

The process of financing social entrepreneurship: Tensions between normative discourse and procedural acting

Clara Cruz Santos¹, Cristina Albuquerque², Helena Neves Almeida³

1 - 3 Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação da Universidade de Coimbra

***Abstract.** Three social dimensions of resource provision are engaged social management of social entrepreneurship projects: (i) the Economical resources that includes the financing lines and the productivity logics; (ii) the Human resources, that integrates the stakeholders, their characteristics, training and innovation potential and the (iii) Social resources derived from social policies, organizations and social interaction networks. In an ideal context these three actors would function coherently in terms of intervention goals, constituting the grounds to the construction of Social entrepreneurship. However, it's possible to identify some contradictions, or at least paradoxes, between an innovative normative rhetoric and the principles inherent to the evaluation and approval of concrete social entrepreneurship projects for financing in Portugal. So, our general aim is to understand the links between normative models of social innovation, the way how these reveal specific socio-political-ideological guidelines and how they are operationalised.*

***Keywords.** social entrepreneurship; innovation; sustainability; fundraising; Social policies.*

Introduction

Portugal, as others European countries, faces a time of economic recession with serious impact on the lives of thousands of unemployed families who are struggling to manage their minimum capital to survive. This social and economic situation has, also, an important impact on the lives of young people who are looking for their first job in a saturated market on the way to insolvency. The new reality reflects the diffusion of new settings called of "atypical" employment with flexibility in contractual terms, time, space and status. According to Kovacs (2005), these new configurations are designed of "atypical employment" by some, and of "flexible forms of employment" by others. Nevertheless whatever its designation remains a neo-liberal market perspective with a growing trend for its flexibility which fails to accomplish the social integration function transforming itself into something intermittent and diffuse, "failing to provide a consistent life narrative for the life projects which are grounded on it" (Caleiras,2008:32).

The process of financing social entrepreneurship: Tensions between normative discourse and procedural acting

This reality is a concern of National and European Governance who, according to the "*National Strategy for Sustainable Development*"¹, prepare Portugal to fight against poverty and defends that its prevention must be a collective task requiring the observance of measures which mainly seeks the innovation and the qualification of Portuguese citizens or with legal residence in Portugal (immigrants) by developing personal and social skills, academic and vocational skills in order to permit or facilitate their integration into the labor market. By joining the idea of innovation, is focused on entrepreneurship as a strong investment in terms of training and insertion in the labor market.

In the discourse of the market enters now and for the first time in debating the role of the third sector, also known as the sector of the Solidarity Economy. In this context the European Agenda 2020 argues that the perception of the economy is not just solidarity: *it is economy*, being urgent to support a stronger social economy, entrepreneurial and qualifying, encouraging innovative initiatives and turning them, as far as possible, in economic projects, that's to say, fomenting social entrepreneurship. However the conception of entrepreneurship as it is offered in the regulatory documents is not consensual.

A careful reading of these documents reveals that its concept moves away from a design of social entrepreneurship towards a conception of social management. These two constructs are not antagonistic but they are not equal to the funding programs designed to create entrepreneurial initiatives remitting the organizations for an empty technical interpretation, whose logics are crisscrossed and where the target for assessing projects submitted in application sometimes moves away from action principles proposed in the same regulatory document.

Involved in creative and even political consequences of this conceptual emptiness that National and European programs present us, we organized this article analyzing, in a first moment, the European logics and policies for combating economic and social instability, to encourage employment and social entrepreneurship, for in a second moment, to position ourselves on the terminological concept of entrepreneurship and social management.

At last with a more empirical approach we present the document analysis produced to the two funding programs, namely the PROGRESS having as reference the critical stance described.

Ruptures in search of the Way: The normative discourses.

The contemporary societies are still anchored around labor and production so by what in the existence of work rupture and in the failure of short /medium term alternatives we witnessed what Castel(1998) describes as processes of "*disaffiliation*", the rupture with links, social and professional networks that endow the individual's social identity.

Within the Luxembourg Cyme in 1997 and in the Lisbon Cyme in 2000 it was possible to identify a number of issues relating to the problem of employment in Europe where was delineate a set of strategies for social inclusion based on the assumption of "*return to work*"² which materialized in a range of documents as the National Action Plan for Inclusion, the National Employment Plan and the EQUAL Program outlined for a favorable socio-economic sustainability and looking for initiatives targeted to vulnerable groups in society.

