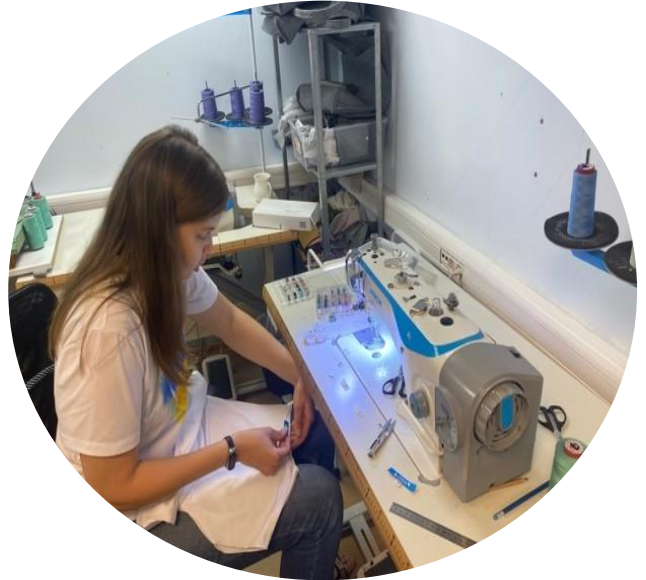




B-WISE
Skills for the future : WISEs ready!



Report understanding user (digital) skill needs in WISEs

2022





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THE B-WISE PROJECT

The B-WISE project targets the skills needs of Workers with Support Needs, their supporters (such as their job coaches and trainers) and their managers. The project also promotes the attractiveness of the WISEs sector as a career choice and raises awareness on the importance of the use of digital technologies to support workers – who are more at risk of being excluded from the labour market – in work placement.

To reach this goal and prepare WISEs to face future challenges, the project implements the following actions:

1. Develops a report to provide an overview of the WISEs sector across Europe and identify the skills needs in the sector.
2. Designs three training curricula to meet the skills gaps of workers in integration, their supporters and their managers.
3. Makes those curricula a reality by testing them in 13 countries and validating them through certification authorities.
4. Develops a European Strategy to continue addressing the skills needs in the WISEs sector even after the end of the project.
5. Raises awareness to promote the WISEs sector as a career choice and on the importance of the use of digital technologies to support people who are more at risk of being excluded from the labour market in work placement.





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INTRODUCTION

How this report fits into the workflow of the B-WISE project

The B-WISE project aims to strengthen the skills of Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISE), in particular in relation to the technological and digital sphere; to this end, this project aims to develop a strategy to enhance the competence of Workers with Support Needs (WSNs), their supporters and those, such as enablers, who are responsible for creating a working environment capable of receiving and implementing influences related to the potential of digital and other technologies. This project is led by a partnership of 28 members from 13 European countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Spain.

In order to pursue the above-mentioned objective, the B-WISE project consists of eight interconnected Work Packages, to which two transversal actions relating to project





management and coordination (WP9) and quality and evaluation (WP10) are added. The project WPs are listed below:

- WP1 Research. State of Art
- **WP2 BUILDING SCENARIOS AND PERSONAS**
- WP3 Design of VET curricula meeting skills gaps
- WP4 Pilot Implementation of the curricula
- WP5 Skills recognition mechanisms
- WP6 Sectoral Skills Strategy (Blueprint) for WISEs sector
- WP7 Communication & Dissemination
- WP8 Long-term action plan and Sustainability
- WP9 Management & Coordination
- WP10 Quality assurance & Evaluation

This report collects and summarises the outcomes of WP2.

The WP2:

- follows WP1, in which the state of WISEs in the partner countries was outlined through national analyses of secondary sources concerning the quantification of WISEs, national policies, etc., and through a questionnaire administered to workers, supporters and enablers. Regarding digital and technological competence, this questionnaire explored the existing competences in WISEs in detail, with reference to the three categories of actors mentioned above;
- precedes WP3, in which, based on the weaknesses found and the room for improvement detected, the characteristics of the curricula are to be outlined, so as to guarantee the strengthening of competences that is the central objective of the project.

What, then, is the missing piece that, starting from the general framework outlined in WP1, allows us to increase our knowledge to best contribute to the subsequent work on curricula to be carried out in WP3?





Scenarios and Personas

The answer contained in the B-WISE project framework starts from an assumption that is as simple as it is fundamental: the objective of capacity-building cannot be adequately achieved unless we are able to understand that:

- European WISEs, although possessing certain unifying traits, are different from each other in their objectives, operational styles, organisation, size, entrepreneurial orientation, etc.
- The people working in WISEs in various capacities (WSNs, supporters and enablers) are diverse in terms of starting skill levels, life histories, investment in learning, etc.

Following from this, in order to be effective, the definition of competence-building pathways must be designed with reference to the different types of WISEs and the different types of persons working in them. In other words, as is well highlighted in the project that is presented, attention has to be paid to the creation of 'scenarios' (the different types of WISEs) and 'Personas' (the different types of WSNs, supporters and enablers), so as to ensure that training and learning respond to the different competence needs.

Basically, the questions running through this report are: what skills-building action do WISEs need based on their characteristics, the directions of their development, their corporate culture and their strengths and weaknesses? What are the characteristics of the workers (enablers, supporters, WSNs) to whom we would like to propose competence-building pathways? Because, just to give a few examples, proposing a digital skills enhancement process to a young and dynamic company that is planning to develop in the technological sphere is different from doing so to a company that considers itself settled and with no prospect of particular future change in sectors where it operates without the use of technology; it is different to think of a training process for a young person with a high level of schooling who has emerged from a situation of drug addiction and for a person over 55 with a low level of schooling and with demanding family responsibilities. It is possible to reinforce digital competences in all the above-mentioned situations, but this must be done with different forms, methods and timeframes; the knowledge gained in WP2 and reported in this report should help to define them in the subsequent phases of the project.



Thus, if the approach of WP1 was aimed at outlining general frameworks, WP2 aims to create typologies, thus trying to maximise 1) homogeneity within each type and 2) differences between the characteristics of different types. This applies as much to WISEs (scenarios) as to persons operating within them (Personas); and these differences operate both between WISEs of different nations – in part due to legal frameworks and cultural traditions – and within individual nations.

This is an ambitious objective, for which there are no established precedents. It is made even more difficult by some contextual elements: to give just one example, the term ‘sheltered workshop’ may indicate different types of WISE depending on national contexts (and, it only indicates WISEs in some cases, since in some countries this term refers to organisations that are not involved in production and do not pay workers a wage comparable to that of other workers), whereas WISEs under a different name may in fact present very similar characteristics. The challenge is therefore to identify a working method that allows the comparison of WISEs (and their operators) that act in different contexts, have different legal forms, act in a wide variety of sectors of activity and have different economic and development perspectives, and to group them according to criteria that cut across all the above dimensions.

It is also necessary to properly balance the analytical accuracy of the model with a need for simplicity and linearity, thus capturing a limited amount of essential data. It is therefore a matter of reducing the infinite variability possible – the tens of thousands of European WISEs and the hundreds of thousands of people working in them – into a limited number of types from a few well-defined characteristics through a few dimensions of analysis.

This approach, besides being central to the specific aims of the project, provides a more general added value for the knowledge and understanding of European WISEs.

This was the starting point for organising the work of WP2.

How this report is organised

In accordance with the B-WISE design framework, this report includes two deliverables centred respectively on Scenarios (and thus on the different types of WISEs – T2.1) and on Personas (and thus on who works in WISEs – T2.2).



These two deliverables are included in the document as follows:

- This foreword, which defines the general objectives and characteristics of the report;
- The chapter 'The working method', which describes and justifies the research strategy, methodological choices, implementation in phases of WP2 and tools used;
 - The chapter 'Scenarios: types of WISEs' (T2.1), which offers a general description of the model adopted, based on three basic WISE types with a plurality of intermediate types. After a description of the main aspects of the model, we will describe the characteristics of the different types of WISE: 1) economic and entrepreneurial aspects 2) job placement aspects 3) enterprise objectives ('how they see themselves in 10 years' time') and 4) the place of WISEs in relation to policies;
- The chapter 'Personas. Who works in the WISEs' (T2.2) offers a summary of the classifications made at national level, divided into the three categories of workers, supporters and enablers;
- In the subsequent chapter, summaries of the national reports are given; a link to the complete form is available in the text;
- The concluding chapter, in addition to summarising what emerged in the previous chapters, develops:
 - the general policy indications from WP2;
 - the specific guidance offered to WP3 in terms of competence-building pathways.





1 THE WORKING METHOD

1.1 The basic choices

The work of WP2 ran from March to October 2022. It involved the participation of the entire partnership, which actively contributed to the work presented here.

Before describing the work carried out in an analytical manner, some methodological premises must be set out that inspired the subsequent steps.

The first is that the cognitive strategy was based on the progressive deepening of the contents, releasing the information gathered step by step. The remarks were discussed each time with the partnership and then developed further. This was done in the knowledge that the first documents shared with the partnership were necessarily imprecise and that during the WP flow, adjustments would be made to improve and strengthen the initial hypotheses. The metaphor we used is that of loading images in the early days of the internet: first blurry and almost indistinguishable, then gradually sharper. This makes knowledge a true collective construction shared by the whole partnership. During this process, some elements produced in the initial stages were retained and became part of the final report, while others were gradually modified thanks to subsequent in-depth efforts that led to better elaboration of the concepts by





incorporating the criticisms and anomalies of previous formulations. Partners actively contributed to this process, both by putting together material on their own national situations and by offering feedback, including criticism, on the work that was being presented, thus contributing to its reformulation.

The second method adopted, linked to the previous one, was to maintain (with the minimum flexibility necessary in such a large partnership and in a complex project) the timeline, even at the cost of sacrificing the completeness of the content in the first phases. The B-WISE project has a very demanding structure, in which each phase is important to the next one. A very accurate product that did not arrive in time to support the WP3 efforts would be of little use. This meant accepting compromises: for example, by taking note that for some partners it was impossible to carry out the number of case studies initially planned by the agreed date; it was decided then to reduce the number of case studies (paying more attention to their correct selection), rather than to extend the time for fieldwork, which would have led to a delay in the delivery of this report and which would have obliged the WP3 leaders to start their work on the competence-building pathways without having the data from WP2. Instead, it was decided to start working with the WP3 leaders as early as March and to involve them in the work of WP2 as it was developed. The smaller amount of data may have partially reduced the heterogeneity of the WISEs studied; however, it must be considered that a study involving five to ten WISEs out of several hundred (or thousands, in some countries) can only be exploratory in nature. The reduction in heterogeneity may, however, have been mitigated by the expertise of the partners, which, thanks to the set of tools used (focus, outcomes of WP1), also made additional information regarding their own countries available to the WP leader.

The third major methodological choice was the adoption of a qualitative strategy, based on understanding and interpretation. This choice stems from the fact that WP1 produced and is still producing a considerable amount of quantitative data, based on a complex questionnaire administered in the fall of 2021. This gathered detailed information on a plurality of organisational aspects of European WISEs (including those related to technology and digitalisation). The knowledge gained from WP1 was abundantly utilised in WP2 and also provides useful insights for the design of WP3, but it would have been repetitive and unnecessary to reuse similar tools in WP2. We therefore chose to work intensively with qualitative interviews, focus groups and participant observation, asking the interviewers to first of all grasp the 'climate' within



the WISEs, to understand the nature and rules of the interactions. WP1 and WP2 express different yet complementary methodological choices and produce outcomes that have to be read together by those who will lead WP3 and the subsequent phases.

Besides the methodological aspects outlined above, the complementarity between WP1 and WP2 also concerns the substance of the work performed. Examining the WP1 materials available at the time (the first weeks of 2022) when WP2 was set up from WP1 country fiches, it emerged that:

- with respect to the categorisation of WISEs (scenarios), there was sufficient evidence in WP1 to elaborate a first hypothesis, which would have required:
 1. subsequent validation by the partnership;
 2. some insights, particularly with regard to the development plans of WISEs: not what they are today, but what they want to become in ten years' time;
- with respect to the categorisation of people (workers, supporters, enablers) operating in the WISE, it was found that the available elements of WP1 were not sufficient and that it was therefore necessary to organise a specific cognitive effort, dedicating a significant part of the resources of WP2 to this. This does not exclude the possibility that subsequent elaborations resulting from WP1 (the outcomes of the aforementioned questionnaires), made available in the summer of 2022 and thus with a timeline contemporaneous to the drafting of this report, may be included, together with the outcomes of this work, in the premises for the realisation of the subsequent WP3.

On the basis of the above, it was therefore decided to:

- 1) elaborate an initial version of the typification of WISEs (Scenarios) on the basis of the outcomes of WP1, integrating, developing and improving this product during WP2 both through discussion with partners and by integrating existing information;
- 2) devote the majority of WP2 resources to the collection of information useful for the categorisation of those working in WISEs (Personas);
- 3) allocate a large portion of WP2 resources to the implementation of case studies, based on open interviews and participant observation, with the aim of integrating existing information on Scenarios and gathering information on Personas.



Finally, taking up and sharing an invitation from the partnership, it was decided to structure a highly participative research model, resulting in a report in which both the collective effort and the skills of all partners are reflected. The partners were not a mere 'labour force' for the implementation of operational phases (e.g., interviews), but contributed to each work phase thanks to their own knowledge and sensitivity; several times during the course, the initial proposals of the WP2 leader were discussed and redefined thanks to the work of the partnership. This aspect is dealt with in the next section, which makes the contribution of the partners explicit.

1.2 The phases of WP2

With these premises, the work of WP2 consisted of eight phases that engaged the phase leader and the entire partnership from March 2022 to October 2022 and are summarised below.

1.2.1 Step 1 – Definition of working hypotheses

This phase was carried out by the WP2 leader IIR in liaison with the WP1 leader Euricse. From the study of part of the work from WP1, specifically the Country fiches, a first draft of a classification of European WISEs was derived and verified together with Euricse, which constitutes the 'Scenarios' in which to design the actions to strengthen competences.

At this stage, the first version of the model was hypothesised, as further detailed below, which identifies the three ideal types of WISEs as Productive WISEs, Social WISEs and Training WISEs (PW/SW/TW model or PSTW). This hypothesis was discussed in the first instance with Euricse, which ascertained its validity, and was then taken as the starting point for the subsequent phases of WP2. To support this modelling, a first version of the 'model table' was produced: a battery of 23 items (eight items related to entrepreneurial aspects, 12 items related to job placement, three items related to the policy context in which WISEs operate) that represent the practical tool to classify a WISE as a PW, SW or TW or as an intermediate model. This is an important step, as it represents the first attempt to compare and classify WISEs regardless of their legal



form and the country in which they operate. This model is revised and corrected in subsequent steps.

This first phase absorbed 0.5% of the total research resources of WP2.

1.2.2 Step 2 – Validation of Phase 1 hypotheses

The hypotheses of phase 1 were discussed with the entire partnership at a meeting held on 7–8 March; this was done both through consultation and by testing the usefulness of the model within individual national contexts. To this end, a whiteboard was shared, in which each group of national partners placed the WISEs of the country they represent within the model. This both produced interesting background information and made it possible to bring out the points of the model that needed to be modified and deepened.

After this first 'live' experimentation during the meeting, the partners were asked to organise national focus groups in March/April 2022 in which they would place the different types of WISEs in the proposed model and produce the corresponding report. These national reports were then discussed during a meeting on 28 April.

The substantive outcomes of this phase are discussed in the following chapters; from a methodological point of view, the proposed model represented a very useful scheme for understanding and classifying WISEs in ten out of 13 countries, while in the other cases additional reflection and some adaptations were necessary and included in subsequent versions of the model. At this stage, some sectors of activity that are particularly common in the different countries of the partnership were also identified, on which a significant number of the case studies chose to focus (see step 4). This made it possible to investigate the level of digitalisation and implementation of technological solutions adopted by WISEs in relation to the technologies available in these sectors (see step 5).

This phase involved the commitment of all partners and absorbed 9.3% of the total research resources of WP2 (9.3% of which were committed to the WP leader, 90.7% to the other partners).





1.2.3 Step 3 – Training of surveyors

As mentioned in the previous pages, the main original contribution of WP2 is the realisation of case studies. On 29 March 2022, a meeting was organised to train interviewers, where the outline for the case studies was proposed and mock interviews were carried out.

As a result of this work and thanks to the comments received, the WP leader proceeded to 1) modify certain aspects of the initial outline and 2) disseminate a structured guide on how to carry out the case study approximately one week after the meeting. This guide includes:

- indications for the choice of the cases to be studied, taking into account, besides the availability of WISEs, the sector of activity and the heterogeneity of the units studied;
- guidance on how to approach the WISE studied, the general information to be gathered and how to identify relevant contacts, starting with the first contact (usually a WISE executive);
- specific guidance with respect to interviews and observation work. Concerning the observation work, it was recommended that the interviewer should stay within the WISE as much as possible, in order to gather information on the organisational style and the relationships between people in addition to the interviews;
- an outline for the report on each WISE and the national summary report.

All these are attached to this document (Annex 3).

The number of WISEs on which to carry out the case studies was also allocated, with seven case studies assigned to national partners with 72 days available for research work and three case studies assigned to partners with a total of 30 days for research work. Partners with fewer days were not directly involved in the case studies, although they were asked to contribute with comments and to reread the results of the case studies. For each case study, seven working days were allocated to the partners, including any travel and the drafting of the report for each case.



This phase, which took place between April and the beginning of May 2022, involved the commitment of all partners and absorbed 6.23% of the total research resources of WP2 (14.5% of which were committed to the WP leader, 85.5% to the other partners).

1.2.4 Step 4 – Case studies

The case studies aimed to identify the elements still missing in delineating the Scenarios (specifically, the directions of development that the WISE sees ahead) and to identify the Personas operating in the WISEs.

The case studies involved the researcher staying in the WISE if possible, conducting interviews and observing the organisational climate there.

Case studies include:

- an interview with one or more enablers in which they delve into some topics related to WISEs; in this interview, the following points were covered, among others:
 - general information on the WISE was collected and a ‘model table’ was compiled for each WISE;
 - the subject of WISE development directions was explored;
 - a WISE SWOT analysis was carried out;
 - information on a number of elements relating to the use of technology (and in particular digital technology) today and those envisaged for the future was collected;
- some in-depth interviews with people working in the WISE:
 - at least two interviews with enablers (if any);
 - at least three interviews with supporters (if any);
 - at least four interviews with WSNs (if any);
- observations of the everyday life of the WISE.

For each of these aspects, guides were provided to the interviewer.

The interview phase was based on an open interview methodology; the interviewee was asked to situate his or her presence in the WISE within the course of his or her life (past and future) and was invited to recount his or her everyday life; it was the



interviewer's task to understand, among other things, how a competence-building course fits within the biographical events and everyday life of the interviewees.

For each case study, a short report was written on the basis of a format developed by the WP leader following discussion with the partnership. The partner from each country with the largest number of days allocated to research also drafted a report for its country, which also integrated the elements gathered during the focus group (phase 2). The country reports are integrated in summary form in this paper, while the complete country reports and related case studies are available as hyperlinks in each country's paragraphs.

From mid-May to mid-July 2022, 73 case studies were carried out. In these case studies, in addition to general information on WISEs, 518 interviews were conducted: 112 with enablers, 157 with supporters and 249 with WSNs. This took up 55% of the resources of WP2, 7.4% of which were used by the project leader and 92.6% by the other partners.

1.2.5 Step 5 – In-depth study on technology and digitalisation

One of the aspects already analysed in WP1 and further investigated in Phase 2 concerned the most widespread activity sectors in European WISEs; in Phase 4, this information was enriched by the inclusion in the case studies of information on the use of technologies and the degree of digitalisation in the WISEs studied. This information, besides having a descriptive value, can be used to understand the extent to which WISEs are technologically appropriate in comparison to other comparable companies. In order to investigate this aspect, a management engineer¹ was commissioned to carry out an in-depth study on this issue, which is given in summary form within this report ([p. 174 ff.](#)) and in full form as an annex [Annex B, [p. 277 ff.](#)]. This report includes the table 'Annex C: The adoption and use of technologies by WISEs analysing the different functions of the technologies for each of the cases studied.

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The partners were instructed to focus the case studies as much as possible on certain sectors² that had emerged as particularly relevant in the previous phases. This was aimed at facilitating comparisons between the use of technologies in WISEs and other non-WISEs operating in the same sectors.

It should be noted that while it was easy to identify a relationship between the technological adequacy of WISEs and the type of technological function considered (e.g., internal communication, external communication, training, production, etc.), in most cases it is difficult to estimate technological adequacy according to business sector.

This phase was carried out between July and August 2022 and took up 1.7% of the WP2 resources dedicated to research. It was carried out entirely by the project leader using the information produced in the previous phases.

1.2.6 Step 6 – Provisional drafting of the report

Phase 6 includes the provisional drafting of this report; in addition to the researchers commissioned by the WP leader, researchers from ENSIE and EASPD collaborated on this, as these two partners have a significant number of research days in WP2, but, due to their transnational nature, they were not engaged in activities related to a national specification like the other partners.

This phase took place between June and the beginning of September 2022 and employed 8.1% of the WP2 resources dedicated to research, 11.1% of which were committed to the WP leader, the remainder to the other partners named above.

² The primary focus (at least half of the cases studied) was on the following three areas: 1) restaurants, catering and food; 2) cleaning services; 3) assembly and packaging. The aim was also to concentrate on the following other case studies: maintenance of green areas, agriculture, environmental services and waste management, commercial activities and handicraft activities (e.g., carpentry, metal carpentry, textile production, clothing production, laundry, printing and others). Obviously, especially in smaller countries, this criterion was verified on the basis of the actual presence and availability of WISEs available to be studied in these sectors.



1.2.7 Step 7 – Sharing and improving the report

This report was presented on 13 September in a meeting involving the entire partnership; it was illustrated by means of slides in summary form and handed over to the partners in extended form.

Partners were invited to verify the content of the report and, if possible, to discuss the content of the report with national stakeholders and propose changes and additions to the report. Review partners carried out editorial work on the proposals received and worked with the WP leader to evaluate changes to the report.

This phase took place in September 2022 and involved the entire partnership, committing 12.4% of the WP2 resources dedicated to research, 5.1% of which were allocated to the WP2 leader and 94.9% allocated to the other partners.

1.2.8 Step 8 – Delivery and presentation of deliverables

To conclude, the WP2 leader and the other partners involved in the drafting of this report collected the observations proposed by the partners in Phase 7, talked with the partnership for any further details, and then proceeded to draft this report in final form, presenting the work to the partnership.

This phase took place in October 2022 and committed 6.4% of the WP2 resources dedicated to research, 16.9% of which were allocated to the WP2 leader.

1.2.9 Acronyms

Certain acronyms resulting from the work developed in WP1, specifically in Country fiches, will be used extensively in the following chapters. Referring to the WP1 work for a more extensive description of the legal forms assumed by WISEs in the different countries, a list of the Country fiches with their acronyms is provided below.

In addition, the acronym WSNs will be used to indicate Workers with Support Needs integrated in WISEs.





Table 1 - Acronyms

Country	Acronyms	Typology of WISE
<i>Austria</i>	SÖB	Socio-economic enterprise
	GBP	Charitable employment project
	BBE	Agency for advisory and supervision
<i>Belgium</i>	MW	Collective customised jobs (Collectief maatwerk, MW), consisting of Maatwerkbedrijven, MWB and Maatwerkafdelingen, MWA
	LDE	Proximity services (Lokale diensteneconomie)
	EI	Integration company (Entreprise d'Insertion)
	ETA	Companies organising work customised to persons with disabilities (Entreprises de travail adaptées)
	IDESS	Employment development initiatives in the proximity social services sector (Initiatives de Développement de l'Emploi dans le secteur des Services de proximité à finalité Sociale)
<i>Bulgaria</i>		Social enterprise class A
		Social enterprise class A+
		Specialised enterprise and cooperative of persons with disabilities
		Shelter employment centre
<i>Croatia</i>		Association
		Social cooperative
		Veterans' social working cooperative
		Limited liability company
		Sheltered workshop
		Integrative workshop



<i>France</i>	RQ GEIQ	<p>Entreprise d'insertion</p> <p>Entreprise de travail temporaire d'insertion</p> <p>Entreprise d'insertion par le travail indépendant</p> <p>Entreprise adaptée</p> <p>Neighbourhood enterprises, regies de quartier</p> <p>Employers' organisations for work integration and training (groupements d'employeurs pour l'insertion et la qualification)</p> <p>Centres of adaptation to active life (centres d'adaptation à la vie active)</p>
<i>Greece</i>	KoiSPE KoinSEp EntaxisEidikonOmadon KoinSEp EntaxisEvalotonOmadon KoiSEn	<p>Social cooperative of limited liability</p> <p>Social cooperative enterprise of integration of special groups</p> <p>Social cooperative enterprise of integration of vulnerable groups</p> <p>Social cooperative of inclusion</p> <p>Women's agricultural cooperative*</p>
<i>Italy</i>		B-type social cooperatives
<i>Latvia</i>		<p>Limited liability company with social enterprise status</p> <p>Limited liability company without social enterprise status</p> <p>NGOs (association and foundation)</p>
<i>The Netherlands</i>		<p>Association</p> <p>Foundation</p> <p>Cooperative</p> <p>Private company with limited liability</p> <p>Combination of private company with limited liability and foundation</p>
<i>Poland</i>	ZPCh ZAZ SS	<p>Supported employment enterprise</p> <p>Professional activity establishment</p> <p>Social cooperative</p>



<i>Romania</i>		Social insertion enterprise De facto WISEs Sheltered workshop
<i>Slovenia</i>		Company for people with disabilities (Invalidska podjetja) Employment center (Zaposlitveni centre) Registered social enterprise (Socialno podjetje)
<i>Spain</i>	CIS	Social initiative cooperative (Cooperativa de iniciativa social)
	CEE	Special employment centre (Centro especial de empleo)
	EI	Employment integration enterprise (Empresa de inserción)



2 T2.1 SCENARIOS: TYPES OF WISES

Defining a strategy for capacity-building in WISEs, particularly, though not exclusively, in the area of technology and specifically in relation to digitalisation, needs to be contextualised with respect to what WISEs actually are. As it is easy to see, aside from some unifying characteristics that define an organisation as a WISE, the European landscape presents very different subjects. The different types of WISEs are, in the terminology adopted by B-WISE, the scenarios within which the competence-building action has to take place.

In this paper, the unifying characteristics are first recalled to define the boundaries of WISEs and to set out which subjects are to be considered as such and which, although having certain aspects in common with WISEs, are to be placed outside this perimeter.

Then, the rationale behind the identification of different models of WISEs is illustrated and such models are described one by one in general terms. As is easy to imagine, while in the analytical scheme the elements that distinguish one type of WISE from another are highlighted, in the empirical analysis we may often find ambiguous situations. This is not to be considered a failure in the construction of an ideal type, whose function is not to represent reality, but to propose, through typification, categories of analysis that allow us to better understand individual cases.





In the following paragraphs, the characteristics of the different types of WISE are analysed with reference to the dimensions explored with the different research tools used by the model tables on the outcomes of the case studies: the entrepreneurial aspects, the work integration of WSNs, the relationship with policies and technologies.

The second part of this chapter provides brief summaries of the national situations, placing each country's WISEs within the model proposed earlier; extended national reports, complete with documentation of the case studies, are available as links to each country in the chapter 'Country reports', [pp. 173 and ff.](#)

2.1 The perimeter of WISEs: common features

Before analysing the different models of WISEs, it is necessary to delimit the field of work and define what can be defined as a WISE and what cannot. The set of actions that, in different ways, aim at the work integration of WSNs is very broad and it can be difficult to analyse such different phenomena. The issue is made more complicated by the extreme variety of legal forms, public policy approaches and cultural traditions in Europe. While being aware of the provisional nature of this definition, WISEs were considered to be those organisations that:

1. carry out a productive activity (e.g., a restaurant, a handicraft activity, a green maintenance or cleaning service, a shop, etc.) to offer a job opportunity to WSNs; the organisation has the specific aim of employing WSNs, also offering activities to strengthen and qualifying WSNs;
2. produce a significant share of the resources necessary for the organisation's survival through its productive activity; as a general rule, it would be appropriate for these resources to constitute the majority of the revenues;
3. hire most of the WSNs as paid workers according to collective agreements (and therefore not as trainees, users, free of charge, with symbolic remuneration, etc.) and, according to their health condition, the WSNs work such a number of hours as to achieve at least partial economic autonomy.

This definition is quite selective with respect to the set of organisations in the social economy (and beyond) that in various forms are sensitive to the issue of work integration of WSNs.



For example, there may be organisations that carry out workshop activities (and are therefore consistent with point 1), in which, however, the majority of the disadvantaged people included are not employed (therefore they do not meet point 3), even if they benefit from the social and training point of view from the activities carried out; and/or the resources come not from the sale of the goods or services produced (e.g., catering, recycling activities, etc.), but from fees paid to the organisation for various reasons (payment of educational staff, fees for the integration of WSNs, fees proportional to the opening hours of the activity, etc.) related to the social or training value of the activities carried out (therefore they do not meet point 2).

There may be organisations that help disadvantaged people in their job search by intermediating with companies potentially willing to hire them and thus actually contribute to their employment, but which do not employ disadvantaged people internally and are therefore not consistent with the definition of WISEs adopted here.

There may be organisations that provide vocational training and thus prepare disadvantaged people for future employment, but they are not social enterprises according to the definition adopted here.

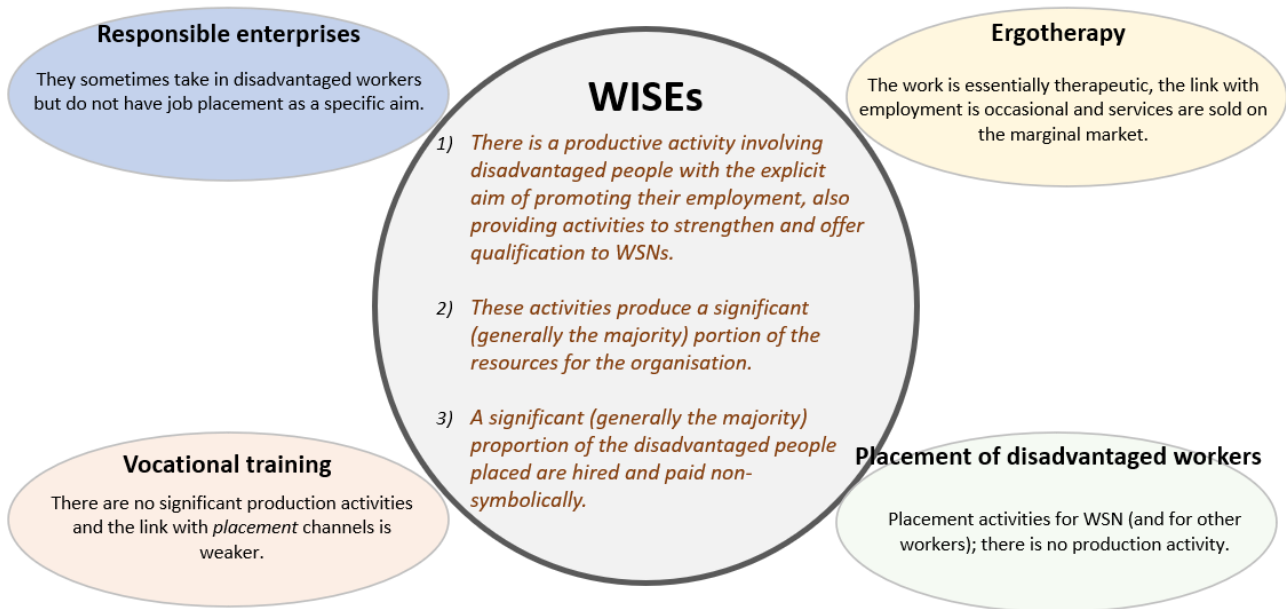
Lastly, there are companies that adopt forms of social responsibility that lead them to employ certain WSNs, but for whom this action is not an explicit and overriding purpose, but a laudable form of concern for the communities where they operate.

