

OLD CHALLENGES, NEW PATHWAYS: SOCIAL ENTERPRISES FOSTERING IMPROVEMENT AND SOCIAL INNOVATION ON SOCIAL INCLUSION

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EDITORIAL

This is the **last** newsletter of the project “*Old Challenges New Pathways – Social enterprises fostering improvement and social innovation in social inclusion*”. The OCNP project is a 2 year European initiative (Sept. 2013-Jul. 2015) funded through the [Lifelong Learning Programme](#).

Consisting in a series of exchange visits and networking among partners from 5 European countries, the project focuses on work integration social enterprises (WISEs) – organisations that provide goods and services through a commercial approach.

This newsletter has the intent of sharing the final seminar of the project as well as the field trip and debates that took place during the transnational meeting in the city of Porto, while concurrently presenting the lessons learned from the project.

PROJECT PARTNERS

- [A3S Associação para o Empreendedorismo Social e a Sustentabilidade do Terceiro Sector](#) (PT)
- [Scuola Centrale Formazione](#) (IT)
- [Samenwerkingsverband Sociale Teverkstelling vzw](#) (BE)
- [Focus – Association for mental health Care](#) (RC)
- [Centre d’Initiative et de Gestion Local Strassen a.s.b.l.](#) (LU)



FINAL SEMINAR

The final seminar of the project “*Old challenges, New pathways: social enterprises fostering improvement and social innovation on social inclusion*” took place on June 26th at Atmosfera M (Porto), with the participation of several national and international stakeholders who directly engage in work related with the work integration of people in a situation of social vulnerability.

This seminar constituted the perfect setting for the debate and further reflection on questions associated with networking at a regional, national and European level and in tackling the challenges brought about by unemployment and the fight against poverty. The seminar focused on the deepening of knowledge and exchange of experiences on the different realities of Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) spread throughout Europe. In addition, the seminar served as a window for the presentation of the [RESIT](#) strategy - Portuguese Network of Work Integration Social Enterprises - as well as the results of the institutional and networking tasks that have been developed at the European level, particularly through its relation with [ENSIE](#) – *European Network of Social Integration Enterprises*.

After a short introduction of the project and of the seminar’s programme conducted by Carlota Quintão (A3S), Sofia Mora (A3S), shared the lessons learned from the “*Old challenges, New pathways*” project. She highlighted the existing diverse types of responses employed in different European countries with regard to the characteristics of the target groups (including its productivity levels and autonomy in labour market integration) and the established relations with employers and public policy. She also mentioned the common challenge that is the one of the funding of WISEs, namely through the commercialisation of goods and services. An additional learned lesson is the importance of promoting public debate, political lobbying and networked action both at the national and European level, as key factors for the affirmation and sustainability of WISEs.

The European partners presented the national experience of WISEs in each one of their countries. Rebecca Minghetti (SCF) presented the Italian experience; Hana Habibalová (FOKUS) the Czech experience; Werner Leemans (SST) and Pietre Hendrickx (Ghent municipality) the Belgium experience. Finally, and also at the European level, Maria Nieves presented the general strategic lines of [FAEDEI](#) – *Federación de Asociaciones Empresariales de Empresas de Inserción* and [ENSIE](#).

At the national level, the RESIT strategy was presented as well as the work developed by the WISEs of some of its members: Rosa Silva presented ARTENAVE’s action in Moimenta da Beira whereas José Ricardo talked about Centro Social de Soutelo’s work in Gondomar. Some data regarding the work integration of disadvantaged people in the regular labour market and innovative traits of WISEs was also presented. In addition to these speakers, other key intervenients of the social economy sector were also in attendance. Carla Vale from the Gondomar Employment Centre spoke about public policies regarding work integration in the municipality. Filipe Pinto from Padre António Vieira Institute (IPAV) shared information about the Local Development of Communitarian Base. Lastly, Américo Mendes from the Portuguese Catholic University closed the seminar by discussing the role of public policy in work integration.

All of the PowerPoint presentations are available both in [portuguese](#) and [english](#) in A3S’ website.

THE RESIT STRATEGY

The core mission of [RESIT](#) is to pursue more and better bridges for employment and social integration of disadvantaged groups, as well as more cooperation between the public and private sectors and social economy organisations.

RESIT is an informal network of social economy organisations that work voluntarily since November 2011. RESIT is a member of *ENSIE - European Network of Social Integration Enterprises* - since August 2013.

The participation in this project constituted an essential step in the consolidation of the cooperation strategy at the European level, through ENSIE, which had always been of the core goals of the network. At the national level the RESIT members were the project's fundamental stakeholders and have had an active participation throughout.

RESIT's strategy for the upcoming years hangs on three fundamental axis:

1. To implement new methodologies/strategies to regulate the relation between offer and demand of the labour market;
2. To capitalise on the acquired knowledge to create and test a new WISE model for Portugal;
3. To defend a public policy of work integration

RESIT's strategy for the upcoming years is to strengthen cooperation at the European level through ENSIE, to promote the implementation of effective models and good practices of socio-professional integration of disadvantaged people, and to reinforce, expand and professionalise its own organisational structure.

www.resit-europe4all.pt

RESIT MEMBERS

- [A3S](#)
- [ADSG](#)
- [ANARP](#)
- [APDES](#)
- [APPV](#)
- [Aria Jardins](#)
- [ARTENAVE](#)
- [Centro Social de Soutelo](#)

FIELD TRIP TO CENTRO SOCIAL DE SOUTELO

Besides having a final debate on the project's conclusion and steps to be taken next, the last transnational meeting also included a field trip to Centro Social de Soutelo.

