



WISEs contribution & ENSIE recommendations for the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights in the framework of the visit to the EU

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Introduction

The [European Network of Social Integration Enterprises](#), ENSIE, represents the interests of 29 national, regional and local networks of 'Work Integration Social Enterprises' (WISEs) from 21 European countries striving for more inclusive and integrated forms of employment at the European level. WISEs are defined by three identifying principles: they are enterprises that operate at the core of the economic system and have a strong pedagogical dimension that allows them to reach their main objective which is the social and professional integration of disadvantaged people. On ENSIE's official website, you can find a detailed [mapping of European WISEs](#) which are sorted by countries.

WISEs contribution to the implementation of the 15 out of 20 European Pillar of Social Rights principles (EPSR)¹

Through diversified and innovative activities, WISEs do directly and indirectly contribute to the implementation of the [European Pillar of Social Rights principles](#). This year, to celebrate the 3rd anniversary of the EPSR, ENSIE published a [Booklet on WISEs good practices in implementing the EPSR](#) and contributed to the European Commission's (EC) public consultation on "[Have your say on reinforcing Social Europe](#)" that aimed to prepare the EC Action Plan for the implementation of the EPSR planned to be published at the beginning of 2021.

ENSIE proposed recommendations for principles WISEs contribute to the most in their daily functioning.

- **Principle 1: Education, training and life-long learning**

WISEs promote and use the work-based learning methodology² in continuing vocational education and training (CVET³), addressing mainly people in disadvantaged situations and socially excluded, improving their employability by providing, depending on the situation and on the countries' traditions, the necessary basic, soft or transversal skills, work placements accompanied by job coaching and mentoring etc.

¹ Principles: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20.

² Work-based learning (WBL) is a powerful way to support adult learning and human resource development in enterprises.

³ CVET is education or training after initial education and training – or after entry into working life aimed at helping individuals to improve or update their knowledge and/or skills, acquire new skills for a career move or retraining and/or continue their personal or professional development.

In this framework, the recognition of informal and non-formal learning to favour a better matching of workers' skills on the labour market is crucial. ENSIE thus supports the [2012 Council Recommendation](#) and the initiatives of Member States offering citizens more possibilities to validate the skills acquired outside the institutional education and training systems.

In addition, what is lacking in the EU recently published proposals⁴ are concrete actions towards the most disadvantaged to develop basic and digital skills.

Finally, to improve the employment opportunities of low-skilled adults in Europe, Member States should continue to put in place pathways for upskilling through programs established in cooperation with social partners and education and training providers –WISEs included–, as well as local, regional and national authorities.

- **Principle 4: Active support to employment**

Active labour market measures for WISEs are effective in supporting the employment of disadvantaged (especially long-term unemployed) people. Governments can choose to support WISEs and thus to favour the integration of disadvantaged people in the traditional labour market through active labour market measures.

In fact, by choosing the WISEs model, public authorities can transform the costs⁵ associated with disadvantaged people into a real investment generating both economic and social return as money put in these measures is more than balanced by the financial revenues produced by the disadvantaged people's professional integration. This is the case in France for instance where in 2018, the State decided to fight poverty and social exclusion by investments in integration through an economic activity that develops almost 4,5€ of turnover for 1€ of subsidy⁶.

Finally, according to the latest results of the ENSIE's "[Impact-WISEs](#)" study realised in 2019 (2018 data)⁷, 64.57% of disadvantaged workers have managed to find a job in the same WISE, in another WISE, in the traditional labour market, became entrepreneurs or found qualifying training. This study measures the social impact of WISEs and demonstrates the positive impact they bring to society.

- **Principle 8: Social dialogue and involvement of workers**

There is a need to promote the social economy enterprises model and their participative and democratic principles as alternative forms of business governance that promote the full involvement of workers who actively participate in setting their policies and decision-making.

⁴ The latest European Commission's publications on the Digital Education Agenda, the European Skills Agenda as well as on the European Education Area and the Pact for Skills.

⁵ The costs linked to the disadvantaged person can be: minimum income, unemployment benefits, health costs, etc.

⁶ On the economic return, please consult the article "[Efficacité économique et efficacité sociale... en même temps !](#)", Fédération des Entreprises d'Insertion, 2018.

⁷ 719 WISEs participated in the study representing 10 European countries and 50,730 workers (38,022 disadvantaged workers). The results of the study vary each year depending on the participating member networks.