In this regard the appeal, including the third sector as an important resource to explore, the design of innovative socio-economic responses, revalues the potential of nonprofit agents in the production of goods and services oriented for the common good and for the reconstitution

¹Council Presidency of Ministers, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development -NSSD 2015.

² The acts of the 2000 Lisbon Summit.

and consolidation of social cohesion. For instance, the possibility of creating jobs for the unemployed (especially long and of very long duration) and other vulnerable public became actually a basic element in the political assessment of the social and economic importance of the third sector. Such importance has been recognized since the European Employment Strategy.

More recently the European Commission launches a new Political Agenda (the Agenda 2020) which prioritizes the EU guidelines for achieving economic and social renewal. From this new Agenda, the Commission establishes three priorities which mutually reinforce themselves: (i) *smart growth* in order to develop an economy based on knowledge and on innovation; (ii) *sustainable growth* which seeks to promote a more efficient economy with respect to the use of resources, ecological and more competitive and (iii) *inclusive growth* promoting an economy with high employment levels, capable of ensuring social and territorial cohesion.

One of the instruments capable of overcome the economic crisis and promote the attainment of the objectives listed above, was presented by the Economic and Social Committee (2011) as the "*Creativity and Entrepreneurship*". According to the same document (2011, section 1.1.) "*Entrepreneurship in Europe is usually understood as the creation of companies, SMEs, the private business and social sector,*" defining entrepreneurship as "*the ability of an individual to put ideas into action*" (*ibid.*), thus creating value for society.

Entrepreneurship emerges in an economic and social dimension, in the sense not only to identify and create opportunities in business, but also as a concern with the introduction of specific European national and regional programmes, promoting creativity and entrepreneurship with particular attention to disadvantaged groups in order to eliminate social inequalities.

In fact, according to several authors, social entrepreneurship is increasingly seen as an innovative way of renewing the social and political intervention, to create alternative forms of management of social and economic, to create conditions for social inclusion and employment as well as a mechanisms for greater social and democratic participation. Thus involves a high potential of innovation and entrepreneurship in the socio-economic domain, anchoring on assumptions of efficiency, social and human development and environmental, cultural and economic sustainability. The potential of systemic change and reform that some authors shows (Dees, 2001), are presented in the assumptions of social entrepreneurship reflected as well in different aspects: of the ability to create change in the way that a particular sector is organized, in the prioritization of action into the causes and not on symptoms, reducing the needs rather than its mere satisfaction. We can also see this in the creation of holistic and sustainable changes, in the ability of acting locally as also in the ability of simultaneous global influence and disseminate knowledge, actions and principles.

These premises corroborate what Vasconcellos & Franco (2011) nominate by "*Innovation Union*" which advocates an expanded notion of the concept of innovation in the field not only intrinsically business, but also in response to major societal challenges such as climate change, energy and food security, health and aging. According to these authors is necessary to create new markets and develop new opportunities in terms of employment with importance in the economy which in their opinion are exactly related to these areas. On this taking entrepreneurship is intrinsically linked to the creation of wealth on the belief that this is one of the most viable ways to draw away Europe's current crisis. The creation of wealth, according to the Official Journal of the European Union (2011), will support investment in education, employment, health and social conditions being creativity and entrepreneurship the key instruments for the progress of society.

Our reading of the normative guidelines of the European Union is that whatever form of entrepreneurship (business or social) the main purpose is, undoubtedly, an economic purpose: "*creating something that makes money*" either directly or on a way to sustain initiatives

The process of financing social entrepreneurship: Tensions between normative discourse and procedural acting

relating to social conditions: education, social welfare, employment, among others. However the definition of European social economy identifies a set of principles that are not consistent with this view, in particular:

"1) Purpose of service to their members or community more than to obtain profit, 2) Autonomy in terms of managing, 3) Democracy in the decision process, in which the membership and their participation in decisions is not dependent on capital which owns, and finally 3) Priority for the people and for the work in the distribution of income."(Defourny et al., 1999:38-39)

Despite the complementarity between the market economy and the social economy there are differences in their characteristics referring to the first matters related to the structure and operation, and to the second matters related to principles and values (Ferreira, 2011). Even though the characteristics of the current solidary economy, by reference to traditional non-profit organizations shows, according to the European study carried out by Borzaga and Santuari (2003), greater autonomy (economic and management) and capacity for initiative and innovation. In fact, research supports the conclusion that: (i) material resources are of multiple origins, demonstrating more autonomy by reference to the State; (ii) there is an increased orientation in the area of job creation, particularly for vulnerable groups; (iii) acquires relevance further cooperation with commercial companies with evidence of an increase in what concerns to innovation with regard to the types of goods and services produced, to the methods of responding to the social needs, to the target groups and to the active accountability of the various collaborators in terms of production, both with regard to management shared of the organization.