Thus, the definition of a WISE identifies a well-defined and delimited entity and not the set of entities that in various ways work to promote the employment of WSNs generically.





Figure 1 - Perimeter of WISEs



As can be seen from these examples, whether an agency is recognised as a WISE or not is not a value judgement, not even with specific reference to the issue of job placement: referring to the previous examples, there may be training agencies and intermediary agencies that do excellent work and help disadvantaged people find employment, but they are not WISEs according to the definition adopted here.

2.2 The model

Having defined this aspect, it is now possible to enter into the substance of the identification of the scenarios. Even from the reading of the Country fiches of WP1, three types of WISEs seem to emerge, through which the model underlying the subsequent reasoning is constructed.

Before delving into the distinguishing features, it should be noted that all three types of WISEs are to all intents and purposes WISEs and thus share the unifying features of the paragraph above: they have an explicit purpose of work integration, they carry out productive activities that are the predominant source of income and they employ WSNs by remunerating them in a non-symbolic way, paying them a wage comparable to that of other workers. It is wrong to consider one type of WISE 'more WISE' than another. Further, all types of WISEs are exposed, each in a different way, to certain risks of falling



outside the perimeter of WISEs if they evolve in a way that differs from the three characteristics mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Again, it should be noted that the types of WISEs outlined below are independent of their legal forms: there may be WISEs with the same legal form that belong to different models and WISEs with different legal forms that are classifiable in the same model; this independence of legal form is valuable in order to be able to compare organisations operating within national legal systems that are also very different from each other. The same can be said with reference to denominations, even those that do not coincide with specific legal forms; the most obvious case is that of 'sheltered workshops', which, on the basis of the different evolutions that have occurred in some of the European countries where this form is present, have at least in some countries taken on characteristics that make them WISEs (while in other cases they remain structures that cannot be assimilated to WISEs and are thus not the subject of this analysis).

The models presented below aim at identifying – in coherence with the approach leading to the definition of scenarios – subsets of WISEs that are united by a plurality of different elements: entrepreneurial, relating to work integration practices, policy positioning, enterprise culture, etc. It is not a single characteristic that identifies a type of WISE, but the convergence of several interrelated characteristics that may present themselves in a more or less marked way. Similarly, there may be intermediate types and there may be cases where the definition of WISEs is 'borderline' and with respect to which it is advisable to develop ad hoc reasoning as to whether to include them in the model or not.

That said, the three basic scenarios considered are:

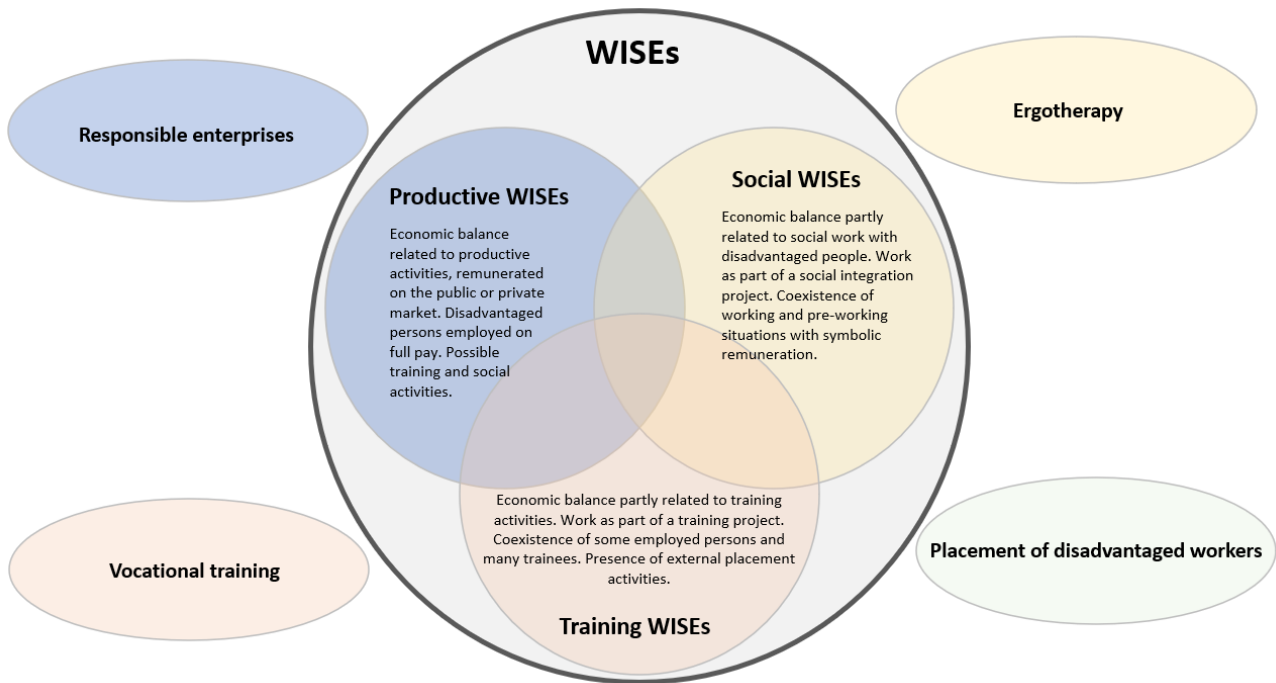
- Productive WISEs (PWs)
- Social WISEs (SWs)
- Training WISEs (TWs).

The basic traits are highlighted in the diagram, while in the following paragraphs these three scenarios are described in detail.





Figure 2 - WISEs general model



It should also be noted that a correct understanding of the nature of a WISE often requires considering it within a 'group logic', as WISEs are often part of collective organisational entities, variously named and structured according to national regulations; for example, a WISE that manages a shop where some WSNs are employed is part of a larger group, driven by a single or highly integrated management centre, which includes various welfare activities (care, education, listening centres, etc.), cultural activities, employment services, etc. Sometimes this integration of several organisational units may also include explicit economic flows (one unit of the group economically supports activities that are economically weaker, but which the group considers socially significant) or implicit flows (those who work in some units of the group are actually paid by another unit). In these cases, it is correct to analyse the WISE not as an entity in its own right but as part of a strongly integrated group of organisations, which expresses common and shared objectives, one of which is the work integration of WSNs.



2.2.1 Productive WISEs (PWs)



These are WISEs that are strongly production-oriented; their sustainability depends exclusively or almost exclusively on the sale of goods and services on the market, where they compete with other enterprises, both WISEs and, above all, non-WISEs. In some cases, they reach significant economic size (some millions of euros), employ hundreds of people and become significant entrepreneurial actors in the territory in which they operate. The larger units make significant investments in production facilities,

vehicles, work tools, etc. Some equip themselves with state-of-the-art technologies in their sector and integrate significant digital aspects in their production cycle. A good part of WSNs may not be able to develop significant professional skills given their starting conditions, but nevertheless WISEs as far as possible include them in production cycles that integrate significant technological and digital elements, compatible with the market sector in which they operate. The sectors of activity are diverse, and in larger WISEs especially they concern areas that tend to be team-based, employing a significant number of people: cleaning, green maintenance, environmental services such as waste sorting and recycling, craft and industrial production, civil maintenance, construction, etc.

WSNs are employed and remunerated according to employment contracts, with the explicit objective that the salary leads to economic independence; unhired WSNs (e.g., trainees, interns, etc.) are present to the same extent as for enterprises following national regulation. Where the legal form allows it (e.g., cooperatives), WSNs are/can also be members of WISEs. The enterprise culture is strongly oriented to the achievement of the economic autonomy of the WSN: the work and the consequent remuneration are not conceived as a mere 'gratification' connected to a path of social integration but as a tool of effective personal autonomy, which allows the WSNs to no longer perceive him/herself as a service user, instead seeing himself/herself as a person able to live from his/her work and to plan their life thanks to this (finding and maintaining a house, a vehicle, starting a family, etc.).



There are also aspects that depend on the funding and incentive policies envisaged at national level: where there are significant incentive policies available, including full or partial public support of those dedicated to work integration (or even in the absence of such support, in a limited number of excellent cases), these WISEs ensure significant support for work integration programmes, primarily with the presence of supporters. In cases where such public support is lacking (and with the exception of just a few excellent cases in many countries), the WISEs try as far as possible to ensure certain forms of support, which often, however, given the resources available, take the form of the presence of 'non-disadvantaged work colleagues' (or ex-disadvantaged) who express a personal willingness to listen to and support WSNs.

Intervention is focused on employment and (again except for in some excellent cases) there are no structured interventions addressing other needs of the WSNs (housing, social assistance, educational interventions, etc.).





There are both WISEs oriented towards keeping the WSNs temporarily at the WISE and then placing them in other enterprises and WISEs where the WSNs remain permanently (unless individual choices or situations lead to his/her exit). Generally, this second solution appears to be more widespread, even if this depends in part on the type of disadvantage and public support policies. The first solution is obviously more costly for the WISE, because it requires replacing people who have accumulated skills and experience to 'start again' with new WSNs. This can take place without public support policies in only a few best-practice scenarios.

The type of disadvantage of the persons included depends on various factors, such as the mission of the company and, sometimes, specific regulations, which envisage focusing on a particular type of disadvantage (e.g., persons with disabilities). In the absence of such situations, the type of disadvantage tends to be mixed, trying to make work integration and production aspects compatible. There are, in some cases, WISEs that, due to exposure to tough competition and the subsequent lack of resources, tend to choose 'light disadvantaged', crowding out people with severe disadvantages or to reduce supporters' working hours.












Table 2 - Productive WISEs - Features

<p>It derives its resources from the sale of goods and services on the market to individuals, enterprises and public authorities.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Income</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">It is one of the most characteristic aspects of these WISEs.</p>	<p>It derives resources from the recognition of welfare, training and placement activities by public authorities.</p>
<p>Generally, low turnover (<€100K).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Turnover</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">There are different situations, but some large units are present.</p>	<p>Generally, large turnover (several million €).</p>
<p>Significant profits.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Profitability and sustainability</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">There are different situations, but there are some units that make significant profits.</p>	<p>Many companies with losses that put their continuity at risk.</p>
<p>They make significant investments.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Investments</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">The enterprise culture leads these WISEs to invest.</p>	<p>They do not make significant investments.</p>


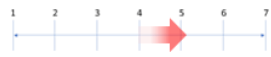
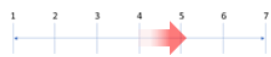



<p>Advanced technological equipment.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Technologies</p>  <p>The enterprise culture leads these WISEs to look for appropriate technologies.</p>	<p>Minimal technological equipment.</p>
<p>Significant qualifications.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Workers' qualifications</p>  <p>It depends on sector of activity.</p>	<p>Generic workers' qualifications.</p>
<p>Main competitors are other WISEs.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Competitors</p>  <p>In general, they operate on the open market.</p>	<p>Main competitors are non-WISE companies.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Examples of most frequent areas of activity</p> <p>Cleaning, green maintenance, waste collection and other environmental services, craft and industrial production, civil maintenance, construction, catering.</p>	







<p>Direct and indirect public (or, at least, external) support, related to WSN integration, covers all costs.</p>	<p>Direct and indirect public support covers all costs</p>  <p>It depends on national legislation; the absence of public support prevails.</p>	<p>Absence of direct and indirect public (or, at least, external) support.</p>
<p>Supporters are remunerated explicitly by public or by others' external contributions.</p>	<p>Is there anyone paid for working besides WSNs thanks to public support?</p>  <p>It depends on national legislation; the absence of public support prevails.</p>	<p>No public support explicitly remunerating supporters.</p>
<p>Turnover entirely derived from public contracts (e.g., for cleaning services on public buildings, maintenance, recycling) reserved for WISEs.</p>	<p>Reserved public procurement</p>  <p>It depends on the national legislation. In most cases, this institution appears to be uncommon.</p>	<p>There are no public contracts reserved for WISEs.</p>
<p>All disadvantaged people in WISEs are employed and paid.</p>	<p>Disadvantaged employment status</p>  <p>It is one of the most characteristic aspects of these WISEs.</p>	<p>Many disadvantaged people in WISEs are not employed (e.g., traineeships, ergotherapy, etc.).</p>





<p>WSNs receive ordinary contractual pay.</p>	<p>WSNs' remuneration</p>  <p>It is one of the most characteristic aspects of these WISEs.</p>	<p>A proportion of WSNs receive minimum/symbolic wages.</p>
<p>The great majority (>67%) of workers are disadvantaged.</p>	<p>Percentage of WSNs</p>  <p>In part, it depends on the degree of production support provided.</p>	<p>A minimal proportion of workers are disadvantaged (<15%).</p>
<p>WSNs are in the WISE temporarily.</p>	<p>Temporary or permanent placement</p>  <p>There are different situations, although the solution of permanent integration seems to prevail.</p>	<p>Disadvantaged people are in the WISE permanently.</p>
<p>The only institutional purpose of the WISE is related to work integration.</p>	<p>Work and social integration</p>  <p>With the exception of a number of excellent cases, attention to non-work aspects is left to the informal availability of operators.</p>	<p>Social aspects (housing, inclusion, care, etc.) are central to the institutional scope of the WISE.</p>



<p>Structured specific training activities (e.g., professional training) for WSNs, leading to training certification.</p>	<p>Specific training activities dedicated to WSNs</p>  <p>It is generally absent.</p>	<p>There are no specific training activities for WSNs.</p>
<p>The WISE provides placement activities and is recognised as employment service provider.</p>	<p>Placement activities on open labour market (in non-WISE enterprises)</p>  <p>It is generally absent.</p>	<p>No structured placement activities.</p>
<p>People with specific vulnerabilities (disabilities, addictions, prisoners, etc.).</p>	<p>Type of disadvantage</p>  <p>It depends on national regulations and traditions.</p>	<p>It is aimed at all people who have difficulties entering the labour market.</p>
	<p>Type of disadvantage (detail)</p> <p>It depends on national regulations and traditions.</p>	
<p>With respect to Public Administration - PA, they relate to employment services.</p>	<p>Institutional reference</p>  <p>It depends on national regulations and traditions.</p>	<p>With respect to PA, they relate to welfare services.</p>



<p>There are operators with the specific task of supporters.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Supporter presence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">  </p> <p>These WISEs try hard to sustain the presence of supporters, but where this is not supported by specific funding (except in exemplary cases) it is left to the goodwill and willingness of people.</p>	<p>There are no operators with the specific task of supporters.</p>
<p>High structuring of tasks related to work integration.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Structuring of supporters</p> <p style="text-align: center;">  </p> <p>These WISEs try hard to support supporters, but where this is not sustained by specific funding (except in exemplary cases) it is left to the goodwill and willingness of people.</p>	<p>Low structuring of tasks related to work integration.</p>

2.2.2 Social WISEs (SWs)



Social WISEs generally originate within organisations that aim to achieve a range of different interventions (e.g., educational and care provision, social inclusion, etc.), related in a broad sense to the area of welfare, benefitting groups with specific disadvantages: e.g., people with intellectual disabilities, people with mental health problems, homeless people, single women or man with children, female and male victims of violence, etc. As part of the broader intervention targeting people, SWs activate pathways aimed at employment, since the employment sphere is considered a decisive aspect of the well-being of the users.



Some of these activities initially originated with the aim of occupational therapy, seeing employment in para-productive activities as a benefit for the users, who were sometimes encouraged in their efforts through small compensations. These compensations were not framed as forms of actual remuneration, but for their educational and symbolic value as incentives to strive to improve one's abilities.

In some cases – those of interest for this report – the activities described above have, however, evolved into productive activities, capable of generating revenue through the sale of goods or services and consequently able to produce resources to ensure non-symbolic remuneration for the WSNs. These are Social WISEs.

If the original social vocation continues to be implemented within the WISE, revenues for productive activities and remunerations for welfare activities are co-present; and paid workers and users of services with symbolic remuneration coexist. However, more frequently the social vocation is implemented within a 'group logic': in other words, a WISE is set up as a spin-off of an organisation with a social vocation; the WISE remains linked to the parent organisation but develops the aspect of work integration in a more specific way. In some cases, the parent organisation economically supports the WISE either with a view to taking charge of the initial investment or to constantly support these activities, as they are functional to the broader social integration project carried out by the parent organisation; this support may be direct, through economic transfers, or indirect, e.g., by taking charge of part of the coordination staff or by making investments (e.g., purchase of a building) for goods that are then actually used by the WISE.

In some WISEs, the 'social' origin belongs to the remote history of the organisation and today the WISE can be framed as a Productive WISE; in others, although fully within the WISE perimeter (a significant share of revenues is derived from the sale of goods and services and a significant share of workers are remunerated in a way that is not merely symbolic), there features that link it to the Social WISE model described here remain evident.

In these cases, the economic equilibrium is ensured by a combination of resources drawn from the market and resources given to the WISE in return for the social work performed. These resources may come directly from the public administration (e.g., in the form of fees for the integration of certain users in productive activities) or from a



parent organisation. There can be cases of coexistence of regularly paid WSNs and of disadvantaged people taking part in WISE activities as users; or, in other cases, there can be remuneration policies that offer minimum compensations that, even if not sufficient for the autonomy of those that receive them, have a strong symbolic value because they make clear how the disadvantaged person can be to all intents and purposes an income producer – even if said income is minimal – and not just a user. However, it must be considered that national legislations often provide for economic transfers for the benefit of certain categories of WSNs (e.g., persons with disabilities). Therefore, income must be considered in these cases as supplementary to the benefits received.

These WISEs include people with different types of disadvantages. This can include people with severe disabilities, e.g., people with intellectual deficits, psychiatric patients or people coming from paths of extreme exclusion (e.g., homeless people). In other cases, the type of disadvantage is less marked in terms of reduced working capacity (e.g., single women, female victims of violence), but the social value connected with inclusion in an occupational activity is nevertheless strong. Especially in cases of more severe disadvantage, WSNs remain permanently in the WISE.





SWs can be active in various fields of activity such as catering and food workshops, agriculture, assembly or textile workshops, tailoring, tourist reception, commercial businesses, etc. There are WISEs in which the activity is characterised by its 'workshop' aspect, meaning the possibility of working in a relatively protected context, setting production times and methods that are consistent with the characteristics of the people involved. The workshop context also facilitates the work of the supporters, who can operate with the WSNs nearby and enhances the group dimension. In other instances, WISEs specifically chose an activity with public contact (e.g., a shop) for the 'political' value of this choice in combating prejudices: this offers a concrete demonstration that even people generally considered incapable of working can instead make quality products, thus boosting a transformational change that may lead to the building of more cohesive societies.

The level of technology use is generally moderate.







In these WISEs, the work of the supporters is central and generally well structured; the WISE therefore finds resources that allow supporters to perform their task without being totally absorbed by production.




Table 3 - Social WISEs - Features

<p>It derives its resources from the sale of goods and services on the market to individuals, enterprises and public authorities.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Income</p>  <p>Sustainability comes both from the sale of goods and services and from other sources related to social work.</p>	<p>It derives resources from the recognition of welfare, training and placement activities by public authorities.</p>
<p>Generally, low turnover (<€100K).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Turnover</p>  <p>Generally, these are small-scale activities.</p>	<p>Generally, large turnover (several million €).</p>
<p>Significant profits.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Profitability and sustainability</p>  <p>Generally, these are activities that achieve a minimum economic balance.</p>	<p>Many companies with losses that put their continuity at risk.</p>
<p>They make significant investments.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Investments</p>  <p>There are different situations; it is still not a qualifying point for these WISEs.</p>	<p>They do not make significant investments.</p>







<p>Advanced technological equipment.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Technologies</p>  <p>There are different situations; it is still not a qualifying point for these WISEs.</p>	<p>Minimal technological equipment.</p>
<p>Significant qualifications.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Workers' qualifications</p>  <p>Depends on sector of activity.</p>	<p>Generic workers' qualification.</p>
<p>Main competitors are other WISEs.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Competitors</p>  <p>Production activity takes place on the open market.</p>	<p>Main competitors are non-WISE companies.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Examples of most frequent areas of activity</p> <p>Catering and food workshops, agriculture, assembly or textile workshops, tailoring, tourist reception, shops.</p>	
<p>Direct and indirect public (or, at least, external) support, related to WSN integration, covers all costs.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Direct and indirect public support covers all costs</p>  <p>It depends on national regulations; support from a parent company within a group logic is widespread.</p>	<p>Absence of direct and indirect public (or, at least, external) support.</p>

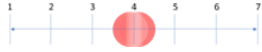




<p>Supporters are remunerated explicitly by public or by others' external contributions.</p>	<p>Is there anyone paid for working besides WSNs thanks to public support?</p>  <p>It depends on national regulations; however, indirect support from a parent company within group logic should also be considered.</p>	<p>No public support explicitly remunerating supporters.</p>
<p>Turnover entirely derived from public contracts (e.g., for cleaning services on public buildings, maintenance, recycling) reserved for WISEs.</p>	<p>Reserved public procurement</p>  <p>It depends on the national legislation. In most cases, this institution appears to be uncommon.</p>	<p>There are no public contracts reserved for WISEs.</p>
<p>All disadvantaged people in WISEs are employed and paid.</p>	<p>Disadvantaged employment status</p>  <p>The majority of the disadvantaged are workers, but there is a certain proportion of users in the organisation or in related bodies.</p>	<p>Many disadvantaged people in WISEs not employed (e.g., traineeships, ergotherapy, etc.).</p>






<p>WSNs receive ordinary contractual pay.</p>	<p>WSNs' remuneration</p>  <p>The value of remunerating people is recognised, although often they receive minimal remuneration.</p>	<p>A proportion of WSNs receive minimum/symbolic wages.</p>
<p>The great majority (>67%) of workers are disadvantaged.</p>	<p>Percentage of WSNs</p>  <p>Most of the workers are disadvantaged; there are only a few supporters.</p>	<p>A minimal proportion of workers are disadvantaged (<15%).</p>
<p>WSNs are in the WISE temporarily.</p>	<p>Temporary or permanent placement</p>  <p>Often these WISEs place people with severely impaired work abilities, who are difficult to place outside.</p>	<p>Disadvantaged people are in the WISE permanently.</p>
<p>The only institutional purpose of the WISE is related to work integration.</p>	<p>Work and social integration</p>  <p>It is a characteristic aspect of this type of WISE. The care of social aspects can be done by the WISE itself or within group logic.</p>	<p>Social aspects (housing, inclusion, care, etc.) are central to the institutional scope of the WISE.</p>



<p>Structured specific training activities (e.g., professional training) for WSNs, leading to training certification.</p>	<p>Specific training activities dedicated to WSNs</p>  <p>They are present if they are part of the social integration process.</p>	<p>There are no specific training activities for WSNs.</p>
<p>The WISE provides placement activities and is recognised as employment service provider.</p>	<p>Placement activities on open labour market (in non-WISE enterprises)</p>  <p>They are generally absent.</p>	<p>No structured placement activities.</p>
<p>People with specific vulnerabilities (disabilities, addictions, imprisonment, etc.).</p>	<p>Type of disadvantage</p>  <p>It depends on national regulations and traditions.</p>	<p>It is aimed at all people who have difficulties entering the labour market.</p>
	<p>Type of disadvantage (detail)</p> <p>Disability, mental health, extreme poverty; in some cases, other target groups for social intervention.</p>	



<p>With respect to PA, they relate to employment services.</p>	<p>Institutional reference</p>  <p>Generally, with welfare services, but it depends on national regulations and traditions.</p>	<p>With respect to PA, they relate to welfare services.</p>
<p>There are operators with the specific task of supporters.</p>	<p>Supporter presence</p>  <p>This is a defining aspect of these WISEs.</p>	<p>There are no operators with the specific task of supporters.</p>
<p>High structuring of tasks related to work integration.</p>	<p>Structuring supporters</p>  <p>This is a defining aspect of these WISEs.</p>	<p>Low structuring of tasks related to work integration.</p>

2.2.3 Training WISEs (TWs)



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Training WISEs arise from the evolution of organisations that carry out training activities and have developed a specific focus on dealing with vulnerable groups, e.g., NEETs or persons with disabilities. These are organisations that in some cases have reached a significant size in terms of both persons trained and equipment. At a certain point in their history, these organisations felt it was important to complement their training offerings with the implementation of productive

activities in which trainees or newly trained persons could directly experience the rhythms and requirements of a real work context.



This has given rise to supply units that sell goods and services to customers and, in doing so, derive a not inconsiderable part of their sustainability. Although not widespread in most of the countries considered, these cases are of great interest because they are characterised by modest economic values.

As in SWs, this has frequently given rise to WISEs that maintain strong interrelationships with a parent organisation, which contributes directly or indirectly to their sustainability, e.g., by contributing to investments in production tools or by bearing the costs of personnel working between parent and WISE.

The sectors of activity may be varied, although the catering and food production sector seems more common than others.

Sometimes business activities remain a mere by-product of the main training activity and have minimal entrepreneurial dimensions; in other cases, they have evolved over time, becoming true Training WISEs.

These WISEs, in keeping with their origins, are structured to train people with a view to their subsequent placement into the ordinary labour market and thus differ from other WISEs in several characteristic features.

First, training activities are not occasional and episodic, nor limited to the 'on-the-job training' that characterises most WISEs but are a fundamental part of the integration process. Sometimes, a job placement activity (in non-WISE enterprises) completes a programme that foresees insertion in structured training activities, preceding and/or contemporaneous with production activities.

Second, the WISE or another entity of the group to which it belongs has structured services aimed at facilitating subsequent placements in non-WISE companies or, in any case, contacts with companies in the area to which the trained persons are offered with a view to considering subsequent employment. These organisations, in fact, generally consider themselves not as the final landing place for WSNs, but as a 'bridge' towards subsequent placements.

Hence, the third distinguishing feature: the presence of WSNs is generally quite short (sometimes quantifiable in months, sometimes in a few years) and almost never permanent. This desired goal obviously requires, in addition to training and support by


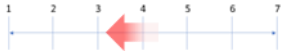





the WISE, that the WSN is in a situation where he/she can significantly improve his/her skills, so that he/she can aspire, after a period in the WISE, to employment in a non-WISE enterprise.

The status of the persons employed can in fact be quite 'elastic': especially where the periods of stay are short, even if the activities carried out consist in selling goods and services on the market, persons employed (possibly with specific contracts dedicated to those entering the world of work) and persons with a status linked to the training phase (e.g., traineeships) may coexist.

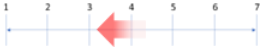
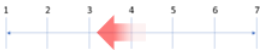


Table 4 - Training WISEs - Features

<p>It derives its resources from the sale of goods and services on the market to individuals, enterprises and public authorities.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Income</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Sustainability comes both from the sale of goods and services and from other sources related to educational work.</p>	<p>It derives resources from the recognition of welfare, training and placement activities by public authorities.</p>
<p>Generally, low turnover (<€100K).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Turnover</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Generally, these are small-scale activities.</p>	<p>Generally, large turnover (several million €).</p>
<p>Significant profits.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Profitability and sustainability</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Generally, these are activities that only achieve economic equilibrium in the particular context of TWs.</p>	<p>Many companies with losses that put their continuity at risk.</p>


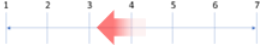




<p>They make significant investments.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Investments</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> </p> <p>The training activity carried out as a group leads to substantial investments in production tools.</p>	<p>They do not make significant investments.</p>
<p>Advanced technological equipment.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Technologies</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> </p> <p>Investment in technology is stimulated by the need to operate with appropriate machinery.</p>	<p>Minimal technological equipment.</p>
<p>Significant qualifications.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Workers' qualifications</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> </p> <p>Workers' qualifications are the result of training activities.</p>	<p>Generic workers' qualifications.</p>
<p>Main competitors are other WISEs.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Competitors</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> </p> <p>Production activity takes place on the open market.</p>	<p>Main competitors are non-WISE companies.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Examples of most frequent areas of activity</p> <p>Catering and food workshops.</p>	






<p>Direct and indirect public (or, at least, external) support, related to WSN integration, covers all costs.</p>	<p>Direct and indirect public support covers all costs</p>  <p>It depends on national regulations; support from a parent company within a group logic is widespread.</p>	<p>Absence of direct and indirect public (or, at least, external) support.</p>
<p>Supporters are remunerated explicitly by public or by others' external contributions.</p>	<p>Is there anyone paid for working besides WSNs thanks to public support?</p>  <p>Depends on national regulations; however, indirect support from a parent company within group logic should also be considered.</p>	<p>No public support explicitly remunerating supporters.</p>
<p>Turnover entirely derived from public contracts (e.g., for cleaning services on public buildings, maintenance, recycling) reserved for WISEs.</p>	<p>Reserved public procurement</p>  <p>It depends on the national legislation. In most cases, this institution appears to be uncommon.</p>	<p>There are no public contracts reserved for WISEs.</p>
<p>All disadvantaged people in WISEs are employed and paid.</p>	<p>Disadvantaged employment status</p>  <p>Situations are often encountered that push these companies to the edge of the WISE perimeter.</p>	<p>Many disadvantaged people in WISEs not employed (e.g., traineeships, ergotherapy, etc.).</p>






<p>WSNs receive ordinary contractual pay.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WSNs' remuneration</p>  <p>Situations are often encountered that push these companies to the edge of the WISE perimeter.</p>	<p>A proportion of WSNs receive minimum/symbolic wages.</p>
<p>The great majority (>67%) of workers are disadvantaged.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Percentage of WSNs</p>  <p>Generally, activities are carried out by disadvantaged people with the guidance and support of supporters.</p>	<p>A minimal proportion of workers are disadvantaged (<15%).</p>
<p>WSNs are in the WISE temporarily.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Temporary or permanent placement</p>  <p>They are WISEs that explicitly aim at external inclusion. It is a characteristic aspect of these WISEs.</p>	<p>Disadvantaged people are in the WISE permanently.</p>
<p>The only institutional purpose of the WISE is related to work integration.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Work and social integration</p>  <p>Social aspects are of interest if they are related to training aspects (e.g., training of people with disabilities).</p>	<p>Social aspects (housing, inclusion, care, etc.) are central to the institutional scope of the WISE.</p>



<p>Structured specific training activities (e.g., professional training) for WSNs, leading to training certification.</p>	<p>Specific training activities dedicated to WSNs</p>  <p>It is a characteristic aspect of these WISEs.</p>	<p>There are no specific training activities for WSNs.</p>
<p>The WISE provides placement activities and is recognised as employment service provider.</p>	<p>Placement activities on open labour market (in non-WISE enterprises)</p>  <p>It is a characteristic aspect of these WISEs, possibly carried out at group level.</p>	<p>No structured placement activities.</p>
<p>People with specific vulnerabilities (disabilities, addictions, imprisonment, etc.).</p>	<p>Type of disadvantage</p>  <p>They tend to deal with people with work-related problems, although their social vocation may also lead them to include people with special vulnerabilities.</p>	<p>It is aimed at all people who have difficulties entering the labour market.</p>
	<p>Type of disadvantage (detail)</p> <p>NEETs, people with disabilities, people with various forms of social hardship.</p>	



<p>With respect to PA, they relate to employment services.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Institutional reference</p> <p style="text-align: center;">  </p> <p>Generally, with employment services, unless the persons placed have specific forms of disadvantage for which they are in the care of welfare services.</p>	<p>With respect to PA, they relate to welfare services.</p>
<p>There are operators with the specific task of supporters.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Supporter presence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">  </p> <p>This is a defining aspect of these WISEs.</p>	<p>There are no operators with the specific task of supporters.</p>
<p>High structuring of tasks related to work integration.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Structuring of supporters</p> <p style="text-align: center;">  </p> <p>This is a defining aspect of these WISEs.</p>	<p>Low structuring of tasks related to work integration.</p>



2.2.4 Comparative overview

In the following, the above evaluations are shown synoptically. The characterising elements of each WISE are bordered in red.

Table 5 - Social WISEs - comparative overview

	PWs	SWs	TWs	
		Income		
It derives its resources from the sale of goods and services on the market to individuals, enterprises and public authorities.				It derives resources from the recognition of welfare, training and placement activities by public authorities.
Generally, low turnover (<€100K).		Turnover		Generally, large turnover (several million €).



