

Scientific community and funding agencies have been increasingly aware about the importance of evaluating and measuring the social impact research. The recent nature of this increased interest is shown in debates about procedures, tools and indicators most suitable for social impact assessment.

**Keywords:** social impact; research; social challenges; assessment

## WHAT IS SOCIAL IMPACT

The concept of social impact is very often used referring to different activities. In IMPACT-EV, we have clarified what social impact means and from what should be differentiated. For instance, social impact should not be confused with **disseminating results**, that is when research findings are publicised, both to the scientific community, policy makers, stakeholders and citizens in general (i.e. press, social media, networks).

Social Impact is neither the same than **knowledge transfer**, as it refers when the published and disseminated results are taken up by policymakers and/or social actors as the basis for their policies and/or actions regardless of whether they have evidences of social improvements or not.

**For the purpose of the IMPACT-EV, social impact** of research is defined as when the published and disseminated research results, which have been transferred, lead to an improvement in relation to the goals agreed in our societies (through our political representatives).

In the case of European research, we take into consideration the EU Lisbon 2010, EU2020 Strategy (i.e. employment, R+D investment, climate change/energy, poverty/social exclusion and education) and the recently launched EC Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change serve as a framework of those common social targets or objectives. At an international level, the UN Millennium Development Goals cover the following topics: Eradicating poverty and hunger, Education, Gender equality, Reducing child mortality, Maternal health, Combating diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, environmental sustainability, Global partnership for the development. Besides, the project also considers the possibility of taking into account other societal targets defined by the societies.

## HOW TO MEASURE SOCIAL IMPACT

In our work, we have reviewed different problems in measuring social impact. Here a summary of them:

- The attribution of specific social benefits to particular research projects' results and processes;
- The fact that many impacts of research projects are not directly addressed to social impact (i.e. increasing employment in a specific group)
- The longer time needed to occur for social impact
- The lack of tradition among the scientific community to gather information and

evidences about the impact of their research.

In order to overcome these difficulties, the IMPACT-EV Team developed an evaluating system in which weights are assigned for the different social impacts of a given research projects based on the following criteria:

- Relation to EU2020/UNMG
- Percentage of improvement achieved in relation to starting situation
- Transferability of the impact
- Publication on scientific journals (with a recognized impact), governmental or non-governmental official bodies
- Sustainability of the impact

## MAPPING EUROPEAN SSH RESEARCH

IMPACT-EV researchers have carried out the evaluation of the impact of SSH in Europe, with a sample of 513 FP6 and FP7 SSH projects. We have revised databases like E-CORDA, SESAM and CORDIS, analysed data collected through an online questionnaire, conducted interviews with EC Scientific Officers and project main researchers, and revised complementary information as websites, public reports and scientific papers, as well as previous assessments, evaluation reports and other relevant documents.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Identification of SSH European funded projects which results have achieved significant social (as well as political, scientific and in ERA) impact. These projects cover different countries, research areas and contribute to the achievement of different EU targets.
- Many researchers have not collected the social impact of their projects researchers and some of them do not know whether they have it or not. New trends have been identified in terms of raising awareness among the scientific community about the importance of pursuing social and political impact as well as gathering evidences in this regard.
- After the contacts and interviews conducted, several main researchers are considering and rethinking their own work from the social impact perspective.

## A STEP FORWARD

The logo for SIOR is rendered in a large, bold, orange, sans-serif font. The letters are slightly irregular and hand-drawn in style, with the 'S' being particularly large and prominent.

In order to facilitate and promote that researchers show and share the social impact of their projects with other researchers or stakeholders, the first Social Impact Open Repository (SIOR) has been launched under the framework of the IMPACT-EV project.

SIOR is a new open access repository to display, cite and store the social impact of research results. In fact, this is the first open registry on social impact, connecting research outputs to social improvements. Within SIOR, researchers or research institutions describe the social impact of their scientific work, providing evidences of each impact (i.e. institutional report, publication, legislation, website, dataset, press release, etc.). By including their evidences of social impact in SIOR, researchers and research institutions make clear contributions to science, to societies and to their own work. Besides, SIOR also allows researchers to link their social impacts to research institutions, funders, and ORCID researcher IDs.

## CONTACT

**Principal investigator:** Dr Ramon Flecha

**Email:** [impact-ev@ub.edu](mailto:impact-ev@ub.edu)

University of Barcelona.  
Faculty of Economics and Business  
Diagonal, 696. Tower 4, Floor 1, office 4111  
08034 Barcelona