

## Advanced Course

# SOCIAL INNOVATION IN RURAL AREAS

Zaragoza (Spain), 18-22 November 2019

### 1. Objective of the course

Social innovation has been heralded as a vital part of the European recovery project since the economic crisis in 2008. It is of particular importance to rural areas, especially more disadvantaged rural areas, where multiple problems of depopulation, environmental quality decline and low levels of economic activity have been recurrent. With the trend of rapid urbanisation, the remoter rural areas will continue to be adversely affected.

In these areas, the state and municipalities often struggle to maintain basic public services because of public sector austerity. Markets are weak and there is still a high dependency on primary industries. This creates space and opportunities in which civil society can take on an increasingly important role in sustaining and improving conditions.

Throughout Europe and more widely, there are compelling examples of how civil society actors alone or with other partners have been able to take the lead in community economic development in the land-based sector and beyond, revitalising social capacities in fragile communities and supporting environmental improvements.

Behind the political rhetoric of leading global figures such as Manuel Barroso and Barack Obama, social innovation is a contested concept with multiple meanings and different interpretations. Greater clarity is urgently needed as to what social innovation is, how it can best be supported and where its efforts should be concentrated.

This course is part of the EU-funded Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas (SIMRA) project ([www.simra-h2020.eu](http://www.simra-h2020.eu)). The project is built on more effectively linking the practice community with the research community to allow the integration and cross fertilisation of knowledge and understanding.

At the end of the course participants will have:

- Gained a critical understanding of the concept of social innovation and its influence on social, economic and environmental outcomes in rural areas.
- Recognised the diverse roles of communities and civil society in the development of social innovations.
- Awareness of the multiple applications of rural social innovation to support societal well-being.
- Been introduced to a range of tools and methods to better support social innovation.

- Acquired competences for identifying, categorising and analysing cases of social innovation in Europe and non-European Mediterranean countries.
- Been able to identify factors that affect the development of social innovation in rural areas.
- Appreciated the challenges of evaluating social innovation.
- Explored the policy context for social innovation and learned how policy can stimulate or constrain its development.

### 2. Organisation

The course is jointly organised by the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), through the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza (IAMZ), and the EU H2020 project SIMRA (Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas) funded under grant agreement No 677622. The course will take place at IAMZ and will be given by an international team of well-qualified lecturers participating in this project, coming from international organisations, research centres, universities and the practice community.

The course will be held over a period of 1 week, from 18 to 22 November 2019, in morning and afternoon sessions.

### 3. Admission

The course is designed for 25 professionals with a university degree or equivalent. It is intended for decision makers, public, private and third sector development agents, evaluators, facilitators, technical advisors, researchers and other stakeholders involved in promoting, financing, planning, implementing or assessing social innovation projects in rural areas.

Given the diverse nationalities of the lecturers, knowledge of English, French or Spanish will be valued in the selection of candidates, since they will be the working languages of the course. The Organisation will provide simultaneous interpretation of the lectures in these three languages.

### 4. Registration

Candidates must apply online at the following address:  
<http://www.admission.iamz.ciheam.org/en/>

Applications must include the *curriculum vitae* and copy of the supporting documents most related to the subject of the course.



The deadline for the submission of applications is **6 September 2019**. The deadline may be extended for candidates not requiring a visa and not financial support if there are free places available.

Applications from those candidates requiring authorisation to attend the course, may be accepted provisionally.

**All participants will be exempt from the payment of registration fees.**

## 5. Financial support

A limited number of candidates from Mediterranean countries and from other European countries may receive financial support covering the cost of travel and full board accommodation in the Hall of Residence on the Aula Dei Campus (see registration form).

Candidates from other countries who require financial support should apply directly to other national or international institutions.

## 6. Insurance

It is compulsory for participants to have medical insurance valid for Spain. Proof of insurance cover must be given at the beginning of the course. Those who so wish may participate in a collective insurance policy taken out by the Organisation, upon payment of the stipulated sum.

## 7. Teaching organisation

The course requires personal work and interaction among participants and with lecturers. The international characteristics of the course favour the exchange of experiences and points of view.

