The importance of social innovation for the visually impaired citizens: The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) Case

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ABSTRACT

Today, innovation appears as new ideas, creative ideas, new situations in the form of devices or methods. Innovation is also often seen as the implementation of better solutions that meet new requirements, specific needs, or current market needs. Social innovation has a special importance among the forms of innovation. This study aims to evaluate social innovation applications for the visually disabled citizens in local governments. In this study, it is aimed to conduct a registration service review for visually impaired citizens within the scope of social innovation. With the registration service, it is aimed to voice the books in line with the demands of visually impaired members through volunteer readers. This study also evaluates the IMM's social innovation efforts that provides innovative solutions to their problems. Additionally, this study also evaluated audio libraries for visually impaired individuals, which help them to read books.

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Introduction

Mankind has always shown great interest in seeing everything happening around and being able to see makes people comfortable and happy. On the other hand, in cases where this special sense is absent or does not function adequately, that person is called "Visually Impaired" or "Impaired citizens ". Visually impaired citizens face a range of visual challenges every day. They try to overcome these challenges by using certain tools. A deep understanding of the rigors faced by visually impaired citizens in their daily lives will help guide innovation to solve these challenges or rigors.

Social innovation has great potential to alleviate social problems. It is also about finding new ways to respond to social needs while increasing society's capacity to act. Local governments are the basis of social innovative practices when it comes to the visually impaired or impaired citizens. There are many tools for the visually impaired to continue reading books and one of these tools, registration services, is a good example of innovation for the visually impaired. In essence, local governments are the state units that provide the closest service to the local people. Localization reproduces the centralized and uniform understanding of globalization and contributes to the formation of a more humane and livable world. On the other hand, giving more responsibilities and duties to local administrations, which are the closest administrative units to citizens, in the provision of public services is seen as a democratic development (Berkun & Durmaz, 2019). With the increasing importance of local governments, the provision of public services can be carried out more efficiently and effectively by local governments. Local governments are equipped with legal powers and responsibilities by the central government in order to meet the common needs of local citizens within the framework of historical development. Local governments are important both for their ability to serve effectively and quickly, and for local citizens to effectively exercise their democratic self-governance rights. However, management structures may differ in each country (Kucuk, 2019). The main elements that local governments have are autonomy, realization of public services, efficiency, democracy and relations with central government (Vurur, 2019). Local governments are affiliated with a central structure and take over some of the

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centralized authority to serve the local people and adopt a management style that appeals to certain regions within the borders of the country (Dinc, 2019). The management of issues concerning local government is carried out through local representatives who are directly elected by the people living in that region (Denge, 2019). Local governments are organizations that go back a long way. Local governments, on one hand, fulfill the duty of meeting the needs of the people in their places. On the other hand, they play an important role in social life by ensuring the implementation of democratic elements such as participation, representation and election (Altin & Sahin, 2019). Local government types are Provincial special administrations, municipalities and villages. The fact that local governments are units that provide the closest public services to the local people reveal their importance. Local governments have had important functions in many areas, especially in social, economic and cultural areas, since their first emergence. In general, local governments come to the fore in health, education, housing, transportation, zoning, urban structures, environmental and environmental health, water and sewerage, solid wastes, cleaning, cultural and social services (Guvenc & Simsek, 2018). The works jointly performed by local governments and central administrations are generally health services, landscaping and cleaning services, education services, public works and zoning services and social services (Gungor, 2012).

Many people with visual impairments or other physical disabilities are often unable to use printed materials and may be deprived of many reading materials. In our country, there are people with visual impairments or physical restrictions that can prevent a book from being read by that person. At this point, registration services for the visually impaired are an important development in reaching printed materials. The development and implementation of innovative and quality services that meet the needs and expectations of the visually impaired is also an important situation in terms of social innovation.

This study aims to evaluate social innovation applications for the visually disabled citizens in local governments. This study examines IMM's social innovation efforts that provides innovative solutions to their problems. Additionally, this study also evaluated audio libraries for visually impaired individuals, which help them to read books. In this study it is also aimed to conduct a registration service review for visually impaired citizens within the scope of social innovation. With the registration service, it is aimed to voice the books in line with the demands of visually impaired members through volunteer readers.