In the quest of this idea many of the European and National objectives are diffuse being inherent the need of implementing initiatives in the field of social entrepreneurship that have a real impact (we refer to visible results, measurability rates of economic and social integration) in the living conditions of social vulnerable groups, but paradoxically "*masked*" with cohesion and social solidarity objectives relating to systems of support more targeted, in rhetorical terms, to social cohesion than to economic growth. This invisibility of the real objectives leads the professionals of the third sector or of the social economy to an analytical *limbus* address to the way they have to choose.

It will be important to note that the two dimensions are different, but it is also important to social entrepreneur to create sustainability in order not to depend on either philanthropy or government support. But that in opposite of the market logic, he has to take into account also the logic of social demand. So as opposed to the rationality inherent in the market where a product, service or idea that doesn't produce or does not have clients or profitability can lead to insolvency of the organization, being, often necessary to eradicate it. In the social market is not possible to eliminate an initiative just because this is unprofitable, especially when it reveals of extreme social need, putting to social entrepreneur the urgency of finding ways of funding and revenue sources to cover the real cost of this initiative without expectations of profit, but trying to reach a financial balance.

In this sense when we speak of social entrepreneurs, we speak also of managers. But the detailed analysis of the EU normative documents brings us to some entanglement of the two concepts that, although, complementary, are different.

The Walkers: Social Entrepreneurs Vs Social Managers.

When we compare the concept of Social Manager with the concept of Social Entrepreneurship the first assumption that occurs is that both are social managers. However,

the social manager might not be able to be a social entrepreneur and a social entrepreneur may not have the appropriate skills to an effective and efficient management of social enterprises. Under the concept of entrepreneurship that appears in the opinion prepared by the Thematic Network "Local Development and Entrepreneurship" "Green Paper on Entrepreneurship in Europe", prepared by DG Enterprise, European Commission (Equal, np-b: a cit in Ferreira, 2011) the

"Entrepreneurship (...) goes further than the mere reference to social manager (...). It is the will and capacity to be active, to design and implement a structured initiative, based on a project, defining goals and objectives, identifying and mobilizing allies and resources, scheduling and budgeting, and then managing and evaluating processes and outcomes(...). Indeed, such attitude, and the inherent skills, knowledge and competencies not only apply in order to «transform an idea into a successful experience»"

There is related to the concept of a social entrepreneur the concept of innovation and social change and in this context Alonso (2011) like other authors (Dornelas, 2001; Drucker, 1987; Greatti and Senhorini, 2000) distinguish also some personal traits of the social entrepreneur. To these authors (ibid.) the social entrepreneur is a visionary person, creative, practical and pragmatic, who knows how to overcome obstacles to produce significant social change with a positive social impact in the region or where he operates and with equal ability to spread those ideas to national and /or international level. We observe in these authors a shared belief that entrepreneur ability is an innate skill, something related to our personality. However more recent studies have come to contradict this static view of social entrepreneur for a more dynamic one.

Ferreira (2011) conducted a study in Portugal using privileged informants and "taking into consideration a criteria of the diversity in a universe of organizations that revealed important dynamic community in which they inhere" (idem, 2011: np). From the conclusions we highlight the following: Apart from the activities that occupy within organizations closely related to the decision-making, a constant relationship between the internal and external stakeholders and a permanent monitoring and supervision of these projects, there is 1) the existence of a strong parallel between the path of the entrepreneur and the organization where he is inserted by following , in some cases, his participation in the movement that has given rise to the organization, 2) most of these entrepreneurs realized on their path a personal journey traversed with forms of activism or in social associations with a deep awareness of the collective benefit and community development, 3) have a strong working knowledge and are also well known in the region where the organization is inserted, having access to informal social networks that allow them to exercise some influence, 4) as sources of formation, they have a plurality of areas , most with academic training, but not being the whole.

