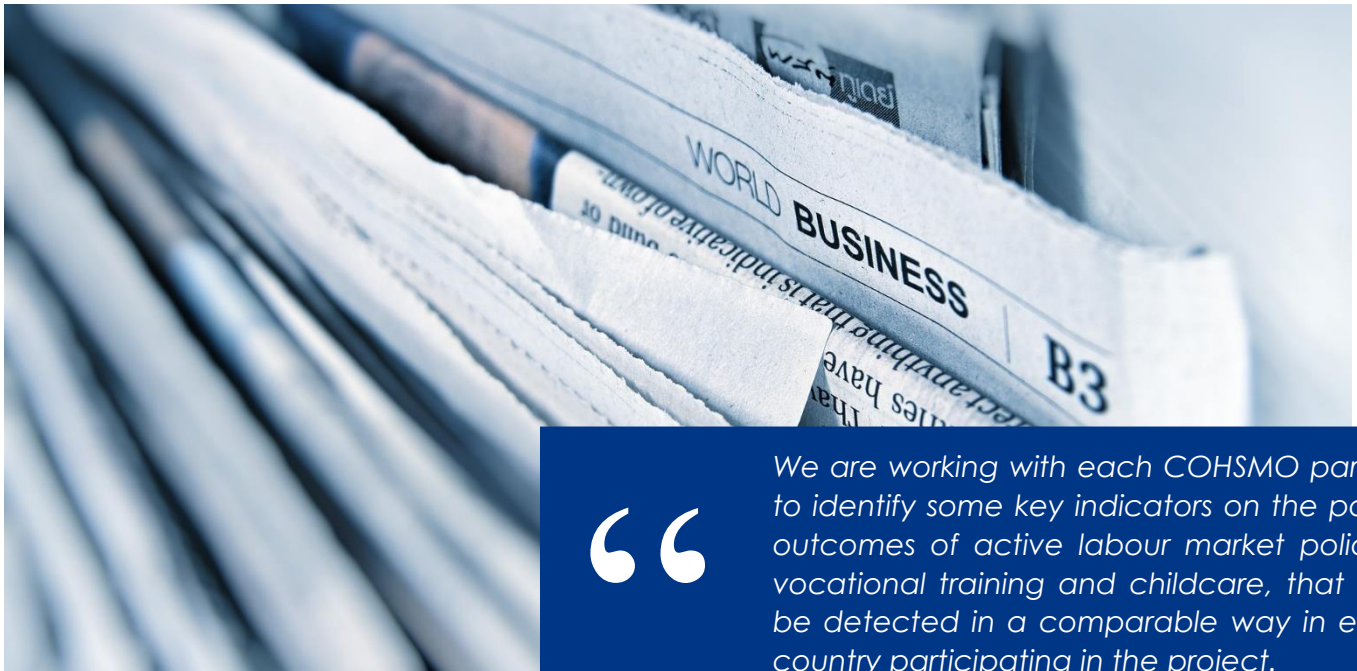# NEWS LETTER | ISSUE NO. 4

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This newsletter focuses on the research activities relates to the 5th work package within the COHSMO-project, where focus is on Social Investment – a policy strategy recently emerged in European politics.

> " *We are working with each COHSMO partner to identify some key indicators on the policy outcomes of active labour market policies, vocational training and childcare, that can be detected in a comparable way in each country participating in the project.*

WP5 and the Social Investment Approach: connecting territorial cohesion and economic growth

Research activities related to the fifth working package focus on Social Investment (SI), a policy strategy recently emerged in the European political agenda. This approach attempts to elaborate a perspective of social policies capable to integrate both social justice and economic growth goals. The core of SI lies in the provision of capacitating services aiming at developing human capital,

improving labour market participation and work-life balance. Within COHSMO, the SI approach takes on a territorial lens: we want to analyze and recognize contextual, locally based, conditions that can make SI policies actually effective.

The preliminary work carried out by teams of University of Wien and Poly-

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technic of Milan started with an in-depth review of the literature regarding Social investment strategies as pursued since the late 90s in European countries. First, we outlined the main features of the SI strategy that considers the welfare state not as an obstacle to economic development but as a potential resource. In this perspective, the role of social policies shifts from the protection of disadvantaged individuals to the prevention of problematic situations, due to the future occurrence of scarcely predictable social risks. The welfare state should therefore empower citizens by providing them with the tools to face new emerging challenges. We also highlighted how research on SI underestimated its territorial articulation. However, the relevance of the local welfare in the provision of SI services, as well as the combination of spatial disparities and local characteristics of the economy, represent conditions that may favor or potentially hinder the goals of a Social investment strategy. Finally, we reviewed how these policy orientations have been applied in different countries in three key policy fields of SI: active labour market policies, vocational training and childcare.

Based on the results of the literature review, we collected a wide array of socio-economic indicators related to structural and contextual conditions that may impact the implementation of SI. We considered both conditions needed for a likely adoption of SI approach and those that favors positive outcomes of SI policies. The latter is necessary because the impacts of the policies may vary depending on the

structural conditions present in each area. Using the main datasets present at EU level in order to guarantee cross country comparability, we went beyond the main focus on the national level, by collecting sub-national indicators (NUTS 1 and NUTS 2 level), according to wide dimensions previously identified. This data will be used to develop a report on the interaction between social investment and territorial cohesion.

We also focused on the policy outcomes of the SI policies. We are working with each COHSMO partner to identify some key indicators on the policy outcomes of active labour market policies, vocational training and childcare, that can be detected in a comparable way in each country participating in the project.

Finally, we are developing a nation-wide survey to be implemented in all the 7 COHSMO countries, aimed at assessing to what extent social investment criteria have been adopted in the local regulation regarding the three key policy fields that we are investigating.

The COHSMO-project is structured by means of a work plan into work packages (also referred to as WPs), which can be thought of as different phases of the project. Each partner will organize a Work Package. The COHSMO-project operates within 9 different work packages.

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PARTNER FEATURE

LITHUANIA

The Lithuanian COHSMO partner is Vytautas Magnus University from Kaunas, Lithuania. Vytautas Magnus University is the third largest university in the country, re-established in 1989 after the soviet period. Team leader is Jurga Bučaitė-Vilkė who has an extensive experience in research project management and implementation mostly focused on social welfare policies, territorial governance and participatory democracy.

The Lithuanian team consists of five members: assoc. prof. Jurga Bucaite-Vilke, prof. Artūras Tereškinas and Aušra Maslauskaite and doctoral students Ieva Dryzaite and Viktorija Baranauskiene. All team members work in the Social Research Centre, which is a part of Department of Sociology in the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Social Research Centre, headed by the National Science Award nominee prof. Artūras Tereskinas, is one of the leading academic institutions in implementing national and international research projects on social inequality, social stratification, family and gender studies and welfare policies.

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