



ENSIE Contribution to the High-Level Conference of the European Social Charter

as a step to take further commitments under the Charter

3-4 July 2024, Vilnius, Lithuania

I. Introduction

ENSIE, the [European Network for Social Integration Enterprises](#), represents the interests of national and regional networks of 'Work Integration Social Enterprises' (WISEs) striving for more inclusive and integrated forms of employment at European level. Together with its 30 members from the EU and beyond, ENSIE plays a key role in raising awareness on the Social Charter's rights and strives to ensure their effective implementation on the ground when it comes to socio-professional inclusion of disadvantaged groups (migrants, Roma, women, young people, disabled people etc.).

There are approximately 2.8 million social economy entities in Europe which offer sustainable solutions to key socio-economic challenges we are facing¹. The Social Economy Action Plan recognizes their contribution to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) principles and its 2030 headline targets as well as of the Sustainable development goals at EU and global level.

II. Work Integration Social Enterprises

WISEs are a subset of the social economy which take various forms in Europe, and ENSIE define them as organisation which identify with the three following principle:

- a) **They are enterprises whose social objective is the socio-professional integration of vulnerable people** who, through their exclusion and their relegation to a marginal role in society, have fallen victim to increasing social and professional handicaps.
- b) **They are enterprises operating at the core of the economic system.** In their drive towards their social objectives, the 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. Faced with concrete situations and their

¹ "Building an economy that works for people: an action plan for the social economy", European Commission, 2021

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inherent pressures, all of the actors involved in work integration social 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.

- c) **They are enterprises with a strong pedagogical dimension.** Indeed, they are the ideal environment for the competence improvement for adults belonging to disadvantaged groups, also when it comes to long-term training of employees. WISEs improve the employability of disadvantaged people by job coaching, mentoring, skills assessment, identification of an individual career path, job shadowing, on-the-job training, up to inclusion in conventional companies of the labour market.

In this framework, WISEs are deeply concerned by, among others, the article 1, of the [revised European Social Charter](#) fully believing that everybody must have the right to work! Also article 9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 19 §1 §3 §11, 22, 20 and 30 are crucial for WISEs which contribute to their implementation through their daily activities. Concretely, a job contract is an important step to access social protection and security. It allows these people to be fully active citizens of the society. Besides, WISEs often promote participatory democracy practices within their organisations. These practices reinforce the feeling of justice, citizenship but also the empowerment of workers.

In this context, ENSIE fully endorses the European Social Charter and its articles and calls Member States to commit to its principles and, to the remaining seven States² that are still bound by the 1961 Charter, to ratify the revised Charter. To conclude, the network also calls Member States and the EU institutions to ensure the support for civil society organisations' involvement at national levels policy-making processes for an inclusive representation of people's needs and challenges on the ground. ENSIE believes in this Charter as in the basis of the societies but also of all the EU initiatives for a more sustainable and inclusive social future.

III. ENSIE contribution

Title: Empowering Communities: WISEs and the Social Charter's Principles in Action

Content : ENSIE would focus on showcasing the link and the added value of the social economy entities/enterprises, especially focusing on WISEs, with and towards the implementation of the Social Charter's principles. In addition, it is important to tend to coherence and harmonization at policy level when it is about fundamental social and human rights in general. We are living a

² Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Iceland, Luxembourg, Poland, and the United Kingdom.

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political momentum where EU current social policies (the EPSR, Social Economy Action plan, UNCRPD, etc.) supplement the implementation of the Social Charter. Concretely, ENSIE will highlight:

- WISEs contribution to the Social Charter implementation and its importance to ensure socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable groups.
- The importance of a transparent and regular dialogue among all the actors on the common commitment towards the implementation of the principles of the Social Charter. This entails strategic partnerships between policy makers and the civil society organizations representing social economy. These dialogues must involve the European Union on the necessity of EU accession to the Charter, ensuring social and fundamental social and human rights are respected in all Member States.
- Recommendations on further steps to undertake to improve access to social rights for disadvantaged people.

Potential format: plenary session, workshop, round table.

Contact person:



ENSIE – Rue du Commerce 72 – 1040 Brussels

Aziza Yussupova – ENSIE Policy Officer

azizam.yussupova@ensie.org

<http://www.ensie.org/>

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