Qualitative research methods are a general name given to methods that try to explain real-life events and problems not based on numerical data, but based on interpretations (Sonmez & Ilgun, 2018). In this study, unstructured method, (i.e. uncontrolled observation) was used. In qualitative research, observation provides important clues to researchers about the conditions that cover social phenomena and the behavior of individuals, that some behaviors show their natural state, and the context in which the obtained data should be interpreted and evaluated. Unstructured observation is divided into two as participatory and unattended. Participant observation method was used in this study.

The study is limited to the registration services for visually impaired citizens operating in the province of Istanbul.

In this study, first of all, the difficulties of the visually impaired were tried to be understood and an awareness about the impaired citizens was tried to be achieved by empathy. Then, how the registration services for visually impaired citizens operating in the province of Istanbul are carried out and the practices related to this subject were examined.

Social Innovation in Local Governments

The role of innovation in underpinning developed economies is increasing day by day. Based on this, every country adopts economic models based on innovation and tries to develop innovation-based models (Uzkurt, 2017). The public sector is of great importance for every country. Institutions in the public structure are of vital importance to the public with the services they offer and the functions they undertake. Public innovation is a complementary tool that strengthens democratic governance in enhancing the quality of life of all citizens. Public innovation should be evaluated with the public value it will create (Aksoy, 2007).

Innovation can be expressed as a new structure or a policy, management process, a new program or plan, new production process, new service or products produced in institutions. Innovation is a very important differentiation strategy in gaining competitive advantage in the future (Kalay & Kızıldere, 2015). Innovation means newness and includes innovative companies and their innovative activities. Innovation is the application of a new or greatly improved product, process, new marketing methods and management in business practices, workplace organization or business external relations (Gokce, 2010). After clarifying the concept of innovation and other explanations about innovation, it would be appropriate to clarify the innovation process. The innovation process generally consists of discovery (examination) and learning, idea development, testing and implementation and commercialization. The aim of the public sector is to provide the best service to the public effectively and efficiently. It is aimed to provide the best service to the public regarding innovations that are to be made in the public sector. The main purpose of the private sector is to make a profit and to keep its earnings at a certain level. In addition, in the public sector, the main purpose is to provide the best service to citizens without seeking profit. Since the main performance criterion in the private sector is income from investment, the measurement of success is more concrete compared to the public (Gokce, 2015). The purpose of Innovations in the Public is to provide a service with more innovative management to increase the welfare of the people and organizations who will benefit from this service (Gungor & Goksu, 2013).

Local governments have to consider existing processes and services, identify problems and evaluate issues with new strategic approaches in order to implement solutions cheaply, quickly and economically. The new approach in municipalities is social

innovation, focusing on social problems and extending a helping hand (Guzeller, 2019). It can be mentioned that there is a close relationship between local governments and innovation. Local administrations, which are the closest public service units to local people, have an important place in providing service innovation. The authorities of a city need innovation and creativity, such as urban entrepreneurship, in order to achieve their goals of being the best in the areas they serve (Akyos, 2019).

Social innovation and activities, which are seen as innovative ways to eliminate social problems and needs, which will enable increasing social transformation and change in recent times, are seen as a tool of innovation and its importance is increasing day by day (Ates, 2018). Social innovation can be expressed as a broad category of policies that tries to meet social needs through empowerment of individuals. Social innovations aim to provide a service that is difficult to reach with existing public tools (Yildirim & Smyrl, 2019). Social innovation can occur in the form of a product, in some cases a process or technology, as well as in the form of a principle, idea, intervention, action or a combination of these. The main purpose of social innovations is health, reliability, social life, education etc. that traditional methods are insufficient to solve. It refers to the efforts to meet social needs and solve social problems in such matters (Yesilkaya & Yildiz, 2018).

Local governments, which incorporate innovation activities, increase efficiency and productivity in their organizations, develop social responsibility awareness, achieve competitive advantage, branding and institutionalization, research and development and similar activities, as well as determining the opportunities and resources of the regions within the borders of local governments, ensuring social and economic developments, provide more benefits for the state and society by improving in many areas such as increasing innovation capacity, increasing efficiency and so on (Esmer et al., 2019).

