

EPR Public Affairs Event A tool for Active Inclusion of People with Disabilities – Social Economy Employment Models

3 December 2019
Avenue des Arts 8, c/o CCI 'Salle Delvaux' 1210 Brussels

REPORT

Jerónimo Sousa, EPR Chairperson, gave a warm welcome and presentation on the topics of the event. He referenced the collective aim of promoting good practices among organisations and policy makers. After this Sabina Lobato Lobato, Fundación ONCE, and Thomas Worack, Weber Shandwick, were invited to give a presentation on their respective organisations. Exploring employment models for persons with disabilities across Europe. During the presentation, the researchers shared some findings:

This was followed by Alicia Gomez Campos, EPR's Policy, Communications and Projects Officer, inviting a panel of four speakers to discuss the inclusion of people with disabilities: Pablo Sanchez, Fundación ONCE (Spain), Michael Backhaus, Mariaberg (Germany), Adelaide Aymer and Marie-Sophie, [65 degrés](#) (Belgium). Each panellist gave their view on the importance of social inclusion in the job market. From the panel discussion, the main findings that emerged were:

- ✓ **The goal of active inclusion:** Social enterprises must be normalised enterprises, people who are appropriately trained. Concrete supporting unit try to promote complete training programs to prepare people to be ready for employment. Funded by European Social Fund, to find new niches of employment. Personal assistants to aid people with disabilities. Peer to peer help for people with mental health problems
- ✓ **A community in need:** Faced off with economic plan and negotiations. They have to work and need time to develop things together. A task for professionals to find balance between helping each other and being productive. Need to find ways of dealing good career service. For mental abilities, train the managers how to create an economy and opportunities with maintenance of people with disabilities.
- ✓ **Importance of the European Commission:** Need help from the Commission because it is not easy to do such a project. European funding can help to facilitate and make life easier for start-ups.

This was followed by a second panel discussion about the views of different stakeholders which was chaired by Laura Jones, EPR's Secretary General, involving Irma Botic, European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE), Frank Sioen, European Network for Independent Living (ENIL), Daniel Sorrosal, European Federation of Ethical and Alternative Banks (FEBEA), and Victor Meseguer, Social Economy Europe (SEE). The conclusions that emerged from the panel discussion were:

- ✓ **A sustainable social enterprise:** There they are better to work in their corner in terms of social enterprises instead of having a network. In Hungary enterprises are working on own, but Croatia and Moldova they have a willingness but don't have the means to cooperate together. Enterprises in France in national reform programs which is a great success. There are also a lot of barriers that enterprises are facing
- ✓ **Lack of knowledge makes up a key challenge:** Some public authorities and enterprises do not know how to work together. In Romania and Ireland, public authorities don't know how to approach enterprises. Enterprises are somewhat financed by the state but it is difficult to get. If you can apply for financial support, need to provide a financial report. Lack of information surrounding EU policies, this year worked with the Austrian semester officer. Put together with national networks to work with their issue.
- ✓ **A need for better dialogue:** Better capacity to have political resource, policy frameworks, set of factions and creation for new enterprises in this domain. Stakeholders have distinct organisations and different ways of addressing issues but have a shared goal of creating a fairer society.
- ✓ **Overcoming barriers to work:** In many countries disabled people face barriers to work. In the private sector, they lose support like disability benefits. For many PWDs, it is not financially beneficial as they would lose benefits, PWDs lack education and thus can't get higher paying jobs. There is a link between what social enterprises can do and a transformation to a more social enterprise.

Irma stated that ENSIE works with 27 national and local networks in the EU and beyond. They seek to create a better framework for social enterprises. There are two points which we stressed before. Social public procurement, working on a project for social impact.

Victor mentioned the importance of the European socioeconomic landscape. Together they can transform European policies and institutions that can favour the different factors. Doing a very important job. Represents organisation in Brussels, Social initiative foundations like in Spain. Cooperatives, associations and foundations in member states, united under values that are common.

Daniel explained the concept of ethical banking. He stated that his organisation runs 28 banks, with members in 15 countries. Members are on average 30 years old. Founded in 2001, the organisation was based on the ideal of a citizens' financial system that benefits society at large.

Lastly, Risto Raivio, a senior expert at DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion at the European Commission, gave a presentation on the Commission's perspective and outlined a strategy for people with disabilities. He highlighted the need to put social enterprises in the European context and commended how services offered by organisations are cooperating closely with the Commission. However social stigmas still exist and need to be counteracted through awareness campaigns

Public Affairs Evaluation Report:

EPR disseminated Evaluation forms to all participants to the event and collected them at the end of the day. The Evaluation form addressed all the sessions of the event and allowed participants to provide EPR with relevant feedback as per the information they received in the event, the participatory and interaction of the panels and the relevance of the topic chosen.

Average evaluation rating of the event was 4.2 out of 5.

51 Participants/members from over 15 different countries attended the event.

