

What can be learned from ImPRovE for Horizon 2020?

**RETHINKING THE ROLE OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES (SSH) IN
H2020**

**Tim Goedemé, PhD
University of Antwerp
Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy (CSB)**

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Outline

- Introducing ImPRovE
- The ImPRovE research question
- First results
- Increasing policy relevance
- Lessons and ideas for the future



Introducing ImPRovE

- ImPRovE: Poverty Reduction in Europe: Social policy and innovation
- 4-year project (March 2012 – February 2016)
- FP7-funded (about 2,700,000 EUR)
- Expected output: 3 international conferences; over 50 papers; at least 3 books, new research infrastructure
- <http://improve-research.eu>

Partners

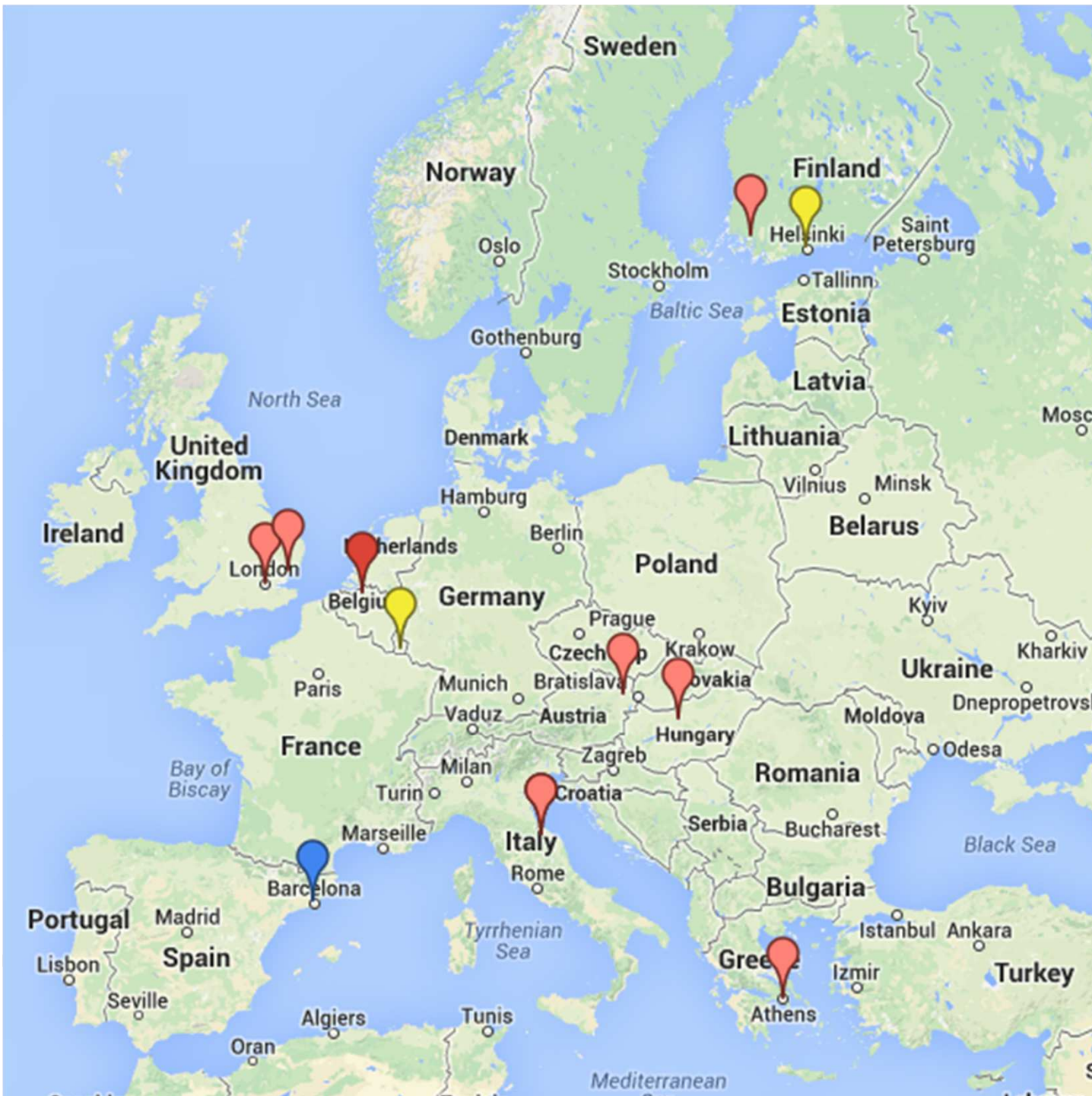
University of Antwerp is coordinator (red)

7 other partners, in six countries (orange)

2 voluntary partners, in Spain (PSiTIC, blue) and Brasil (nepac)

2 liaised partners, in LU and FI (yellow)

Advisory board & 22 associated experts





Research question

Starting points:

- Lisbon strategy and Europe 2020: assumption of complementarity between growth, jobs and social inclusion
- Before the crisis, despite higher employment rates and economic growth, nowhere has any substantial progress been made in combating relative financial poverty
- New (often small-scale) social projects and actions have emerged. The Commission announced that it will work “to design and implement programmes to promote social innovation ...”