In this respect and in favor of the emergence of the movement we are seeing at present time, in order to foster in the educational curricula of basic and higher courses, disciplines geared for entrepreneurship, seems to us that the social entrepreneur can obviously have some important personal characteristics but his skills were acquired in a processual path towards his life that enabled them to acquire basic social competencies as well as experience in the recognition of opportunities and he uses it in favor of a collective project to which he identifies and produce value.

This process is not visible in the current framework of the management of social equipments, since on the same institutional space coexist volunteers managers (with no training in management and without a strategic vision of organizational development), and hired

The process of financing social entrepreneurship: Tensions between normative discourse and procedural acting

professionals for management or administration of a particular social department or service and that although commune with social entrepreneurs the same management features, they do not share the same internal missionary and visionary features, as the first ones.

For social management we understand all the processes and methods undertaken by the social manager in order to optimize the functionality of organization with reference to its objectives. In this context their role in the organization is related not only to the management of human resources (some authors emphasizing the importance of leadership in social management, Lawler & Bilson, 2010) but also with project management, which is part of the team supervision, monitoring and evaluation of social projects. His function in the design of projects and intervention programs may be secondary. However, his development is part of a strategy of organizational improvement and provision of quality services for well-defined target audiences in a participatory way. A social entrepreneur manager includes in his daily life a coordinated and network and human and material resources, drives the creation of social value, and bases his action on autonomy and responsibility of his employees, concerned with empowerment, not merely of the public target of the project but also of the professionals involved in action

In a schematic way we may, illustrate the possible connection between the characteristics of two actors: Social Entrepreneurs and Social Managers in the production of a functional profile of Managers Social Entrepreneurs

| | Social Entrepreneurs | Social Managers | Social Managers Entrepreneurs |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Functional Framework | Integrated in a team or as managers | Organizational Hierarchy Dependence | Horizontal Management, Democratic leadership |
| Control | Decentralized Individual and Collective Empowerment | Centralized | Autonomy and Functional Responsibility Citizen Participation Individual and Collective Empowerment |
| Focus of the Function/ Action | The best for the client/Community – Production of social value Competencies Focus | The best for the Organization Program Focus | Articulation between the best for the organization and the best for the client/ community. Focus in the acquisition and valorization of the stakeholders competencies. |
| Work Scope | Work targeted by mission, vision, objectives, evaluation and processes | Work targeted by objectives and results evaluation. | Strategic Conception of the Project and team supervision. Network work Work targeted by mission, vision, objectives, evaluation, processes and results. |

Source: Synthesis done by the authors.

Figure 1 – Analytical synthesis for the construction of comparative functional profile of Social Entrepreneurs and Social Managers.

Whatever the form, managing a social project, in the area of social economy, involves the efficient management of political and human resources available in the context as a way of ensuring its implementation and development, as well as its sustainability. Three social dimensions of resource provision are engaged in this process: (i) the Economical resources that includes the financing lines and the productivity logics; (ii) the Human resources, that

integrates the stakeholders, their characteristics, training and innovation potential and the (iii) Social resources derived from social policies, organizations and social interaction networks. In an ideal context these three actors would function coherently in terms of intervention goals, constituting the grounds to the construction of Social entrepreneurship.

However, we find criss-crossed logics in the political and economical agenda of the financing lines that support the social emergence of entrepreneurial projects and the evaluation framework (the guide-lines of the program) used by the central and executive departments that, in Portugal, evaluate the same projects.

In this assumption we intend to discuss, in a broad way, the “*grammar*” underlying the appeal to social innovation in Portugal and effective practices/ projects financed, translating a specific political and social construction of intervention which relays on normative models and specific socio-political-ideological guidelines

The Roads: Programs, rationalities and tensions on the support of entrepreneurship.

The program analyzed corresponds to a European program –The PROGRESS. PROGRESS is the European Union employment and social solidarity program, set up to provide financial support for attainment of European Union’s objectives in employment, social affairs and equal opportunities as set out in Social Agenda, as well as in objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. This new strategy, which has a strong social dimension, aims at turning the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. The European Union needs coherent and complementary contributions from different policy strands, methods and instruments, including the PROGRESS program, to support the Member States in delivering on the Europe 2020’s goals.