Achieve significant profits.		<p>Profitability and sustainability</p>		Many companies with losses that put their continuity at risk.
They make significant investments.		<p>Investments</p>		They do not make significant investments.
Advanced technological equipment.		<p>Technologies</p>		Minimal technological equipment.
Significant qualifications.		<p>Workers' qualifications</p>		Generic workers' qualifications.
	<p>Competitors</p>			



Main competitors are other WISEs.

<p>Cleaning, green maintenance, environmental services, crafts and industrial production, civil maintenance, construction, catering.</p>	<p>Examples of most frequent areas of activity</p> <p>Catering and food workshops, agriculture, assembly or textile workshops, tailoring, tourist reception, shops.</p>	<p>Catering and food workshops.</p>
	<p>Direct and indirect public (/external) support</p>	

Main competitors are non-WISE companies.

Direct and indirect public (or, at least, external) support, related to WSNs

Absence of direct and indirect public (or, at





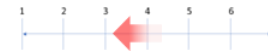
integration, covers all costs.

least, external) support.

Is there anyone paid for working besides WSNs thanks to public support?

Supporters are remunerated explicitly by public or by others' external contributions.

No public support explicitly remunerating supporters.



Reserved public procurement

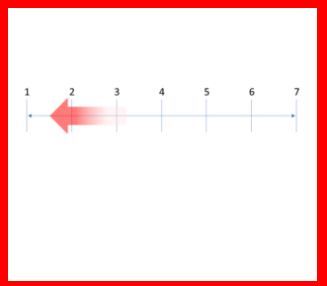
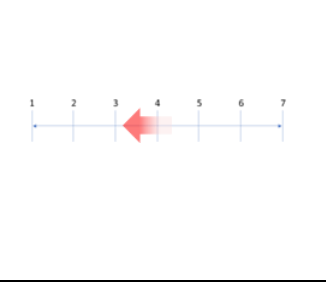

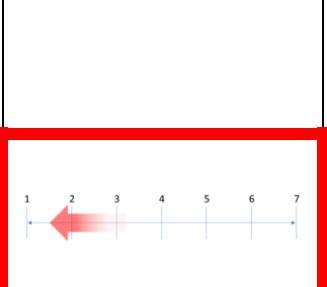
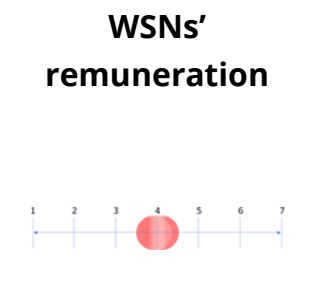
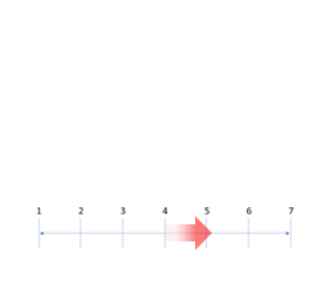
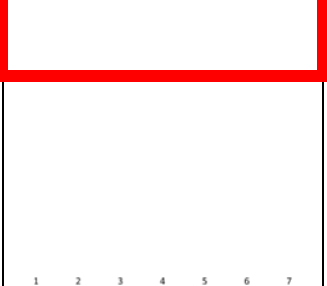
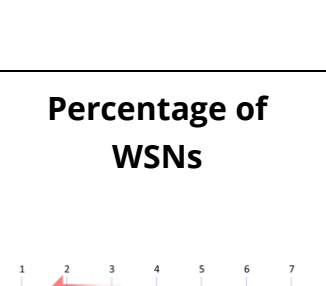
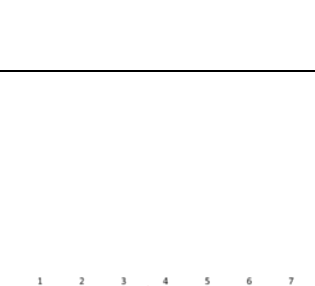
Turnover entirely derived from public contracts (e.g., for cleaning services on public buildings, maintenance, recycling) reserved for WISEs.

There are no public contracts reserved for WISEs.





All disadvantaged people in WISEs are employed and paid.

	Disadvantaged employment status		
			
	WSNs' remuneration		
			
	Percentage of WSNs		
			

WSNs receive ordinary contractual pay.

The great majority (>67%) of workers are disadvantaged.

Many disadvantaged people in WISEs are not employed (e.g., traineeships, ergotherapy, etc.).

A proportion of WSNs receive minimum/symbolic wages.

A minimal proportion of workers are disadvantaged (<15%).





WSNs are at the company temporarily.

	Temporary or permanent placement 	
	Work and social integration 	
	Specific training activities dedicated to WSNs 	

The only institutional purpose of the WISE is related to work integration.

Structured specific training activities (e.g., professional training)

Disadvantaged people are in the WISE permanently.

Social aspects (housing, inclusion, care, etc.) are central to the institutional scope of the WISE.

There are no specific training activities for WSNs.



for WSNs, leading to training certification.

The WISE provides placement activities and is recognised as employment service provider.

People with specific vulnerabilities (disabilities, addictions, imprisonment, etc.).




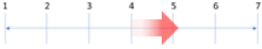


	Placement activities on open labour market (in non-WISE enterprises)	
	Type of disadvantage	

No structured placement activities.

It is aimed at all people who have difficulties entering the labour market.





<p>It depends on national regulations and traditions.</p>	<p>Type of disadvantage (detail)</p> <p>Disability, mental health, extreme poverty; in some cases, other target groups for social intervention.</p>	<p>NEETs, people with disabilities, people with various forms of social hardship.</p>
<p>With respect to PA, they relate to employment services.</p> 	<p>Institutional reference</p> 	<p>With respect to PA, they relate to welfare services.</p> 
<p>There are operators with the specific task of supporters.</p> 	<p>Supporter presence</p> <div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px;">   </div>	

With respect to PA, they relate to employment services.

There are operators with the specific task of supporters.

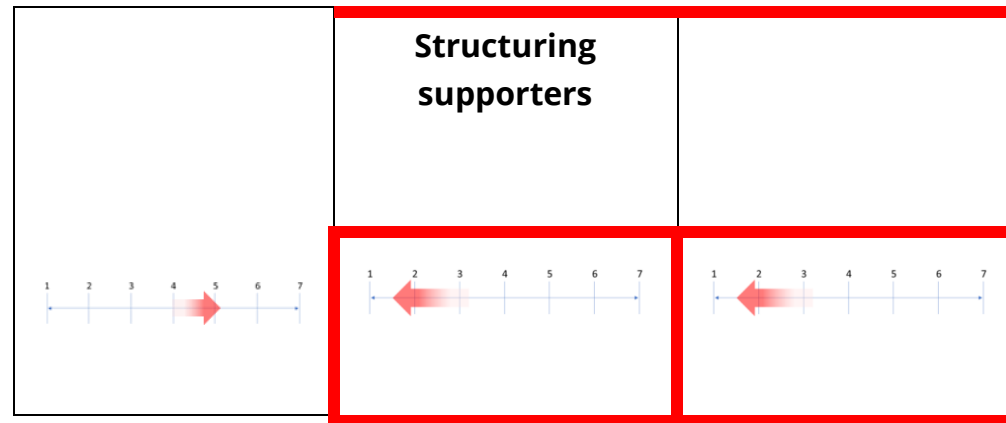
With respect to PA, they relate to welfare services.

There are no operators with the specific task of supporters.





High structuring of tasks related to work integration.



Low structuring of tasks related to work integration.





2.2.5 Usefulness of the model

The model has functioned well in countries where public support for WISEs is not very high: Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Romania and Slovenia. In these countries, adherence to a model is recognisable in the culture of the WISEs, their organisational priorities and their history; sometimes a model is recognisable in a 'pure' form, sometimes with mixed characteristics. In these countries, the model is useful in the form in which it has been proposed and contributes to outline a set of useful features both for the specific purposes of this project (the strengthening of digital skills) and more generally to understand the nature of these WISEs and consequently to correctly frame both public policies and strategies for the development of the sector. The model does require further elaboration and refinement, which can take place both during the project and in the development of autonomous research initiatives.

In countries with strong public support (Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain – [see p. 228 ff.](#) and annex table), we find a more nuanced situation, in which WISEs tend to develop with the characteristics of PWs, but also to develop significant training aspects (including formal ones, not only those 'on the job' typical of all WISEs) and (less frequently) social aspects. In these countries, the historical origin of WISEs may also be less relevant: there are, for instance, WISEs that were founded as sheltered workshops, which in later years, thanks in part to the encouraging support framework, have adopted strongly entrepreneurial models and today are Productive WISEs in their own right, although sometimes retaining some characteristics of SWs or TWs. The problem arises, therefore, of how the model can frame a WISE that:

- has production characteristics: turnover from the sale of goods and services in the order of several million euros, regularly hires hundreds or thousands of WSNs, invests, etc.;
- but at the same time receives public support which in many cases ranges between one third and two thirds of total revenues;
- organises significant training activities and has a large number of supporters with working time explicitly dedicated to supporting WSNs and therefore disconnected from production (and, in some cases, are remunerated by public policies for this function).



In these cases, characteristic elements of different models coexist. This does not mean that it is not possible to identify greater proximity to one or the other model at the level of the prevailing business culture or mission (for example, this is quite clear in Austria or Belgium). The boundaries are more blurred and the usefulness of the model is not so much in identifying different types of WISE but different functions within the WISE. In some countries (the Netherlands and Spain), even with these cautions, it is more difficult to use the model as proposed. Overall, this model can be very useful to identify the different types of WISEs; however, in some countries, caution is required as the models are less self-evident.

2.3 The outcomes

After these preliminary remarks, the main outcomes of the empirical survey, resulting from Phase 2 (national focus groups) and Phase 4 (case studies), are presented in the following pages.

In the first part, some information on economic and entrepreneurial aspects, such as turnover, economic margins, investments, etc., are presented.

In the second part, aspects relating to human resources and specifically work integration activities that characterise WISEs are analysed.

In both cases, the elements common to all WISEs are first presented, regardless of the model to which they belong; then the three scenarios are developed separately, highlighting the characteristics of each of them; finally, some comparative considerations between the three scenarios are proposed.

Following this analysis, a SWOT analysis was carried out, starting from the outcomes of the case studies, highlighting the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the various scenarios.

Conclusions on the policies adopted towards WISEs is postponed until the concluding pages.



2.3.1 Entrepreneurial aspects

2.3.1.1 General concept

During the research, we focused on the following entrepreneurial characteristics regarding the different scenarios: income, turnover, profitability and sustainability, investment, technologies, workers' qualifications, competitors and most frequent areas of activity.

The national focus groups revealed that there is significant variability among the different types of WISEs in general, but when looking at the entrepreneurial characteristics, WISEs have some common features, with some differences, in almost all participating countries (with a few exceptions, e.g., Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia and Poland).

Their income derives primarily from the sale of goods and services on the market to individuals, enterprises and public authorities, although in many countries they also receive financial support (recognition of training and placement work, government funding, state aid, cost subsidies, donations and sponsorship) useful for remunerating supporters' work and care activities towards WSNs. The type of income is one of the characteristics by which the differences between the different WISE scenarios are most noticeable.

In some countries (e.g., Austria, Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania and Spain), many WISEs have significant turnovers (up to several million euros). This fact dispels the common stereotype that WISEs are unable to operate successfully in the market. This obviously does not exclude that there are also smaller WISEs.

With respect to sustainability, there are, of course, very different situations, including some WISEs that make losses; however, what is noteworthy is that, alongside a significant share of WISEs that break even, there are many WISEs (e.g., in Austria, in the Netherlands and in Romania) that are able to generate and reinvest significant profits. Again, the clichés about the inability of WISEs to operate successfully in the market are disproved



There are WISEs that make significant investments for the following reasons: to compete with non-WISE companies (e.g., in Belgium, Italy and Romania), to adapt to new activities and new employment opportunities (e.g., in Italy and the Netherlands), to buy new equipment (e.g., in Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Romania and Slovenia) or to guarantee the well-being and security of WSNs (e.g., in Belgium (Wallonia) and the Netherlands).

In most cases, the WISEs compete on the same level with non-WISE enterprises and sometimes they collaborate with them. This indicates once again that WISEs are not 'second-class enterprises', but enterprises that, based on the strategies they choose, can compete on an equal footing, or collaborate on an equal basis, with non-WISE enterprises.

Although WISEs show interest in strengthening the technologies and some of them use advanced technologies, there are numerous cases where social enterprises have minimal technological equipment because they choose simple activities in order not to create barriers for the inclusion of WSNs.

As for the qualification of the WSNs, in most cases, the jobs in WISEs require generic or lower worker qualifications. In some cases (e.g., Romania and Slovenia), the employees participate in internal training to be able to do their daily job-related tasks.

Not all the WISEs represented in the focus groups have the above-mentioned entrepreneurial characteristics. There are also marginal, undeveloped WISEs. This depends on local traditions, sectors of activity and other factors. In some cases, this is because business activity is a secondary sector of an organisation that has a social or educational approach and provides certain users with work experience or on-the-job training. There are also cases where it is due to the manager's limited entrepreneurial attitude. The entrepreneurial direction could strengthen a WISE's sustainability, but it could also lead to the neglect of social and training functions. In some countries (e.g., Austria, Belgium and Spain), this issue does not occur because training and social care are integrated (generally recognised and financed) within the WISE's daily operation. In other cases, the WISEs do not recognise these functions and only offer job opportunities or provide some of the services mentioned above in an informal way depending on the workers' or their supporters' needs. This feature is also fundamental to the WISE scenarios and will be explored further.



The main areas of activity in the participating countries based on the national focus groups are the followings:

- Restaurants, catering and food
- Maintenance of green areas
- Cleaning services
- Environmental services
- Agriculture and horticulture
- Assembly and packaging
- Crafts (carpentry, metalworking, laundries, printing, clothing, textiles, etc.)
- Logistics services and transport
- Construction and renovation
- Digitalisation/data entry
- Shops
- Tourism

On the following pages, the different Scenarios will be discussed in more detail.

2.3.1.2 Productive WISEs

In most cases, these WISEs operate on the open market and derive their income from the sale of goods and services for private users and public authorities. Although some WISEs (e.g., in Belgium, Croatia, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain) reported that they receive various benefits from the government (e.g., cost subsidies, government funding) in addition to their productive activities, this is only a small part of their income.

Obviously, we found WISEs of very different sizes and with different degrees of entrepreneurial soundness (investment, professionalisation, quality, etc.), similarly to the non-WISE economic system. Therefore, the presence of thousands of for-profit micro-enterprises as well as WISEs with very small turnovers and employees should not be surprising.

The aspect that emerges, which is instead worth emphasising, is that at least in a certain number of European countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain) it is quite usual to find Productive WISEs with turnovers in the order of several million euros, with hundreds (sometimes thousands) of workers, quality



products, investments, etc; in other words, top-level enterprises, recognised in their own area among the leading players in the local economic fabric. And this does not happen in a limited number of cases, but in a widespread manner throughout much of the national area, thanks to the persistence of dozens of units with economic characteristics of this type.

When it comes to the sustainability and profitability of the Productive WISEs, many WISEs that made significant profits were identified. This also testifies to the fact that there are WISEs that manage to successfully stay on the market. At the same time, this does not mean that such WISEs do not face difficulties. In Italy, this is due to the competition with other non-WISE companies; in Romania, it depends on the season and the number of sales achieved. The representatives from Austria mentioned that 'some of the WISEs act as non-profit organisations; therefore, profit is not the main aim of these enterprises, and losses that put their continuity at risk are seldom seen'. In most cases, we can observe that the situations vary in sustainability and profitability depending on the sector, the market and the competitors. Some cases were identified in Croatia, Greece and Slovenia where Productive WISEs are facing losses that put their continuity at risk, but overall, the Productive WISEs seems to be sustainable. In most countries, the Covid-19 situation has had a negative impact on profit.

Most Productive WISEs make significant investments. Some of them do so to be able to compete with other for-profit companies (e.g., in Belgium, Italy and Romania), or to adapt to new activities and new employment possibilities (e.g., in the Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain).

When it comes to the use of technology, we can observe differences among Productive WISEs. In Austria, the use of technology plays an essential role and is considered job enrichment for employees and supporters. Therefore, some WISEs started projects to promote digitalisation in their own enterprise or even established training curricula for their social workers/key staff (e.g., DigiCoach). Depending on the work activity, they use advanced technological equipment (e.g., special tools for accessible technology, computer programs, technologically advanced machines). In Belgium, these technologies are used in order to compete on equal terms with non-WISE companies, even though Productive WISEs invest less in far-reaching automation. There was even a representative who reported that technology is not necessary and is seen as a threat to social work in their WISE. In the Netherlands, there is a Productive WISE that is an IT



web service company where the technological equipment is on a high level, although not specifically human-related. In many countries, Productive WISEs also use these technologies to compete with other for-profit companies and use specific equipment for their activities (e.g., high-performance sewing machines, coffee roasting line). In Spain, France and Italy we can observe a great variety of situations, from companies that caught up with the technological equipment of their business sector to compete with for-profit companies to others that have minimal technological equipment. In Croatia, Greece, Latvia and Slovenia, most WISEs use minimal technological equipment, being engaged in very simple areas of activity with the aim of creating accessible jobs even for people with low skills.

As regards to the workers' qualifications, most Productive WISEs require generic or low qualifications and workers are trained on the job.

WISEs compete in the market, thus competing (and sometimes collaborating) with non-WISEs (as well as, possibly, some other WISEs operating in the same sectors).

2.3.1.3 Social WISEs

This section contains data on both Social WISEs and intermediate cases between Social WISEs and Productive WISEs.

The most important entrepreneurial characteristic of Social WISEs or Productive/Social WISEs is the type of income. In this scenario, the resources mainly come from the recognition of their social work (e.g., by subsidies, government funding, donations and sponsorships). Since these are WISEs anyway, a considerable part of the revenue is derived from the sale of goods and services; but a part of the income is instead from significant public support that allows them to hire social workers as supporters and to offer social support to WSNs. These companies are characterised by considering work integration as part of an overall project to take care of the WSNs and thus they also consider aspects such as social care, housing, etc. We can observe this situation in Austria, Wallonia, Croatia, Italy, Latvia and Romania, although this is a minority of WISEs. The income from the sale of services is considerably lower than the income of Productive WISEs. Due to this reason, their yearly turnover is usually low; there are a few exceptions, such as Poland, although in that case they are borderline WISEs, similar to organisations providing welfare services. In some cases, these organisations are the result of the evolution of sheltered workshops who have over the years acquired the



characteristics of a WISE, but that retain a very careful approach to taking care of social needs.

When it comes to profitability and sustainability, we can observe different situations between companies that face continuous losses and are supported by extraordinary sources e.g., from a parent organisation, and those that make a profit but usually just enough to keep them operating. Their small economic size is always a risk for WISEs that position themselves in a competitive market in their sector. A representative from Bulgaria reported that ‘the most significant profit of the Social WISEs is the opportunity for WSNs to gain work experience and thus maintain a good quality of life’.

In general, Social and Productive/Social WISEs do not make significant investments, and these are mainly spent on equipment, employee work experience and well-being, and current and future activities.

In general, these enterprises use minimal technology and carry out simple productive activities. There are some cases where technology is used to create safe and accessible working conditions for people with disabilities.

As regards to workers’ qualifications, WISEs operating in this scenario mostly require general or low qualifications, since the tasks are mostly simple and are compatible with the conditions of the WSNs. In these WISEs, WSNs’ profiles referred to as ‘Safely Here’ are most frequently found ([see p. 151 ff.](#))

We can observe that these types of WISEs mainly compete with other for-profit companies, but there are some countries (e.g., Austria, Italy and Poland) where WISEs quite frequently compete with each other as well as with non-WISEs.

2.3.1.4 Training WISEs

This section contains data on both Training WISEs and intermediate cases that lie between Training WISEs and Productive WISEs.

With respect to the economic data that characterise these WISEs, it is important to clearly identify the phenomenon we wish to talk about. There are, in countries such as Belgium or Croatia (with reference to former sheltered workshops) where there are significant levels of support for labour integration, cases of WISEs with significant training activity within a basically Productive WISE context. In these cases, we find high



turnovers, high operating margins, substantial investments, etc. But, in fact, these are essentially PWs that have developed training activities internally.

The situation is different for actual Training WISEs, which are created within institutions for what amounts to training purposes as a productive appendix to offer WSNs a context in which to experiment and strengthen their skills.

In the latter cases, WISEs derive (directly or indirectly) a large amount of resources from the recognition of their training work for WSNs (e.g., public funding for the training courses and subsidies). This can happen directly, when it is WISE that is remunerated for the training activity or, more frequently, indirectly, when it is a training institution that is remunerated for this, and that training institution then supports WISE financially. These types of WISEs generally also do economic activities and have income from the sales of goods and services on the market, but like Social WISEs, this is significantly lower than Productive WISEs. In general (Austria, Latvia, Italy, and Spain), the turnover is usually medium or low.

When it comes to profitability and sustainability, the profit is not significant, and these WISEs often have losses. In Italy, the representatives reported that it is often difficult to assess sustainability separately from that of the original VET provider. If considered separately, sustainability would be limited.

Often, training and Productive/Training WISEs' level of investment is lower than that of non-WISE companies operating in the same sector.

In terms of the use of technology, we can consider two different topics. The first is technologies for production purposes. In this regard, case studies attest that technology has plays an essential role in the Training WISEs, as it is part of the training. Participants should be realistically prepared for the regular labour market and since digitalisation is part of modern employment, this is considered crucial (e.g., some Austrian case studies). Often the equipment was purchased for training activities and is used for both production and teaching purposes (e.g., Italy). The second theme is that of technology as a tool for training. In this regard, we found some cases of WISEs lagging behind when it comes to investments in advanced technological equipment for learning and training purposes (e.g., learning management systems, mixed reality solutions, micro-learning platforms). Sometimes it is challenging for the target groups



(e.g., elderly workers). In any case, both with respect to technological equipment and staff skills, the importance of the field of activity must be considered.

In regard to the workers' qualifications, some Training WISEs (e.g., in Austria, Belgium and Italy) aim to reintegrate the target group through training, workshops and education and to bring the persons placed in it to a professional level compatible with entry into the labour market or with entry into a Productive WISE. This is one of the most important characteristics of the Training WISEs. For this reason, the workers' qualifications are usually lower than in non-WISEs. In these WISEs, WSNs profiles referred to as the 'Revenant' are most frequently found ([see p. 167 ff.](#)).

These types of WISEs mainly compete with non-WISE companies.

2.3.1.5 Comparison between WISEs

Overall, we can observe that the entrepreneurial characteristics that most determine the WISEs' scenarios are income and the level and purpose of investment.

Productive WISEs, where present in a 'pure' form, mainly derive resources from their economic activities: sales of goods and services on the market to private individuals and public authorities and only a small part of their income coming from various sources of government funding, subsidies or donations; this is the case, at least, in countries where support for WISEs is weaker. As highlighted elsewhere, the situation is different in countries where WISEs receive more support.

In contrast, Social and Training WISEs can derive resources from two sources.

The first is the recognition of social, training and placement activities by the public authorities; these WISEs make some income from economic activities, but this is significantly lower than Productive WISEs. The amount and type of income largely determine what activities (e.g., work, social, training) and investments are carried out in the different WISEs' scenarios.

In general, the yearly turnover of Productive WISEs is higher than Social or Training WISEs.

The second possible source is to be understood by considering Social WISEs or Training WISEs as part of a group of social economy bodies. In this case, the WISE is often a



productive activity (generally of medium-small size) that the parent organisation carries out in order to complete its mission in the social or training field.

We can observe that most Productive WISEs make significant investments to be able to compete with mainly for-profit companies in order to adapt to new activities, especially those linked to involvement in new activities and new employment opportunities. In contrast, Social WISEs do not make significant investments and these are spent mainly on equipment, employee work experience, well-being and current and future activities.

Regarding profitability and sustainability, Productive WISEs make significantly more profit than Social or Training WISEs, therefore making them more sustainable, but not always without difficulties. In cases of Social WISEs or Training WISEs created by a parent organisation, sustainability is often ensured by direct or indirect transfers from the latter.

2.3.2 Work integration

2.3.2.1 General concept

Regarding work integration, we focused on the following characteristics during the research: WSNs' employment status and remuneration, percentage and type of WSNs, duration of employment (temporary or permanent), work and social integration activities, specific training activities dedicated to WSNs, placement activities on the open labour market (for-profit companies), institutional reference and supporters' presence and their role. It derives resources from the recognition of welfare, training and placement activities by the public authorities.

The national focus groups revealed that WISEs employ a significant proportion of workers from disadvantaged backgrounds who generally have low qualifications.

Due to the prevalence of Productive WISEs, most WSNs are employed and paid according to collective agreements. Only a small proportion of workers are not hired and receive social allowances.

The share of WSNs varies widely, even within the same countries. There are many cases where the WSNs make up more than half of those employed (e.g., in Belgium: 65–96%, according to the different types of WISEs; in Croatia: more than 50%; in Greece: a high



percentage of the total employment; in Latvia: more than 60%; in the Netherlands: the great majority of workers according to the type of WISEs; in Romania and Slovenia in most WISEs; and in Spain: more than 70% in CEEs, a Spanish type of WISE). This seems to be, at least regarding the cases studied, the prevailing situation. But there are also different situations: for instance, in Italy, cases where the share of WSNs is, according to the country's regulations, around 30% are widespread; in Bulgaria, we find cases where WSNs make up between 20% and 30% of those employed. In the Netherlands, alongside WISEs with a high number of WSNs, we find others with percentages around 15%. Several factors influence the share of WSNs: these include legal constraints, the business culture of the WISE and sustainability requirements.

In terms of the type of disadvantage, in addition to persons with disabilities, other disadvantaged groups are also employed by WISEs (e.g., long-term unemployed persons, migrants, NEETs, Roma people, single parents, ex-prisoners, drug and alcohol addicts).

Regarding the duration of the integration, training and placement activities in the open labour market, in most countries, permanent employment is prevalent (e.g., Greece, Latvia, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain CEEs) and there are no structured placement and training activities within WISEs. In some countries, although permanent integration is prevalent due to the lack of external placement opportunities, there are some WISEs that aim to operate as 'bridges' to employment in non-WISE enterprises (e.g., Belgium, Italy and Spain EISs). In some countries, placement activities are remarkably common (e.g., Belgium and Austria). Often, placement activities are associated with the presence of training activities and these are the core of Training WISEs. Some countries are planning the implementation of training and placement activities in Productive WISEs (e.g., Greece). These characteristics and activities to a large extent determine the type of WISEs.

When it comes to the support of the workers in work and social integration, the type of support activities provided to employees depends to a large extent on the type of WISE. In most cases, we can observe the presence of social assistance (housing, social care, and services, rehabilitation, etc.) alongside the work integration activities.

Regarding the institutional reference, most WISEs relate to employment services, but we can observe mixed situations as well (between employment and welfare services).



Most WISEs, in all countries, engage supporters, who are an indispensable element to WISEs and their roles are generally well structured. A smaller number of cases have supporters that have informal roles without much structure (e.g., IDESS in Wallonia; Women's Agricultural Cooperatives in Greece; conventional companies, social cooperatives, associations in Croatia and Latvia; a WISE in Slovenia). Sometimes, there is explicit financial public support for WISEs to hire supporters: 'public support is mainly linked to workers' salaries and investments, as well as support units, which get specific support to cover salaries. The amount granted is based on the number and level of disability of workers to be served' (Spain).

Considering different WISE 'scenarios', the following characteristics can be observed about work integration characteristics.

2.3.2.2 Productive WISEs

In this WISE scenario, WSNs are usually employed and work, and are paid, for enough hours to ensure partial or complete economic independence, according to their health conditions. There are some cases where some workers are not employed and/or receive symbolic or reduced payment (e.g., France and Women's Agricultural Cooperatives in Greece).

In most Productive WISEs, a large proportion of workers are disadvantaged, which usually means that more than 50% of the employees are from vulnerable groups. There are some Productive WISEs (e.g., the Netherlands, a WISE in Romania and CISs in Spain) where WSNs make up only a minority of the workforce. In the terms of the type of disadvantage, most types of disadvantaged groups are employed by Productive WISEs: persons with disabilities (highest rate), long-term unemployed, workers after rehabilitation, NEETs, migrants, elderly, refugees and people with alcohol, narcotic, psychotropic, toxic substance, gambling or computer gambling addiction, etc. We can observe some cases where the WISEs only focus on one group (e.g., ETAs in Belgium, Women's Agriculture Cooperatives in Greece, WISEs in Latvia, Slovenia and the Netherlands and CEEs in Spain), but in most cases, there is a mix of disadvantaged groups in employment.

In regard to the duration of integration, most Productive WISEs offer permanent contracts to their employees. There are some cases (e.g., in Belgium (Flanders) and Italy) where there is a model that is a mix between permanent and transitional models.



There are few cases (e.g., Austria and Romania – mixed model) where employment is temporary. We can observe that the transitional model with placement and training activities is possible where WISEs have adequate support (usually from the state) to finance the above-mentioned activities that do not generate revenue but improve employment possibilities of WSNs in the open labour market. The transition model is very expansive. This is because 1) it includes training and placement activities and 2) above all, because the WISE deprives itself of a trained worker to start with an untrained one. This is possible 1) in a few best practices or 2) where there is adequate support.

When it comes to specific training activities dedicated to WSNs, in most Productive WISEs there are no structured, specific training activities that lead to certification or placement in the open labour market. However, there are some Productive WISEs that provide training for their workers. We can observe different situations: in Austria, training activities are often prepended before workers start their job in the WISE: some WISEs do competence checks, health issue checks or capability checks; in other cases, a couple of hours are reserved for training/education. In Belgium (Flanders), there are some training activities not specifically aimed at job skills but at other aspects (e.g., well-being, resilience, coping with aggression, permanent training in the workplace). In Wallonia (also Belgium), generally, there are more training activities for workers than those required of a non-WISE enterprise. In Italy, there are different situations. In many cases, there are no specific training courses; however, there are WISEs that give particular attention to the qualification of WSNs. Sometimes, WISEs have partnerships with a vocational, education and training institute for the training of its employees. In Slovenia and Spain, in some WISEs, there are some specific training activities related to the job's tasks. In Romania, a Productive WISE provides specific training activities and works in partnership with other enterprises in the group to provide vocational training and certifications.

Regarding work and social integration activities, the institutional purpose of most Productive WISEs is related to work integration. There are some WISEs where we can observe mixed situations. In Austria, Productive WISEs support WSNs not only in reintegration into the regular labour market but also in stabilising their social environment (by either supporting the target group through social work or by sending the persons to other established institutions, e.g., addiction care, responsible authorities, debt counselling, education institutions). In some countries (e.g., Belgium,



Italy, Slovenia and Spain), although most supporting activities have a work-related purpose, there are also cases where attention is given to additional needs (e.g., housing, social care).

We can observe that most Productive WISEs have no structured placement activities. This is borne out from the fact that in most cases the employees have long-term contracts. However, there are exceptions. In Austria, all Productive WISEs are supposed to do placement activities as part of reintegration into the open labour market. The placement rates are stipulated by the Austrian Public Employment Service. The contracts are usually temporary – therefore, placement activities or support in finding employment in the regular labour market is an essential part of Productive WISEs. In Belgium (both in Flanders and Wallonia) and in Romania, external placement is usually also part of the core activities of Productive WISEs. In Spain, CEEs provide placement activities and are recognised as employment service providers.

Regarding the institutional reference, in most countries (e.g., Austria, Belgium (in Flanders), Croatia, Greece, Latvia, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Romania and Spain), Productive WISEs offer employment services but we can observe mixed situations in Belgium (Wallonia), Italy, Romania and Slovenia, where Productive WISEs offer not only to employment services but also welfare services.

