Social Innovation – Empowering the Young (SocIEtY) for the Common Good

**Partners**
- Bielefeld Center for Education and Capability Research, Bielefeld University (co-ordinator) | Germany
- Employment Research Institute, Edinburgh Napier University | United Kingdom
- Center for Research on Qualifications, Céreq, Marseille | France
- Department of Education and Pedagogy, Aarhus University | Denmark
- Department of Political and Social Sciences, University of Pavia | Italy
- Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam | The Netherlands
- Department of Social Welfare Studies, University of Ghent | Belgium
- Group of Studies on Development, Cooperation and Ethics (GEDCE), Universitat Politècnica de Valencia | Spain
- Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest | Romania
- B&B Consult AG, Brussels | Belgium
- Pionierhuis- en Beurteningsstelle Arbeidswacht (FORBA) – Working Life Research Centre | Austria
- Department of Theoretical Sociology and Social Analysis (TSS), Institute of Sociology, Johannes Kepler University (JKU) Linz | Austria
- Centre for the Study of Capabilities in Social and Health Services (CESCAP), University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland (HES-SO|EESP) | Switzerland

**Context**
SocIEtY focuses on the most socially vulnerable young people in Europe that are increasingly exposed to social exclusion and poverty and that society, politics and the state institutions have left behind. Thus, fighting social inequalities and disadvantages is some of the main big challenges for Europe.

**Research questions**
The project consequently takes the perspective of how young people aged 15-24 live in different European countries today; and examines what can be done to create social and institutional opportunities for more social cohesion and inclusion. Main questions are:

- How do existing policies and social practices of networks of social support tackle the problems faced by disadvantaged young people?
- How far, and in what ways, young people's ideas, experiences, aspirations and voices can be included in policymaking?
- How can social innovation establish a link between these two issues?

**Theoretical framework**
Following a Human Development perspective, SocIEtY has adopted the Capability Approach (cf. Sen 2010; Nussbaum 2010), bringing in the idea that social arrangements should aim to expand people’s capabilities – that is: their freedom to promote or achieve what they like doing and being. In particular, the project refers to the concept of “Informational Basis of the Judgement of Justice” (IBJJ) introduced by Amartya Sen (1990).

**Objectives**
SocIEtY’s mission is to improve the quality of life of the most socially vulnerable young people in Europe through social innovation in terms of expanding their actual chances to actively shape their lives in a way they have reason to choose and value. Main objectives are:

- Broadening the existing informational basis for policymaking to tackle inequalities and foster social innovation by looking at different policy fields through a combination of bottom-up and top-down perspectives.
- Empowering young people to bring in their voices, aspirations and engagements to enhance their options for participation and social inclusion.
- Developing a unique methodology of participation that links different stakeholders and status groups to create innovative partnerships to initiate new and innovative forms of deliberative processes for making and implementing policy.

**Research Design**
An interdisciplinary collaboration of 13 partners from 11 European countries combines quantitative and qualitative methods and focuses on young people facing multifaceted inequalities while living in deprived city districts.

**Understanding and Assessing Inequalities**
that disadvantaged young people are currently facing through a coherent and holistic theoretical underpinning

**Analyses of Local Social Support Networks**
of young people living in the selected city districts to identify the main stakeholders, their interplay and key factors of social deprivation

**Developing and Implementing Participatory Research**
bringing in the voices of researchers, practitioners, policy makers and young people regarding the common good

**Mapping and Analysing Youth Policies**
towards inequalities on local, regional and national levels extended by a longitudinal analysis of EU-SILC data

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