The Progress in May of 2011 has opened a line of funding designated “call for proposals n° VP/2011/010, budget line 04-04-01-01 -“*projects contributing to exchange of good practices*” with the next purposes:

1. Developing early-warning and forecasting systems to improve the matching of skills supply and demand;
2. Supporting the development and exchange between public employment services, education and training providers and companies on lifelong learning and guidance to help people make choices regarding careers as well as education & training;
3. Close involvement of social partners both at EU and national level, in actions that can help equip people for employment with the right skills and help employers to find the skills they need
4. Supporting the strategic dialogue with private and third-sector employment services on strategies addressing skills development.

We highlight two axes which we would take into account as applicants in the analysis of the program: a) a strong concern in the development of skills of unemployed citizens, particularly with regard to competencies, training and b) emphasis on concerted action between the public and the private as a strategy for sustainability of actions.

In this sense and taking into account both the application form of the present action and the global objectives of PROGRESS Program seems to us important to define a project combining an action research and a direct social intervention with the target groups, already

The process of financing social entrepreneurship: Tensions between normative discourse and procedural acting

defined on the same document. In this way we were able to observe, describe and analyze comparatively the different measures, employment and social policies of the countries with whom we held the European consortium, and at the same time, develop a set of initiatives for unemployed citizens capable of promoting their skills and professional training in order to make them more competitive in the labor market. On the other hand, the line of funding in question requires a strong territorial action so that organizations connected to the local government that have a strong working knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of its territory will be privileged because they can develop appropriate responses. These initiatives could establish potential actions to develop entrepreneurial skills in the citizens and promote the emergence of new entrepreneurial focus in the knowledge acquired by the target group and the emergence of new markets related to what PROGRESS designate as a strong link between supply and demand.

This rationale fits into the logic of development of "Creativity and Entrepreneurship" as defined in the Official Journal of the European Union (2011) in its social dimension to the business activities included in the daily life in the same text defines it as follows :

"Social inclusion and poverty relief are supported by the entrepreneurship because society is at the heart of innovation, as it changes its practices and institutions"(4.5, idem, 2011).

But if until now all the guide evidence in the organization of an application within the logic of entrepreneurship, job creation and social innovation could make sense to the reader's Manual PROGRESS, quickly we are faced with a number of priority actions little consonant with a pro-active attitude in terms of creativity and value creation, as well as the definition of the entities by the same program that can be financed. We describe:

*"Priority areas for co-operation for **both domains**: Among priority areas for cooperation are activities mentioned (the below list is not exhaustive):*

– Workshops on benchmarks, supporting good practices on equipping people with the right skills for employment addressing different aspects of policy formulation, decision making and policy execution;

– Organisation of seminars, round-table events, study visits, staff exchange and communication activities to publicize the results of sharing of experiences in the policy fields covered by this call; Focused information campaigns and awareness raising efforts targeting key stakeholders and other relevant groups;

– Reinforcing existing or new networks devoted to the advancement of the targeted policy issues and practices.

These activities may possibly be combined with the following:

– Small-scale studies in order to gain greater knowledge on improving the first transition from education to work for young people and supporting good practices on equipping people with the right skills for employment;

– literature and desk reviews in the policy fields covered by this call, where such are not already available." (Call for proposals n° VP/2011/010: p 5-6)

The reader will certainly have trouble to understand how the objectives are and the results suggested in the first presentation part of the program may be feasible with the actions considered eligible. This contradiction results in difficulty in understanding (i) what is the true purpose of the program (action - research and debate or research and social intervention?), (ii) how we (with the implementation of the activities suggested and considered eligible), can achieve the initial objectives of the program? (iii) Which is the determining direction? Since the same appear as requests "double-bind", i.e, any solution presented will never be satisfactory for a component of the project.

The methodological inconsistency regarding to the conception of funding lines leads the entrepreneur to one kind of functional "Russian roulette".

On the same program and respecting to eligible entities despite the call to territoriality, the local and regional organizations only can be eligible entities that have at least consolidated experience of at least three years at the level of management and implementation of projects previously funded by European Union (the new and innovative initiatives will have many difficulties in entering in this financial market) and should also provide economic stability that can prove who hold "cash" with the same amount for which it seeks funding. Again the new initiatives and local initiatives that work in a logical "bottom-up" stay sidelined because they can not compete with entities that are structurally solids and continuously access to structural funds and will reproduce the same logic of action that although theoretically legitimacy are being challenged by the guidelines contained in normative documents.