Centro Social de Soutelo is a Private Institution of Social Solidarity (IPSS), whose mission is to satisfy the legitimate needs and expectations of the community, whilst promoting equality, participation, cooperation and solidarity. The Centre provides services in the educational field (Kindergarten, Pre-school, and Leisure Centre) services to the elderly and dependants (Day-care centre, housing support) and in the area of communitarian intervention (Guaranteed Minimum Income, WISEs, among other projects). Besides the staff working in these domains, the organisation has a strong local communitarian dynamic with the participation of 200 people. In this domain several cultural and social activities are carried out: Choir, Theatre, Yoga, and teams of volunteers who gather food for the Food Bank.

Centro Social de Soutelo has two WISEs: Sorrisos I and Sorrisos II. Their mission is the socio-professional reintegration of long-term unemployed or disadvantaged people vis-à-vis the labour market, with the aim to train professionally and ensure a social response in home support services while contributing to improve the quality of life and well-being of clients.



The two WISEs, with their 17 workers provided social value estimated in 109.267,00 in the year of 2011. The WISEs were funded by the State (70%) and by the sale of goods and services (30%).

Their main clients include 79 private institutions and 3 organisations (1 training company, 1 school and 1 association). Its main partners are the Health Care Centre and the Employment Institute.

The WISEs provide services such as personal hygiene for elderly and dependants, transportation of children/youngsters with special needs, social laundry, sale of geriatric material, among many others. Currently, the WISEs have 25 workers. 73 people already went through the integration process, from which 47 were able to get a job in the regular labour market. Half of those involved in the process were integrated in the Centre itself.



One of the innovative factors of these WISEs is the use of participative methodologies, involving the workers, conferring it with an innovative trait in the style of management.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE “OLD CHALLENGES, NEW PATHWAYS” PROJECT

The “*Old challenges, New pathways: social enterprises fostering improvement and social innovation on social inclusion*” project consisted of an exchange of knowledge with a high impact on its participants. Many learnings of subjective and intangible value were acquired and others that we seek to share here.

The Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) respond to the need to integrate those in a situation of vulnerability such as mental illness, disability, homeless, incarceration, drug addiction, among others, in the labour market. WISEs are entrepreneurial initiatives organised according to a logic of economic sustainability that offer goods and services with the primary objective of integrating people who are away from the labour market. Their mission is to create conditions for empowerment and training thus enhancing pedagogical approaches. To this end, they operate under a logic of an integrated approach that includes the dimension of employment (training, skills development and job search), the social monitoring (together with support structures in the area of health, social, housing) and the role of peers (workers with more experience help the new workers in their integration).

In a nutshell, we share the 6 main learned lessons from OCNP:

1 // There is a profound cultural and historical diversity in the visited countries, to which corresponds a **heterogeneity of experiences and models of WISEs**. These vary according to the different characteristics of the labour market, public policy and traditions of intervention of the Civil Society.

2 // We see that there is a clear cut strategic bet on **the quality of the products and in their commercial affirmation**. The competitiveness is developed through cooperation with different agents from the local economy and through the diversity and complementarity of businesses between WISEs.

3 // WISEs promote **social responses adapted** to the characteristics of their target audiences (i.e. levels of productivity vs autonomy in the integration in the regular labour market) and regarding the existing structure of opportunities (i.e. relation with employers, public policy).

4 // The **economic sustainability** is the biggest and most transversal challenge. WISEs generate revenues through the sale of goods and services but they are still dependent on the State. The role of the State is fundamental through direct financial support and/or through sub-contracting for the acquisition of goods and services. The current challenge is related with the contraction of the role of the State, felt in all of the countries, and the subsequent need to broaden the generation of revenue.

5 // The current **European debate on WISEs** constitutes an opportunity for the recognition and affirmation of the work integration social enterprises.

6 // A strong **presence in representative networks of political bargaining**, as well as the creation of strong dynamics of **regional, national and European cooperation** are key factors for the affirmation of the work integration sector. A relationship with the European Commission was also established through the representation structure of ENSIE and through an overall understanding of the European challenges.

Lastly, we highlight the added value this project brought about for Portugal and for RESIT. As a result of the project, there was a clear approximation to the members of ENSIE, which is illustrated by the implementation of a new ongoing project - “*Strengthening emergent professional profiles in the third sector*”. Additionally, as a follow-up to the institutional contacts, there are potential partnerships for different projects being discussed: the status of social enterprise (Czech Republic); results and impact evaluation (Belgium) and development of networking strategies and support for new initiatives (Italy).

THE VOICE OF THE PARTNERS

“In recent years, experts of social economy have begun to associate the reality of the social enterprise with the concept of “hybridisation”: thanks to their capability to mix and joint together the three parties, that make up a whole society (State, market and civil society), WISEs amount as a model more inclusive and equitable, oriented to the production of economic value, not only for the social enterprise and its disadvantaged users, but also for the territorial community.” SCF

“...focus on competences, the strengths of persons, we look at what people can do instead of what they can’t. We noticed that it is necessary to continuously fight stigmatisation and continuously strive for the rights to work of those target groups in all partner countries, the bridge to the normal economy stays difficult to cross.” SST

“WISES need an ‘umbrella organisation lobby, encourage networking, mutual learning, share good practices, develop skills and competences (personal but also organizational skills). The cooperation with the local authorities, social partners and midfield partners is also very important. Local government can be an ambassador of social economy. WISES absolutely need to be embedded in (local) economy, be present and visible and accentuate their added values.” SST

“Thanks to this project and the relations born into ENSIE network, we realised with the Portuguese partner an Erasmus+ KA2 project about the new professional profiles in social enterprises.” SCF