Research question

The two central questions driving the ImPRovE project are:

- How can social cohesion be achieved in Europe?
- How can social innovation complement, reinforce and modify macro-level policies and vice versa?



Research question

The main research objectives of ImPRovE are:

- To evaluate the Lisbon decade in terms of policies and actions against poverty at European, national and sub-national level;
- To improve the understanding of the interrelationships between employment, social protection and social inclusion and between institutionalised macro level social policies and innovative local actions;
- To improve the EU measurement tools by strengthening the EU 2020 poverty reduction indicators;
- To assess alternative policy scenarios to reduce poverty.
- 16 work packages, 12 nearly completed



First results

- Nearly 40 papers completed, I will focus on two (of many) messages:
- If we care about poverty, we need more (persuasive) research about what an ‘adequate’ minimum income would be
- and how this minimum income can be realised for everyone in Europe



First results

What is an adequate income? Difficult, but crucial question:

- Evaluating income levels (minima, wages,...),
- Measuring poverty,
- taking account of public goods and services

One way of answering this question: reference budgets

- Reference budgets are illustrative priced baskets of goods and services that represent a certain living standard
- But until now, for different purposes, with different methods, not comparable



First results

If developed in a cross-country comparative way:

- help Member States to design effective and adequate income support measures;
- facilitate mutual learning and identification of best practices in the fight against poverty;
- facilitate the Commission's task of monitoring and assessing the adequacy of income support in Europe
- contextualise other social indicators

- complementary to national instruments & reference budgets



First results

- But also more fundamental research questions
 - To what extent are reference groups and views on minimum adequacy europeanised?
 - How relative is the social minimum?
 - What are its most important determinants?
 - How can it be influenced?
 - Can an adequate income for everyone and ecological sustainability be reconciled?

