



TSI Press Release No. 2

European third sector stakeholders provide valuable input to TSI research agenda

Third Sector Impact project leaders met with stakeholders working at EU level to present TSI's research objectives and to hear stakeholders' expert views on third sector impacts and the barriers it faces at the EU policy level. Participants provided valuable recommendations to TSI researchers, especially to focus on the impact of citizen participation and to differentiate mainstream impacts from truly distinctive contributions of the third sector.

Brussels, October 15th, 2015. The meeting outlined the overall objectives of the TSI project: developing a common conceptualization of the third sector in Europe; measuring its socio-economic impact across the continent; the identification of barriers and solutions for the development of the third sector in Europe; and on-going exchange with stakeholders to inform the research process. Participants from major third sector networks and EU agencies confirmed the importance of TSI's research agenda.

A unified [conceptualization](#) of the third sector in Europe, bringing the concepts of social economy and civil society together, was deemed important to give the sector more visibility and legitimacy at EU policy level. Identifying [impacts](#) can show what makes the sector unique in its contribution to cultural, economic and social life. EU stakeholders spontaneously added social inclusion, the promotion of human rights to the list of impacts so far identified by TSI and proposed to link impact to the actual needs and concerns of the European population. Most importantly, there was wide agreement that the third sector can nurture a culture of participation across the continent, as European civil society influences national organizations, especially when they are membership-based.

In order to show third sector impact appropriately stakeholders and TSI researchers developed the idea of a matrix rather than a list that highlights two different dimensions of impact indicators in order to sieve down to the most promising impacts on which to work in order to recommend new and unified impact indicators to statistical bodies in Europe: Impacts that speak to the mainstream concerns, i.e. the role of the third sector as a contributor to employment and an economic engine, and impacts that reflect the truly distinctive contributions of the third sector like engaging citizens, promoting participation, and building solidarity.

Finally, discussion focussed on reciprocal impacts in relation with the EU policy environment, identifying several significant impact [barriers](#). Stakeholders highlighted the lack of reference to the third sector in the EU policy environment outside the European Reform Treaty and the loss of political momentum to further meaningful citizen consultations. External voices were said to be shut out by the Brussels lobby.

TSI will continue the conversation with stakeholders through individual feedback, online surveys and [consultations](#) and further stakeholder meetings.

For a more detailed report of the Brussels meeting refer to the [TSI Events](#) section. If you wish to interview a TSI consortium member contact Jennifer.Eschweiler@emes.net.