In most Productive WISEs, supporters play an essential role, and their activities are generally well structured. The supporters, in lots of cases, are simply non-WSN colleagues (e.g., Italy, Latvia and Romania) or more experienced WSNs (e.g., Wallonia in Belgium). The activities of the support persons relate to work integration (e.g., Greece – KoiSPE, KoinSEp, Romania, Slovenia and Spain) and the safety of the WSNs. In Italy, there are different situations; however, in some cases, integration procedures are structured with a specific work integration manager and formalised procedures. There are some Productive WISEs (we can find some examples in Croatia, Woman Agricultural Cooperatives in Greece, Latvia, the Netherlands and Slovenia) where there are no operators with specific supporting tasks; even in the countries mentioned, these are not exclusive solutions, and we can also find cases where supporters are explicitly present.



2.3.2.3 Social WISEs

This paragraph concerns both Social WISEs and intermediate cases between Social WISEs and Productive WISEs. Regarding WSNs, we can observe in most cases (e.g., Bulgaria, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland and Romania) that, although the WSNs are employed, they receive the minimum wage. Some Social WISEs show a great variety of forms of employment: some of the WSNs are employed with a contract and others are in the WISE as social care users. Salaries are therefore varied, ranging from minimal and symbolic reimbursements to regular contractual wages, although in some cases at very reduced working hours. Sometimes the forms of remuneration of WSNs are designed to be consistent with the integration process in which they are included; for example, in a WISE in Romania, the WSNs are also hosted in a housing service and they receive pay divided into three parts: contribution to the house expenses, saved money for the future apartment and pocket money. It is clear in this case how money management takes on an educational value, training WSNs in conscious and forward-looking use of their wages. In some cases, the hourly wage corresponds to the contractual minimum wage, but the number of working hours per week is minimal (fewer than ten or sometimes fewer than five) or the work is carried out on an occasional or intermittent basis according to national regulations. This can lead to cases where the WSN is at the same time a user of a social welfare service of a WISE (or of a sister organisation) and a paid worker for a few hours per week. Sometimes the working hours and/or the monthly pay is quantified to such an extent that the WSN does not lose the social allowances he or she receives: a wage contributes to WSNs' economic autonomy as an addition to the social allowance.

In most Social and Productive/Social WISEs, a large proportion of workers are WSNs, which means that more than 50% of the employees are from vulnerable groups. There are a few cases (e.g., Bulgaria and the Netherlands) where WSNs are a minority in the workforce. Like the Productive WISEs, most types of disadvantaged groups are present in the employment of Social and Productive/Social WISEs: persons with disabilities, persons with psychiatric disorders, persons in long-term unemployment, Roma people, NEETs, the elderly, homeless persons, persons with alcohol and drug problems, refugees and persons with difficulties in the labour market. In most cases, there is a mixture of disadvantaged groups in employment. These are in any case people who are undergoing a social rehabilitation programme that includes participation in work activities for various reasons, e.g., to strengthen self-esteem, to confront an



environment governed by rules, to test their ability to relate to other people, to test their ability to sustain the rhythms of production, to rediscover their manual skills, etc.

In regard to the duration of integration, WSNs usually stay permanently in the employment of Social and Productive/Social WISEs. We can also observe mixed situations (e.g., in Wallonia in Belgium, associations and veterans social working cooperatives in Croatia, in the Netherlands, and Supported Employment Enterprises in Poland). In Romania, a WISE states that 'WSNs are temporarily employed, at least in theory. Some are unable to find a job on the free market'; other WISEs integrate WSNs for a period from two to five years.

When it comes to specific training activities dedicated to WSNs, there are training activities in Social and Productive/Social WISEs (in most cases) but these are not as structured as in Training and Training/Productive WISEs. WISEs of this type usually provide training for their employees to acquire the skills, knowledge and competences needed for their job and to understand their role. In a Romanian WISE, they organise one-on-one and group conversations on different topics on life management (e.g., handling money, friendships, relationships, healthy habits, the importance of diet and sport, sex, abortion, handling emotions, punctuality). In addition, each job coach offers specific training on their domain of work (e.g., cooking, selling, sorting items, delivering, cleaning, assembling furniture), but participants do not get any certificate at the end of the training. In veteran social working cooperatives in Croatia, they offer structured specific training activities (e.g., professional training) for WSNs leading to training certification. There are some WISEs (e.g., social cooperatives in Croatia, in the Netherlands, Supported Employment Enterprises in Poland and some WISEs in Romania) where there are no specific training activities.

Regarding the work and social integration activities, the institutional purpose of most Social and Productive/Social WISEs mainly relate to social aspects (e.g., housing, inclusion, care, providing access to school, support in administration processes). Work integration is also present but in a smaller proportion than in Productive WISEs. There are some Productive/Social WISEs (e.g., social cooperatives and veteran social working cooperatives in Croatia, and Supported Employment Enterprises in Poland) where the institutional purpose mainly relates to work integration.



We can observe that most Social and Productive/Social WISEs have no structured placement activities. However, there are some WISEs that lie between the social and training model (e.g., Bulgaria, and) that provide placement activities. In Wallonia in Belgium, external placement ('enclave services') is usually also part of the core activities of the WISE.

Regarding the institutional reference, we can observe mixed situations in most countries (e.g., Belgium, Latvia, Netherlands, Social Cooperatives and Professional Activity Establishments in Poland and Romania), since Social and Productive/Social WISEs relate to both employment and welfare services. We can find some WISEs that only offer employment services, and some WISEs that only offer welfare services.

In most Social and Productive/Social WISEs, supporters are the key element of this type of WISE. They have specific responsibilities that lead to a high degree of structuring when it comes to tasks related to work integration. In some cases (e.g., Austria, Bulgaria, Italy and Romania) they are qualified professionals, in others (e.g., Wallonia in Belgium and some WISEs in Latvia and in Romania) the supporters are simply non-WSN colleagues or more experienced WSNs. There are some Social and Productive/Social WISEs (e.g., social cooperatives and associations in Croatia and Social Cooperatives and Supported Employment Enterprises in Poland) where there are no operators with specific supporting tasks.

2.3.2.4 Training WISEs

This paragraph concerns both Training WISEs and intermediate cases between Training WISEs and Productive WISEs. When it comes to WSNs' status and remuneration in Training or Productive/Training WISEs, we can observe that in general, the WSNs are employed and paid in this scenario. In Austria, the target group usually gets subsidies during the training (e.g., unemployment benefits and needs-based minimum benefits). Some of the Training WISEs employ their WSNs on a regular wage. In Belgium (Flanders), the WSNs are remunerated through social welfare. In Italy, only a few Trainings WISEs operate; in these WISEs, few workers are paid; others are trainees or people in training. Paid workers – generally, NEETs who are not formally WSNs according to Italian law but are according to European criteria – are sometimes hired as apprentices, a specific kind of contract provided for by Italian law, receiving a regular wage.



In most Training and Productive/Training WISEs, a large proportion of workers are WSNs, which means that more than 50% of the employees are from vulnerable groups. In this scenario (like in others), most types of disadvantaged groups are present: persons with disabilities, persons who need psychosocial support, elderly persons, young, vulnerable adults who have left compulsory schooling, persons in long-term unemployment, NEETs, migrants, ex-prisoners, persons with alcohol and/or drug addiction and persons who have difficulties entering the labour market. There are some WISEs (e.g., sheltered workshops in Croatia) that focus on one group (e.g., persons with disabilities), and there are others (e.g., Austria, Flanders in Belgium, Bulgaria and Italy) where a mix of disadvantaged groups are employed.

In most Training and Productive/Training WISEs, the duration of integration is temporary because their goal is to place their target groups in mainstream (for-profit) companies or Productive WISEs due to the training and supported employment they receive at the WISE. There are some cases (e.g., integrative workshops in Croatia) where workers can stay permanently, but the general aim is also external placement.

The other main characteristic of this type of WISE is the specific training activities for WSNs. The training activities in this scenario are fundamental parts of the WISE's operation, and the purpose of these is to improve the target groups' employability and reintegrate them in the open labour market. In general, these training activities are structured, personalised and provided both within courses and work in the enterprise. Some of the training leads to certification.

In regard to work and social integration activities, this type of WISE aims to train work skills, competences and knowledge for future employment; however, they also provide support depending on additional needs (e.g., housing, social inclusion, social services). There are some Training and Productive/Training WISEs (e.g., in Croatia and Spain) whose institutional purpose relates only to work integration.

When it comes to the placement activities, external placement in the open labour market is usually one of the main goals of this scenario, but we can observe differences among the participating countries. In Austria, placement rates are stipulated by the Austrian Public Employment Service, contracts are temporary and support in finding employment on the regular labour market is an additional part of Training WISEs. In Belgium (Flanders), the public employment service of Flanders (VDAB) is responsible for



temporary access to the Training WISEs and other employment activities in the social economy for all persons, regardless of their status, as well as for placement activities after training activities have been completed (VDAB assesses whether a person still meets the conditions for participation in a Training WISE and can or cannot move on to paid employment, whether it is the social economy or in the open labour market, at least annually). The WISEs themselves are neither responsible for employing the person after the training activities nor for supporting the target groups in their job search (in the social or regular economy). Supporting persons in their employment is carried out by VDAB and partner organisations. In Croatia, Italy, Romania and Spain, external placement is part of the core activities of this type of WISE.

Regarding institutional reference, in most countries (e.g., Austria, Flanders in Belgium, Spain and Romania), these types of WISEs relate mainly to employment services. In some cases, we can observe a mixed situation. For example, in Italy it depends on the person included: some arrive at these WISEs through welfare services (e.g., persons with disabilities), others (e.g., persons with difficulties in the labour market) through Employment Centres.

In this scenario, supporters are an indispensable element of WISEs; their role is generally well structured and relates to the job placement of WSNs. In most cases, they are qualified operators with specific tasks.

2.3.2.5 Comparison between WISEs

Overall, we can observe that the share of paid workers, the duration of integration, the presence of training and placement activities, the work and social integration activities and the institutional references most determine WISEs' scenarios.

Although WSNs are also employed, are paid and receive contractual payment in Social and Training WISEs, their wages are lower than in Productive WISEs.

While Productive and Social WISEs are characterised by long-term, permanent employment of the WSNs, Training WISEs employ their target groups temporarily because one of their main goals is to improve their employability and place them in the open labour market.

The presence of training activities for WSNs in Training WISEs is most typical and in most cases these trainings are structured and personalised, and some of them lead to



certification. Although there are also training activities in some Productive and Social WISEs, these are not as structured as in the Training WISEs and their main purpose is to support their workers in understanding their role and learning the skills, competences and knowledge needed for their work activities.

Regarding work and social integration activities, the institutional purpose of most WISEs relates to work integration. The Social WISEs offer significant support on social aspects to their WSNs (work integration is also present but in a smaller proportion compared to Productive WISEs). We can sometimes observe mixed situations in all scenarios (e.g., mixed models).

When it comes to placement activities, Training WISEs are the enterprises that provide most structured placement for WSNs in for-profit companies or in some cases in Productive WISEs.

While most Social WISEs relate to both employment and welfare services, most Productive and Training WISEs are related to only employment services.

In regard to the percentage and type of WSNs, and the presence and role of supporters, we can observe similar situations in the three WISEs scenarios. In most cases, a large proportion of workers are WSNs. The supporters are indispensable elements of most WISEs and their role is generally well structured.

2.4 SWOT analysis: a transversal reading

During the case studies, a SWOT analysis was carried out. This is an analysis framework aimed at identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an organisation and is used to assess the position of a company within its development strategy. The individual SWOT analyses can be accessed in the extended national reports

The four criteria above – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats – are the result of the intersection of two analytical dimensions:

- the helpful elements and the harmful elements;
- the elements of internal and external origin.



Figure 3 - SWOT Analysis



The next steps were:

- aggregation of the outcomes of the SWOT analysis based on the scenarios identified;
- identification of the items and sub-items mentioned in the SWOT, verifying their presence in the various Scenarios;
- discussion of the items, identifying for each one how they fit into the SWOT framework.

2.4.1 The aggregation of the SWOT by scenarios

The table shows the main themes that emerged from the SWOT, aggregated based on the scenarios. Although, as highlighted elsewhere, in some cases the identification of WISE types may have certain controversial aspects, in general the analysis returns useful results for identifying the different scenarios.



Table 6 - Productive WISEs - SWOT analysis

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<p>Strengths</p> <p>Reputation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good recognition by local governments and stakeholders, leading to growth of the business and visibility (Belgium, Slovenia, Croatia, the Netherlands, Romania) • Customer satisfaction due to appreciation of the social objectives of the PWs, the fast and good-quality service and products, the individual approach towards clients and a lack of order losses, facilitating customer loyalty (Austria, Croatia, Latvia, Romania) • Increased professionalism and regional anchoring through inclusion in territorial and supra-territorial network structures and activities with good practices (Belgium, Italy, France, Romania) 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generational issue due to the ageing of the employees and the management and training of new management both in terms of skills and adherence to the mission (Italy, Belgium) • Lack of staff in administration and support (e.g., Greece) and lack of a well-trained team; unstructured with poor communication, poor teamwork in some parts of business, low sense of responsibility (Austria, Croatia) • High work pressure (Belgium, the Netherlands) <p>Digitalisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of digital skills of workers and the use of technology, which is a problem when facing



	<p>Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very productive, skilled, flexible, experienced, collaborative, organised team with a strong leadership and inclusive attitude in the domain of support; work integration by sharing the same values regarding solidarity and social economy (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Spain, the Netherlands, Romania) <p>Production:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provision of 'added value' compared to ordinary enterprises: short distances to customers, delivery time, positive ecological effects, etc. (Austria, Spain)• Diversification of the sectors of activities that can succeed economically and bring growth (Austria, Croatia, the Netherlands)• Provision of unique and quality products or services and these latter often have certifications (Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands)	<p>competition (Austria, Croatia, the Netherlands, Spain)</p> <p>Public support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of support from national authorities (Croatia, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania) <p>Production:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of experience in marketing and sales and difficulty in making structural and organisational changes in accordance with the changes in the labour and production market by combining social work and support to business and entrepreneurship (Greece, Spain) <p>WSNs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of qualified WSNs (Latvia, Spain)
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	<p>Profitability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alongside social mission, strong focus on financial health and profitability. Running on business principles and not as charity (Belgium, Latvia) <p>Sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good financial and asset situation (Romania, Italy, the Netherlands) even in a time of economic crisis and pandemic (Romania) <p>Partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong cooperation and alliance with various stakeholders and reliability of partners for the reintegration of WSNs. This boosts their social visibility and the design of strategic plans in line with the changing reality of the labour market (the Netherlands, Spain)	
External origin	Opportunities	Threats





	<p>Public support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial opportunities from public authorities (Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Spain, Poland) through reserved tenders (Italy) and European funds (Spain, Romania). This encourages the use of services and goods produced by PWs and the creation, maintenance and expansion of social initiative enterprises as well as processes of digital transformation to obtain more visibility and social recognition• Some changes in the national legislation will be beneficial for WISEs (France, Romania) regarding the circular economy (France), exemption from the payment of profit tax, reserved contracts and the unemployment insurance system, stimulating employment (Romania) <p>Digitalisation:</p>	<p>Global context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Human resources shortages due to the pandemic (Croatia)• The economic crisis before the pandemic (Greece) and the pandemic itself and the Ukrainian war have led to unpredictability and uncertainty because of scarcity of raw materials, energy crisis, price inflation, etc. It represents a significant risk to the existence of PWs (Belgium, Croatia, Slovenia, Spain, the Netherlands, Romania, Poland) <p>Public support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not enough government funding options and public support (Italy, Greece, Romania) and lack of possibilities to use European funds (Greece, Romania) as social economy is not seen as a solution by the authorities and legislation is not clear and adapted (Romania)• Reserved contracts are legally possible (Italy, Greece, the Netherlands) but, in many territories, they are hardly used (Italy) and they impose severe limitations in terms of cash liquidity (Greece). The
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technological equipment and innovation to implement activities and online shopping related to circular economy and production process of PWs (Belgium, the Netherlands, Romania) through policy subsidies (Belgium) <p>Partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New collaboration and maintenance of existing partnerships in public and private sectors (Belgium, Slovenia, the Netherlands, France). Good relationships with local authorities and big employers in the area allow them to offer synergistic services and take advantage of the quota system (Slovenia) <p>Placement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Necessity to develop the placement of WSNs in the regular market through their integration in traditional companies (Austria, Greece, France) <p>Growth:</p>	<p>payments from the state and local authorities for reserved contracts are usually delayed, there is no financial space for big investments and no direct or indirect support for the functioning of the WISE as a business (Greece)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial dependence (the Netherlands, Spain) on municipalities/organisations (the Netherlands) and on public or private subsidies in order to develop their investment (Spain) <p>Competition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pressure of competition with non-WISE companies (Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Spain). In case of crisis, customers can select conventional enterprises as they can manage production faster and more cheaply (Latvia) <p>Human resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulties in finding personnel (Italy, the Netherlands) and particularly young people and qualified workers due to low economic levels• Labour market scarcity (Belgium, the Netherlands)
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market development of new business sectors and activities and increasing export to reach more potential customers (Croatia, Latvia, the Netherlands, France, Romania) at regional, national and international level (Croatia) by using the social angle in communication of PWs and by working with the public sector as clients (Latvia). Growth ambition allows WISEs to reach more WSNs (the Netherlands) 	<p>Political uncertainty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing regional and national policies can have a major impact on WISEs and WSNs (Belgium, Romania, the Netherlands, France). For instance, legislative instability and unbalanced national priorities emerged on the public agenda as a result of unforeseen issues such as pandemic, natural disasters, drought, etc. (Romania) <p>Lack of public awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient and incomplete knowledge on social economy and WISEs preventing purchase from social enterprises (Romania, Poland)
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Table 7 - Social WISEs - SWOT analysis

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	Strengths	Weaknesses





	<p>Funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building stable funding mechanisms and/or diversifying income sources (Poland, Croatia). The use of reserved contracts is helpful and there are some other possibilities of additional sources of funding, projects, etc.• Source of revenues depending on a single contracting entity because in times of good cooperation it provides stability, but in a situation of political conflict, it can mean a complete loss of orders (e.g., Poland) <p>Partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong partnership with stakeholders (Latvia, Italy, Romania). Close partnership with the 'parent organisation', which economically and organisationally supports the WISEs (Italy) and ensures closeness to the target group (Latvia) <p>Team:</p>	<p>Production:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entrepreneurial weakness in Italy, Croatia and Latvia thanks to undeveloped market due to the lower quality of production or the lack of business knowledge (i.e., quota employment) and skills, or simply the leader at time• It is hard for staff to cope with the production numbers (Romania, Italy, Bulgaria). The staff consists of unskilled young people whose productivity and competence are low. Permanent supervision of the staff providing mentoring/training is required (Romania) <p>Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Necessity to have competent persons in mentoring roles to support WSNs in carrying out the company's economic tasks. This creates lower level of productivity (Croatia, Poland, Romania)• Difficulty in investing in human resources (Romania, Croatia, Bulgaria). The staff consists of unskilled young people whose productivity and competence are low. Permanent supervision of the staff providing mentoring/training is required
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff educated, experienced, productive and connected to the local community (Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia)• WSNs gain more self-confidence and courage and are socially open (Austria). They are motivated and have a sense of belonging and willingness to volunteer (Italy)• WSNs possess strong skills and experience (Croatia, Italy) <p>Reputation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• High customer and worker satisfaction due to the quality of goods and services with a meaningful and visible impact (Bulgaria, Poland, Romania) <p>Digitalisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creation of new jobs such as graphic designer, social media officer, etc. (e.g., Austria)	<p>Public awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insufficient communication and public awareness regarding the social missions of SWs (e.g., Bulgaria)
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External origin	Opportunities	Threats
	<p>Growth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Market development with new project at the regional and national level through the creation of new activities and services and the expansion of the client base (Croatia, Romania, Latvia, Bulgaria) <p>Partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of partnerships and good cooperation with private sector (e.g., Croatia), larger businesses (e.g., Latvia) and local authorities (e.g., Poland) <p>Digital:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of digital technology will help the productivity and activities of the SWs (e.g., Bulgaria, Romania)	<p>Production:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decreased production of WISEs due to the economic crisis, high inflation and the pandemic (e.g., Romania, Latvia, Croatia, Poland) <p>Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficult to recruit qualified and motivated employees (Romania, Croatia, Italy) <p>Competition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• They risk losing out in the market competition (Italy, Romania) <p>Administration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strict legal and regulatory requirements put pressure on the administration of the WISE (Austria, Romania) <p>Digitalisation:</p>





	<p>Funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility to use public procurement and reserved contracts (e.g., Croatia, Romania) <p>Reputation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaining recognition of the social value through the work done (e.g., Italy) through more public awareness and customers' loyalty (e.g., Austria) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some cases, the development of technology is often perceived as a threat (e.g. Austria, Latvia). Digitisation occurs rapidly and WISEs struggle to keep up.
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Table 8 - Training WISEs - SWOT analysis

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<p>Strengths</p> <p>Digitalisation:</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Marketing:</p>





	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of technology in daily activities (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia)• Equipment adapted to production and learning needs (e.g., Romania) <p>Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The team is stable, well-prepared, strong, motivated, experienced and have strong training competences (Austria, Italy, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Romania)• Good knowledge of the needs and skills development of WSNs (e.g., Bulgaria, the Netherlands) <p>Partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• They are still in a close partnership with the parent organisation, which ensures closeness to the target group (Italy, Latvia, Romania) by provision of digital expertise, networking frameworks and regional anchoring (Austria) but also financial and administrative support (Romania)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of marketing strategy and budget (Latvia, Croatia, Romania), leading to dependency on clients (e.g., Latvia) and to low visibility and insufficient investment in the promotion and marketing of WISEs (e.g., Croatia) <p>Digital:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No focus on digital skills and equipment (Austria, the Netherlands). In Austria, training centres are well equipped with hardware and software, while WSNs are poorly equipped. It is therefore difficult for the WSNs to train and acquire skills because of the unavailability or obsolescence of materials
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close cooperation with stakeholders such as municipalities (the Netherlands, Poland) and conventional companies (the Netherlands) <p>Reputation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High customer and worker satisfaction due to the quality of goods and services and also the determination of the staff (Croatia, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Romania) • Training is certified, which encourages WSNs (Austria, Bulgaria) <p>Funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses various possibilities for additional sources of financing with public funds in order to implement their activities (e.g., Croatia, Poland) 	
External origin	Opportunities	Threats
	Growth:	Funding:





	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Market development for new activities (Croatia, Latvia, Romania) at regional and national level (Croatia) through the expansion of client base and large investments (Latvia) <p>Partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased recognition thanks to good cooperation with national and international stakeholders, such as other WISEs, NGOs, public authorities and conventional companies (Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania) <p>Placement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will to place WSNs in regular companies by matching the training with the skills required in the regular labour market (Austria, Bulgaria, the Netherlands)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of or unstable funding support from public authorities (Romania, Bulgaria) for WISEs (Romania) and for NGOs willing to become WISEs (Bulgaria)• Financial dependence on public authorities (the Netherlands, Austria) <p>Political uncertainty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instability of political landscape raising volatility in the social sector (e.g., Bulgaria, the Netherlands)• Economic crisis altering prices due to the war in Ukraine and inflation (Poland, Romania, Latvia)• Intensification of Covid-19 and lockdowns potentially affecting the business and its long-term sustainability (Bulgaria, Austria) <p>Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty to recruit staff. In some cases, the mentality of people with disabilities is oriented towards waiting for assistance and not engaging in work. Sometimes it is difficult to fully involve new generations of workers in the mission and working style of WISE.
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	<p>Funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New funding opportunities for the activities of TWs (Romania, Bulgaria)	
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2.4.2 Identification of prevailing items

Table 9 summarises the items that emerged in the SWOT analysis, which have been reported in full in the tables above (Table 6, Table 7 and Table 7). The themes reported among the strengths are Reputation, Team, Training, Profitability, Digitalisation, Production, Partnership and Funding. The following columns note which WISE types highlighted certain items. For example, PWs listed Reputation among their strengths; of course, this does not mean that all PWs have reputation as a strength, but this happens with some frequency and appears reasonable (and not merely contingent or occasional) within the theoretical framework.

As can be seen, the same theme can be mentioned, even by the same type of WISE, as among the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; this is not surprising, as it reflects the complexity of the reality of WISEs.

The items were then grouped into higher-level items (see right-hand column). For example, Team, Training, Workers' skills and WSNs are all item referring to Human resources. This is the starting point for the subsequent analysis.

2.4.2.1 Table 9 – Items of SWOT analysis

		PW	SW	TW
S	Reputation	X	X	X
	Team	X	X	X
	Training			X
	Profitability	X		
	Digitalisation			X
	Production	X		
	Partnership	X	X	X



	Funding		X	X
W	Team	X	X	
	Workers' skills, WSNs and production	X		
	Public support	X		
	Marketing	X		X
	Production	X	X	
	Digitalisation	X		X
	Public awareness		X	
O	Reputation		X	
	Digitalisation	X	X	
	Growth	X	X	X
	Partnership	X	X	X
	Placement	X		X
	Placement	X		X
	Funding		X	X
	Public support	X		
T	Global context, Covid-19, war	X		X



Political uncertainty	X		X
Administration and bureaucracy		X	
Public awareness	X		
Public support	X		
Funding			X
Human resources/team	X	X	X
Competition	X	X	
Production		X	
Digitalisation		X	

2.4.2.2 Legend

 Human resources	 Support
 Stakeholder	 Reputation and public awareness
 Entrepreneurial enhancement	 Other

2.4.3 SWOT analysis: the items

2.4.3.1 Reputation and public awareness

The issue of reputation has always been central to WISEs and other social enterprises, which are characterised by a peculiar relationship with their communities. This relationship provides WISEs with various forms of support (e.g., volunteering) and is closely linked to the mission of WISEs. This theme is linked to that of public awareness, that is, the ability to form a public opinion aware of the work of WISEs. These two issues are interrelated, although reputation is related to a WISE's direct stakeholders (the inhabitants of the area in which it operates, workers, customers, etc.) while public



awareness concerns public opinion and therefore also people who do not have direct contact with WISEs.

The first important element is that all types of WISEs indicate reputation as among their strengths. Among the PWs, good recognition by local governments and stakeholders is highlighted, leading to growth of the business and visibility (e.g., Belgium, Slovenia, Croatia, the Netherlands and Romania) and customer satisfaction due to appreciation of the social objectives of the PWs, the fast and good-quality service and products, the individual approach towards clients and a lack of order losses, facilitating customer loyalty (Austria, Croatia, Latvia and Romania). SWs and TWs highlight the high customer and worker satisfaction due to the quality of goods and services with a meaningful and visible impact (e.g., Bulgaria, Poland and Romania). It is clear from these descriptions that reputation is built from a mix of two types of characteristics: those related to being a 'good company' – reliable, punctual, producing good-quality products/services, etc. – and those related to the appreciation for the mission of work integration. This strength determines the loyalty of customers, the support of citizens and in some cases even the support of local administrations.

Reputation is also referred to as an opportunity, in the sense that there are WISEs (e.g., SWs in Italy) that believe it is possible to leverage the perception of the social value generated to strengthen both customer loyalty and community attitudes.

At the same time, there are cases (e.g., SWs in Bulgaria) where there is still little public awareness of the work done by WISEs. However, apart from this specific statement it should be noted that all mentions of the reputational element in the 'helpful' column concern relations with direct stakeholders, whereas relations with an extended public are less mentioned. This outcome is consistent with what is also highlighted in the in-depth study on technology, where certain widespread weaknesses emerge in terms of external communication (websites, while existing, sometimes poorly maintained, limited social presence, promotional multimedia products not widely disseminated).

2.4.3.2 Entrepreneurial items

Entrepreneurial aspects are among the most mentioned by all WISE types, both in the helpful and harmful categories.



2.4.3.3 Digitalisation and technologies

Given the purposes of B-WISE, the first theme that is useful to explore is that of digitalisation. The issue of digitalisation is mentioned in all four items of the SWOT analysis.

PWs are the WISEs where the greatest examples of technological development can be found. Many of these companies have in recent years made substantial investments in various areas of technology. The significant integration of technology and digitalisation in the production cycle raises the issue of the lack of digital skills of workers and the use of technology, which is a problem when facing competition (e.g., in Austria, Croatia, the Netherlands and Spain). Digitalisation and technological enhancement are mentioned in the opportunities quadrant too; for example, opportunities related to the development of online sales, the field of circular economy and in general the improvement of production processes (e.g., in Belgium, the Netherlands and Romania) are mentioned. These WISEs, which often make very significant investments in technological facilities, highlight the opportunity for supportive public policies to facilitate these investments.

SWs consider digitalisation as a weakness, because they note that digitalisation usually occurs more quickly than they can react. Some SWs try to develop digital technology, but usually they feel themselves not digitalised enough. Regarding attitudes, it is generally considered necessary that supporters and enablers develop new skills and educate themselves to be aware of the newest developments; but among SWs, the development of technology is often perceived as a threat and a factor that will lead to even greater exclusion of WSNs, who will be even more unsuitable for the job.

When it comes to TWs, the situation is complex: on the one hand, there are cases where the digital element is a strength, as these WISEs can take advantage of equipment available for training activities: these WISEs successfully adapt learning equipment to production; on the other hand, there are cases where they see that acting with this logic means having obsolete tools that are unsuitable to meet the challenges of the production cycle.

2.4.3.4 Growth

All WISEs see growth as an opportunity. Although most look to a local market, there are some WISEs that see the possibility of expanding nationally and internationally,



including by making customers (individuals, enterprises and public administrations) aware of the social value of WISEs' products. Entrepreneurial development is seen as the means to offer opportunities for integration to more and more WSNs. The willingness to develop new activities and the consideration of technology as an opportunity to be developed opens the field for skill-building that subsequent project phases can develop.

2.4.3.5 Production

PWs widely emphasise that one of their strengths lies in their production capacities. WISEs provide an 'added value' compared to ordinary enterprises: short distances to customers and delivery time, positive ecological effects, etc. (e.g., Austria and Spain). Working in different sectors can bring economic success and growth (e.g., Austria, Croatia and the Netherlands). WISEs' services are of high quality, something often also attested to by certifications (e.g., in Italy, Latvia and the Netherlands). With respect to weaknesses, PWs show a certain slowness in making structural and organisational changes; moreover, it is sometimes challenging to reconcile productive activity with the presence of WSNs.

On the issue of production, SWs show a different sensitivity to that previously reported of PWs; in fact, most of the SWOT analyses of these WISEs place aspects relating to production among the weaknesses. Entrepreneurial weakness is reported in SWs in Italy, Croatia and Latvia; these WISEs find difficulties in developing economic activities due to lower quality of production or lack of business knowledge and skills, or simply for shortcomings of the leadership. Workers often find it difficult to fit into production cycles, either because they are primarily motivated by a social vocation or due to a lack of professional experience. Moreover, the type of disadvantage of WSNs often makes efficient production particularly difficult. These are the WISEs that also see the production aspect as a possible threat, particularly as they feel exposed to the economic crises that have already led to a decrease in production in recent periods.

2.4.3.6 Competition

Exposure to competition is cited among the threats facing WISEs. In some cases, especially among SWs, competition is feared because they feel entrepreneurially weak and therefore vulnerable in relation to competitors; in other cases, especially among PWs, competition is highlighted as an issue that arises especially in the face of the economic crisis, which leads to the search for cheaper production, where non-WISEs



manage to be more competitive. In general, WISEs, although not without their strengths, face production challenges, sometimes competing with companies that do not have to take on the labour integration of WSNs with little support, and therefore this challenge, where they are not on an equal footing, often becomes very demanding.

2.4.3.7 Marketing

The topic of marketing is mentioned to a limited extent in the SWOT analysis, but generally in the area of weaknesses. There are different situations, but the perception of weaknesses that emerges from some of the case studies is consistent with what has been reconstructed on some of the items relating to the use of technology, where customer relationship management (CRM) systems, outward communication and online sales strategies are not very widespread.

2.4.3.8 Sustainability

The situation of economic and financial balance is cited by some PWs as an element of strength, also marking the difference with other non-profit organisations not oriented towards entrepreneurial action. It is noted that many WISEs managed to maintain a good economic condition even in difficult times such as the 2008–2011 crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.4.3.9 Support

This section will examine the issue of support for WISEs, considering both the public policy aspect and other forms of fundraising. As will be seen, these issues appear among both 'helpful' and 'harmful' elements.

