European Network for Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE) a.s.b.l.

DECLARATION OF ASSOCIATION
OBJECTIVES

The economic, social, and political costs we pay as a result of mass unemployment in Europe are uncomfortably high. How much unemployment, social injustice, and uncertainty is a society able to sustain without unravelling the bonds of its social cohesion? Conversely, to be able to rely on opportunities for employment, for education, and for the acquisition of needed skills is not only an asset for the individual but also for the citizenry and for society as a whole. We have established a European network for social integration enterprises.

We want to contribute to opening up opportunities for all men and women to exercise their rightful claim to participation in social life and be part of the economic changes across the whole spectrum of employment and the scope of retraining facilities. Before our very eyes, the labour market is in the throes of drastic and significant changes. Gainful employment in the industrial sector is progressively giving way to opportunities offered in the sectors of communication, of information and of service provisions, and the habitual forms of employment are on the decline. New forms are on the rise. Career interruptions, which in the past were «the preserve» of women, have now become the norm. Today’s, and tomorrow’s, forms of gainful employment have become more demanding than they ever were in the past. Work involves a greater demand for autonomy and better qualifications. For a growing number of individuals, this changing nature of today’s employment forms constitutes in the first instance a higher risk factor. Lacking the necessary qualifications and adequate job training, without linguistic skills, often encountering additional problems because of ill health or adversity in their personal lives, these individuals are not capable of satisfying the growing demands of an employment market without a clearly defined target base but adapted to individual circumstance. After years of social exclusion, some amongst them have become scarred to such an extent that their re-admission into society may at times seem even impossible.

The enterprises and social initiatives grouped within the European network are actively combating social exclusion by offering such individuals opportunities for employment and retraining. Their social and professional integration is supported by an employment contract of limited duration and a training program that serves as a bridge towards the employment market, or through the generation of permanent employment within the framework of certain social
enterprises. Our enterprises are designed to actively contribute to the prevention of a long-term or permanent exclusion, by focusing on the abilities of the individual to assist himself or herself, as well as on the aspects of participation and of social and civil responsibilities. We advocate in favour of an equitable reallocation of employment opportunities between men and women. It is our aim to keep abreast of and keep pace with the social changes ongoing in our respective nations, unite our resources, and profitably make use of the forces of an interdependent integration of common regions and districts. We are an integral part of the European economy. Our employees generate products and services that are lasting and useful. They sustain the structural development of their respective regions and increase purchasing power. They prospect for and develop, often in collaboration with conventional enterprises, new markets, contributing in this manner to safeguarding and creating jobs within the economy. Always in search of market niches, the socio-economic enterprises often stand at the origin of social innovations and are pioneers on the road to a sustainable economy.

The European social integration enterprises are distinctive in quite a number of different ways. Their political environments, their support instruments, their entrepreneurial philosophies and individualised methods of assistance differ from each other. Their multi-faceted character is a source of enrichment for Europe. What unites them is their common goal and their desire to improve the chances for all individuals to become part of the economic and social exchanges across the range of practical opportunities initiated in the areas of employment and training.

With this objective in mind, we are in total step with the aims of the Commission of European Communities.

THE “IDENTIFYING PRINCIPLES” OF THE “SOCIAL INTEGRATION ENTERPRISES”

1) Enterprises whose social objective is social integration and citizenship. Their fundamental and initial objective is the social and professional integration of individuals who through their exclusion and their relegation to a marginal role in society have fallen victim to increasing social and professional handicaps. The social enterprises continue to play an ongoing role in the social and professional requalification training that restores to individuals at risk, individuals that are vulnerable and have become marginal, the status of gainfully
employed workers. They offer such individuals the opportunity to prepare themselves for their integration into the labour force and to gain access to employment and the training to acquire needed skills. Their existence has for already many years allowed persons to lift themselves out of their passive status of being merely recipients of social welfare and to become active contributors through their social and professional introduction into the employment market. The social and professional integration moreover covers the aspect of equality between the sexes. The participation of women in the labour force under the banner of equality for all members, the creation of structures necessary to achieve this goal, and the institution of mechanisms leading men to participate in the tasks of providing care thus constitute a genuine challenge for the social integration enterprises.

