On the 20th of May, in the framework of the European Semester process, the European Commission (EC) published its “Spring Package” containing the Communication on the 2020 Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) and the CSRs for each Member State.

This year, recommendations are structured to reflect the new socio-economic reality of the Coronavirus crisis and encourage Member States to implement measures designed to:

- Mitigate the immediate health and socio-economic impact of the pandemic.
- Restore growth while supporting green and digital transition in the Single Market.

These CSRs focus on the 4 dimensions of competitive sustainability that were presented by the European Commission in its Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy published in December 2019.

ENSIE has analysed the Communication of the 2020 CSRs and presented its position on main topics related to Work Integration Social Enterprises.

**Key objectives and dimensions of the 2020 CSRs**

I. Stability

II. Fairness

III. Environmental sustainability

IV. Productivity and competitiveness
The Communication announced that the "EU economy is expected to experience a recession of historic proportions this year". A coordinated approach is needed in order to limit the economic damages, ensure a robust recovery and implement measures leading to a sustainable and inclusive growth.

The unemployment rate increased in the EU and is “forecast to rise from 6,7% in 2019 to 9% in 2020 and then fall to around 8% in 2021”.

An important impact on the social conditions is mentioned, especially for people. “It is a priority to mitigate the social impacts and avoid permanent rise in poverty and inequalities”.

ENSIE welcomes the Commission’s commitment to protect those who were already in a vulnerable situation prior to the crisis and who are strongly affected by the crisis. ENSIE represents Work Integration Social Enterprises that work with disadvantaged people and help them to get socially and professionally integrated thereby contributing to the poverty reduction. To ensure that no one is left behind in this new and ambitious EU growth strategy and to ensure that the impact of the crisis is recovered as expected, the Commission needs to ensure the accessibility to its support measures for the profit and non-profit organisations on the ground, especially measures undertaken by the EU regarding flexibility and finance”.

The Communication also states that “The pandemic underlines the interconnectedness of economic, social and environmental spheres and the need for a holistic strategy to recovery. For this reason, the integration of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals in the European Semester (...) is even more important than it was before”.

INTRODUCTION
ENSIE together with its members is actively involved into the European Semester process and supports this initiative of the European Commission to follow more closely the achievements of the Member States in the area of SDGs through the European Semester. In fact, ENSIE is deeply concerned by the implementation of the SDGs at national levels as WISEs contribute to 10 [1] out of 17 SDGs through employment and education opportunities as well as their contribution to growth and sustainable economic development.

I. STABILITY

Due to the ongoing Coronavirus crisis, the recommendations also present the activation of the general escape clause that allows Member States to temporarily depart from the budgetary requirements (that would normally apply) in order to preserve jobs, help companies and support recovery. At the same time, it will enable the EC and the Council to undertake the necessary policy coordination measures within the framework of the Stability and Growth Pact.

ENSIE welcomes this measure as according to the study ENSIE led with its members on "The impact of the COVID-19 on WISEs", there is a real need for Member States to focus on their support to national WISEs that had as consequences of the crisis a drop down in revenue and employment, had to close down temporarily or partially or that are at serious risk to go into bankruptcy.

[1] Goal 1 - No poverty - Goal 4 - Quality education - Goal 5 - Gender equality – Goal 8 - Decent work and economic growth - Goal 9 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure - Goal 10 - Reduced inequalities - Goal 11 - Sustainable cities and communities - Goal 12 - Responsible consumption and production - Goal 13 - Climate change - Goal 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions and communities
The Communication also presents measures that Member States undertook to support affected workers [2] and SMEs [3].

ENSIE welcomes the support measures which are taken by Member States towards the SMEs as WISEs usually belong to this enterprises category. ENSIE also advocates for an EU intervention that encourage stronger integration and harmonisation, reduce fragmentation and inefficiencies, and promote cross border collaboration. To help European SMEs, in particular WISEs, to recover after the crisis and to scale up, sustainable growth is required.

II. FAIRNESS

The Recommendations remind us that vulnerable groups must not be left behind and the European Pillar of Social Right (EPSR) remains the compass for policy action to ensure that.

[2] Reduce hours worked or temporarily suspend workers while compensating with public income support.
[3] Through subsidies loans, State guarantees, delay the tax payment or social security contributions.
ENSIE is pleased to read that the European Pillar of Social Rights’ principles will be the framework of all EU actions and encourage the implementation of these principles together with its members through WISEs inclusive and innovative activities. ENSIE also hopes that the EPSR’s implementation will be reinforced through the future Action Plan on EPSR planned for the beginning of 2021.

The Communication mentions that “*Structural change should also be encouraged through actions to promote innovative forms of work and entrepreneurship including social economy*”.

ENSIE is glad to see the recognition of the Social economy and its enterprises as innovative actors but also their work done in order to contribute to the inclusion of the vulnerable people and in job creation. Indeed, WISEs are key implementers of the SDGs and the European Pillar of Social Rights principles, and if supported could play a key role in the social and economic crisis recovery.

These CSRs focus on guaranteeing people the right *to develop skills in particular digital ones*. The crisis showed how important are the access to distant learning and IT devices and the knowledge of the digital skills. Digital technology also contributes to greener solutions for our societies and economies.
Everyday WISEs contribute to bridging the basic skills gap in Europe. In fact, WISEs have a strong educational dimension intended to strengthen the capacities and skills of workers within the company through adapted and individual social support. The educational programs are indeed tailor-made to reveal the potential of each person.

ENSIE also supports the recognition of non-formal education alongside formal education as well as the strengthening of the validation and certification of skills acquired through non-formal education. The key role played by civil society organisations and work integration social enterprises in the provision of lifelong learning services should also be better recognised and supported.

Finally, the social dialogue is mentioned as key instrument for Member States “to ensure that measures taken are successful, inclusive and sustainable”.

ENSIE is glad to read that social dialogue is promoted as an instrument to ensure successful and inclusive measures. The participation of interested stakeholders as civil society organisations in the shaping of national policies is crucial and reinforce the feeling of justice, citizenship but also the empowerment of citizens. These participatory practices are also used by WISEs which strive to promote democracy and participatory practices within their organisations. ENSIE finally calls the EU to encourage other organisations to use these principles and practices in their environment.
III. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

“Investing in sustainable mobility and the circular economy represents an opportunity to improve productivity and foster green transition”.

ENSIE supports the European Commission’s request to invest and to support the circular economy. According to the results of the annual “IMPACT-WISEs” study carried out in 2019, the main sector in which WISEs operate is the waste management [4]. These types of recycling/ reusing WISEs therefore address the three pillars of sustainability: the economic, social and environmental dimensions.

IV. PRODUCTIVITY AND COMPETITIVENESS

Digital technology is essential to a more robust recovery of EU societies and economies.

[4] Recycling, sorting, waste collection and the creation of various articles while employing recycled materials and environmentally friendly operating techniques and methods.
Due to the digitalisation phenomenon, new types of work are created and new skills are required. In this framework, it is essential for the EU and national authorities to ensure the accessibility of the education available programmes for disadvantage people.

NEXT STEPS

- The Commission calls on the European Council to endorse and adopt the CSRs for 2020-2021.
- The Commission calls on the Member States to fully implement them and in timely manner, in a dialogue with social partners, civil society organisations and other stakeholders at all levels.
- The Commission calls on the Member States to urgently adopt the Multiannual Financial Framework and to prepare the relevant programmes on the basis of the CSRs.
If you have any remarks or if you want more information, don't hesitate to contact ENSIE:

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