themselves (see www.euricse.eu).

About IRIS Network - Iris Network is an Italian Network that gathers the research institutes aiming to study social enterprises in Italy. It was established to support and disseminate empirical research and theoretical studies, with the goal of favouring a deeper understanding of social enterprises. Against this background, IRIS promotes debates and exchanges among institutes, research centres, universities and individual researchers, while also favouring the involvement of social entrepreneurs (see www.irisnetwork.it).