In our world of constant change, society needs innovative and creative solutions every day. It is social innovations that will meet these needs. Social innovation is realized through the adoption of strategies in culture, health, arts, employment, education, housing, providing new services in areas where social problems in the environment may arise, determining new ways to existing services, implementing new activities, developing the masses to be injured and finding new resources (Ozdemir & Ar, 2015). Social innovation is generating solutions and implementing innovative ideas to existing cultural, social, environmental and economic problems in ensuring a sustainable life for societies, people and the world.

Social innovations have important effects such as identifying social needs and problems, establishing social activities, being the center of attention of markets, cooperating with shareholders, creating system and social differentiation and spreading social values. Social innovation is an approach that offers different and new solutions to solve many problems, especially insufficiencies in resources and energies, climate changes, demographic imbalances, and health problems (Toprak, 2018). Social innovation process consists of defining needs, solutions or problems, pilot ideas and prototypes, evaluation of good ideas, promotion and dissemination, learning and dissemination, support and systemic change (Akçil, 2019; Erbil, 2017; Grice et al., 2012).

The IMM Case with Registration Service for Visually Impaired Citizens

One of the most important factors that show the development of countries is the high rate of reading books in that country. Developed countries carry out many studies to increase the rate of reading books. Countries do not ignore those with disabilities within the scope of these studies. In every country, intensive efforts are made to enable people with disabilities to read books at a high level and to have these opportunities. associations also relate to the visually impaired with some official institutions and organizations in Turkey are helping in this regard (Coppersmith, 2009).

Local governments have a great responsibility in helping visually impaired citizens access and benefit from these books.

The audio library of the IMM tries to do its part carefully and sensitively on behalf of those who see it so that the visually impaired can take a more active place in social life and develop themselves in a way that they may need the least help, and in this process, it tries to bring all public institutions and volunteer citizens to the work to maximize the service provided. As for the visually impaired, the social state understanding and justice among the citizens of the same country, like other persons with disabilities, must take the place they need to take in the society, excluding their disabilities. In addition to its establishment purposes, the audio library has also undertaken many tasks for the visually impaired. With the support of volunteer citizens, it is aimed to ensure that the visually impaired can benefit from libraries, which are social heritage, and be more successful in their school life (IBB, 2019).

The development of audio libraries can eliminate the book starvation for the impaired citizens or other disabled people. Books are considered a man's best friend, and they provide us with endless knowledge and allow people to develop their understanding as well as being an invaluable source of entertainment. Books have existed forever, but recent advances in technology have provided us with various alternatives to books as well as physical form. These include electronic books and audiobooks.

Every developed country has projects for disabled citizens. Special services offered to disabled citizens are an indicator of how much we have a share of human dignity. Since we are a society with a state tradition, IMM also tries to pave the way for disabled citizens. It is aimed to ensure that visually impaired citizens do not stay away from books and libraries due to their disabilities and to make the necessary arrangements to make them benefit from this heritage. These projects will have many contributions to the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and to the citizens who have visual impairments to the city and the country (IBB, 2019).

Dialogue in the Dark

Dialogue in the Dark experience 'touched' more than 8 million people in more than 130 cities around the world; It was created and implemented by Prof. Dr. Andreas Heinecke in Germany in 1988. Dialogue in the Dark Museum on December 20, 2013; Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality was established at Gayrettepe metro station by Istanbul Social Enterprise with the support of Metro Istanbul and Turkcell. There are separate sections for the hearing impaired and visually impaired. It is stated that more than 100 thousand people visited the Dialogue in the Dark Museum. In this museum, by breaking the walls of prejudice, it is ensured that the dialogue of disabled and non-disabled individuals whose communication language is different from each other is developed.

In the world, 31 years ago, Dialogue in the Dark exhibitions (museum) were implemented in Germany. Outside Israeli and Indian applications, Turkey's is the second museum in the world. 67% of the visitors are between the ages of 18-25 and the interest and sensitivity rate of the youth is high. Children over 9 years old and adults are allowed here. Entrance can be made every hour and the tour can be completed in one hour. You can also come and login in groups. A ticket for 45 TL must be purchased.

Watches, phones, bags and personal belongings are put in the locker and the key is given to the person concerned. When the time came, we entered with the attendant. There were light areas, even if it was a little. The guard stood next to the many walking sticks used by the visually impaired. He introduced himself, gave us a cane each. He warned that we would hold it with our right hand and walk with our left while holding the wall.