Public policy support is considered by WISEs as both an opportunity and a threat (in the sense that it is feared it will diminish or remain insufficient). This is the focus of analysis by PWs especially. Let us first examine this support as an opportunity. WISEs see opportunities for financial support from public authorities (e.g., Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Spain and Poland) through reserved tenders (e.g., Italy) and European funds (e.g., Spain and Romania). Public policies, these WISEs note, could become an important source of support, e.g. through the purchase by public administrations of goods and services produced by WISEs or through forms of support for the creation, consolidation and growth of WISEs. SWs and TWs highlight among their strengths the ability to attract resources, being recognised for the social value of their work. In some national contexts (e.g., Romania and Bulgaria), TWs see additional funding opportunities related



to their ability to combine entrepreneurial and educational aspects. Public policies can also focus on specific support such as technological investments and the reinforcement of digitalisation or communication initiatives aimed at ensuring greater visibility and social recognition of WISEs. This, of course, requires an awareness of the importance of the social product of WISEs.

This issue will be taken up in the concluding phase, where consequences related to the disavowal of labour integration as a product of social value will be analysed. In summary, the issue is as follows: where this awareness seems to be lacking, opportunity turns into threat. This means not enough government funding options and public support (e.g., Italy, Greece and Romania) and a lack of possibilities to use European funds (e.g., Greece and Romania) as the social economy is not seen as a solution by the authorities and legislation is not clear and adapted to WISEs' needs' (e.g., Romania). When awareness of the importance of the social product of WISEs is lacking, it may also happen that reserved contracts are legally possible (e.g., Italy, Greece and the Netherlands) but, in many territories, they are hardly used (e.g., the Netherlands and Italy). In other cases, the lack of sensitivity of public administrations results in delayed payments, causing severe limitations in terms of cash liquidity (e.g., Greece). This makes the relationship with the public administration, instead of representing an opportunity, a threat, because it entices WISEs with the prospect of large contracts that are then unmanageable when it comes to payment and end up putting WISEs in great difficulty.

A different kind of observation about threats related to funding comes from the world of Productive WISEs. This is the fear that WISEs will become too dependent on supportive policies and lose their entrepreneurial characteristics. This reasoning extends to all types of support, public as well as private (e.g., donations), classifiable as a subsidy and thus distances WISEs from their entrepreneurial spirit. Certainly, this concern denotes an organisational culture strongly oriented toward economic independence and entrepreneurship. In some contexts – former sheltered workshops that need to initiate a transition to a WISE model or national contexts where revenues other than the sale of goods and services are prevalent – this is a positive and supportable expression of social entrepreneurship. However, it can constitute – in countries with a limited level of support – a kind of 'Stockholm syndrome' that makes WISEs incapable of evaluating the resources actually needed to ensure adequate quality of integration processes.



Finally, again on the threat front, there are WISEs in some national contexts that fear competition from new social economy entities that might contend with WISEs for the limited resources available to them.

2.4.3.10 Partnership

The ability to create partnerships is one of the main features of WISEs. Not surprisingly, it figures among the 'helpful elements' – strengths and opportunities – for all types of WISEs, while it is never mentioned among the 'harmful' elements.

The theme of partnership is articulated by WISEs in many ways.

A first aspect is that of collaboration with partners to facilitate the work integration of WSNs. There are, on the part of WISEs, numerous attestations of collaborations with different entities that contribute to the process of integrating WSNs. This can be done in many ways.

It can be public or private entities that care for WSNs in aspects other than employment but cooperate with the WISE as part of a coordinated integration process. These may be for-profit enterprises willing to hire WSNs after a period of stay in the WISE, especially where the WISE adopts a temporary integration model; in such cases, a relationship of mutual trust is often established between the WISE and the non-WISE enterprise: the non-WISE enterprise appreciates the WISE's ability to prepare people for the next job placement, both from a soft skills and professionalism perspective; the WISE appreciates the social responsibility of the non-WISE enterprise and its willingness to cooperate for the integration of WSNs. In these cases, collaboration on the issue of work integration can be accompanied by entrepreneurial partnerships, which can be carried out in different ways, from outsourcing orders from the non-WISE enterprise to the WISE, to investing in joint entrepreneurial activities. In addition, in some countries (e.g., Italy), there are systems that allow non-WISE companies to fulfil a part of the obligation to hire WSNs, outsourcing orders to WISEs; this can foster relationships between WISE and non-WISE companies.

There are many cases of partnerships with public administrations, which, beyond operational support, may concern the common desire to raise awareness in the community on issues of inclusion and work integration.



A specific type of partnership that concerns TWs and SWs is the one that binds WISEs with a parent company that supports WISEs in different ways (economically, by providing equipment and real estate, sharing the personnel costs of enablers, digital expertise, networking frameworks and regional anchoring, etc.). The theme is deepened on p. 233, par. 5.1.3.

2.4.3.11 Human resources

Human resources in companies, in general, and particularly in WISEs, are a key element in the internal and external functioning of the structure. Indeed, they play an essential role for many reasons, since they actively participate in the various developments and deployments of the organisation. This element within the WISEs is therefore important as it allows for human development and employee fulfilment within the WISE. Ensuring a good, qualified team that understands the specific needs of each employee is therefore an invaluable asset and a specific strategy, since it would positively impact the reputation, growth and visibility of the WISE. Thus, the topic of human resources was one of the main points raised during the interviews with the various WISEs in the countries participating in the project. Among the elements falling into the category of human resources, three were predominant and are as follows: the team, the workers' skills and the placement of Workers with Support Needs.

2.4.3.12 The team

All types of WISEs consider the team to be one of their strengths, but at the same time one of their weaknesses. Let us therefore see the terms in which this apparent contradiction develops. The team's strengths lie in several elements, across different types of WISE. First of all, elements such as adherence to the WISE's values and more generally identification with values of solidarity and inclusion, the motivation that drives people to work diligently, the ability to establish close relations with the local community and the sense of belonging are reported: these are elements that refer to the sphere of values and represent a characterising element for WISEs. But in addition to this, being prepared, productive, flexible, able to collaborate and experienced are mentioned. The leadership skills of the enablers and the specific professional competence of the supporters who are able to work best with WSNs are also mentioned. But at the same time, significant criticism emerges with respect to the work team, which is reported in the SWOT analysis as elements of weakness.



The first two elements concern the management team. Some of the leadership group is old, and it is difficult to carry out a generational change. This is a phenomenon particularly felt in some countries (e.g., Italy and Belgium), and its causes and consequences must be examined in-depth. Among the causes are the unattractiveness – including economic – of some WISEs, the fact that they have developed around a specific charismatic person who has centralised everything on herself or himself, the difficulty of conceiving different roles for ageing managers and so on. Among the consequences, one can observe the risk to the continuity of the WISE when the old executive retires. The same issue is highlighted in a complementary way as the difficulty in transmitting the values and mission of WISEs to young leaders, including the willingness to devote the same amount of energy to it as the previous generation.

Another critical area is that of the intermediate figures: administration, communication, heads of specific activities, etc., who are sometimes inadequate and have little sense of responsibility. This may stem from the difficulty of conveying adherence to the WISE's mission outside the management team as well as recruitment difficulties. In some countries (e.g., Romania, Croatia and Bulgaria), difficulties emerge in SWs in investing in human resources and sometimes the staff consists of unskilled young people whose productivity and competence are low; this implies the need for permanent supervision of the staff. SWs themselves sometimes encounter difficulties in finding competent persons to support WSNs in carrying out the company's economic tasks; this creates a lower productivity level (e.g., Croatia, Poland and Romania). Finally, it is pointed out in several countries that those working in WISEs are under great pressure, which may push people to leave the WISE, become demotivated or risk burnout. Some WISEs see the difficulty recruiting staff (e.g., Bulgaria and Croatia) and finding personnel and particularly young and qualified people due to low economic levels (e.g., Italy and the Netherlands) as a threat.

2.4.3.13 WSNs

Contrasting elements also emerge with respect to WSNs. Among the points of strength, there is the will of WSNs to rebuild a positive existence that leads them to be good workers. The TWs also list among the strengths the attractiveness of WISEs for WSNs due to the issuance of certificates on the skills acquired that are then expendable on the primary labour market. But there are weaknesses too. Sometimes the issue is that the mindset of WSNs is not work-related (e.g., Bulgaria) and this recalls once again the



need for WISEs to be equipped to work on soft skills. Other WISEs (usually PWs) reported the problem of a 'lack of qualified Workers with Support Needs'. This is a matter inherent in being a WISE; it is no coincidence that some WISEs claim to choose simple working environments because WSNs would not be able to work in more complex sectors. But it is equally reasonable that other WISEs want to deal with more complex production sectors and that can lead to greater business solidity and therefore to more qualified and stable jobs for WSNs; however, in this way they risk encountering difficulties in finding WSNs able to occupy the job positions. In the solution to this dilemma there is the key to the entrepreneurial and social success of the WISEs.

2.4.3.14 Placement

Some WISEs (TWs and PWs) reported the opportunity to develop the placement of Workers with Support Needs in the regular market through their integration in non-WISE companies (e.g., Austria, Greece and France); this may happen by matching the training with the skills required in the regular labour market (e.g., Austria, Bulgaria and the Netherlands).



3 T2.2 – PERSONAS: WHO WORKS IN THE WISES

The national partners carrying out the case studies identified a set of persona profiles relating to enablers, supporters and WSNs. This phase of work therefore produced a very rich – but at the same time fragmented – picture. It was hence necessary to identify similarities between profiles described in different countries in order to arrive at a limited number of profiles common to the 13 countries participating in the B-WISE project.

After having noted all the profiles described by each partner, the work of grouping and aggregating similar profiles was started. In this way, the following number of profiles were identified: five enablers, three supporters and four WSNs. An additional profile was then identified that is probably outside the scope of B-WISE and relates to staff members (administrative employees, planners, communication staff, etc.) who are neither enablers nor supporters and do not work directly with WSNs. This profile was not examined in-depth, but it was nevertheless considered useful to point out the presence of this component as well.





The next task was to 'purge' the profiles of contingent features, focusing instead on the core characterising traits. Each profile could in fact contain some elements closely related to the core characteristics of the profile and other elements that instead have occasional and contingent characteristics. For instance, the fact that the older category of enablers (the 'Almost Retired' persona), with a long history in the WISE, expresses a certain fatigue and is mainly oriented towards managing the handing over of responsibilities to younger enablers, taking for themselves a more and more marginal role, is a fundamental characteristic of the profile, which is strongly linked to the core characterising traits. However, in many other cases we found characteristics (a hobby, a certain type of previous career path, etc.) that could not be linked to essential profile traits and were therefore not considered in the definition of the final profiles.

The 13 profiles thus obtained were then briefly described, reporting the general characteristics of the profile, the area of values and skills; an attempt was then made to capture the biographical aspect with which the personality of the profile develops over time, with an eye on future directions of development. There is also an in-depth examination of the relationship of each profile with technologies and finally some indications are summarised that, based on the above-mentioned characteristics, can be offered to WP3.

3.1 Enablers

Five enabler profiles were identified:

- The 'Founder': leaders of a WISE for many years, they embody its values and make the most important decisions;
- The 'Social Enabler': leaders of a WISE with a social studies or humanities profile, they represent the social soul of a WISE;
- The 'Almost Retired': leaders of a WISE for many years, they are close to retirement, a bit tired and sometimes disillusioned;
- The 'Tech Enabler': they come from technical professions and want to bring their expertise to a WISE; but sometimes the two worlds have difficulty meeting;
- The 'Beginner': they are young, with a lot of enthusiasm and little experience, grappling with the challenge of running a WISE they have recently created.



3.1.1 The Founder

The Founder is a fairly widespread Personas profile. Founders can be found in the Netherlands, Greece, Croatia, Austria, Romania, Latvia, Slovenia, Croatia and Italy.

3.1.1.1 Past in the WISE and work experiences

The history of the WISE and that of the Founders often intertwine. The Founders have been active in the WISE for many years; in some cases they were its first leaders, in others they were in the group that started the WISE. Some of them also have personal interests such as being a parent of a beneficiary, which pushes them to create a social enterprise. In some cases, this profile has had different experiences in its career; however, these are always in the field of social economy and/or non-governmental organisations. Nevertheless, the Founders have a career within the WISE, where they have legitimised themselves as leaders and are now recognised as the persons who lead the WISE by embodying its values and mission.

3.1.1.2 General information

Aged between 45 and 55 years old, they have a high-level educational background, holding a university degree or postgraduate degrees in disciplines related to social sciences, social enterprise management, economics, law or the humanities. They have done in-depth training with respect to the management of social enterprises and have also trained themselves by seeing and learning about social enterprises in their country and in Europe and by learning from other experiences.

3.1.1.3 Characteristics and soft skills

They are the leaders and the most prominent persons in representing the WISE (or sometimes the WISE movement) to external stakeholders. They are eloquent and have excellent communication skills, which are generally not professional but instinctive. They have innate leadership skills, which they tend to exercise in a collaborative style, also thanks to some of their charismatic traits.

3.1.1.4 Values and behaviours

The Founders have a strong commitment to solidaristic values, are highly motivated, moved by ideals of social change and believe that it is possible to overcome discrimination and to socially and professionally integrate many people who are



excluded from this opportunity today. For this reason, they are involved in politics in order to influence decision-making at the local level. They want to work towards this goal, towards which they pour enthusiasm and energy. This passion makes them capable of carrying very heavy workloads. Their social vocation does not contrast with their attention to economic and management aspects: the Founders know that their project of change requires solid economic foundations, and they want to work hard to build it.

3.1.1.5 Current role and tasks in the WISE

In the WISE, they have a leading role in every important decision. They have a very broad set of tasks and competences, which they exercise, depending on the size of the organisation, directly or with the help of a staff, ranging from strategic aspects (mission and development directions) to managerial ones (budget governance, operational and organisational choices).

They are also the organisation's head, representing it in public and building relationships with other organisations to build partnerships. They have a role of some visibility at local and sometimes national level. They may be involved in representative organisations and are often courted by politicians, with whom they have good relations, although they sometimes express disappointment at the bureaucratic and insensitive approach of institutions.

3.1.1.6 Future perspectives

They see themselves in the future still at the helm of the WISE, for which they would like to imagine new development paths.

3.1.1.7 Connection with technology

They are well acquainted with digital technologies, which they use both in their personal life and at work. They are often the typical 'advanced users' who are able to use digital technologies even beyond the basic functions that different software offers, both in office automation and specific software related to their work. They also make fluent use of messaging and remote communication technologies, which have become widespread for managing relationships, especially in the last couple of years. In some cases, they use the most popular and most work-related social medias, such as LinkedIn or Facebook. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that both their background and the focus of their interests are predominantly social and humanistic,



so the Founders do not have a 'technical' mentality and therefore it does not come naturally to them to lead technology-based development of the WISE.

3.1.1.8 Needs for skills enhancement

They are naturally curious and attentive to new development opportunities. They are ambitious, driven to undertake new things and to acquire the necessary skills for this.

3.1.1.9 Recommendations for WP3

The Founders are central figures for WISEs. The fact that they are more or less aware of the potential of the digital dimension is central for defining the orientation of WISEs on this issue. What is important with respect to these Personas is not so much to increase their technical competences on specific topics but to ensure that they can grasp the possibilities of development. It is difficult for such a profile at this point in their career to strengthen their skills by taking part in a structured training activity, but it is possible to ignite their curiosity by having them visit advanced organisations or by placing them side by side with people capable of translating their visions through advanced technological solutions.



The Founder

E

General information

Usually male, 50 years old, one of the founders of WISE and currently the leader of WISE.

Values and identity
They are inspired by ethical values and solidarity. Highly motivated, eloquent, visionary, enthusiastic and driven by ideals of change, they dream of a world where there is no discrimination and where everyone has access to opportunities.

S

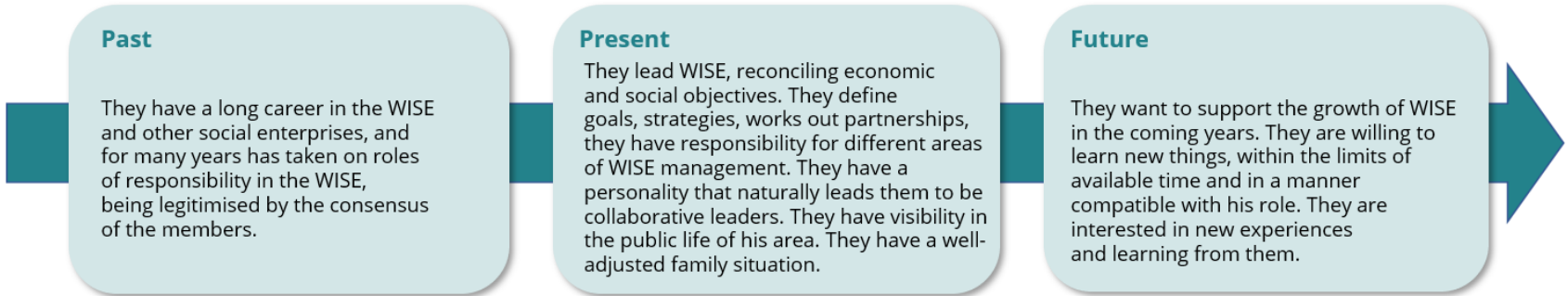
Technologies

With a high school education, they are familiar with the personal use of technology for both daily work and social communication. They are intrigued by technology and open to digital change in their WISEs, although his passions are not related to technology.

Education and training
They have undergraduate or postgraduate degrees in social disciplines or the humanities. They have done specialised training in the management of social enterprises.

W

Work and life perspective





3.1.2 The Social Enabler

The Social Enabler is a fairly widespread Personas in WISEs from Belgium, Latvia, Austria, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, the Netherlands, Croatia, Spain, Poland and Italy.

3.1.2.1 Past in the WISE and work experiences

The Social Enablers have an average of 15 years of working experience in different sectors and positions. Before becoming an enabler, they worked in the same WISE (or sometimes in other organisations) as psychologists who worked with vulnerable groups, political scientists, former volunteers, trainers, job coaches or supporters. Therefore, even if this persona had different job positions, they mainly had an internal career at the WISE.

3.1.2.2 General information

Predominantly between 25 and 50 years old, the Social Enablers are usually highly qualified and well-educated persons. They hold a university degree in the field of social work, history, business administration and management, political sciences and government, law, sociology, psychology, human resources or economics. Out of the desire to get more knowledge, during their career they attended trainings and courses on social fields after joining the WISE, or courses on self-development, mediation, motivational conversations and project management to improve their skills, as their own development was important. As determined and motivated persons, they continue to attend some trainings such as coaching in order to be able to help the WSNs to solve their issues on their own.

3.1.2.3 Characteristics and soft skills

They are highly motivated and determined with strong leadership skills. Usually, they have innovative ideas and a sense of sacrifice and hard work. Due to their knowledge and expertise, they know the needs of the WSNs very well. They are open and supportive people.

3.1.2.4 Values and behaviours

The Social Enablers are inspired by the social, human and environmental missions of the WISE and believe in an inclusive society through an inclusive labour market. They have a clear social drive with a strong commitment to the WISE and can be members of various



associations. They believe that every human being has value and that is the reason for his or her presence in the WISE. Sometimes, it may be that they have a personal motivation for becoming interested in social work, such as having family members with disabilities or other needs that have led them to be beneficiaries of social intervention (sometimes by the WISE itself). The Social Enablers are optimistic, passionate, committed, structured and loyal to the missions and values that they care. As a person of confidence, the WSNs trust them, as they listen to their issues and have good relationships with their colleagues. However, some of them may have some doubts because they found the social inspiration unrealistic due to the ignorance of public authorities and the competition between WISEs and with other companies. In other words, they believe they have an idealistic approach that is disconnected from reality.

3.1.2.5 Current role and tasks in the WISE

In the WISE, they oversee the management of the enterprise. They are a highly experienced director, team leader of job integration training or EU project manager. They take care of employees, maintain relationships with departments and customers, make decisions on further development and run the day-care centre for many years. Regarding the development of the WISE, they help it transition to becoming modernised and ready for the future. The Social Enablers may have received a promotion within the WISE or joined it as they found a way to lead with a specific meaning. They could not imagine themselves in another job.

3.1.2.6 Future perspectives

They would like to continue their self-development by taking more relevant courses linked to their work and to acquire more responsibilities. Although they would like to play an important role, it may also be possible for them to consider different career options from time to time. Concerning the future of the WISE, they hope that it will become more financially independent and grow by developing its current activities, but also increase income and initiatives, and have more skilled staff directly working with the WSNs.

3.1.2.7 Connection with technology

This profile brings together people with different technological skills and attitudes towards technology. Most of the Social Enablers, however, use technology in a fashion typical of people who are highly educated and they are advanced users of technology in



their personal and professional life, as they use it frequently and easily. The Social Enablers are actively looking at the issue of digitalisation and the application of technology. Moreover, they perceive it as a tool to stimulate work integration and are willing to make it deployable if it turns out to be necessary. Usually, they are aware that the future brings new technologies and want to develop tools within the WISE such as photo editing and creating publications in Adobe InDesign and Microsoft PowerPoint. They appreciate learning more about technology and propose implementing a digitalisation strategy for all management and production processes. Sometimes, the Social Enablers can also take different positions; even if they personally frequently use technologies, some of them may consider that the WISE has enough technology, and the only needs are soft management programs like ERP and cloud management tools. Also, they think that the use of digitalisation is a boon and bane and that technology is an important tool in our society, but human relations are even more important.

3.1.2.8 Needs for skills enhancement

They are usually open to learning more and attending training linked to their work even if they developed the necessary professional skills during their career. These people are interested to learn about team management and improve their communication as they are always willing to evolve and be trained further. Some of them have limited entrepreneurial experience and less knowledge of business management. Certain job positions require developed organisational and leadership competencies; some trainings are essential to fit with these demands.

3.1.2.9 Recommendations for WP3

In organisations such as WISEs that particularly appreciate mission adherence and value orientation, the Social Enablers are constantly exposed to the risk of the 'incompetence principle' (or 'Peter principle'): that is, of being entrusted with increasingly demanding management functions due to the fact that one is a capable and willing person, and then of succeeding up to a certain level, thanks to one's starting cultural heritage, responding with enthusiasm and success to the professional challenges posed to him/her, until subsequent 'promotions' place this person in positions objectively beyond his/her reach, either due to a lack of skills, or because he/she is asked by the WISE to take on tasks that are extraneous to the person's vocation. The areas in which the Social Enablers are most exposed to this risk are organisational, managerial



and economic, and therefore reinforcement actions may generally concern aspects related to leadership, organisational responsibilities, etc. There are probably no reasons (apart from possibly individual passions) for systematically targeting these figures for competence-building actions in the area of technology.





The Social Enablers

E

General information

Usually male, 35 - 45 years old, these personas are determined enabler who manage the WISE as a leader.

S

Technologies

They have a high level of digital skills and welcomes the technology in everyday work life and they use technology in everyday work life, and they are aware of the benefits of digital tools, although they think that human relations are more important.

W

Values and Identity

Inspired by the social, human, and environmental missions of the WISE, they believe in an inclusive society and understand the needs of employees. Loyal, optimistic, confident, and highly motivated, they are also a member of various associations during their free time.

Education and training

They are usually highly qualified person as they have university degree in social work, business administration and management, political science, sociology, or law. They continue to attend training to improve their skills, knowledge and own development.

Work and life perspective

Past

With an average of 15 years of experience, they worked in different positions with the WISE as political scientists, trainers and former volunteers. They also worked in different sectors before joining the WISE. Usually, their previous work was related to their current job.

Present

They oversee of the management of the WISE. Highly experienced they maintain relationship with different targets, make decisions and run the daily work of the WISE. In addition, they are open to new changes as they help the organisation transition to becoming modernised.

Future

As they wished to stay within the WISE, they want to continue their self-development through trainings, and they would like to play an important role to develop the future perspectives of the organisation. They are ready to work hard to develop the current activities and to increase the income and the initiatives of the WISE.



3.1.3 The Almost Retired

The Almost Retired have spent many years at the helm of their WISE, often in top positions. They are long-standing leaders with strong skills and are known and respected in their community. Today, they are nearing the end of their career. It is time for the Almost Retired to take stock: of what they have achieved and what they have failed to do. But above all, it is time to think about the fact that retirement is approaching, that it is time to encourage a handover to younger people. They are torn: the WISE is their life, but they are aware that they are not the future of the WISE and they are a bit tired. The Almost Retired can be observed in many countries, such as in Croatia, Italy, France and Slovenia.

3.1.3.1 Past in the WISE and work experiences

Usually, since the beginning or for a long time, the careers of these people have been in the WISE. This profile has occupied many positions but the prevailing one is the position of the manager, and it is the person who guided the WISE through the various different transformations. Therefore, these people know all the processes that can be relevant for the WISE. Older businesspersons who worked for many years, they devoted their life to the social economy sector.

3.1.3.2 General information

The Almost Retired are 55–65 years old. They have a high degree of education in the field of humanities, socio-economics or engineering.

3.1.3.3 Characteristics and soft skills

Idealistic and motivated people, they have very good leadership skills with a significant network that could help the development of the WISE. This potential network can create collaboration with other social economy organisations and with relevant stakeholders in their area even though this relationship can also be sometimes conflictual. Although some can be conflictual, they maintain good communication with the local authorities and with their subordinates. They are knowledgeable, very warm and calm people enjoying a good reputation in the community.



3.1.3.4 Values and behaviours

Guided by a strong ethical drive with principles of equality and social solidarity, they are sometimes inspired by religious ideals and sometimes have a secular desire to share paths of emancipation with people in situations of social hardship and marginality. However, as they wish to maintain the business over improving it, sometimes they tend to maintain distance from their employees. The Almost Retired know that they have achieved many things, but they are also aware that many of the social changes they fought for have not been realised and feel they do not have sufficient energy to take on new challenges. Sometimes they are inclined to remember a 'golden age' of social ferment and change, which is different from the current one in which people are people are less willing to commit to social change.

3.1.3.5 Current role and tasks in the WISE

They have neither the ambition nor desire to significantly change the way that the WISE operates. They are enthusiastic about working for the WISE but they are starting to feel fatigue. Although they are not social workers, they have enough experience to handle the WISE through complex systems of remuneration and government assistance. Moreover, they are the leader, and their role is to manage and to maintain the position of the WISE or improve it through their significant network of business and government contact. This network allows them to secure funding and beneficial contracts as they are concerned about the future of their WISE.

3.1.3.6 Future perspectives

They are usually waiting to retire, but they have some concerns and fears regarding the future of the WISE after their retirement. Consequently, they would like to transmit their expertise and knowledge regarding all aspects of the management of the WISE.

3.1.3.7 Connection with technology

They are aware of the importance of technology and know that digital tools will become more strategically important for the future development of the WISE. They try to stay up to date and during the pandemic managed to overcome initial uncertainties and use several platforms for online meetings (e.g., Zoom, Meet, GotoMeeting, etc.); they have sufficient digital skills for basic communication such as e-mail, social media and online platforms for holding meetings. Therefore, technology is adopted as needed to expand or minimise expenses. On the other hand, some of them think that the



meaning of their work lies in direct contact with people and have some insurmountable limits to their digital skills.

3.1.3.8 Needs for skills enhancement

Due to their age and approaching retirement, they have no desire for additional training. They will hardly be able to invest personally in strengthening their digital skills. They think that their skills are in line with the needs of the workplace. As for other enablers, it is more important working on their vision rather than on their skills. However, as they are still the leaders of the WISE, they need to enhance some aspects such as marketing and modern techniques.

3.1.3.9 Recommendations for WP3

For this profile, skills enhancement is not a priority; instead, it is important to support complex organisational processes that lead the WISE to transition from established leadership to a future that is yet to be defined. This process involves many delicate aspects: 1) strengthening the managerial competences of the new generation, 2) overcoming the perception of the Almost Retired that they are indispensable and irreplaceable and 3) outlining 'exit' career paths that valorise the role of those who have served the WISE for many years and who should not feel forgotten and excluded (e.g., they can continue to collaborate without the burden of organisational responsibilities such as cultural aspects or training); this helps encourage the Almost Retired to facilitate the transfer of responsibilities to younger enablers.



The Almost Retired

E

General information

Usually male, over 55 years old, these personas are currently the leader of a WISE waiting for retirement.

Values and Identity

Inspired by strong ethical and social principles, they are sometimes guided by religious ideals and sometimes by a secular view. They have good leadership skills, are highly motivated and knowledgeable and enjoy a good reputation in the community.

S

Technologies

The use of technology is part of their daily work. They are aware of the importance of the digital, although they think the meaning of their work lies in direct contact with people. They were born in a non-digital world, and they haven't a technological education.

Education and training

They have a master's degree in humanities, or socioeconomics.

W

Work and life perspective

Past

They worked for the WISE since the beginning or for a long time and guided the WISE through the different transformations. They occupied various positions with significant responsibilities. They devoted their lives to the social mission and the development of the enterprise and the social economy sector.

Present

They are leaders with no ambition to change the way the WISEs operate and they have enough experience to handle the complexity of the current challenges. Their role is to maintain and create good relationships and collaborations with the network and government contacts to secure the future of the WISE.

Future

The future development of the WISE is their most important concern due to the approaching retirement. They plan to transmit their knowledge and their expertise to the next enabler who will take the lead.





3.1.4 The Tech Enabler

The Tech Enabler is a common profile for someone that is leading the WISE and can be seen in Belgium, Italy, Austria, Poland and Bulgaria.

3.1.4.1 Past in the WISE and work experiences

Usually, the Tech Enablers have been working in the same WISE for 15–20 years. However, in some cases, they approached the WISE after a high-level professional career in for-profit enterprises or worked in private enterprises and coaching on changes in digital attitudes for more than 10 years. They occupied many positions in the past as industrial engineers with a strong interest in innovative technologies. Most of them joined a WISE because they wanted to give a different meaning to their existence and the work that they were doing.

3.1.4.2 General information

The Tech Enablers are over the age of 35. They are highly educated and hold a degree in the field of IT, science, economics, engineering, communication and media or business administration.

3.1.4.3 Characteristics and soft skills

They are highly professional and have strong leadership skills regarding management of WISEs. They are relatively optimistic, structured and rational and these personal aspects enable them to keep the many activities they oversee under control.

3.1.4.4 Values and behaviour

They are fascinated by the social and sustainable mission of the WISE and inspired by the principles of warmth and informality. In some cases, Tech Enablers are quite impatient with the WISE's resistance to change and prefer to keep all the responsibilities, as they do not delegate them to their colleagues. Therefore, it is difficult for the staff to reach them, as they are always busy and overwhelmed. They can also be misunderstood by their colleagues as they have a different language, development vision and corporate culture due to their past experiences. This leads to distance and loneliness.



3.1.4.5 Current role and tasks in the WISE

In the WISE, they have managed to successfully create a good team to achieve an excellent production cycle. In addition, they also provide support for the WSNs.

3.1.4.6 Future perspectives

They would like to acquire more knowledge and expertise as they have a strong desire for change. They respect the tradition of the WISE but, at the same time, believe that some changes must be made in order to make the WISE more efficient, productive and technological and less bureaucratic. According to them, the use of digital technology is an important element for the future of the WISE. Indeed, they think that digitalisation will enhance integration into the labour market for vulnerable groups.

3.1.4.7 Connection with technology

They are very familiar with technological and digital aspects. The Tech Enablers trust technology as an engine of innovation and creative new processes and would like to speed up the acquisition of tools. According to them, a fully prepared WISE needs a digital offensive such as an adequate learning platform, web shop and/or electronic time registration. However, a well-prepared digital WISE requires named contact persons who have time and financial resources, who collaborate with the management and related departments and who lead a team of decentralised people who are responsible for single tasks. They are sure that digitalisation is not related to peoples' age and educational background, but depends on their attitude and interests. Digitalisation will enhance integration into the labour market for WSNs.

