

Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISE) Event

Follow-up

3 June 2015

On 18-19 May, Eurodiaconia, ENSIE and EASPD held a seminar on Work Integration Social Enterprises.

The event aimed to introduce the important role played by WISE to incorporate socially excluded people, as well as people with mental or physical disabilities, into society, through adapted work.

May 18

The first day was dedicated to sharing of experiences and discussions between the members of the three organising the event European networks Eurodiaconia, ENSIE and EASPD welcomed WISEs from 11 European countries: [PRO ARBEIT](#) & [FAIRHAUS](#) from Germany, AAC SHIRAK DIOCESE SOCIAL-EDUCATIONAL CENTRE from Armenia, [RENEWAL](#) (the Czech Republic), [PEDALEN](#) (Sweden), [HUMANA NOVA](#) & [DOMACI](#) (Croatia), [De Omslag](#) (the Netherlands), [Frame of Mind](#) (the United Kingdom), [NASO](#) (Bulgaria), [CHANCE B](#) (Austria), [REHAB GROUP](#) (Ireland), [JOB-LINK](#) (Belgium) & [CUDV Draga](#) (Slovenia). Each organisation presented its activities on stands during the morning, which enabled the participants learn about various products and services.

After a brief presentation of the European framework of WISEs, the participants split into small groups for a speed dating. The discussion was structured around three main topics: interest in the workshop, main issues and challenges for WISEs in the participants' countries and future priorities for improvement at EU level. The EU-level networks proposed a follow-up session to share experiences and challenges with the participants and to identify key priorities for WISEs to address at EU level. A networking dinner concluded this day of sharing between the WISEs representatives.



May 19

The second day of the event was opened to a wider audience, which had the opportunity to learn more about WISEs' role for the society, good practices, policy and funding framework. Each participant had the chance to directly exchange with the WISEs representatives through the stands showcasing member organisations' projects.

Three panel sessions focused on specific topics: the role of public authorities and the EU in ensuring an enabling framework for WISEs, the role of private finance in the development of WISEs and the link between the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and WISEs.

The first session explored both EU and national framework of WISEs with representatives from Act Group Croatia – Teodor Petričević, presenting the state of play and challenges in

the country and Kiril Nikolov from the European Commission DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs who shared the achievements and the priorities of the European Commission on the topic. Alain Herdies from Jeunes Schaerbeekoïses au Travail ended the panel presentations with specific examples of public procurement good practices in order to support the development of WISEs in Belgium.

The second panel analysed different alternatives of private finance involvement in WISE projects. Elinor de Pret, from the European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA), underlined the growing importance of investors looking for a social impact in their investments, as well as the parallel need of facilitators providing both financial and non-financial support to increase the impact of social projects. Christelle Bastin, from the Belgian credit cooperative CRÉDAL, presented the organisation's record of successful projects helped by socially-engaged investors, mentioning the cooperative's key role in bridging liquidity needs of WISE. Sébastien Lévrier, from the French organization AVISE, stressed the potential for WISE of socially responsible private procurement from mainstream business.

The third panel explored how the legal framework of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities can influence the future evolution of WISE. Luk Zelderloo,

Secretary-General of EASPD, made clear how the Convention stresses the key role of employment to facilitate the ultimate goal of full participation, inclusion and equal citizenship among persons with disabilities. In the same vein, Sabrina Ferraina (EASPD) stressed how the Convention UN CRPD is especially challenging for the sector of sheltered workshops. For this reason, dialogue between stakeholders is fundamental to achieve further developments in the sector and greater connection with mainstream labour markets.



As a first experience of practice sharing between members of these three EU-level social NGOs, the WISE Event represented a great opportunity for Eurodiaconia, ENSIE, EASPD and their members to exchange on similar experiences and challenges and set up the basis of future relevant cooperation to favour the social and professional inclusion of people with disabilities and groups at risk of poverty into labour markets and society.