Well, as we already noted the Agenda 2020 has a key instrument to combat economic recession that has haunted Europe the consolidation of one smart, innovative and sustainable economy where the strategies considered as fundamental refers to the Creativity and Entrepreneurship. However the financing lines (as the "VP/2011/010") have regulatory guidelines which move away from the concept of entrepreneurship and innovation (in its business or social dimension) and go close to traditional and establish old forms of social and economic intervention.

Considering the above and since the self-sustainability of social entrepreneurship is still in a very early stage, the professionals are faced with operationally diffuse funding lines, making it difficult one consistent emergence of social entrepreneurship in Portugal and in Europe.

Brief Final Considerations

The Official Journal of the European Union (2011) presents this parable to illustrate the importance of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship in Europe, it designates the

"European value investing in entrepreneurship:

If you give me 1 € and I give 1€, each has 1€

If you give me one idea and I give you one idea, each has two ideas.

Entrepreneurship in Europe = 500 million people + 500 million ideas + 500 million actions.

How many of these ideas make us overcome the crisis? " (Idem, 2011: 48/46).

This interesting parabola reflects the European concept of entrepreneurship as one privileged way to overcome the current economic downturn and is based in our view, in the entrepreneurial and creative role that each citizen should have to renewing the social and political intervention, anchoring in the assumption of individual potential reformer. To achieve this, the European Commission recommends the tools to access funding as PROGRESS (analyzed by us), ESF, JASMINE, among others that in their opinion bring advantages not only for business but also for the sustainability of initiatives to assist communities and development especially with regard to NGOs.

With respect to Social Entrepreneurship the appeal to the intervention of third sector revalues the potential of nonprofit agents for the production of goods and services for the common benefit. However, in the normative discourse of the state and in this case in the European Union, the ultimate goal of any form of entrepreneurship should be to create wealth, clearly demonstrating the economic value of social goods becoming contradictory with the current concept of economics solidarity that can not directly create wealth, but providing social development in terms of job creation and working in social intervention by social and professional inclusion of disadvantaged social groups.

The process of financing social entrepreneurship: Tensions between normative discourse and procedural acting

This ambiguity regarding the policy objectives for social entrepreneurship reveals, equally, in the instruments which produce for fostering entrepreneurship and programs of employment promotion and social development. Despite concerns about sustainability and social reform initiatives of the third sector in creating new solutions and new social responses, the weight of neo-liberal market logic is present in the very programs that put at the disposal of the solidarity economy. But, it seems important to the sustainability of social initiatives, the current economic climate of job insecurity acts as a powerful brake on the ability to develop as quickly as desired, social entrepreneurship initiatives capable of immediate integration and socio-professional insertion of the large number unemployed in Europe, as well as an effective fight against poverty through self sustained actions with full financial independence of the state.

In this sense, we think important one clearer position from the normative guidelines of the European Union. It means that creating tools for social and professional integration as PROGRESS objectives and eligible actions which come, sometimes, in contradiction, is not the solution. On the contrary, it tends to contribute to the difficulty of translation by professionals who deal daily with target population, of the grammar or hidden writing in a paradoxical way in these same documents.

So we must clearly assume that there are two forms of entrepreneurship, both are complementary and should co-exist and reinforce each other, but require policy measures and policy instruments as the distinct paths to explore are necessarily different.

The parable with which we began the final considerations of this article makes us much sense, it's a possibility to strength a national reform in poverty. However their capacity for mobilization is still too weak and targeted to achieve a minimum guarantee for survival. Therefore, the development of skills and social abilities of citizens in conjunction with an intervention assurance the minimum living standards will be unequivocally more beneficial than acting only on the dimensions of one social problem because it will allows, on the one hand to obtain the desired results in terms of its potential to mobilize and perhaps became an entrepreneur, and on the other, will allow the resolution of one of the most serious social problems that Europe faces today, poverty and unemployment.

This concern is well grounded in current political thinking but its discourse must have to be revealed, also, in the instruments and resources available to social entrepreneurs and social managers so they can be able to fulfill the dual task and not getting caught in widespread indications that compromise, also, their performance and long-term social effectiveness of social entrepreneurship.

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The process of financing social entrepreneurship: Tensions between normative discourse and procedural acting

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