3.1.4.8 Needs for skills enhancement

The Tech Enablers think that they have developed the necessary professional skills during their career. Although they are driven by the social values of the WISE, they are less interested in communication and social skills. Nevertheless, they are ready to learn more about technology and new training in general.

3.1.4.9 Recommendations for WP3

The successful integration of this enabler profile into the WISE management team can be decisive. It can lead the WISE to evolve in a technological and digital direction much more than training other enablers. The issue that needs to be handled by training and counselling concerns the organisational



structure of WISEs. On the one hand, WISEs are fascinated by Tech Enablers; on the other hand, they have trouble integrating this profile. The Tech Enablers are fascinated by the idea of dedicating their efforts to a meritorious purpose such as work integration, but find it difficult to understand the culture and communication codes of the WISE, even if they have been working there for many years. The proposed actions may concern a kind of 'cultural mediation' between WISEs and Tech Enablers; at the same time, it seems important to invest significant resources in promoting contact between WISEs and potential Tech Enabler training sites (techno-scientific universities), facilitating early contact between young technicians and WISEs (e.g., internships for young engineers and young computer scientists in WISEs, scholarships enabling WISEs to cover their costs for one to two years, etc.).



The Tech Enablers

E

General information

Usually female, 35 - 45 years old, they are part of the board who leads the WISE.

S

Technologies

They are familiar with digital tools. They think that the future of the WISE is related to the adaptation and the use of technology. They believe that digitalisation can improve the future of mankind, regardless of people's age and level of education.

W

Values and Identity

Fascinated by the social mission of the WISE, they have strong leadership skills and are optimistic and rational. They can be impatient with the WISE's resistance to change, and they encounter difficulties in sharing responsibilities

Education and training

They are highly educated and graduated in fields such as IT, science, engineering, economics, business administration and communication and media.

Work and life perspective

Past

Sometimes they have an internal career in the WISE, but usually they joined it after professional experiences in different sectors, since they wanted to have a social meaning in her work.

Present

They managed to build a very good team for the WISE for the benefits of the production cycle. Some members think that they represent the future of WISE, but sometimes there are some conflicts with other managers. They is always busy and overwhelmed.

Future

In their future perspectives, they want to acquire more expertise and knowledge to help the development of the WISE as they believe in some changes to make the WISE more technological, and efficient, and dynamic.



3.1.5 The Beginner

The Beginner is an uncommon profile among the enablers of WISEs and can be found in few WISEs.

3.1.5.1 Past in the WISE and work experiences

While many are new directors of WISEs or have taken over for retiring older directors, the Beginners have little to no experience with social work or are social workers with no business experience who due to certain circumstances find themselves at a fairly young age in an executive role in a WISE. This profile has almost no experiences with WSNs or the management of an enterprise.

3.1.5.2 General information

They are between 25 and 35 years old and are highly educated, as they hold a bachelor's degree in the field of social work.

3.1.5.3 Characteristics and soft skills

Relatively young and inexperienced enablers, they are ambitious, idealistic and competitive with a touch of naivety. Although they can form bonds quickly, it is still difficult for these people to understand the needs of WSNs.

3.1.5.4 Values and behaviours

As motivated people, they would like to see the development of the WISE and are aware of the organisation's needs. However, their naivety prevents them from maintaining the necessary discipline and often leads to supporters taking on the mantle of authority within the WISE.

3.1.5.5 Current role and tasks in the WISE

In the WISE, they manage the enterprise, but their lack of experience is reflected in the daily working of the enterprise. Indeed, they have trouble maintaining a profit, securing contracts and running the WISE as a business. The lack of experience can also be felt in their relationships with WSNs, burnout and other issues in the workplace, as well as misinterpretation of behaviour among employees. Moreover, they often overwork or underutilise their employees.



3.1.5.6 Future perspectives

As young, motivated people, they intend to attend general learning and training in order to take on new responsibilities. Their future plans are mostly related to the development and the growth of the WISE. They desire to seek more employees and enough experience to have a stable WISE with the ambition to move this enterprise towards making more profit. Another future perspective is included in their plans such as having close connections to stakeholders in the local areas.

3.1.5.7 Connection with technology

The Beginners usually use digital tools in the daily work routine in order to expand or minimise the expenses of the WISE.

3.1.5.8 Needs for skills enhancement

Due to their young age and lack of experience, they need to acquire knowledge of vulnerable groups to better manage burnout and other issues in the enterprise. Marketing and modern techniques are also part of their needs, particularly with the aim of developing the WISE in its sector of activity.

3.1.5.9 Recommendations for WP3

This is a profile that is highly inclined to learn new skills and invest in its own training. It needs wide-ranging support in managerial, relational and technical skills. They are probably able to find many training resources on their own. An important added value could be the creation of links with other WISEs and other social economy organisations because this type of profile is able to learn from contact with more experienced enablers. It would be useful for representative and coordinating organisations of WISEs to arrange specific actions to support Beginners and to enhance their role with stakeholders (public administrations, for-profit enterprises, etc.).



The Beginners

E

General information

Usually these personas are female, around 30 years old. They recently took the lead of the WISE.

S

Values and Identity

Appreciating the social missions of the WISE. They are idealistic, motivated and are keen to see the development of the organization. They are inexperienced; it is still difficult for them to understand the needs of the WSNs.

W

Technologies

They are aware of the importance of technology. They use technology in the work routine, to make WISE efficient, to design the development of WISE.

Education and training

They are highly educated; They hold a university degree in the field of social work.

Work and life perspective

Past

Relatively new in the WISE as directors of a new organisation or replacement for the retired leader, they have almost no experiences with workers with support needs and the management of a business.

Present

As a new enablers, they manages the WISE, but the lack of experience is felt in the day-to-day work. They have some difficulties maintaining profit, securing contracts and understanding the needs of all employees. They often overwork or underutilize them.

Future

They plan to attend some general trainings to learn more about the management of an enterprise and to understand the needs of the employees. As young enablers, they spend their time thinking about the future developments of the WISE and the potential close connections with stakeholders.



3.2 Supporters

Within the partnership, many profiles of supporters with very different histories and competences emerged; this could have generated a very high number of personas, with the consequent difficulty of managing the results from the point of view of the project's subsequent steps; it was therefore decided to construct the profiles around a characterising trait as follow:

- The 'Social Oriented': the prevailing trait is to have come to the WISE driven by the desire to professionally help people in need;
- The 'Professionally Oriented': these are people who came to the WISE because of their technical competence in a profession: cooks, plumbers, electricians, tailors, etc., who at some point in their lives put their skills at the disposal of the WISE;
- The 'Next Enabler': here the prevailing element is that the supporter is taking on more and more responsibilities in the WISE and is preparing to become a future enabler.

3.2.1 The Social Oriented

Social Oriented supporters are a very common profile in European WISEs; we can find this profile in many WISEs.

3.2.1.1 Past in the WISE and work experiences

The origin of these supporters can be very diverse. Some of them have been involved in social work since the beginning of their careers after a training course (educators, social workers, etc.). But in other cases, the background is different; they may in fact be people who have worked in very different occupations for several years – tailors, photographers, plumbers or in repetitive work – but in each of these cases they did not feel satisfied with their work, and they found themselves almost by chance working as social workers for a WISE.

3.2.1.2 General information

These people are mainly female, between 40 and 50 years old. Sometimes they have completed a training cycle in social work, but in other cases they completed compulsory schooling and decided to enrol in a professional course; sometimes they



are bored by the monotonous work. In some cases, they attended evening classes, did the school-leaving examination and looked for a job.

Sometimes they came from a vulnerable group, and they met the WISE as a WSN; after a few years, also thanks to the WISE, they regained autonomy and self-esteem and were able to cope successfully with former problems and became appreciated for their skills, gaining trust and becoming supporters in their turn; in that case, this today encourages them to work hard for those who now have problems.

3.2.1.3 Characteristics and soft skills

They love being with people and relating to others. They do not like the monotonous repetition of single tasks. They are eager to learn; flexibility is essential, as well as empathy.

3.2.1.4 Values and behaviour

They think that human beings must be prioritised; they are intrinsically motivated to generate well-being in society. They are loyal and appreciate and respect the mission and the values of the WISE. They give the best of themselves and try to teach and motivate others to value their qualities and abilities.

3.2.1.5 Current role and tasks in the WISE

In the WISE, they are now the foremen of a group of disadvantaged workers. It is important for them to support WSNs, helping them to understand how to improve their lives or to develop the skills best suited to them in order to exploit them in the world of work, whether soft skills or digital skills.

3.2.1.6 Future carrier paths

They are happy to have come to work in the WISE and do not express the intention to return to the official labour market: they feel they can help people here. Their focus is on their relationship with people. They would be happy to have tools that relieve them of some of the practical tasks as team leaders to devote themselves to social work. On the other hand, they are unenthusiastic about certain practical operational, monotonous aspects (e.g., giving safety notes).



3.2.1.7 Connection with technology

These people may have a basic ('they always like to have a well-constructed introduction to a new system') or average ('they mainly use digital tools for communication and administration') knowledge of technology and digital tools. In general, they think that workers would benefit from blended learning and online training (easy-to-understand and easy-to-use materials). They would like to increase their knowledge and gain more self-confidence regarding the use of IT. They are also positive about technological innovation because it is convenient and makes work faster and easier, for example: 'They think that new machines will help to lift heavy materials and will thus reduce physical efforts'. They are eager to learn new things in this area.

3.2.1.8 Needs for skills enhancement

If the Social Oriented comes from non-social study and professional paths, they may need training that make their innate willingness to help others more professional. They may also need guidance on how to teach skills to people with comprehension and sometimes literacy difficulties. Often, they have no easy-to-read material they could use with WSNs and when they have it available, they fear that this material may be inadequate or too difficult for WSNs.

3.2.1.9 Recommendations for WP3

They could benefit from easy-to-use support that facilitate some practical training aspects of the WSNs. They may be the people who are best able to offer suggestions on how to make programmes and training materials understandable to WSNs. They are also the key to making WSNs realise the need to engage in strengthening their skills. The technological field is not at the centre of their interests, but the Social Oriented supporters could be a reference point to reflect on the introduction of technologies in the WISE: they could in fact be able to evaluate how much they decrease the physical effort and monotony of work, leaving more space to the relationship, and when instead they constitute insurmountable barriers for the WSNs.



The Social Oriented

E

General information

Usually Female, around 50 years old.

S

Technologies

They have average digital skills. They think that WSNs would benefit from blended learning and online training. They are positive about technological innovation because it is convenient and makes work faster and easier. They are eager to learn new things in this area.

W

Values and Identity

They think: human beings must be prioritised; they are intrinsically motivated to have a social impact. They are loyal and they appreciate and respect the mission and the values of the WISE.

Education and training

Usually, they have an education as social workers. Sometimes they did different studies and later discovered their social vocation.

Work and life perspective

Past

They generally started working in WISE or other social enterprises as social workers, but sometimes they accidentally found themselves working for a WISE, because they did not feel satisfied with her previous tasks.

Present

They are now the head of a group of disadvantaged workers. It is important for them to support workers with support needs, helping them to understand how to improve their lives or to develop their skills.

Future

They are happy to have come to work in WISE, they do not express the intention to search other jobs: they feel they can help people here.





3.2.2 The Professionally Oriented

We found this profile in Romania, Belgium, Italy and Latvia.

3.2.2.1 Past in the WISE and work experiences

The previous experiences of this supporter can be varied; in some cases, they encountered the WISE in their youth but then had a different professional career; in other cases, they always did different jobs. Whatever the origin of these supporters, they at some point encountered the WISE, which appreciates their professional qualities and considers them useful for supporting the WSNs in production activities. This may have happened in different ways: through professional contacts or, often, through personal relationships, e.g., long-standing relationships with WISE executives; and, perhaps by chance, the WISE's need for technical expertise and the Professionally Oriented supporters' need for change in life meet. These supporters appreciated the working atmosphere in the WISE and were happy to put their skills at the service of work integration. If they had already come across the WISE in their youth, they are now very happy to have returned to a workplace where from the first moment they felt at home.

3.2.2.2 General information

There are no characterisations of these supporters with respect to gender or age. Generally, their educational level is low, and they start working early.

3.2.2.3 Characteristics and soft skills

Colleagues and WSNs appreciate their professional ability. They love to pass on their skills to other people. It seems to them that this is the best way to put to good use what they can do. It is natural to turn to them to know 'how to do a certain thing' and these supporters feel valued by this.

3.2.2.4 Values and behaviour

They are committed to social value. They love working with people (they love social contact), and they feel close to and understand the WSNs.



3.2.2.5 Current role and tasks in the WISE

Starting from their technical expertise in a certain trade, they lead a team in which WSNs work. These are supporters who instruct the WSNs on how the work is to be done and who verify its execution.

3.2.2.6 Future carrier paths

Most of them feel at home in the WISE and have no intention of changing path. They have been working in the WISE for the past few years or have returned at some point. The WISE is their passion; they would like to do more. Sometimes this happens: technical expertise can lead Professionally Oriented supporters to take on technical or sectoral responsibilities in the WISE, which is always hungry for excellent people in production.

3.2.2.7 Connection with technology

Generally, these supporters are very knowledgeable about the technologies that concern their field of activity; they can, for instance, suggest to WISE managers which aspects of certain production facilities need to be modernised and they can point out where technologies are not adequate. If their professional specialisation is IT-related (e.g., in the case of WISEs performing activities such as data entry, document digitalisation, etc.), they can directly suggest solutions related to digitalisation.

3.2.2.8 Needs for skills enhancement

They want to 'be better' in their profession. They wanted to take the project they are working on to another level but could not do it by themselves. They would be interested in learning more about management.

3.2.2.9 Recommendations for WP3

This is undoubtedly an important profile for the technological growth of WISEs. Together with Tech Enablers, they can be an important element of change. Very often the WISEs find it difficult to hire this type of staff because they come from professions in which they earn quite high sums of money, which sometimes the WISEs are not able to offer; in this case, these supporters on the one hand are pushed towards the WISE because they appreciate its mission and working climate, but on the other hand they have resistance related to economic engagement. Strengthening skills is one of the aspects



where it would be important to work on the strategic and organisational aspects of WISEs.





The Professionally Oriented

E

General information

Usually female, around 35 years old.

S

Technologies

Good or excellent knowledge of technologies related to one's job and medium digital skills in other fields.

W

Values and Identity

They are committed to social value. They love their profession, and they love working with people; they think that by teaching a job, great help can be given.

Education and training

Generally, they have a low educational level, but they have high skills and experience in their job.

Work and life perspective

Past

They had different work experiences. Sometimes, they were WSNs and arrived at the WISE many years before, sometimes they came from the regular labour market.

Present

They are coaches green maintenance, chefs or many other things. Sometimes they manage all the processes and the workers in their everyday life, giving instructions and checking WSNs' work.

Future

They feel at home in the WISE and they have no intention of changing path. The WISE is their passion; they would like to do more.



3.2.3 The Next Enablers

This is the most common and most widespread type of supporter profile, found in most participating countries.

3.2.3.1 Past in the WISE and work experience

Most of them have work experience in the social field, either in the WISE or in previous work experience. They have already worked with WSNs. Besides having worked in social work (e.g., as psychologists, social worker, social economists, occupational therapists, etc.), many of them have experience in the field of human resources.

3.2.3.2 General information

They are mainly between the ages of 35 and 45. This type of person has a high-level educational background, holding a degree or postgraduate qualification in disciplines related to social sciences, mental health sciences or human resources. Although the majority come from social professions or the humanities, some of them have different educational backgrounds. Sometimes they can be a former WSNs, and they feel motivated to bring about change.

3.2.3.3 Characteristics and soft skills

They are warm, emotional and empathetic and like social contact and working with people. They are highly motivated, very patient and communicative. They are always ready to encourage WSNs and train them. They play a mentoring and supervising role in the WISE.

3.2.3.4 Values and behaviour

The Next Enablers are involved in the social cause. Working in WISEs is their passion. They are enthusiastic and like to feel useful. They are inspired by the social goal of the WISE; they choose to work in WISEs for the social contribution that they can make at this stage in their life. They are motivated to see the results on WSNs. They are inspired by the vision of work integration of WSNs and by the values of solidarity and social equity. They may also volunteer in other social projects. Generally, these people are enthusiastic about their WISE, although this does not exclude that, in some cases, sharing the mission of the WISE may be accompanied by dissatisfaction with the salary.



3.2.3.5 Current role and tasks in the WISE

In WISEs, these types of supporters work mainly in directly supporting WSNs (and their families) during their integration into employment. They are therefore specifically job coaches/job trainers. Regardless of their background, they play a leading role. Their work is primarily concerned with supporting WSNs; but for some time, the WISE has increasingly been offering them management tasks of various kinds, such as responsibility for certain operational areas or human resources management. This flatters these supporters but they realise that they do not have enough time to devote to working with people, which remains their main occupation.

3.2.3.6 Future carrier paths

These kinds of supporters are very passionate about their work and have strong motivation and social commitment. Their professional future plan is to stay connected with the WISE; they are motivated to see the improvement of WSNs. The project that the WISE has for them is clear: to make them future enablers who will increasingly take on management responsibilities.

3.2.3.7 Connection with technology

This profile is not clearly characterised with respect to technology: we can find supporters with a high level of digital skills (e.g., in Bulgaria, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Romania, Spain, France, the Netherlands and Slovenia) but others with very low digital skills (e.g., use of social networks, e-mails, mobile phones). This distinction does not seem to concern either country of origin or educational level, but probably an age-related gap. The low digital skills group does not reject the usefulness of technology outright but uses it only where it is really necessary. On the other hand, the digitally inclined supporters group strongly believes that their work would be more fruitful with new technologies. In their opinion, IT skills are crucial, but without forgetting human contact with people.

3.2.3.8 Needs for skills enhancement

They are generally motivated to learn new skills and they consider training a very important part of their personal development in general. The main question is to define the direction of training: towards acquiring more technical skills on the work done with WSNs or towards management skills typical of the enabler?



3.2.3.9 Recommendations for WP3

For this profile, it is first necessary to define the direction of professional development. Many WISEs have, as is well known, a prevalence of internal growth paths: it is normal that the executive does not come via a head-hunter who finds executives on the market, but from career progression by people who work in the WISE and gradually gain the trust of colleagues and managers. Careful consideration must be given to this aspect: it is a strength that guarantees the continuity of the mission, but at the same time represents a possible area where the aforementioned 'incompetence principle' applies. The supporter who is identified as a possible future enabler certainly feels attracted and gratified by the assumption of responsibility; however, one must be sure that this kind of path accords with the actual vocation of the person and does not derive only from a 'sense of duty' ('The WISE needs me! I can't say no!').

The first contribution a WISE may need is an organisational analysis of these aspects. Where the outcome is to support a career path that leads the supporter to be a manager, it is important to provide adequate time and a careful analysis of the person's vocation. The risk in case of a mistake is quite well known to people who work for a WISE: 'You are a good supporter, you are a trustworthy person, you are good with people! Well, from tomorrow you are the restaurant manager!' Unfortunately, it is not necessarily the case that all those who identify with the mission of the WISE and who know how to work with WSNs are also good managers – or at any rate, that they can become so spontaneously, without an appropriate growth path. In short, this is the right person in the wrong place, with disastrous results for both the person and the WISE...



The Next Enablers

E

General information

Usually male, around 40 years old.

S

Technologies

They can have either a high level or a low level of digital skills. They do not reject the usefulness of technology outright; IT skills are crucial, but without forgetting the human contact with people.

W

Values and Identity

They are involved in the social cause, working in the WISE is their passion; they are enthusiastic and like to feel useful. They are inspired by the social goal of the WISE. They are motivated to see results for WSNs.

Education and training

They have a high-level educational background and hold a degree or postgraduate qualification in disciplines related to social sciences, mental health sciences or human resources.

Work and life perspective

Past

They already have work experience in the social field either in a WISE or not. They worked in social field (e.g., as a psychologist, a social worker, or occupational therapist) or had experience in the field of HR.

Present

They work mainly in directly supporting disadvantaged workers and their families, during their integration into employment. They are specifically job coaches/job trainers. Regardless of his background, they play a leading role.

Future

They are very passionate about their work, and they have strong motivation and social commitment. WISE sees in them a possible future enabler and wants to invest in their growth. They are gratified by this and want to meet these expectations positively. That is why they are interested in training.



3.3 Workers with Support Needs

WSNs profiles are NOT constructed based on a categorical approach (e.g., people with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, drug addicts, etc.), but on the basis of the capacity-building needs.

Four profiles were identified using this criterion:

- The 'Safely Here': people with significant issues and limited possibilities for growth who found the WISE a safe environment;
- The 'Soft-Unskilled': people whose most significant issue appears to be a lack of soft skills;
- The 'Growth-Oriented': people who have found the WISE a place to grow and aim to take on more responsibilities (e.g., to become supporters);
- The 'Revenant': people who, also thanks to the WISE, have overcome difficult moments in their lives and now want to prove to themselves and others that they have become autonomous and can make their way in the world of work.

3.3.1 The Safely Here

The Safely Here is a widespread persona profile. We can find this person in most case studies (e.g., in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Spain).

3.3.1.1 Past in the WISE and work experiences

Safely Here have been working in the WISE for many years; in some cases, for more than 20. For many of them, it is their first and only job. In some cases, they came to the WISE after negative experiences in their life. The Safely Here who had working experiences before their current job have rather simple work experience, mainly manual and repetitive tasks with minimal stress. The Safely Here are satisfied with their current position and feel secure working in a WISE.



3.3.1.2 General information

This profile is not characterised by a particular age group or by being predominantly male or female. The Safely Here are generally low educated, have interrupted their studies or have had great difficulty in motivating themselves to complete their studies due to their abilities or bullying at school. Many of them graduated from support needs education. In many cases, they attended training courses or workshops at the beginning of their work at the WISE or acquired the necessary skills and competences while implementing their daily tasks.

The Safely Here can come from a range of disadvantaged groups: many of them have psychological and intellectual vulnerabilities (e.g., persons with intellectual disabilities or psychiatric problems, persons with autism spectrum disorder) that result in cognitive impairment. Many of them have physical vulnerabilities. We can also observe other Safely Here who have severe and more types of disabilities. In addition, the Safely Here can be long-term unemployed (due to low education, discrimination, etc.) or former convicts. In many cases, the disadvantage is cumulative. These barriers mean that they need continuous special support during their daily work.

3.3.1.3 Characteristics and soft skills

The Safely Here are often confronted with various social challenges due to their family histories (alcoholism, abuse), social difficulties, school abandonment, health, cognitive problems or low income (high level of poverty). They tend to be low-skilled due to their limited cognitive abilities and low education. They therefore have large knowledge gaps. It is difficult to find jobs adapted to their capacities and sometimes the job must be adapted to them. They can perform simple and repetitive tasks and can follow a routine under supervision. They lack problem and conflict resolution skills and sometimes have communication problems. Through training courses, they can acquire skills and competences needed for their daily tasks, and these are quite simple. The Safely Here often do not know or overestimate their limits and capabilities. They sometimes feel insecure and fear being judged. They are more emotional than rational. In many cases, they are eager to try new things and are motivated to improve their skills and knowledge. In other cases, however, there are Safely Here who have no desire to learn more due to their age, conditions or bad experiences. These persons are more pessimistic and could be entirely without hope.



3.3.1.4 Values and behaviours

Most Safely Here value their current job very highly and it is very important to them. They would like to be valued member of society. They therefore are hard-working and satisfied with their daily tasks and many are proud of the salaries they earn themselves. They would like to have a quiet life and stable job and stay at WISE until retirement. They need a place where they are treated as valuable people and need stability and regularity in their lives. They feel safe at the WISE. Safely Here need regular support not only in their work but often in their daily lives. (Some of them receive this support from their family but there are Safely Here without family who are supported by the WISE.) Most of them like social relationships and do not like to be alone. The pessimistic Safely Here often think that all the negative experiences that have happened in their life is the fault of others. They need more time, support and patience from others to better appreciate themselves and their job. Most Safely Here are motivated workers whose main aim to be as independent as possible in their life.

3.3.1.5 Current role and tasks

On a typical day, Safely Here take their place in WISEs where they carry out their simple and repetitive tasks, many of them with ongoing support. Their tasks may include stocking, counting, sorting, (re)packaging, preparing products, taking orders, making handmade products, cleaning, helping in the kitchen, preparing meals, etc. They are mainly employed in jobs with minimal stress and responsibility.

3.3.1.6 Future perspectives

Most Safely Here aim to keep their current job because it is safe and not stressful and they value the trust of the social enterprise manager. They enjoy working in a team and belonging. One “Safely Here” persona commented: ‘I wouldn’t trade this job for anything in the world.’ Many of them would like to retire from where they currently work.

It can be observed that without the professional and social support provided by the WISE or the parent organisation, Safely Here would have a minimal chance of overcoming the difficulties of working independently in the open labour market.

3.3.1.7 Connection with technology

Most Safely Here have low or basic digital skills and use technology mainly for personal purposes at a basic level: mobile phones, e-mail, social media, Google searches, apps,



visiting websites, shopping online, watching movies and TV shows, etc. In some cases, they do not use any digital skills at work or at home.

They are not interested in using digital skills to a higher level and in spending energy and time learning new technologies. They do not really see how technology could be useful in their work and are not excited by the digital world. Some are even intimidated by technology. However, there are also Safely Here, while having doubts about technology, who are open to developing the skills they need to their job.

During Covid-19, many Safely Here learned to use Skype, Viber and Zoom, which helped them in their personal and professional lives (communicating with others, booking appointments, etc.).

3.3.1.8 Needs for skills enhancement

Most Safely Here are not interested in developing their skills but since they are very loyal and motivated in their current job, they are highly keen to learn new skills to meet the demands of their job. Therefore, they are open to new demands and opportunities, especially if they are implemented at their workplace. Most of them understand that they need to work to improve themselves, but not to seek more responsibilities and to strengthen their skills. Cognitive barriers can also be a reason for low motivation to develop skills. Therefore, most of them need ongoing support in their learning process.

3.3.1.9 Recommendations for WP3

Training courses are needed to help them to maintain their position, improve their soft skills (basic skills, problem solving, communication skills) and boost their self-confidence. Videos, images, repetitive tasks and easy-to-read content could be helpful for them. They learn slowly and need lots of support and patience. In addition to training courses, they need social support. Digital skills make their daily tasks easier but only at a basic level. In any case, the goal for this profile is not to aim for a job in the external labour market, nor is it to take on more responsibility in the WISE or to grow professionally. The job is an important element of a person's care programme and enhances the person's residual capacities. First and foremost, training means recognising that the Safely Here has skills that WISE can put to good use; everything he/she learns will improve his or her self-esteem and bond with the WISE.



The Safely Here

E

General information

Usually male, 45 years old. They have intellectual disabilities that result in cognitive impairment. They need continuous special support in his daily work and in their private life as well.

S

Technologies

They have limited skills and uses technology mainly for personal purposes at a basic level: mobile phones, e-mail, social media, Google searches, apps, visiting websites, watching movies and TV shows, etc. They are not interested in using digital skills to a higher level.

W

Values and Identity

They value their current job, that is very important to them. They would like to be a valued member of the society. They therefore are hardworking and satisfied with their daily tasks. They would like to be as independent as possible.

Education and training

They are low educated. It was hard for them to complete their studies due to their abilities. They attended training courses at the beginning of his work at the WISE to acquire the necessary skills and competences for his daily tasks.

Work and life perspective

Past

They had negative experiences in their job search. They did rather simple work, which was mainly manual and repetitive tasks with minimal stress.

Present

They have been working in the WISE for many years. They feel safe at the WISE. They do simple and repetitive tasks with minimal stress and responsibility with ongoing support.

Future

They would like to keep their current job because it is safe and not stressful and they values the trust of the social enterprise manager. *"I wouldn't trade this job for anything in the world"*. They are open to learn new skills to meet the demands of their job.



3.3.2 The Soft-Unskilled

This is a very common profile. In some participating countries (e.g., Belgium, Croatia, Latvia and Romania), the 'Soft-Unskilled' personality profile can be observed, but it is probably present in all countries.

3.3.2.1 Past in the WISE and work experiences

Soft-Unskilled persons work for the WISE since they could not find job in the regular labour market because they have a disability or disadvantage that prevents them from finding a job and from being socially included. Even when the professional skills are there, the problem is that they lack personal stability, the ability to relate to others, the ability to respect rules and to stay within the work environment, etc. The causes may be different, either social (a problematic family, leaving school early, involvement in deviant lifestyles as a child) or physical (either related to mental health problems or to traumatic events such as a car or work accident). Whatever the cause, these people have lost contact with the normal social context and have lived on the margins for many years; if they have held jobs, they have lost them in a short time; they are intolerant of the rules of coexistence and working environments; and they lack certain fundamental skills to be able to rebuild a position in society.

3.3.2.2 General information

This profile is not characterised by a particular age group or by being predominantly male or female. Soft-Unskilled people have predominantly lower or medium-lower professional qualifications. They may come from a lower-class background with fewer opportunities to choose well-paid job or from regions far from the development centres.

When it comes to type of disadvantage, many Soft-Unskilled have suffered accidents or medical injuries during their lives that resulted in a disability (e.g., physical disability, mild cognitive problems). Some of them have a congenital, moderate disability (e.g., epilepsy, schizophrenia, autism). In other cases, the deterioration in conditions has occurred due to life situations such as drug addiction or other events that have placed the person on the margins of society. In some cases, the disadvantage is cumulative. Regardless of the origin of the problem, the fact is that now this person has serious difficulties in relating to the social context that surrounds him or her: he/she risks being



intolerant of the rules of a workplace, unable to relate to colleagues and managers or respect schedules and so on. These barriers mean that they sometimes need special support and attention in their work.

3.3.2.3 Characteristics and soft skills

Many of them find it difficult to accept their problems and may have forms of generalised resentment: they may always blame others for the difficulties they encounter in life and fail to understand what they would have to change to reintegrate socially and in the world of work. As a result, they tend to overestimate their abilities, are pessimistic and stubborn and find it difficult to cope with stressful situations. Some of them are inquisitive, talkative and require social contact. They may have considerable intellectual capacity, but are not always able to make the most of it. They may therefore lack concentration and attention to detail. They have lower levels of organisation. They can work independently but not in every kind of job and need special circumstances to be productive.

3.3.2.4 Values and behaviours

The Soft-Unskilled may be hard-working, but they are unreliable. They would like to feel needed and valued and that their families are proud of them, but often this does not happen, and this leads to further frustration.

In terms of values, the most important thing for the Soft-Unskilled is family, health, financial independence and general happiness every day; they perceive that this might be an achievable goal, even if they cannot understand why this is so difficult for them.

3.3.2.5 Current role and tasks

Soft-Unskilled people can do simple IT tasks (e.g., in administrative work) or tasks that do not require a high level of responsibility (e.g., catering). They can work autonomously if they have received adequate training and instructions are clear; they regularly need supervision. For this profile, the problem, even before professional skills, is on other fronts: psychological endurance, behaviour at work, relationships with colleagues and compliance with rules and schedules. And, even outside the workplace, the main problem is to develop or rediscover the elements that allow them to integrate into society.



3.3.2.6 Future perspectives

The Soft-Unskilled appreciate their job at the WISE. Since they have bad experiences in the regular labour market or have realised that they are now not able to perform all the tasks that they could do before their accident, they prefer to stay permanently. In the case of a successful path of labour integration, it is possible that at the same time they can work on soft skills that also make better social integration possible.

3.3.2.7 Connection with technology

Most Soft-Unskilled people have basic digital skills and use them at home or at work. Some of them have a high level of digital skills and are interested in IT. They can use technology frequently and easily. Some of them are familiar with CRM or external systems, e-mail in business communication, photo editing tools, Mailchimp, Canva, WhatsApp, Viber, apps, etc. They are open to learn about new technological innovations.

3.3.2.8 Needs for skills enhancement

As Soft-Unskilled people would like to keep their job, most of them are open to new needs and opportunities, especially if they are implemented in the workplace. For them, the vocational aspects are secondary; they need to develop their soft skills (e.g., organisational skills, time and stress management). Many of them are interested in learning more about technology and are highly motivated to acquire new digital skills.