The social integration enterprises do, in effect, represent true potential for “citizen” involvement. They bank on the values of participation, solidarity, and respect for the aptitudes and abilities of every individual to make his or her personal contribution. These values bestow true content and meaning to the rights of the European citizens.

2) Enterprises at the core of the economic system.
In their drive towards their social objectives, the social integration 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. Faced with concrete situations and their inherent pressures, all of the actors involved in social integration enterprises are forced to overcome the challenges of productivity and, by this fact, of integration. This aspect of integration in a concrete economic context that is subjected to market demand constitutes an effective instrument for the individual and collective upgrading of excluded and marginal persons. This very position induces an obligation towards continuous innovation impacting on the very core of the enterprise: its management methods, organisational structure, participation systems. It further leads to financial and partnership innovations in recognising the “value added inclusion” of the service of gainfully employed integrated individuals to society and economic actors.

3) Enterprises of a strong pedagogical dimension.
The social integration enterprises initiate educational programs designed on the basis of existing potential within the enterprise.
• Programs of socialisation based, on the one hand, on the rights and privileges of the employed persons with reference to the labour codes and collective agreements and, on the other hand, on the human entrepreneurial community.
• Programs designed for professional training within a concrete production environment where professional know-how is learned, initiated, and acquired by and through professional practical experiences.
• Programs covering the scope for integration based, on the one hand, on the necessity for dealing with problems and, on the other hand, on the management of integration at the workplace or place of production.
• Programs of citizenship based on information and the training of the role of the employed individuals within the activity and the administration of the enterprise and on the practice of democratic economy.

THE FUNCTIONS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION ENTERPRISES”

Integrated members of the social economy, the social integration enterprises can bring elements necessary to the reinforcement of European construction, by their cohesive position between economic and social aspects, by their entrepreneurial effectiveness, by their social identity, and by their values of coherence and participation. They are capable of a modest participation in the emergence of a new way of looking at society, a different way of interpreting the economy no longer geared towards the notion of exclusion but, on the contrary, towards a sustainable development that is considered an integral aspect, such as the combination of the economic, social, and ecological factors. Confident of its convictions, the European network for social integration enterprises is built up around three functions:

1) The function of communication and liaison
The exchanges between European networks of social integration enterprises have made it possible to match common fundamentals to multiple initiatives at the very heart of different countries of the European Community. These exchanges need to become organised and joined together in order to pursue the identification and the transfer of “proper practices”. The European network for social integration enterprises will take for its mission the extension of these exchanges and their expansion across all of the countries of the European Community. The evolution of these initiatives and their elaboration are to lead to a continuation of the debate started in each one of the countries regarding the
place and the role of enterprises of social integration, public policies relating to them, progress achieved, and difficulties encountered by each one of these initiatives in question.

2) A function of analysis, research, and innovative prospectives
The social integration enterprises are daily implementing programs of entrepreneurial know-how, management, organisation, and of commercial, pedagogical, and social nature, which it is necessary to analyse in order to pinpoint the potential and the economic and social innovations that lie contained within them. The European network for social integration enterprises needs to function as a laboratory for analysis, for research, and for future achievement. In the first place, and starting from its experiences, it needs to study the opportunity and the legal viability of a legal European framework that is favourable to the development of social integration enterprises and will lead to the definition of the status of these enterprises, the financing of their value added integration, and the status of integrated gainfully employed individuals.

3) A political function
The European network for social integration enterprises needs to build a viable body of representation with the European political and administrative authorities of complementary nature, and establish links and a synergy with the existing organisations and networks. The network needs to contribute to the definition and the promotion of a European politic aiming for the development of this social and economic enterprise, by stimulating the elaboration of recommendations or directives that will lead to the recognition of social integration enterprises. It needs to function as the bearer and promoter with the European authorities of local experimentation, bringing through social and professional integration solutions to the problem of exclusion, with reference, for instance, to expressions like “Social elite in the public market place”.

ACEI Spain (Catalonia)
BAG Arbeit Germany
BDV Austria
CECOP Europe
CNEI France
RES Belgium (Wallonia)
SOEB VERBAND Austria
SST Belgium (Flanders)