ENSIE supports the reinforcement of participative and democratic governance in all organisations, including enterprises, based on the Social Economy model. This governance model is a proven instrument to ensure successful and inclusive measures, as showcased in the Rights to Grow project. Furthermore, the participation of interested stakeholders as civil society organisations in the shaping of national and European policies is crucial and should be developed as it reinforces the feeling of justice, citizenship but also empowerment of citizens. ENSIE thus encourages all organisations to use these principles and practices in their environment.

The Green Deal: the social economy and WISEs are missing!

ENSIE welcomes the emphasis put on the fact that the ecological transition should be just and inclusive and the creation of a **"Just Transition Fund"**. The Commission took into account the potential trade-offs between economic, environmental and social objectives as it reaffirms: "The European Pillar of Social Rights will guide action in ensuring that no one is left behind." Indeed, the transition needs to be inclusive or it will not be accepted by the citizens. In this context, it is important to take the most vulnerable into account: "providing access to re-skilling programs, jobs in new economic sectors, or energy-efficient housing". **As some of the most vulnerable people often hold low skilled jobs, they need support to adapt to changes in the economy, transferring from declining sectors to growing ones. The European Social Fund+, the Skills Agenda and the Youth Guarantee, which are to be updated, should be used for this purpose.**

Participation is one of the main principles of Social Economy and ENSIE is pleased to see that the European Commission is using this tool to implement the Green Deal as it will need a large support from the population.

Even though a lot of good things appeared in the Green Deal, **ENSIE is worried about the fact that the Social Economy itself was not mentioned.** The Social Economy goes hand in hand with the circular economy. In fact, the majority of WISEs operate in the waste management sector (reusing, recycling, sorting etc) contributing at the same time to the sustainability of our societies and the social inclusion of the most vulnerable people. WISEs work should be acknowledged by the Commission and included in the Green Deal. **The Social Economy sector should be a leader of the ecological transition and be supported financially and legally by the EU.**

NEXT Generation EU and the Recovery and Resilience Facility Plans (RRFP)

After the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Commission has identified 14 industrial ecosystems for the recovery and the **"social economy and proximity" are included.** This recognition is key to convince Member States to include social economy actors, WISEs and social services within the RRFP (presentation in attachment). Unfortunately, **the lack of transparency of the process and of the accessibility for civil society organisations to the decision-making processes, gives no certitude that money will be invested in this industrial ecosystem.**

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The role and the impact of EU socio-economic governance on poverty, inequality, and social exclusion

The European Semester is one of the main tools of the European Union for the coordination of economic policies across Member States. It allows EU countries to discuss their economic and budget plans and monitor progress at specific times throughout the year.

This process is clear in its phases and is composed by the publication of the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy which presents the general guidelines of the EU at the beginning of each cycle of the year. Then, Country Reports are published by the EU analysing the economic situation and progress for each Member State in their implementation of their reform agenda. Then, the Member States present their National Reform Programmes (NRPs) and their stability or convergence programmes to the Commission which finally publishes the "Country Specific Recommendations" that Member States are invited to follow and implement.

This process allows civil society organisations to be involved and bring their inputs in all stages of the Semester process at both levels (national and European). **The use of the full potential of this tool can bring a real positive impact on people's lives, their well-being and fight social exclusion and poverty.** However, unfortunately there are still some gaps at the European and national levels that prevent the efficient use of the Semester.

In the current European twin transition context, **a balance between reforms and investments in the green, digital transitions and social policies tackling exclusion and poverty are needed. The social aspect should be more emphasized** across all the seven flagship areas of the current Semester process whereas it is only included in one. **The new EU growth strategy which is the EU Green Deal should be a social deal too.** Furthermore, **the European Pillar of Social Rights principles should remain at the centre of EU and national policies to ensure that no one is left behind in the recovery period and after.**

Finally, the **European Commission should be vigilant and demanding towards the respect of the criteria of Member States' consultations with local, regional and national civil society organisations** as at this moment, in some countries negotiations are ongoing behind closed doors giving no opportunities to these actors to give their opinion on the RRFP, impact future social policies and represent vulnerable people's real needs on the ground.

ENSIE is more than pleased to organise a virtual visit of 2 or 3 European WISEs for the UN Special Rapporteur.