3.3.2.9 Recommendations for WP3

WISEs have a great tradition in proposing paths to acquire or recover soft skills. What makes them unique on this front is that, unlike an entity that merely proposes training initiatives, in WISEs, WSNs live each day for several hours within a work context that is both challenging and capable of absorbing their difficulties. The work environment empowers and stimulates people to perceive the importance of their potential contribution, offering economic autonomy as a counterpart; at the same time, it is a work context that knows how to absorb moments of crisis, that offers listening and support, and that, in the face of problematic attitudes, does not set in motion explosive dynamics like many other work environments. When WP3 designs actions for upgrading skills, it will be necessary to fully exploit these peculiarities of WISEs especially for this profile. Within these initiatives, it is worth mentioning, with specific



reference to technology, the choice of some WISEs to set up 'desks' for WSNs aimed at offering help on the issue of digitalisation. In fact, digitalisation is considered a 'soft skill', a social skill necessary for different aspects of daily life (booking a medical appointment, seeking information, starting a file to assert one's right to assistance, requesting information from the public administration and so on). As in other aspects, such initiatives – even if they are sometimes organised thanks to the availability of a few supporters – usually require the presence of adequate resources and thus a recognition of the important work that WISEs do for WSNs.



The Soft-Unskilled

E

General information

Usually female, 40 years old. They suffered an accident that results in health problems that prevents them from finding a job in the open labour market. They sometimes need special support and attention in her work.

S

Values and Identity

They are hardworking, and conditions are less important to them. They like to feel needed and valued and that their families are proud of them. The most important values for them are family, health, financial independence and general happiness every day.

W

Technologies

They have average digital skills and use them at home or at work. They are familiar with CRM or external systems, email in business communication, WhatsApp, Viber, apps, etc. They are open to learn about new technological innovations.

Education and training

They have a lower professional qualification.

Work and life perspective

Past

They have work experience, but no experience of success after their accident. They changed jobs in many different fields until they found an opportunity to work at WISE. They have a lower-class background with fewer opportunities to choose a well-paid job.

Present

They do simple tasks (sometimes in the IT sector, e.g. support in maintaining the WISE's website), that do not require a high level of responsibility. They are able to work because they receive adequate training and clear instructions. They regularly need supervision. They appreciate their job in the WISE.

Future

Since they had bad experiences in the regular labour market and are not able to perform all the tasks that they could before their accident, they prefer to stay permanently at the WISE. They are open to new needs and opportunities, especially if they are implemented in the workplace.



3.3.3 The Growth-Oriented

The Growth-Oriented profile can be found in many case studies (e.g., Austria, France, Greece, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland and Romania, and it is certainly also present in other countries).

3.3.3.1 Past in the WISE and work experiences

Growth-Oriented people may have a lot of work experience, but they have difficulty finding a job in the open labour market because they either do not have the skills or professionalism to meet its needs or they are in a disadvantaged life situation (e.g., housewives, ethnic minorities, etc.). In other cases, they did not have any job before coming to the WISE. After many years of unsuccessful job hunting and negative experiences, Growth-Oriented people find a safe work environment where they can use and develop their skills and expertise and experience success at the WISE. In other cases, work experiences were interrupted due to critical biographical events such as drug addiction or imprisonment; after such experiences, people encountered the WISE in search of a path to redemption. Joining the WISE represented a turning point that allowed them to re-evaluate skills acquired in the past, to acquire new ones and above all to have a possible path to redirect their life.

3.3.3.2 General information

Growth-Oriented people are predominantly between 30 and 50, and case studies show a higher proportion of women in this group. Many of them have a vocational (e.g., in gastronomy, hospitality, marketing or communication) or higher-education qualification (e.g., humanities, psychology or business management). Some have a low level of education, and there are cases when they have interrupted their studies because of imprisonment, abuse or language barriers. Growth-Oriented people have often attended WISE training to improve their skills and knowledge.

Many Growth-Oriented people are long-term unemployed because they do not have the skills, competences or knowledge to meet the needs of the open labour market or because they started their careers so late (e.g., mothers) that they do not have a CV rich in work experience. Some have health problems (e.g., oncological disease, diabetes, accidents), mental health problems (e.g., depression) or a mild disability that prevent



them from finding a regular job. Among the Growth-Oriented, we also find persons belonging to ethnic minorities (e.g., Roma people) or migrants.

3.3.3.3 Characteristics and soft skills

Growth-Oriented people particularly like the atmosphere at WISEs compared to previous workplaces where there was less communication, openness and understanding. Because they are loyal and motivated to stay at the WISE for the long term, they are hard-working, cooperative, conscientious, ambitious, patient and courageous. They can work independently. They like to work in a team, but their negative experiences sometimes mean that they are not open to everyone and lack self-confidence. They like to feel seen and valued. One Growth-Oriented person commented: 'I love the atmosphere here and the autonomy. The supervisors trust me.' They mainly lack professional skills needed for certain positions within WISEs.

3.3.3.4 Values and behaviours

Growth-Oriented people appreciate that the WISE team understands them, treats them humanely and helps them without judgement ('I can take a break if I need because of my health problems.'). One Growth-Oriented person commented: 'I am happy here because I realised that without the WISE, I would never have this job opportunity.' They are committed to the WISE's success and are driven by the WISE's impact (environmental and social). It is important for them to have a job and be involved in activities that benefit others. A Growth-Oriented person commented: 'Work is important for life and good health. Without work and health, it's difficult. Then comes family. When you have all three, you are fine.'

3.3.3.5 Current role and tasks

Growth-Oriented people within WISEs do a wide variety of jobs: sewing, cooking (e.g., chef, kitchen assistant), administration, washing machine repair, machine maintenance, candle making, representing WISEs (interviews, presentations), organising activities for kindergarten children (music, dance, theatre, educational topics, etc.), marketing communication activities (copywriting, social media, content marketing, event management, writing activity reports, etc.), sales, etc. They can perform their tasks independently with appropriate training and coaching. In the course of time, these people feel that their commitment is recognised and rewarded: the WISE gives them a



sign of trust in their work, they feel seen not only as WSNs to be included but as workers who can contribute to the work the WISE does.

3.3.3.6 Future perspectives

Growth-Oriented people would like to continue working in WISEs and do not have a strong ambition to work in the open labour market. They have gained confidence and are open to attending training courses or completing their studies to develop in their role and gain more opportunities and responsibilities. Many have the potential and ambition to become supporters in the future. They are happy to have opportunities to increase their skills, both in professional and other aspects. If they try to dream of their best possible future, they do not see a job in other companies, but taking on more responsibility in WISEs. WISEs gave them confidence and helped them through a difficult phase and now they would like to contribute in turn to give this opportunity to others. After all, it is not uncommon in WISEs that supporters (and sometimes also enablers) have been WSNs in the past.

3.3.3.7 Connection with technology

Some Growth-Oriented people have low-level or basic digital skills and do not need to use technology in their work. They use phones, computers or tablets for their personal lives, for example for communication, banking, scheduling, social media, online shopping, etc. All of them normally use the typical work tools of the activity they carry out: they use vans, kitchens, lawn cutting equipment, printing, or sewing machinery, etc. And they are proud to know how to do it well! There are also cases where they do not use technology in their private lives, but this is less common. The other group of Growth-Oriented persons use many technologies more often and more easily not only in their private lives but also at work. They are more familiar with Microsoft Office, photo and video editing programs, internet banking, applications, online payments, internal CRM systems, etc. They are willing to learn more about technology, including if it improves their skills.

3.3.3.8 Needs for skills enhancement

Since Growth-Oriented people would like to develop within the WISE, they are open to learning new professional skills, knowledge and competences they can use in their work (e.g., new crafts, marketing, psychology, photography, creative writing, machine operation). In addition to professional skills, they would like to develop their soft skills



(e.g., interpersonal communication skills at work). If some technology could help them to develop their skills and improve the quality of their work, they would like to learn how use it. In addition to this, there are a wide set of skills that concern the acquisition of a supporting role or the acquisition of organisational responsibilities.

3.3.3.9 Recommendations for WP3

The Growth-Oriented WSN is a profile that testifies to the ability of WISEs to successfully promote people's growth. Their way of learning and strengthening skills combines different forms: the willingness to participate in specific training, the relationship with the supporters and the enablers who have followed all the steps in WISE, the possibility of testing themselves in a context such as a WISE, which looks at its growth in an encouraging way. It is undoubtedly one of the profiles that is most hungry to learn in all areas, including technological ones and, if in accordance with its sensitivity, digital ones.





The Growth-Oriented

E

General information

Usually female, 30-40 years old. They are long-term unemployed because they do not have the skills, competences or knowledge to meet the needs of the open labour market.

S

Technologies

They have basic digital skills and do not need to use technology in their work. They use phones and computers in their personal life (e.g., for communication, banking, social media). They are open to learn more about technology.

W

Values and Identity

They appreciate that the WISE team understands them, treats them humanely and helps them without judgement. They are committed to the WISE's success. It is important for them to have a job and be involved in activities that benefit others.

Education and training

They have professional qualification (e.g., hospitality). They have often attended WISE training courses in order to improve their skills and knowledge.

Work and life perspective

Past

They had some work experience, but had difficulty finding and keeping a job in the open labour market.

Present

They do a wide variety of tasks independently. They found in the WISE a safe environment where they can use and develop their skills and expertise and experience. WISE appreciates their commitment and is testing them on tasks that involve taking on small responsibilities.

Future

They would like to continue working in the WISE and they do not have strong ambition to work in the open labour market. They are open to attending training courses in order to gain more opportunities and responsibilities. They have the potential and ambition to become supporters in the future.



3.3.4 The Revenant

The Revenant persona is a widespread profile. We can find this person in many case studies (e.g., Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Romania).

3.3.4.1 Past in the WISE and work experiences

Revenants may have had many work experiences, but they have difficulties finding and/or keeping a job in the open labour market. Due to various social challenges, some of them have had problematic lifestyles (e.g., alcohol and drug addiction, problems with the law, substance abuse and convictions) that prevent them from finding or keeping job on a long-term basis. There are also Revenants who have previously worked in the open labour market but suffered an accident (e.g., as a house painter or electrician) or burnout syndrome (e.g., as a teacher) that has led to health or mental problems that prevent them from continuing in their previous profession. The Revenants arrived at the WISE after a long period of unemployment and many unsuccessful experiences seeking to find a permanent job in the open labour market with the support of the social enterprise.

3.3.4.2 General information

Revenants are predominantly between 30 and 55, and the case studies show a higher proportion of men in this group. Due to their challenging social situation, many of them have a low or medium level of education, and some have even interrupted their studies. Those Revenants who have experienced trauma in their lives may have higher a level of qualification and a high level of skills and competences for their original profession.

When it come to their disadvantaged situation, Revenants may come from difficult family circumstances (e.g., parents had alcohol or drug addiction, are sick or died prematurely), have alcohol or drug problems, problems with the authorities, etc. Due to these reasons, many are ex-convicts and people under court supervision. The Revenants may also be migrants, have health problems caused by an accident, have a physical disability, or suffer from burnout syndrome. Even if they had skills, they had a life path that for a while excluded them from work and society; afterwards, thanks also to their stay in the WISE, they regained motivation and determination and today they want to prove to themselves and others that they are again able to become



autonomous, either in their previous occupation or in a new one. They are happy to be in the WISE but look first of all to an activity outside it, employed or self-employed, as soon as possible.

3.3.4.3 Characteristics and soft skills

The Revenants are in a WISE with the aim to re-enter the open labour market. They are therefore highly motivated, cooperative, hard-working and precise. They can work independently and some of them prefer to work alone. Some Revenants (e.g., persons from difficult social backgrounds) have difficulties in reading or arithmetic and are ashamed because of this. They lack self-confidence and sometimes self-discipline. Many of them are lonely and lack family support. There are Revenants (e.g., persons suffering from burnout or who had an accident) who have lots of professional experience and a high level of skills that they can still use in their current job. Revenants are sometimes stressed, have confidence problems due to their experience and sometimes need more time to understand everything, but they are persistent and goal oriented. They like to ask questions and find out new things on their own.

3.3.4.4 Values and behaviours

Many of the Revenants (e.g., ex-convicts, ex-drug and alcohol addicts) are aware that they have led a troubled life. They regret what they have done in their past. Therefore, they would like to be better people and prove to themselves and others that they are different now and can adhere to positive values. They would like to start again and live a 'normal' life. They tend to say 'yes' to every opportunity. Many Revenants (e.g., persons suffering from burnout or who had an accident) would like to go back into their profession, or if they cannot because of health problems, they would like to find a job where they can work independently with their changed abilities. Revenants find the WISE more as a place of recovery rather than regular work.

In terms of values, for them, family, work and an independent existence are particularly important in their lives. Together, these factors are a sign that their lives have changed and that they have put right the problems that had led them in the wrong direction.

3.3.4.5 Current role and tasks

Revenants can perform a wide range of jobs from simple to more complex tasks. In the case studies, we find these profiles in catering (e.g., dishwashing and kitchen help), cleaning, green areas, logistics, sales (e.g., answering the phone, uploading online ads,



price labelling), administration (e.g., invoicing, note taking), etc. There is a Revenant who, although not a supporter, is the one who welcomes new employees by explaining the different aspects of the job, including those related to technology.

3.3.4.6 Future perspectives

The main goal of all the Revenants is to find a job in the open labour market. They would like to lead a stable, simple, independent life after leaving the WISE and to have a permanent job with a decent salary. They believe that they can soon return to their 'real' and 'legitimate' life. Many of them have started training programmes or went back to school to finish their interrupted studies. Some have ambitions to start their own businesses. For the Revenant, the greatest success is when they leave the WISE and find work in the ordinary labour market.

3.3.4.7 Connection with technology

Revenants normally and appropriately use the machinery related to their production activity; they like to study its operation and as far as possible become an expert. They are happy to learn new things, for example from profiles such as the 'Professional Oriented supporters' and are in turn happy to be approached as experts on the working machinery.

Regarding digital technologies, on the other hand, different factors come into play, partly related to personal inclinations, partly to whether the work involves the use of these technologies. So, we can find Revenants with low digital skills and average to high ones.

Revenants with low-level digital skills use technology only in their private lives (e.g., e-mail messaging, social media platforms, using computers or phones). Most of them expect to learn simple elements of digitalisation. Some of them will never be able to go beyond certain levels because of their low educational level. Revenants with medium to high levels of digital skills use the technology at home and at work. They can use computer programs (e.g., MS Office), apps, social media and communication tools (WhatsApp, Viber, e-mail, etc.).

3.3.4.8 Needs for skills enhancement

Revenants are aware of the importance of learning new skills. They need to develop skills that prevent long-term unemployment and help minimise stress or difficulties



(e.g., time management, conflict and stress management and communication skills) and simply for the pride of being good at one's job.

Regarding digital skills, Revenants are open to learning new digital skills. Some need basic technological training, some can acquire more advanced digital skills that can increase their employability.

They hope that they can train themselves enough to find a job on the open labour market.

3.3.4.9 Recommendations for WP3

This persona model is the typical client of Training WISEs or of Productive WISEs oriented towards external placement. It is a figure who is strongly motivated to strengthen his or her competences, both in terms of professional and soft skills (time management, conflict and stress management, communication skills); they also need to improve their self-confidence. They can improve digital skills that can be helpful for them in their job. They can learn independently. Those that had an accident or burnout syndrome need to learn how to live and work with their changed situation and how they can adapt their new conditions to his profession, if it is possible; at the same time, they have to learn that is possible to relaunch their career even in their new condition. It is a profile that can benefit from all forms of competence-building: structured lessons, on-the-job learning, recognition of prior skills also acquired informally, etc. It should be noted that in this case, in order not to frustrate the expectations of the person, it is important that the WISE has channels that favour the external placement of the WSNs.



The Revenant

E

General information

Usually male, 35 years old. They came from difficult family circumstances, which led to drug problems and problems with authorities. They would like to find a permanent job in the open labour market with the support of the social enterprise.

S

Values and Identity

They regret what they have done in their past. They would like to be better people and demonstrate that they are different now. They would like to start again and live a 'normal' life. Family, work and an independent existence are particularly important in their lives.

W

Technologies

They have a medium skill level and use technology at home and at work. They are familiar with MS Office, apps, social media. They are open to developing their digital skills but sometimes they are afraid of dealing with new tools that they will not be able to master.

Education and training

They have a low level of education because they interrupted their studies. They went back to school to finish their studies.

Work and life perspective

Past

They arrived at the WISE after a long period of unemployment and many unsuccessful working experiences. They could not keep a job on a long-term basis.

Present

They can perform a wide range of jobs, from simple to more complex tasks. They are able to work autonomously. Therefore, their team leader assigns them independent tasks.

Future

Their main goal is to find a job in the open labour market. They would like to lead a stable, simple, independent life after leaving the WISE and to have a permanent job with a decent salary. They need to develop skills that prevent long-term unemployment and help minimise stress or difficulties.





3.4 Additional profile for staff members

This category was not foreseen in the initial research design, but it was added – albeit in limited fashion – because it concerns very significant figures in WISEs (designers, administrators, communicators, etc.). It might be useful to devote further studies to these people in the future. Although officially this persona has been categorised and interviewed as a supporter, we believe that instead it is more correct to categorise them in a separate group that will be called Staff Members. Given their role in the WISE, they perform more administrative, logistical and financial tasks than supporting WSNs. Since this profile is outside the scope of B-WISE's interests, a systematic examination of its characteristics will not be undertaken and only a few main features will be highlighted.

This type of persona may be in its first employment or may come from the regular labour market; sometimes he/she worked for many years in other companies before moving into social work. Their work sector was European project planning, communication, finance and sales, business management/public relations, human resources management, engineering or trading.

They are between 24 and 54 years old, but the average age is around 40. They are highly educated (bachelor or master's degree).

This profile is communicative and related to people, competent, educated and rational. Autonomous decision makers, these people can work in communication, planning, evaluation, finance and administration of WISEs; sometimes they assist the enablers in his/her daily tasks. They don't work directly with WSNs.

They all have a high level of digital skills, at work and at home, and they express willingness to learn soft programs.

This type of figure deserves a specific in-depth study.



The Staff members

E

General information

Usually male, 25 - 40 years old.

Values and Identity

They believe in the social cause but their purpose in WISE is not directly related to the wellbeing of WSNs. They are competent, educated, rational, autonomous and decision makers.

S

Technologies

They have a high level of digital skills, at work and at home.

Education and training

They are highly educated (bachelor or master's).

W

Work and life perspective

Past

Sometimes they come from the regular labour market, where they worked many years before moving into social work. Sometimes they met WISEs after university and WISE was the first work experience.

Present

They are responsible for an important technical function (e.g., design, finance, communication, quality). They perform this task autonomously, reporting directly to management.

Future

Challenges for the future include staying in WISE and taking on more responsibility. Will they remain 'external' technicians, ready to evaluate job offers from those who promise better conditions, or will they identify with WISEs values and mission?



©Mapchart

4 COUNTRY REPORTS

4.1 Austria

4.1.1 Scenarios



All types of Austrian WISEs aim to prepare WSNs for the labour market. The characteristic of further placements differs according to the target groups and types of WISEs.

Productive WISEs are either socio-economic enterprises or sheltered workshops. The former employ people temporarily, the latter usually permanently. This leads to differences in the target groups and their placement opportunities. Services and goods are sold to private or public customers. Some of the WISEs run a shop. Productive WISEs in Austria prepare WSNs for employment on the





regular labour market, partially through further social support and training. They range from medium to large-sized ones.

Social WISEs focus on social development and stabilisation. The workers' level of care can rank up to level seven, the highest possible category in Austria. They usually have a larger range of social work on offer than Productive WISEs. They employ their workers temporarily. Employment contracts last, with exceptions, several years. Young adults get ongoing training on etiquette, social and digital skills and cultural techniques (reading, writing, calculating); grown-up workers do too, but it is usually more focused on social and digital skills.

Training WISEs aim to prepare workers for employment on the regular labour market. Workers are employed temporarily. Their training lasts several months or – in fewer cases – years. As training is to some extent closely interwoven with production in WISEs, some workers are placed there afterwards (second labour market). Training WISEs receive state subsidies, but they must fulfil high profit rates. This is considered problematic. These rates were hard to achieve, especially during the pandemic. Some WISEs still notice sales collapses and only few earn more. Some Training WISEs are medium-sized, some are of considerable size.

All the WISEs investigated use digital devices and software. Digitalisation is a topic of importance. All the WISEs agree on that. The specifications and the progress differ a lot. As a matter of fact, Training WISEs seem to be the most advanced, followed by Productive WISEs. They use components such as computers, office software, assistive technology, video conference tools and to some extent e-learning platforms. Their hardware is usually up to date, although frequently one to two years behind the private sector.

The extent of future developments depends on allocated subsidies of local authorities. In general, the WISEs plan to develop and improve their resource allocation to different locations. They plan to optimise and automate workflows. They also plan to optimise training. The WISEs make significant investments, which concern training enrichment by establishing structured easy-to-use and easy-to-understand e-learning platforms. Many supporters agree on devices that must be easy to understand and easy to use. They must be available to supporters and to WSNs. Future WISEs will also be prepared for ecological challenges and will use renewable energies. They will have e-cars and



sustainability officers. Current WISEs lag behind the private sector concerning sustainability. Many WISEs spend their money to preserve their offers to WSNs.

4.1.2 Personas

4.1.2.1 Enablers

- **The manager who wants tangible outcomes, but the WISE still has a long way to go to be digitally prepared:** Male, 55, studied social management, worked in different WISEs. Now he is the CEO of a WISE. He is cooperative with enablers, and he listens to supporters' concepts. Digitalisation is welcome, but it needs to support practical work and has to produce tangible outcomes. However, WISEs still have a long way to go to be fully prepared. Devices have to be easy to understand and easy to use.
- **The manager who is pleased with work conditions within the WISE and who thinks they should extend their offers:** Male, 57, worked 15 years in different private enterprises. Today he is the business area manager and responsible for sales. He is inspired by humanity. He thinks that WSNs should also have a chance in the labour market. Technology is welcome as long as it helps to facilitate work and centres the human being. Training and support are welcome.
- **The mediator:** Male, 50, studied law and sociology. He is registered as a civil law mediator. He states that his education was repeatedly helpful during work. He is a business area manager within a large-sized WISE. He thinks digitalisation is a boon and bane; it is a crucial fact for the labour market. It is thus important to train WSNs.
- **The manager who tries to be efficient and who needs a lot of individual resources to overcome the daily workload:** Female, 48, studied economics and worked in private enterprises in the areas of recruiting and human resource management. She worked in different WISEs as a social worker. She is now the human resource manager. She is sure about the advantages of digitalisation. Investments in new digital technologies will better prepare workers for vocational challenges and free resources for other tasks.
- **The boss who is fond of participants:** Male, 43, studied social work, 15 years of vocational experience in different job market projects as a trainer, supporter and job coach. Now he is the team leader of job integration training for young people with



disabilities, usually after compulsory schooling. The training has a special focus on IT. He is happy that the WISE is always up to date with assistive technologies and high-performing hardware.

- **The digitalisation expert who remarks that more and more WISEs understand the necessity of digital change:** Female, 37, studied communication and media, worked more than ten years in private enterprises as an e-learning expert and content creator including coaching/counselling regarding changes in digital attitudes. Her vision towards the future: digitalisation will enhance integration into the labour market for WSNs.

4.1.2.2 Supporters

- **The foreman who recognises that machines can help to reduce physical efforts and who asks for detailed training on the job for new devices:** Female, 50, finished a tailor's apprenticeship, had no social work training and has always been a working mum. She has low digital knowledge and interest on the part of herself and WSNs. She thinks that new machines will help to lift heavy materials and will thus reduce physical effort.

- **The digitalisation expert who longs for the prioritisation of human beings in IT training:** Male, 42, apprenticed as a plumber. He attended evening classes and studied communication and media. The use of computers is part of the work routine. He is motivated to use more technology in his daily work routine. At the same time, he knows the target group would be overwhelmed. He thinks human beings must be prioritised in training.

- **The supporter who thinks that digitalisation is too expensive:** Male, 36, lives in a cohabitation, 5-year-old son, communicative and gets on well with people. He started a new career as a social worker and is now responsible for acquiring orders, communicating with suppliers and quality control within a WISE. He works with digital devices and specific software each day. He thinks that WISEs cannot afford a structured roll-out of digital offers.

- **The supporter who is prepared:** Female, 38, studied sociology and later on social work. Thinks IT skills are crucial and that one has to be prepared and well-trained to prepare WSNs. She worked at an accommodation service for children and young



adults. Although she had no formal training in IT and digital content, she took responsibility for a digitalisation project within the WISE. She thinks IT skills are crucial.

- **The frustrated supporter who repeatedly explains issues as simply as necessary:**

Female, 42, one child, finished compulsory schooling, worked as a photographer, accidentally started a social worker career. She is now foreman and responsible for five to ten WSNs in the textile sorting and storage department. She adapts to workers with diverse disadvantages and additional social problems such as debts or prison sentences each day. Her vision towards the future: blended learning materials should be easy to understand and easy to use.

- **The supporter who is inspired by meaning. 'I want to do something good for society and have a peaceful soul myself:'** Female, age 33, work instructor and head of brochure dispatch. Her motto: everyone should do what they can do. She focuses on social integration through stabilisation, keeping people busy and providing a satisfying work experience to former drug addicts. Before Covid-19, working life was easier. Digital contact with the target group is more difficult, but when the offer is attractive, people come anyway.

4.1.2.3 Workers with Support Needs

- **The one who will succeed on the labour market by uniting vocational training and personal interests:** Female, 25, finished compulsory schooling. She lives with her parents. Due to her physical disabilities and social pedagogy services in school, she is experienced in assistive technologies. During the vocational training, she deepened and expanded her IT skills. She needs more time for specific processes, but she makes up for some lost time by using assistive technology.

- **The human being that is frightened by digitalisation and long passages of text:** Female, 51, social-emotional and psychiatric disabilities, suffers from a basic level in reading and writing, completed compulsory schooling and has low digital skills. She refuses an ongoing introduction to digital systems. She fears failing. In particular, text-based systems frighten her. Videos, images and short, easy-to-read texts would be okay.

- **One should understand what one is doing. The web bears risks:** Female, 37, obtained a driving licence when 25 years old, lives in a single apartment. She went to a



regular vocational school and fulfilled her vocational training in gastronomy successfully. She had jobs on the regular labour market but failed there. Then she completed several job trainings in WISEs. She does not use technologies during work. In her private life, she uses computers and tablets.

- **The long-term unemployed who transfers digital tasks to their individual**

surrounding: Male, 59, worked for years as a welder in several foundries. The last one went bankrupt. He is long-term unemployed and physically restricted due to herniated disks. He is employed temporarily for seven months at the WISE. In the WISE, he reworks electronic devices. He attended application and IT training but has little interest in using his skills.

- **One struggles and fall. OK, get up again:** Male, 25, worked as a graphic designer. He loves gaming and betting. He got addicted to them. Depression and other psychological problems occurred. He is experienced in graphic and other software and would like to try a new approach: he plans to train peers within the WISE.

- **The worker who is developing step by step. Learning by doing and being treated as a human are important:** Male, 52, former training in various fields, often tough physical work. He suffers from multiple problems: physical exhaustion, various addiction problems: mostly drugs, but also gaming and alcohol. Main goal: he needs to bring stability and regularity into his life and he needs a place where he is treated as a human. Concerning digitalisation, he uses a mobile phone but changes his number quite often. He has an e-mail address but hardly ever checks it. A computer is an option but not a necessity.

- **“I’d never admit it, but I’m nearly illiterate”:** Female, 17, born in Austria. She herself was hardly pushed in education. She did as little as necessary to complete classes and compulsory schooling. She is scared that someone might notice how bad her reading skills are. Unfortunately, some supporters recognised it and now try to motivate her to improve her reading and writing skills. Many systems are text-based, including the e-learning system, but she refused to use them.



4.2 Belgium

4.2.1 Scenarios



Most Belgian WISEs have a long tradition of employing persons with disabilities. Sheltered workshops have existed in Belgium since 1958 with the establishment of the law on 'the training, retraining and social retraining of the disabled'. Over time, all sheltered workshops have been transformed into WISEs that focus on the employment of people outside the labour market and to a certain level on their transition to the regular economy.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, the regulation of and support for WISEs was gradually transferred from the federal level to the regional level (Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels). Since 2014, all policies concerning social enterprises and the social economy have been developed autonomously by each region. In Flanders, collectief maatwerk (MW), which consists of maatwerkbedrijven (MWB) and maatwerkafdelingen (MWA), employs 23,447 WSNs (a minimum of 65% of the employees). Furthermore, the lokale diensteneconomie (LDE) or proximity services (178) employ 2,635 WSNs.

In Wallonia there are three types of WISEs. Entreprises d'Insertion (EI) (98) employ around 6,000 WSNs (more than 50% of the staff). Entreprises de travail adapté (ETA) (54) employ around 8,500 WSNs (more than 70% of the staff). In addition, Initiatives de Développement de l'Emploi dans le secteur de Services de proximité à finalité Sociale (IDESS) (62) employ around 500 WSNs (100% of the staff).

In Belgium, most WISEs are clearly Productive WISEs. There is an economic balance related to productive activities, remunerated on the public or private market. WSNs are employed on full pay. The WISEs can organise some training and social activities.

In Wallonia, the IDESS can be considered Productive WISEs given the fact that the WSNs are employed on full pay. Nevertheless, IDESSs can also be considered Social WISEs, since resources are derived mainly from government funding and only partly from the sale of services.



Belgian WISEs started implementing different technologies and digitalisation processes. The basic conditions for future digitalisation projects are fulfilled. Since 2019, there has been a new regional legislation in Flanders (maatwerkdecreet) and consequently the target population of the WISEs is changing: the group is becoming more diverse, and their employability is lower. Furthermore, the market is changing. Customers demand high quality; the products are more complex and the demand for customisation is greater. The use of assistive technologies, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, etc., can be an important strategy to respond to these trends. Nevertheless, we see that only a small number of Belgian WISEs implemented these technologies up until today.

There are some strategic pathways that WISEs deem relevant to remain future-proof: scaling-up will be an important strategy to keep up with the speed of digitalisation and to find enough competent employees in a tight labour market; the available government subsidies should be harnessed to accelerate the digitalisation and technologisation of the WISEs; the circular economy can create employment opportunities for the changing target group (lower employability); assistive technologies, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, etc., can support the target group and guarantee their employment. WSNs should be involved in the implementation process of these technologies. Innovative collaborations or hybrid business models can open new doors for WISEs. The exchange of good practices and collaboration between WISEs can support the transition to a strong and regionally anchored social economy.

4.2.2 Personas

4.2.2.1 Enablers

- **Enabler 1** (55–65) is the managing director, has been working in the same WISE for over 20 years and has an IT degree. He/she can make tough decisions and is driven by the social, economic and sustainable mission of the organisation. He/she finds it difficult to be enthusiastic and involve employees. It is not easy for employees to contact Enabler 1 (the distance is too large). He/she has an economic point of view, good leadership skills, fewer soft skills and a high level of digital skills.
- **Enabler 2** (45–54) is the Sales/R&D Director, an industrial engineer with a high interest in innovative technologies. He/she has been working in the same WISE for 15 years. He/she is passionate about technology and innovation. He/she is driven by the social



and sustainable mission of the WISE. He/she keeps all the responsibility (does not delegate). He/she is difficult to reach (always busy). He/she has good analytical skills, fewer communication/social skills and a high level of digital skills.

- **Enabler 3** (45–54) is the managing director, a political scientist who worked as a plant manager in a WISE for ten years before being promoted to managing director. He/she knows the WSNs very well and is inspired by the social goal of the WISE. He/she lacks an entrepreneurial mindset. He/she has very good analytical skills and social skills, less knowledge of business management and a basic level of digital skills.

- **Enabler 4** (35–44) is the managing director and holds a degree in social work. He/she recently became the managing director of a small WISE (one year ago). He/she is inspired by the social goal of the WISE and believes in an inclusive society through an inclusive labour market. He/she has difficulties putting vision into practice (lack of structure). He/she pays insufficient attention to the economic aspects of the WISE. He/she has strong social skills and a strong vision but limited entrepreneurial experience. He/she has a basic level of digital skills.

