THE WORK INTEGRATION SOCIAL ENTERPRISES, PROMOTING THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE FURTHEST FROM THE LABOUR MARKET

The 2020 Strategy and the achievement of its goals would move towards the sustainable development of the European Union. Unfortunately, these goals for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth are still far from being achieved, as shown the current data on employment and people in poverty or at risk of poverty and social exclusion in Europe. Also, Europe needs future representative bodies for citizens (European Parliament) and for the Union interests (European Commission) that put in place concrete actions essential to an economic and social policy which addresses the concerns of every citizen, including the most excluded people.

The work integration social enterprises are part of the wider sector of social economy based on three principal fundamentals:

- The primacy of the person and the community purpose;
- The democratic governance and inclusiveness;
- The collective ownership of the profits and surpluses which are reinvested.

ENSIE strongly believes in the possibility to develop ‘another way of entrepreneurship’ that would not be the victim of the profit maximization, of speculations and that would not be done to the detriment of society. Moreover, the social economy initiatives that have shown evidence all around Europe concerning the satisfaction of social and economic needs (integration, training, local and alternative trade, personal services, etc.), usually have a strong local dimension. It represents an important return on investment for the community that has to be taken into account. ENSIE thus calls the candidates to the European Parliament and the European Commission to take into account these three priorities concerning the social economy and to some extend to work integration social enterprises:

To set up a new European Parliament Social Economy Intergroup.

To create within the European Commission a dedicated unit or a transversal department in charge of social economy issues with a specific work integration social enterprises related focus.

To define a European Action Plan for the development of social economy enterprises1, in particular work integration social enterprises, in line with the actions initiated by the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee in the framework of the Social Business Initiative2. This action plan have to focus on the creation of appropriate national legal framework for work integration social enterprises in the countries where it doesn’t exist yet, as well as increasing the visibility of these enterprises and their added-values.

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As direct actors in active social inclusion, ENSIE and the work integration social enterprises more particularly call on:

The implementation of a concrete strategy to fight against poverty and exclusion that aims, among others, the creation of jobs and that takes into account the positive economic and social impact of work integration social enterprises on employment, inclusion of the most disadvantaged people and local development.

The provision of assistance and guidelines beside public authorities in the transposition of the ‘public procurement’ Directive in order to ensure the relevant implementation of the new development opportunities for work integration social enterprises (introduction of social considerations on disadvantaged people employment and reserved contracts).

The establishment of a taxation system, adapted to the Work Integration Social Enterprises’ economic model that fulfill a mission of general interest, with reduced VAT rates and compensation by the State.

The development of a monitoring mechanism for the use of the European Structural and Investment Funds and, in particular, the European Social Fund. This mechanism must ensure that the percentage of the Fund for the reduction of poverty (20%) is respected and the implementation of partnership agreements takes into account the representation of Work Integration Social Enterprises and the promotion and development of this type of companies.

The organization of an annual public hearing beside the European institutions on work integration social enterprises, representing their managers and workers in order to ensure the needs of the sector to be taken into account.
ABOUT ENSIE

ENSIE (European Network of Social Integration Enterprises), asbl, unites national and regional networks of Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs). At the moment, ENSIE a.s.b.l. gathers 24 national and regional networks, representing 16 countries of the European Union (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom) as well as in Serbia and Switzerland.

Together, they totalise some 2,400 Work Integration Social Enterprises, and more than 378,000 salaried persons. All these networks pursue, in a manner adapted to local constraints, objectives of social integration of disfavored publics.

These networks are made up by enterprises of which identifying principles are:

- The social and professional integration of individuals who due to their exclusion and their relegation to a marginal role in society have fallen victim to increasing social and professional handicaps.
- Enterprises at the core of the economic system: work integration social enterprises have decided to carry on their activities at the very core of what is most frequently a major factor in the phenomenon of exclusion: the economic system.
- Enterprises of a strong pedagogical dimension. The work integration social enterprises initiate training and educational programs designed on the basis of existing potential (at professional level and in its participation in society) and develop this individual potential within the enterprise.

ENSIE wants to contribute to a sustainable development within the European Union. This includes the following aspects:

- the job market and the social integration of disadvantaged risk-groups by improving their employment opportunities and productivity,
- the economic viability of work integration social enterprises and the reinforcement of their role in the general economic landscape,
- the promotion of equal opportunities while maintaining the strategy advocated by the European Union in terms of gender mainstreaming.