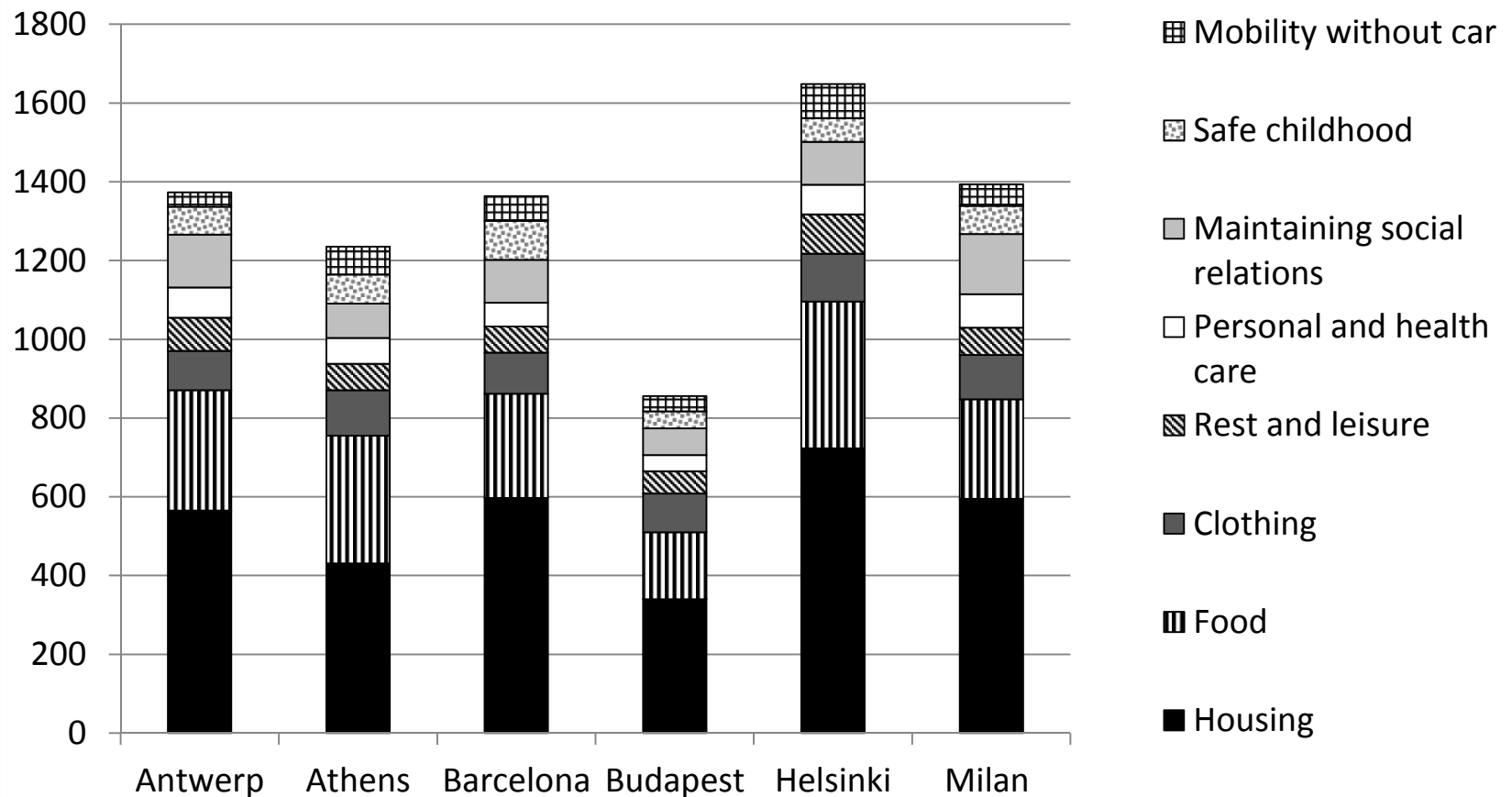


First results

- ImPRovE: First attempt in Europe to construct cross-country comparable reference budgets
- ‘Success’
 - FISS Best paper prize 2014
 - Mentioned in Commission documents
 - Resulted in ‘European Reference Budgets Network’, a pilot project financed by DG EMPL

First results

Cost of adequate social participation, single parent with one child,
EUR/month, 2014 (ImPRovE)





First results

- Results show impact on minimum adequate resources of:
 - Differences in climatological conditions
 - Differences in institutional context (including, guidelines, availability of goods and services, ...)
 - Differences in culture, habits and social expectations
 - Differences in economic structure



First results

- But these are only first results, more validation is needed, we lack a lot of information:
- How to combine elusiveness of targeted living standard and normative questions with requirement of robustness, validity and comparability?
- How to organise a proper, feasible price survey?
- How to estimate the lifespan of goods?
- How to make cases more representative?
- How to obtain better data about accessibility and use of public goods and services?



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Increasing policy relevance

Goals of ImPRovE:

Improve the basis for evidence-based policy making in Europe, both in the short and in the long term:

- Research directly relevant for policy makers
- Dialogue with policy makers & civil society (seminars, workshops, meetings and conferences)

But not 'policy-based evidence making':

- Own research agenda
- Upgrading the available research infrastructure
- Combining both applied and fundamental research

=> need to rise above fashion and policy needs of the day and anticipate future needs and policy questions



Lessons and ideas for the future

- Public goods and social services account for half of social expenditure
 - Does not show up in poverty and inequality figures
 - Important need to shed better light on the expenditure side of households.
 - => reference budgets one option, but still many open questions
- Social innovation: from qualitative case studies to:
 - Proper impact evaluations
 - Quantifying them in other ways
 - Understanding interactions with broader welfare state, and how they can contribute to poverty reduction at the macro level



Lessons and ideas for the future

- Focus more on identifying and testing solutions rather than focusing on identifying the problem
⇒ develop policy scenarios that work
- Do not limit analysis by current constraints of methods, data, and tools:
 - Reflect upon whether we lose sight of something, simply because we cannot measure it
 - Be ambitious in setting up new social science infrastructures and data collection efforts



Lessons and ideas for the future

- Look for an adequate dialogue between researchers and
 - Policy makers
 - Stakeholders
 - Reflect always on policy implications and recommendations, from the start
 - Should include permanent dialogue, before start of projects
- But be aware of too much ‘policy-based evidence making’, need to anticipate future opportunities and needs
(e.g. why do we need World Bank to design social assistance scheme for Greece?)