There was no lighter and we walked about 10 meters holding the wall. The darkness worried me a lot. "Now we're turning left" said the officer. It was a dark area in what I could call pitch black. My anxiety increased and I was very scared. I could not continue with the officer and said that he could remove me from the group. Turns out, we were in the labyrinth at the beginning of the road. The attendant took me back to the entrance and when we arrived at the original light-leaking area, a gentleman was coming across. The officer next to me said, "Sir, this lady is worried, she is exiting before completing her visit."

The person facing me is 35 years old who lost his sight 5 years ago. He immediately took care of me and took me over. "May I have your name?" He said in a soft, loving voice. I told him. He made a few persuasive sentences in a hurry. "You have come to a world you have never known about, it is normal to be afraid or worried. Let's try it again, I will accompany you, if you cannot continue you will return again," he said. He personally accompanied me. We crossed the same roads with my walking stick in my hand, walked straight on the wall with my left hand on the handle, turned left. He said we're now turning right. We came to the bridge. My anxiety got deeper. What bridge? I asked voluntarily. "Our everyday state. You came to a world you have never known. He has managed to be at peace with himself so much that he replied "July 15 Martyrs' Bridge" with a laugh. I was trying to cross the bridge with my left hand, holding the cane with my right hand. My foot touched somewhere like a small hole, I was afraid again.

We proceeded to handle the grab bag of a bridge that I felt was wooden, high enough for children to reach. "You will feel the wind," said the counselor. I could feel the wind. In fact, this is the beginning of another world of darkness. It was a wooden bridge of about five or ten steps. "The bridge is over, we came to the park." He said.

Children's voices were coming, and I heard screaming. My fear and anxiety only increased. From the park and later on, he called his friend who would guide me to other visitors, told me to be particularly interested. "Okay," said the other guide, too.

But I have no strength or courage to take another step. Although I know that every step will be guided by call outs, "Sir, I can't continue, can we go back please?" I said. He tried to calm me down, saying, "Calm down, you are too nervous," but it was in vain. I felt very vulnerable and powerless. I wondered what would happen to me. I could not continue any more, we slowly came back. In great fuss and anxiety, we returned to the entrance area, which originally had a light leak. I put the cane in my right hand into the cane basket. When I saw the light, I was a little relieved. I said to the counselor, let me guide you now. "While helping the unseen, the person who sees should walk in front of him, not next to him." What I feel when I get out of the exit door is experienced inexplicably.

Because I could not complete my visit completely; I could not experience the next stages, where the group guide would be accompanied by the voice of the teacher, taking the subway, the tram, the cafe where they work, etc.

The purpose of this visit was to try to understand the difficulties of the visually impaired, to empathize and to raise awareness. I learned that sound and touch, feeling and smell are very important for them. Except for crossing the traffic lights and similar situations, the fact that it is possible to help them find their way by describing directions with sound, not to only help by grabbing their arm, has made me aware.

It is stated by the authorities that there are 1000 officially registered members of the Altınokta Association of the impaired citizens in Istanbul. However, the number of families living in Istanbul cannot be given precisely and precisely because they are hesitant to register their children and family members due to social, psychological and similar reasons.

In this context; As a social innovation, when a visually impaired citizen is encountered in public vehicles, in places that people can easily access and see, such as parks, gardens, billboards etc.; Social innovation should be provided by regularly passing the cautionary information on how to help them without hurting them, their location information (they should know where they are) regularly.

In addition, by placing audio book reading panels to be placed in public vehicle stops, public vehicle parks, visually impaired citizens should be able to easily access informative and guiding information in the areas they need. *Emergency phone numbers* that can be used in an emergency should be announced regularly. Such as fire brigade, police emergency, emergency aid and so on. In their dark world, it will be more confident and peaceful to know that they can get help when they need it.

This work will ensure the awareness and sensitivity of more citizens, empathy and contribute positively to the social lives of our visually impaired citizens.

IMM Eyüp Audio Library

From the 'Stories of Magical Hands' (10 Pieces) Series for 9+ Age Group by the author Gulsum CENGİZ, the 45-page story entitled Nail Who Wants to Be a Bridge, was read in booth no 6 of the Audio Library voiced in accordance with the rules set by the library.

