

Work integration social enterprises in Europe: insights from the B-WISE project

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The labour market is far from being perfect: on the one side there are applicants that are highly qualified and trained, who normally have good career prospects; on the opposite side are positioned workers that are at risk of labour market exclusion (Borzaga, 2012). Labour policies have been designed by modern welfare states specifically to remove barriers preventing the full integration into the labour market of those workers that bear specific disadvantages, including, among others, the lack of formal education, low skills and cognitive abilities, physical and psychical disabilities, drug and alcohol abuse and unstable housing arrangements (Davister et al., 2004).

Nevertheless, the controversial impact of most of these policies has encouraged the search for alternative pathways to tackle labour market exclusion. Among the host of initiatives experimented with, work integration social enterprises (WISE) are one of the most innovative ones.

WISEs are a double-output enterprise: in addition to marketable goods and services, they also deliver work integration support services, which enable to generate several positive both economic and non-economic externalities for the community. WISEs contribute to improving the quality of life of disadvantaged workers also by helping them regain control over their own personal lives, thus enhancing social cohesion. Another positive externality is the reduction in the demand for healthcare services.

Our presentation draws on the finding of the [B-WISE Erasmus+ project](#): in the first part of the presentation, we will present an overview of the diverse typologies, models of integrations and legal structures of WISEs that have emerged in Europe over the past 30 years. Among these forms, the legal forms made available by the social economy are the most common ones. In the second part, we will focus on Italian B-type social cooperatives, which are the most widespread and successful typology of WISEs in Italy.

Bibliography:

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Davister, C., Defourny, J., Gregoire & Oliver, 2004. Work integration social enterprises in the European Union: an overview of existing models. *EMES Working Papers*, Issue 04/04.