=> Horizon 2020 should leave sufficient room for combining fundamental and applied research and go beyond ‘fashion’ of the day



<http://improve-research.eu>





Realised output

Main research findings relating to poverty and social exclusion:

- the new Member States were successful in closing the **virtuous circle** of decreasing at-risk-of-poverty, increasing employment and keeping social spending down, but poorest & most vulnerable worst hit by the crisis
- while national poverty stagnated during 2005-2009, **EU-wide poverty** substantially decreased in the same period, the reverse is true for EU-SILC 2009-2011
- positive cross-national correlation between the level of **low work intensity** and the number of people living in a household with a persistently low work intensity



Realised output

Main findings in relation to policies (except WP2 & WP3):

- There was a marked increase in the spread of **minimum income schemes** in the period 1992/2001-2012, the cross-country variation in the level of minimum income benefits has remained markedly stable
- programmes emerge as much more successful when looking at whether they reach those who are **'consistently' poor**, a potentially more robust measure
- the regulatory drivers shaping **part-time work** and the welfare state arrangements supporting part-time work play key roles in accounting for the wide variation in poverty risks associated with part-time work across the EU15.



Realised output

Methodological realisations (except WP2 & WP3):

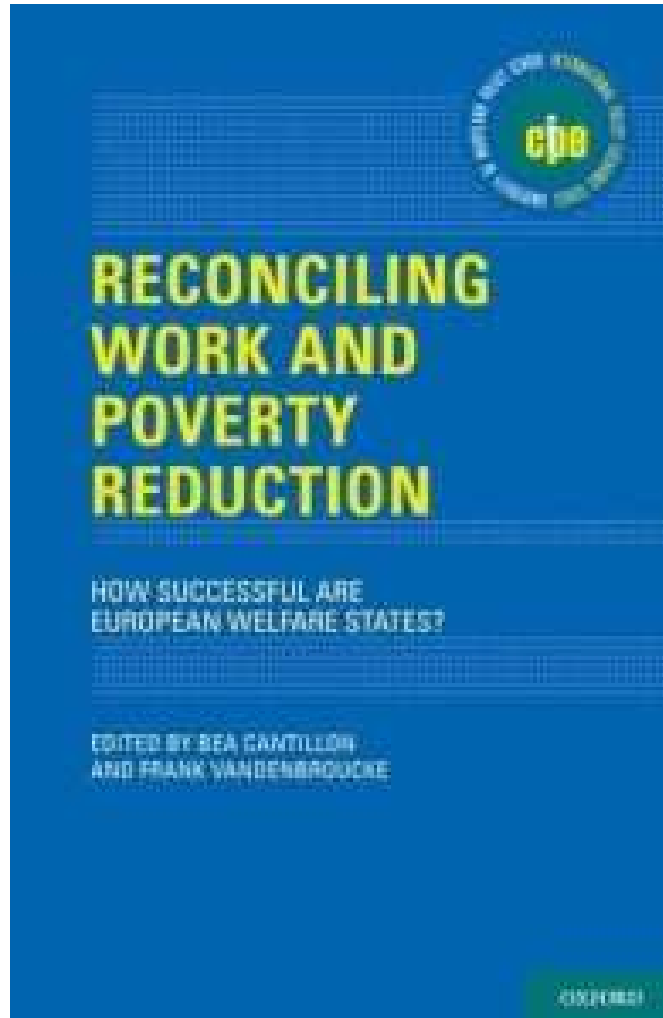
- a theoretical and methodological framework for developing cross-country comparable **reference budgets** in Europe & used this framework for six countries
- have developed a theoretical approach and methodological basis to study **social innovation** with a trans-disciplinary, mixed and comparative method



Realised output

- The ImPRovE Consortium has attracted substantial interest in the research community and by policy makers (notoriously the EC) -> 3 additional partners + SIP
- An extra international conference in the European Parliament in November 2014 as well as contribution to Inclusive Europe Conference (Berlin, October 2014) -> collaboration with related projects
- 17 research papers so far
- 1 policy brief, others will be launched soon
- First wave social innovation cases collected
- ImPRovE feeds directly into project on reference budgets financed by DG EMPL

Realised output



Other book projects:

- Social policy paradigms
- Social innovation
- Reference budgets
- ...



Project overview

Assessing poverty trends

- *Were poverty trends really disappointing and, if so, why?*
- *How has poverty evolved during the financial and economic crisis? What is the effect of the policy measures taken?*
- *How can existing poverty indicators be improved?*

Employment, social protection and social inclusion: complementary goals or a trilemma?

- *Employment growth is an important anti-poverty strategy, at the heart of the EU 2020 strategy. What is the likelihood of success? How and under which conditions can employment help?*
- *What is the role of social services and adequate income support?*
- *How can complementarity between employment, social protection and social inclusion be achieved?*

How can local social innovation complement, reinforce and modify institutionalised policies?

- *How can the adequacy of local social innovation be assessed?*
- *How can social innovation complement, reinforce and modify macro level policies, and vice versa?*

Towards Europe 2020

- *How can the conditions be improved to move towards Europe 2020?*
- *How can the Europe 2020 strategy, the EU social agenda and cohesion policy be brought closer together at EU, national and sub-national levels?*