The recording was copied to a CD that was listened to by the officer and a sample of the recording was given. At this point, it is very important to be able to vocalize according to the recommended rules while recording. It's a difficult situation to re-read, especially in bold, multi-page book voiceovers. After the registration was completed, we shared information about the subject during the chat with the officer.

Audio Library serves for visually impaired citizens. The total number of visually impaired members is 6192. There are also 140 volunteer readers. Care is taken to ensure that volunteer readers are among those who have completed at least high school education. Those deemed appropriate can become volunteer readers. Books are vocalized and digitally recorded by people from all professions.

A very enthusiastic little girl is among the volunteers. Her enthusiasm was not broken and accepted. Even though the number of volunteer readers is high, the important readers are the readers defined as *Bone Readers*. Since irregular readers do not come in a certain order, the service needed cannot be provided in a complete and timely manner. Regular readers read according to the appointment system. There are 8 reading cabins in the library.

Citizens with 40% visual impairment are considered disabled. In addition, visually impaired citizens who can see less, see in the form of light leakage and perceive the environment also benefit from this service.

Especially for university, high school and secondary education students, there may be readings and voices that must be completed urgently during the preparation for the exam. Therefore, regular volunteer readers may be needed more. The number should be increased even further.

Students at high school level are given one-to-one lessons in mathematics, physics, chemistry and similar branches. Visually impaired citizens need to come to the library to study one on one. Likewise, volunteer teachers who teach, must come to the library. Volunteer lecturers are needed.

Visually impaired citizens who want to listen to audiobooks do not need to come to the library; They can find the opportunity to listen to the book they want, using the passwords given to them by the library staff. Applications to access audiobooks can also be launched on the mobile phone.

Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality has an Audio Library in Istanbul. Istanbul is a city of 16 million people. Considering the population density, traffic and similar problems, it makes it more difficult to come from other districts of the city with their own means and become a volunteer reader. There was a middle-aged volunteer *female* reader, whom I learned was from Kurtkoy and was a lawyer. It impressed me a lot. She was coming from quite a distance to the library. Volunteer readers are technically able to read as much as they want and then continue reading where they left off. Volunteer readers, whose times are available, come and read every day.

For our visually impaired citizens living on the Anatolian part of Istanbul to provide more convenient access and transportation and to increase the number of volunteer readers, it was seen that there was a need to open an Audio Library on the Anatolian side. If suitable conditions are met for the short-term libraries on the Anatolian side; Even if it is a small section, an audio library with 2 dubbing booths can be provided. In addition, after the feasibility studies to be carried out, an Audio Library should be opened in the most appropriate place.

This situation will further motivate the volunteer readers. It will enable them to devote their time on the road to reading more books. It will reduce transportation costs less. It will reduce road fatigue. Fatigue directly affects sound negatively and degrades reading quality.

Likewise, our visually impaired citizens who will receive services will have easier access to the Audio Library. Since the cost of building such a library is very high, it will be difficult in the short term to make large numbers. But; In the short term, IMM should ensure the construction of an Audio Library in a place suitable for the Anatolian Side, and take the opening of such libraries in its long-term strategic planning. Besides that; 2 vocalization booths can be opened in appropriate places within the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality service buildings. 2 vocalization booths can be placed in Sarachane service building, Beyoglu Kasimpasa Additional Service Building, Bakirkoy Additional Service Building, Kartal Additional Service Building. In the same way, our visually impaired citizens will also have access to the Audio Library, transportation, etc. it will become easier. IMM personnel working in these

buildings can be volunteer, sensitive readers during their resting hours. Visually impaired personnel also work in these buildings. It will be quick and easy for them to access the information they need in the service building locations they serve. Coordinated studies can be carried out with District Municipalities and similar studies can be carried out there.

The issue needs to be looked at more generally. Considering throughout the country; Our legislators may enact a law that obliges all public institutions and organizations to have voice booths in the official buildings of the service buildings where visually impaired citizens can receive service. They can consist of most of their volunteer readers among the employees.

Including Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). private institutions and organizations that want to support volunteering activities in such a large city will make a great contribution and benefit in innovation studies for visually impaired citizens.