The course will be taught with a combination of lectures, applied examples, case studies, practical group exercises, panel discussions and a field visit. Practical work will enable participants to gain experience in identifying and categorising social innovation, using indicators and exploring policy options.

Participants will be asked to prepare before the beginning of the course a brief document about social innovation projects in their respective countries/regions as well as their particular professional experiences in the topic, if any. These documents will be shared with lecturers and participants.

## 8. Programme

1. Kick-off visit to innovative projects in Huesca province (Spain)
2. Introduction to Social Innovation (SI) (3 hours)
  - 2.1. What is SI?
  - 2.2. The momentum of SI: overview of current debates
  - 2.3. The role of SI in disadvantaged rural areas
  - 2.4. The EU SIMRA project approach to SI: development of methods, case studies, innovation actions, database, consultation with stakeholders and reporting
  - 2.5. Practical exercise on what is and what is not SI and why based on project examples
  - 2.6. Discussion

## 3. Characteristics of SI (2 hours)

- 3.1. Diversity of SI in rural areas: topics, participation, aims, practices involved
- 3.2. Diverging pathways of SI, outscaling and upscaling
- 3.3. Practical exercise and discussion on investigating the diversity of SI

## 4. SI in practice (6 hours)

- 4.1. Viewpoint from SI case studies/innovation actions
  - 4.1.1. Olive grove recovery initiative in Teruel (Spain)
  - 4.1.2. Economic empowerment of women in Deir El Ahmar (Lebanon)
  - 4.1.3. Social cooperative in North Italy
  - 4.1.4. Community development trusts: Portsoy (boat festival, bunkhouse, etc.) (United Kingdom)
- 4.2. Smart Villages: the view from the European Network for Rural Development
- 4.3. Panel discussion and group work based on case studies and field visit
  - 4.3.1. Key actors
  - 4.3.2. Opportunities
  - 4.3.3. Challenges
  - 4.3.4. Lessons learned

## 5. Good practices and adaptive management in SI projects (4 hours)

- 5.1. Facilitation skills and participatory methods
- 5.2. Mapping and engaging stakeholder
- 5.3. Gap analysis, goal setting and project planning
- 5.4. Conflict management and consensus building
- 5.5. Finding funds
- 5.6. Institutional design and governance
- 5.7. Unforeseen project effects and trade-offs
- 5.8. Communication
- 5.9. Risk management

## 6. Methods to evaluate SI (6 hours)

- 6.1. Why evaluation is needed
- 6.2. Evaluation frameworks
- 6.3. Process evaluation and impact evaluation of SI initiatives
- 6.4. Techniques for evaluation
  - 6.4.1. Self-evaluation
  - 6.4.2. External evaluation
- 6.5. Practical exercise on indicators

## 7. Policy needs and policies for supporting SI (3 hours)

- 7.1. Policy impacts on SI in rural areas
- 7.2. Main policy targets for SI in rural areas: vulnerable social groups, societal challenges at large, participatory inclusion of civil society
- 7.3. Practical exercise to identify policies based on case studies

## 8. Final reflections on the course (1 hour)

- 8.1. What have been key lessons learned?
- 8.2. How will participants use learning in their professional roles?
- 8.3. How can SI be embedded in sectors/professions of participants?

---

## GUEST LECTURERS

R. BRYCE, UHI, Perth (United Kingdom)  
R. DA RE, UNIPD, Padova (Italy)  
M. DIJKSHOORN, WUR, Wageningen (The Netherlands)  
E. GÓRRIZ, EFIMED, Barcelona (Spain)  
V. GOVIGLI, EFIMED, Barcelona (Spain)  
A. LUDVIG, BOKU, Vienna (Austria)  
R. LUKESCH, ÓAR GmbH, Vienna (Austria)

D. MILLER, The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen (United Kingdom)  
S. PLANA, Apadrina un olivo, Oliete (Spain)  
L. SECCO, UNIPD, Padova (Italy)  
P. SFEIR, SEEDS-int, Jdeideh (Lebanon)  
B. SLEE, RDC Ltd., Alford (United Kingdom)  
P. SOTO, ENRD, Brussels (Belgium)