This system, which works entirely on the principle of volunteering, once again demonstrated the importance of volunteering in Social Innovation. Volunteer readers make voiceovers according to their professional groups.

Modeling was made of a person who closes his eyes while vocalizing the story and listens to the story. It was voiced on the fiction of conveying the feelings of joy, happiness, pain, sadness and similar feelings to the audience so that girls or boys who will listen without seeing all the emotions that need to be given can be portrayed in their dreams.

While the book voices to be made for children; Small songs should be added, and foreign songs should be included (as in the voiced book). It will be useful for children to improve their language skills.

Likewise, volunteer readers who have foreign languages in English, German, French and other languages should perform various books suitable for age groups. Information that will explain the various branches of fine arts, make them love and use them in their lives should be conveyed. Children should be given the skill of playing a musical instrument.

It is known that they can play musical instruments that most of the people who see cannot play, and they can sing songs and folk songs by seeing with their eyes. As in the example of our great (master) folk poet, the late Asik VEYSEL.

Social Innovations are needed for all these services to be carried out regularly and properly. We may not know that it was called Social Innovation throughout history, but we have always lived as a nation that loves, values and supports people, in solidarity, cooperation and sharing. This feature is present in our genes as a nation. In today's conditions, new innovations should continue to be made under the title of Social Innovation.

Conclusions

Social innovation has great potential to mitigate its negative social impacts. It is about finding new ways to respond to social needs while increasing the capacity of society to act. Most local governments function as social solution providers.

In every country, intensive efforts are made to enable people with disabilities to read books at a high level and to have these opportunities. Local governments have a great responsibility in helping visually impaired citizens access and benefit from these books. The development of audio libraries can eliminate the book starvation for the impaired citizens. Local governments are the basis of social innovation practices regarding the visually impaired citizens. There are many tools for the visually impaired to continue reading books and one of these tools, registration services, is a good example of innovation for the visually impaired.

In this examination, first of all, the difficulties of the visually impaired were tried to be understood and an awareness about the impaired citizens was tried to be achieved by empathy. Then, how the registration services for visually impaired citizens operating in the province of Istanbul are carried out and the practices related to this subject were examined. Findings obtained are as follows;

In the Museum of Dialogue in the Dark, it is aimed to develop the dialogue of disabled and non-disabled individuals whose communication language is different by breaking the walls of prejudice. The purpose of the visit to the Dialogue in the Dark Museum in this study is; To try to understand the difficulties of the visually impaired, to empathize and to raise awareness. It was understood that sound and touch, feeling and smell are very important for the impaired citizens. Crossing at traffic lights, etc. It has come to light that it is possible to help them find their way, not to help them by getting on their arm, but by describing directions with voice.

By placing audio book reading panels at public vehicle stops, public vehicle parks, visually impaired citizens should be able to easily access informative and guiding information in the areas they need. Emergency phone numbers that can be used in an emergency should be announced regularly. Firefighters, police help, emergency aid, etc. like. In their dark world, it will be more confident and peaceful to know that they can get help when they need it.

Citizens with 40% visual impairment are considered disabled. In addition, visually impaired citizens who can see less, see as light leakage and perceive the environment also benefit from the audio library service. In this context, there is a greater need for regular volunteer readers. Applications to access audiobooks can also be launched on the mobile phone.

In order for our visually impaired citizens living on the Anatolian part of Istanbul to provide more convenient access and transportation and to increase the number of volunteer readers; It would be appropriate to open an Audio Library on the Anatolian part. Since the cost of building such a library is very high, it will be difficult in the short term to make large numbers. But; In the short term, IMM should ensure the construction of an Audio Library in a place suitable for the Anatolian Side, and should include

the opening of such libraries in its long-term strategic planning. Besides that, two vocalization booths can be opened in appropriate places within the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality service buildings.

A law can be enacted that obliges the establishment of voice-over booths in the official buildings of the service buildings of public institutions and organizations, where visually impaired citizens can receive services. They can consist of most of their volunteer readers among the employees.

This system, which works entirely on the principle of volunteering, once again demonstrated the importance of volunteering in Social Innovation. Volunteer readers make voiceovers according to their professional groups. Social Innovations are needed for all these services to be carried out regularly and properly.

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