4.2.2.2 Supporters

- **Supporter 1** (35–44) is the project manager, an occupational therapist who has been working in the same WISE for over 15 years. Recently, Supporter 1 has been promoted to project manager of digitalisation. He/she is hard-working, ambitious and inspired by the social goal of the WISE. He/she has good analytical skills but lacks communication skills. He/she has a high level of digital skills, at work and at home.

- **Supporter 2** (45–54) is the policy officer and has a master's degree in pedagogy. After working for local government for 15 years, Supporter 2 started as a policy officer in a WISE. He/she is inspired by the social goal of the WISE and has strong attention to detail but jumps to conclusions too quickly. He/she has communication and analytical thinking skills. He/she has a high level of digital skills, at work and at home – only more advanced programming skills are lacking.

- **Supporter 3** (18–25) is the green maintenance team leader and has a secondary education diploma (horticulture). After high school, he/she studied for three years (social work) without obtaining a degree. He/she loves to work with people. He/she has



no perseverance, low self-esteem and low self-discipline. He/she has a basic level of digital skills.

- **Supporter 4** (45–54) is an occupational therapist. He/she loves helping people but finds it difficult to think outside of the box and to make critical reflections. He/she has good soft skills, however, analytical skills are lacking. He/she has a basic level of digital skills, at home and at work.

- **Supporter 5** (55–65) is an Engineer. He/she loves technology/IT and has limited social skills and limited communication skills. He/she is not a team player. He/she has good mathematical skills and affinity with technology and digitalisation.

- **Supporter 6** (25–34) is the catering services team leader. He/she started working after finishing secondary education (he/she graduated as a care provider). He/she loves working with people but has no attention for detail and speaks before he/she thinks. He/she has good soft and communication skills, no analytical skills nor preceding experience in catering services. He/she has a basic level of digital skills.

4.2.2.3 Workers with Support Needs

- **WSN 1** (55–65) does in-company services. WSNs 1 did not find a job in the regular economy and has been long-term unemployed. WSNs 1 has a lower secondary education degree. He/she is motivated to work and has physical capacities. WSNs 1 is psychologically vulnerable. He/she has limited skills and needs repetitive tasks. WSNs 1 does not use any digital skills at home or at work.

- **WSN 2** (25–34) is in a training programme. He/she did a few interim jobs after dropping out of school (only lower secondary education degree) but lost them because of substance abuse. If he/she is motivated, a lot is possible. He/she lacks self-discipline and self-confidence. WSNs 2 has practically no experience but has high cognitive capacities and no physical disabilities. His/her digital skills are advanced.

- **WSN 3** (35–44) does metal working. He/she graduated from support needs education and started part-time in the WISE directly after graduating. WSNs 3 has mental health issues, is rather shy and has limited physical strength. He/she is motivated, does not know his/her own boundaries and has limited cognitive skills. WSNs 3 needs a lot of training and repetition. It is getting harder to find a job for him/her. He/she has basic digital skills.



- **WSN 4** (45–54) has an administrative job. He/she suffered a brain injury as a child. Due to this injury, WSNs 4 has a physical disability and some cognitive problems. WSNs 4 is stubborn and has difficulties accepting his/her disability. He/she wants to work, overestimates his/her capacities and has no attention for details. He/she is an accountant and has a lot of cognitive skills, but also memory problems, and the quality of his/her work is low. He/she has basic digital skills.
- **WSN 5** (45–54) has an administrative job. He/she has a degree as an early childhood educator. After working in a school for seven years, WSNs 5 suffered from burnout and stayed home for a year. Now he/she works part-time in a WISE but wants to find a job in the regular economy. He/she is motivated to work and kind-hearted. He/she has limited physical strength and mental health issues, has a lot of cognitive capacities and no physical disability. He/she needs structure and repetition. He/she has basic digital skills.
- **WSN 6** (25–34) works in logistics, graduated in support needs education and has a severe form of autism. After school, WSNs 6 started working part-time in the WISE. It is difficult to find a job for him/her. He/she is motivated and has a large network but has low self-esteem, and he/she is scared of trying something new. He/she has very limited cognitive skills and needs a lot of training. WSNs 6 has no physical disability and no digital skills.
- **WSN 7** (35–44) works in IT, lacks concentration and cannot handle stress. He/she has limited experience in the regular economy due to his/her physical disability and probably autism. WSNs 7 has a lot of cognitive capacities but is not very stable. He/she has a high level of digital skills.
- **WSN 8** (55–65) works in logistics. He/she arrived in Belgium at the age of 50. WSNs 8 does not have a degree and has limited cognitive capacities. WSNs 8 gives the impression of knowing how to perform a task, but the quality of the result is low. WSNs 8 has a lot of doubt. He/she is motivated to work and overestimates his/her capacities. His/her digital skills are basic.
- **WSN 9** (45–54) works in logistics. WSNs 9 is an ex-convict. He/she does not belong in a WISE, but he/she cannot find work in the regular economy. He/she works very precisely and is motivated to find a job in the regular economy in the near future but has low self-esteem. He/she has a lot of capabilities but no digital skills.



- **WSN 10** (55–65) works in logistics. He/she holds a lower secondary education degree. He/she has a physical disability and uses a wheelchair. WSNs 10 has been working for 22 years in the same WISE. He/she works very precisely and is motivated to keep his/her job but gets easily stressed. He/she does not indicate her/his boundaries. He/she has limited cognitive capacities, needs repetitive tasks and needs to sit down to work. His/her digital skills are basic.
- **WSN 11** (45–54) works in logistics and lives in a community with other people with a mental disability. He/she graduated in support needs education. WSNs 11 has a mental disability and has been working in the same WISE for 25 years. He/she works precisely and is motivated but needs a lot of support. He/she has limited cognitive skills. WSNs 11 works slowly, but correctly. His/her digital skills are very basic.
- **WSN 12** (55–65) works in logistics. He/she holds a degree in support needs education. He/she has a physical disability (severe arthrosis) and uses a wheelchair. He/she also has a mild mental disability. He/she has been working for 35 years in the same WISE. The social contact at the workplace keep WSNs 12 motivated but he/she overestimates his/her own capacities. His/her digital skills are basic.

4.3 Bulgaria

4.3.1 Scenarios



WISEs in Bulgaria are identified as social tools for supported employment that are essential to workers with disabilities who are often directly or indirectly discriminated against by the conventional enterprises. The work integration itself, as well as the number of alternative strategies, such as the creation of transitional occupations and on-the-job training, are provided by these social enterprises, especially in the light of the lack of governmental support they tend to face.

We can clearly notice the prevailing Social and Training types of WISEs – in which there is a coexistence of employed persons and trainees, and the WSNs usually represent 30% to 50% of the total staff. Part of the resources are derived from the sale of goods



and services, while the rest is often dependent on either government funds, European programmes or other entrepreneurial initiatives and donation campaigns.

All three common WISE types are found – Productive, Training and Social – as some of their characteristics are shared and overlap, as do their relation to public support policies and job placements.

Identified strengths include customer satisfaction, proper management (within the WISE), a personalised attitude between colleagues, experienced mentors, a good marketing approach and the fruitful efforts for competitiveness with non-WISEs. Training and certificates that are issued also represent nice motivation to employees. Having in mind the strengths, and their successful implementation in the day-to-day processes, several opportunities come to light. Employees in the social enterprises are provided with good training – from basic skills (cleaning, washing) to more complicated tasks such as food preparation, pre-cooking activities, taking orders from customers, etc. Mentors/supporters also have the chance to increase their qualifications by constant tutorship, internal training models and active involvement in the development ventures of the WISE.

Talking to the management of the social enterprises, we can see the impact of international politics towards the local businesses, which suffer due to lack of profits. There is a reduction in customers, low interest in local merchandise and generally low purchasing power.

In economic terms, the majority of WISEs have low turnover (<€100,000) and their situations are very different, depending on the size and type of market they are in. The level of investment is generally lower than in non-WISE companies operating in the same sectors. There is some exposure to competition with non-WISEs, but a good proportion of customers choose them because they implement work integration.

Some of the WISEs shared plans to reinvest part of their income in the purchase of technologies that will significantly improve the production process, such as a 3D printer.

WSNs within the organisation also feel positive and believe that by adding this piece of machinery, their focus will be moved towards becoming more creative – they will have the chance to apply their talents and come up with new designs, while mass production



would be carried out by the printer. It is the kind of reinvestment opportunities that every WISE is looking for but not many of the social enterprises can afford.

4.3.2 Personas

4.3.2.1 Enablers

Enablers are usually professionals and experienced managers and some of them are also medical experts such as psychologists, MDs, etc. Enablers work along with the rest of the staff, provide all kinds of support and at the same time represent the social enterprise by handling its public relations. Therefore, very often they are the most active members who are in charge of the organisation, social media activities, national and international partnerships, etc. Enablers tend to keep very close relations with the WSNs on a daily basis. Along with the supporters, enablers listen to the persons with needs and issues concerning disabilities.

4.3.2.2 Supporters

The supporters are the main 'engine' in the everyday struggle of the WISEs' competition with non-WISEs. Some of them are WSNs, who have had the chance to excel at their job positions and now offer their services by not only working along with the staff but also training others in their routine tasks and duties. According to the supporters, their role is seen as a good opportunity to increase their level of competence. Being a part of the WISE's structure is an important personal and professional opportunity for the supporters. They feel their efforts have been properly appreciated by both enablers and WSNs. Supporters believe that their knowledge can expand with time, and their hard work can be even more fruitful if technologies and innovations are added in their activities – they are confident that given the chance, they will be able to adapt to new devices, as well as to train the rest of the staff to work with them.

4.3.2.3 Workers with Support Needs

WSNs who are involved in the WISEs have either physical or mental conditions or both. Their age varies between 18 and 50 years old, but for most of them their 'life has just recently started'. Their status within the WISE is determined by their willingness to achieve personal and professional goals. They seem to find their work experience useful in relation to building basic skills and personal qualities. They expressed their



desire to be socially accepted and, in their opinion, their participation in the WISEs' activities makes this possible.

4.4 Croatia

4.4.1 Scenarios



Although a general framework of the three different types of WISEs can be clearly identified in the Croatian scenario, some of them certainly have common characteristics, which lead the different WISEs to overlap and combine with each other.

Division is found related to direct and indirect public support. Some divisions are notably also related to participation in public procurement. Most WISEs are not very profitable and they have problems with sustainability. This is not surprising, as the Croatian social entrepreneurship sector is relatively 'young', underdeveloped and unsupported on sustainability issues. Workers' qualifications in most WISEs are generic.

There is also a division between WISEs that relate more to employment services and those related more to welfare services.

Hybridity 'lives' in different types of WISEs, but there are also some more clear-cut types. Conventional companies are mostly like Productive WISEs. But social cooperatives occupy an intermediate position between Social/Productive WISEs. Something similar is the case for associations that are mostly Social WISEs but could also have training elements.

Productive WISEs have an economic equilibrium related to productive activities, paid for by the public or private market, by which they employ WSNs. They often compete with traditional companies. WSNs are employed on a full-contract basis and in general represent a smaller part of the total workforce, mostly with disadvantaged groups that can achieve a good level of productivity. Sometimes they have large incomes and invest in productive machines. They aim to provide specific support to WSNs, even if they need to use market-based resources to do so.



Social WISEs are developed from workshops for people who are unable to enter the production cycle due to very significant disadvantages/obstacles; workers develop by starting to produce certain goods and services for the market. Employment is part of more general care of a person. Part of the income relates to this type of social work. WSNs are a significant proportion of the people employed in production.

Training WISEs arise from the evolution of training-based activities, which continue to represent significant revenue; they begin to produce and participate in a significant way on the market. There is an explicit goal to place people in traditional companies thanks to the training and employment support they receive at the WISE. They target WSNs who are able to significantly increase their productivity through training.

Regarding the inclusion of technology and digitalisation, Productive WISEs are equipped with medium-quality machines. The goal is not to introduce technology into all processes. On the other hand, since the WISEs do not have support at the local or national level, investing in new machines and advanced technology is not always possible because funds and resources are used rationally and targeted. E-invoices, e-banking, e-finance, etc., are used. The digital literacy of workers is at a relatively low level: they have smartphones but use only basic applications for personal communication. In this WISE, there is a noticeable 'digital divide' between the technology-related capabilities of management and other workers.

Social WISEs have digital skills that range from low to medium; in this type of WISE, the current working conditions are mostly aligned with the use of digital technology, but considering the challenges coming from the future, there are great opportunities for the development and use of new technologies. There is a gap between the need for support of WSNs and the people who provide it. The digital literacy of workers is at a relatively low level, which indicates an opportunity for learning and development.

Finally, Training WISEs are equipped with top technology and the latest machines for work in all business sectors and production processes. Communication between workers, managers and managers is ensured through e-mail, mobile applications, telephone conversations or direct communication.

Most workers use smartphones and basic communication channels. The problem arises when a person with no experience or an older person in a disadvantageous



position needs to be hired for a position that uses advanced technology. Where there is interest from the workers, it requires additional investments by WISE in education.

4.4.2 Personas

4.4.2.1 Enablers

- **A dedicated visionary:** Middle-aged person (M), 45+, economist, eloquent, visionary. Privately, he is also highly engaged and active in the community. A person who has been in a management position almost from the very beginning and knows all the work processes and every corner of business. He is fully responsible for all operations related to the WISE. He cares about communication with the authorities, but also business development. His digital skills are at a high level, above the job requirements; he uses business analysis programs.

- **A dedicated worker soon to depart without an heir:** An elderly person (M), 55+, engineer, approaching retirement. He is a person who has been in a management position since the very beginning of the WISE's existence. A very warm and calm person. He maintains good communication with the local authorities and good relations with his subordinates. He is cautious and plays it safe, but he achieves the set goals. He loves his lifestyle but is slowly getting ready for retirement. Digital skills sufficiently developed for basic communication: his skills are in line with the needs of the workplace, but there is room for development.

- **A disillusioned man without a proper vision:** Elderly person (M), 60+, before retirement. He is a person who has been in a management position since the very beginning. The establishment of the cooperative was initiated by the manager for personal health reasons. He was dependent on the help of another person. He is trying to develop cooperation with the private sector to achieve sustainability, but he is not succeeding. Digital skills sufficiently developed for basic communication; his skills are in line with the needs of the workplace. He has no desire for additional training and is thinking about retirement.

- **A motivated worker without a view of the future:** WSN (F), 25+, president of the assembly, EU project manager. Responsible for financial monitoring and implementation of the project, she takes care of employees and makes decisions for



further development. She has a good relationship with colleagues and employees. WSNs trust her. Digital skills are developed according to job requirements: accounting programs and online business applications.

4.4.2.2 Supporters

- **Sensible support expert:** A middle-aged person 35+, (F), social worker, in the Human Resources sector. She leads a peaceful private family life. She provides psychosocial support to employees on an individual level, leads the selection and recruitment process, interviews future employees and runs group workshops and life skills training for the training of WISE employees. She works to strengthen organisational culture and care for mental health through various activities. Her digital skills are at an intermediate level: there is room for improvement and progress in the organisation of work using digital tools.

- **A nurturing wife, a faithful companion:** An elderly person (F), 55+, who came to the post of professional support after working at a school, which is an advantage for people in a disadvantageous position who entered the training and employment system after schooling. WSNs confide in her because they have gained mutual trust through years of working together, and if a problem arises, she is the first to whom WSNs and other workers turn. She uses digital technologies in their work, constantly improving and educating themselves about new programs and work principles.

- **A dedicated lady who knows what she wants:** A middle-aged person (F), 40+, social worker who provides support to employees in a disadvantageous position through organised group workshops of social skills, organises trips and movies, etc. The person is sociable, calm and warm and is devoted to family and friends. She has developed digital skills to an intermediate level, in accordance with the requirements of the job. She is interested in new knowledge and learning new skills in accordance with the requirements of a potential job.

4.4.2.3 Workers with Support Needs

- **Older, hard-working, low-educated worker:** The worker is female, 50+, a person with disabilities and reduced working ability, with a lower level of education and of an older age, without work experience. A person with a family and a simple life in the countryside. Life is full of family challenges. She likes to work and it fulfils her. She enjoys farming and gardening. A lower level of education greatly affects her interest in



working with digital technologies. In the private sphere, technologies are used at a basic level.

- **Motivated worker with multiple vulnerabilities:** He is a person with disabilities (M), 25+, a member of the Roma minority, with a rather negative and difficult life situation and bad experiences from childhood, living alone, with a lower level of education. Highly motivated to acquire new life skills, especially digital ones. A very warm and empathetic person. Digital skills are at a lower level, but he has the desire and will to acquire new ones.

- **Learning-oriented person with disabilities:** He is a person with a severe physical disability (M), 25+, with a lower-level professional qualification, a person who has spent his whole life in an overprotected family environment. He has a great desire to learn and master life skills. Highly motivated to acquire digital skills that are currently not at an intermediate level. He looks at the future positively and moves forward with sure steps.

- **Older, hard-working, low-educated worker:** Female, 55+; she is a person with disabilities and reduced ability to work, with a lower level of education. She creates high-quality products and enjoys the support of masters. Through training she acquires the necessary skills. A lower level of education greatly affects her interest in working with digital technologies. In the private sphere, technologies are used at a basic level. There is not too much interest in investing the will and energy to get to know new technologies.

- **A humble family man:** A person with a disability (M), 50+, who only recently entered the system, he is still in the process of being trained to work on the existing digitised machines. He would like to stay in this WISE until the end of his working life, because he had negative experiences with previous employers. He worked in more difficult physical jobs in the foundry factory but was often underestimated by his colleagues and boss. At the WISE, there is a different approach to work: there is enough of it, and he does not work under stress and does not need to work according to the norm.

- **A determined man without real support:** Male, 30+, he is a person with a severe disability. This is the worker's first job. He had negative experiences in finding a job. He has no developed responsibility for work, which is a consequence of inexperience, he had no opportunity to learn. He gets along well with his colleagues but is occasionally



causes conflict and critical. Injustice hurts him. He lives with his parents and likes to travel to the sea. His digital skills are at an intermediate level but he shows a high interest in learning new knowledge and skills.

- **A reserved worker without a rudder in life:** Male, 25+, he is a person with intellectual disabilities. This is his first job. The WSN is withdrawn and quiet. He lives with his parents. He is satisfied with the salary, even though it is minimal. His digital skills are at a basic level. He owns a smartphone that he uses to communicate with colleagues.

4.5 France

4.5.1 Scenarios



Integration enterprises have an economic predominance in France. They are all fully inscribed in the 'classical' economy and the competitive market sector. They must achieve a significant turnover (on average 85%) to continue to exist. The social dimension is at the heart of the philosophy of these companies. All permanent employees, from the manager to the technical supervisor, note the importance of the social mission in their work. Training is an important concern for integration enterprises, but it is not their primary purpose, and, in this sense, they cannot be considered as training organisations.

They are fully part of the traditional economy; they thus apply the rules of their branch and do not benefit from any financial or economic exemption compared to other companies in their sector. The integration enterprises questioned then declare that they are strongly subject to competition from other sectors.

Several integration enterprises interviewed cited the importance of diversifying their activities as priorities for the coming months and years. They also cited recruitment problems as one of their main difficulties. This dimension seems to have increased in



France in recent months with the fall in the unemployment rate. Thus, a study carried out at the end of 2021 by the Ministry of Labour with integration structures declared that nearly 80% of integration companies were experiencing recruitment difficulties.

On the question of the use of technologies, we distinguish two levels. First of all, companies point to the mechanisation of certain positions: they identify this as an opportunity but also as a threat. It is an opportunity because the mechanisation of certain stations is necessary to 'move with the times and be able to accommodate more types of waste', but also a threat because 'we must properly support mechanisation so as not to lose sight of the mission of inclusion'.

It was also identified this link between inclusion and technologies. The leader says: 'Technologies will enter into the way the company operates. Mastering our environment and adapting, instead of resisting. Keeping our DNA while changing our mode of operation. If we want to differentiate ourselves tomorrow, we will have to think about our "I" of inclusion, what we will digitise, save, optimise. Employees are necessarily very resistant to these digitalisations but we are used to it'. In ten years, the company plans to use different technologies: the electrification of its vehicle fleet and logistics optimisation technology. 'The impact will be twofold: improved compliance and less strain'.

4.5.2 Personas

4.5.2.1 Enablers

- **Leaders:** Most of them are people with master's degrees or equivalent. As managers of small and medium-sized businesses, they are very involved in the operational management of their business and the question of middle management is a real point of difficulty for them. The various interviews highlighted the importance of human support for managers

4.5.2.2 Supporters

- **Technical supervisors:** They are responsible for the professional supervision of employees in integration. The different technical supervisors interviewed have quite different personal profiles. Most had engaged in professional activity before entering the integration company in which they work. The various technical supervisors seem



very sensitive to the social dimension of their professions. The supervisors generally have a good use of computer technologies and use them on a recurring basis in their work.

- **Integration counsellors:** They are responsible for the socio-professional support of employees in integration. They support them throughout their integration process. The integration counsellors are mostly women. They have often undergone dedicated training to carry out this position (licence or equivalent). Digital tools are very present in the daily work of integration counsellors.

4.5.2.3 Workers with Support Needs

- Most employees in integration experience social difficulties. The question of training is central for employees in integration. Thus in 2020, a survey revealed that 80% of employees in integration had a level below the baccalaureate. The question of the poor command of the French language is a real obstacle for the return to work. The question of digital technology (its use and its mastery) was posed to employees in integration. Their mastery is very unequal. For some employees, its use is very easy. The other respondents seem less comfortable with it. Most of them use digital tools little in their professional activities. Most use them in their personal life and for this they often use the telephone.

4.6 Greece

4.6.1 Scenarios



WISEs occupy a small part of the social and solidarity economy enterprises in Greece. KoiSPEs (Social Cooperatives of Limited Liability) and KoinSep Entaxis (Social Cooperative Enterprises of Integration) of Vulnerable and Special Groups represent 4.3% of social enterprises. KoiSEn is a very new legal form and until today no WISE of this type has been registered. Women's Agricultural Cooperatives have the possibility to be registered at the National Registry of Social and Solidarity Economy but have no motivation to do so, thus no statistics from the Registry refer to them. According to



the Ministry of Agriculture (2020), 141 Women Agricultural Cooperatives exist, but most of them are not very operational.

The operation of the Greek WISEs could be summarised in one scenario under the title: 'The small-medium, support oriented, Productive WISE'. The scenario refers to Productive WISEs whose main areas of activity are food and cleaning services. They derive their resources from the sale of goods and services to the free market and through reserved contracts with public authorities and receive no support from the state. Regarding WSNs, there is always a prevalent type of vulnerability/disability that each WISE focuses on and represents around 50% of total employees. At the same time, Greek WISEs have a social and solidarity approach and tend to employ persons who belong in vulnerable groups in general, regardless of specific categories of disadvantage. Usually, WSNs are not full-time employed, and they are regularly paid according to the national legislation.

The external environment is unstable after years of economic crisis and there is a lack of financial support or possibilities to use European funds. The payments from the state and local authorities for reserved contracts are usually delayed and there is no financial space for big investments and no support for the functioning of the WISE as a business. As helpful elements of external origin, we could mention the new initiative of the Ministry of Health that will subsidise WISEs for their operation as mental health units who support WSNs and the fact that corporate social responsibility of big enterprises is gradually coming to favour the use of services and goods produced by WISEs. Finally, the National Federation of Social Cooperatives of Limited Liability has made important steps in claiming support for the creation of Supported Employment Offices within the WISEs.

Unfortunately, technology is the 'poor child' of this scenario. The use of technology remains at the basic level of everyday operation and mostly in the administration department. In the different existing commercial activities, the necessary equipment (e.g., kitchen, restaurant, cleaning service equipment) exists but is not the most advanced possible. The use of social media and of the existing websites is also limited and there are no specialised IT staff employed. During Covid-19, an important step was made, mostly for WSNs who learned how to use video conference applications and e-mail in order to be able to maintain their support sessions. Everyone recognises the obvious importance of technology but at the same time, other issues always seem



more urgent and important, and the budget and time needed to be spent in order to invest in technology is always 'lost' between other priorities.

4.6.2 Personas

4.6.2.1 Enablers

- **This persona is the soul of the WISE:** A mental health professional (bachelor's degree) with years of experience in the domains of rehabilitation and work integration, usually around the age of retirement, having his own family and children. He is the President of the Board of Directors. He is mainly inspired by the values and ethics of solidarity, work integration of vulnerable persons and equal professional opportunities for everyone. He uses technology at a basic level in his professional and personal life. He recognises the importance of technology and the gaps in his knowledge and would like to learn more, but the most important obstacle is lack of time.

- **This persona is a full-time employee at the administration and/or finance department:** She has a university degree and her own family. She has a strong relationship with the WISE, its difficulties, values and ethics. Her days are very busy as the staff is limited and her duties include almost everything. She has 'feelings for the WISE and its people', so she could not imagine herself in another job. She just tries to find ways to help the WISE grow and at the same time ameliorate the work conditions. She is an advanced user of technology in her personal and professional life and is always willing to evolve and be further trained.

4.6.2.2 Supporters

- **This persona has been working in the WISE since the day it was founded (usually for more than 10–15 years):** He has a university degree (bachelor's) in mental health sciences. He is a full-time employee in the field of support for WSNs (first contact, informing and supporting them and their family during their integration into employment, interface with mental health services and cooperating with other WISEs' departments). In his professional and personal daily life, he uses technology at a very basic level. He does not reject its usefulness, understands the fact that technology would be helpful in many ways and would enter the process of further training, but this is not a priority.



- **This persona has been working in the WISE for a few years:** She has a higher level of qualification in social or mental health sciences. She is a full-time employee in the field of support for WSNs (first contact, informing and supporting them and their family during their integration into employment, interface with mental health services and cooperating with other WISEs' departments). She is truly inspired by the vision of work integration of WSNs. She would like to continue working for the WISE, but the salary is not sufficient. Regarding technology, she uses it a lot in her personal life and as far as it is needed in her job position at a very good level as well. She would like to improve her skills in this domain.

4.6.2.3 Workers with Support Needs

- **This persona is usually of middle age (over 45 years old), is or has been married with children and has a medium-high level of education (high school or university degree):** She was always a hard-working person. After her hospitalisation and many attempts to re-enter the labour market, she was referred to the WISE, which has now become her second home. She is a basic user of technology in her personal life, and during the pandemic she learned how to use Skype, Viber and Zoom, which helped her in her personal and professional life. She cannot see how technology could be helpful in her work, but she would like to learn more, since she considers training very important for her personal development.

- **This persona is a single person living alone or with his parents. He has finished high school and then entered university:** In some cases, the first episodes of mental illness did not allow him to continue with university. He is working in the WISE, mostly part-time, and is now satisfied with his professional life, as his mental health remains stable as well. He admires the vision of the WISE, is proud of being part of it and would like to see the cooperative grow more and fulfil its scope for work integration of more persons. There is very little or no technology use in his everyday professional life and very basic use in his personal life, mostly for entertainment. He understands how important technology is, but is not interested in learning more.

- **This persona has a very similar personal and professional life path as the previous one, as well as the same qualifications:** The main difference is their relationship with technology. This persona has been in job positions in the past where he was using technology more. In some cases, he is working in departments of the WISE that require the use of technology. He has the will to learn more, would be



interested in participating in training and would not be afraid to accept a job offer that requires more use of technology.

4.7 Italy

4.7.1 Scenarios



Today there are around 5,300 WISEs in Italy, giving employment to around 30,000 recognised WSNs (about half of them are people with disabilities; the other are drug addicts, alcoholics, prisoners and psychiatric patients); for these workers, as long as their disadvantaged status remains, the law recognises exemptions from paying social security contributions, which reduces labour costs by around 40%. In addition to these workers, there are about 15,000 employees not belonging to the categories

mentioned above but characterised by situations of disadvantage (low-skilled older workers, single women with family responsibilities, socially disadvantaged people, migrants, etc.); for these workers, the law does not provide any benefits. Then there are about 45,000 other workers that include supporters, enablers and other workers, for a total of approximately 90,000 workers. Economic sizes vary widely; there are some WISEs that are among the largest companies in each territory, with turnovers of more than ten million euros and several hundred workers, often active for many decades. On the other hand, there are also WISEs with turnovers of a few tens of thousands. The average turnover is over €600,000. WISEs operate primarily in sectors such as cleaning services, maintenance of green areas, waste sorting and other environmental services, cemetery management, catering and food preparation, craft activities, social farming, etc.

The great majority of the 5,300 Italian WISEs are typical Productive WISEs. All their revenue comes from sale of products and services on private and public markets. WSNs are regularly hired based on a national labour contract. These WISEs invest a lot of resources in getting machinery, vehicles and the other tools necessary to operate efficiently, so that they can compete on an equal basis with non-WISE companies.



There are a few hundred Social WISEs that originated from welfare services (e.g., assistance of persons with disabilities), which were then complemented by simple workshop activities, themselves useful to train people for subsequent work activities or to make social integration programmes more effective.

Training WISEs are not very widespread in Italy; there are probably a few dozen in all. They originate from educational (technical or vocational schools) or vocational training providers.

Social WISEs and Training WISEs often operate within groups of organisations together with the organisation that originated them and continues to support them.

The issue of a capacity-building strategy can be approached on several different levels. With respect to the enablers, the main issue appears to be generational renewal and thus the training of a new management team capable of replacing the founding group that led WISEs for several decades and has come close to retirement age. With respect to WSNs, Italian WISEs are characterised by a model strongly focused on competence-building of transversal skills and on-the-job learning.

Italian WISEs do not seem to have any prejudice against the inclusion of technology and digitalisation in production processes. Their level of technology and digitalisation appears not to be dissimilar to that of the generality of Italian firms of comparable size operating in the same sectors. Larger WISEs often introduce digital elements into the production control process, for example with the development of smartphone apps to track the work of operators. In many cases, it seems that there is a fair degree of use of technology in ordinary office work, with digitalisation processes covering the various phases of administrative work (office work, management control, staff attendance, payroll, invoicing, warehouse management, etc.). In the most developed cases, such administrative phases are interconnected. There is also some investment by a good number of WISEs in digital communication, e.g., with respect to the website or social presence. Furthermore, there is widespread use of basic digital technologies for internal communication (e.g., WhatsApp groups). In some cases, there are WISEs experimenting with forms of e-commerce or using digital channels for fundraising.

Often, the low level of education or a disability becomes an obstacle to the dissemination of digital technologies, or in any case it forces the WISEs to deal with simple work that does not require advanced technological tools; in this regard, some



WISEs express the fear that the inability of WSNs to use these technologies creates a further sense of frustration and exclusion in them. In response to this situation, there are cases where WISEs organise internal training actions or activate help desks to raise worker competence levels.

In general, there is a widespread awareness in the management team that the future of WISEs will also depend on the adoption of appropriate technologies, even if managers are not always familiar with these technologies; in this regard, the advanced average age of a significant part of the WISEs' management team represents a potentially hindering factor.

4.7.2 Personas

4.7.2.1 Enablers

With respect to the **enablers**, we can find the following Personas:

- **The Pillar:** He/she is one of the founders of a WISE, he/she has been working there for several decades and he/she is around 60 years old. He/she is inspired by strong ethical values. He/she has a background in the humanities or social sciences, and he has almost always had a career within the WISE, which he guided in subsequent transformations. He/she has leadership skills and a strong network of territorial relationships. He/she is aware of the importance of technology even if personally his investment is not in this area.

- **The Follower:** He/she is 40–50 years old; he grew up in the shadow of the Pillar and is a candidate to pick up its legacy. He/she is more pragmatic; on the one hand he/she admires the Pillar, on the other hand he/she fears that the Pillar does not really trust him/her and is delaying the assumption of his role at the top of the WISE. He/she is sometimes disheartened by the lack of interest in WISEs by politicians. Like the Pillar, he understands the importance of technologies but does not personally invest in them.

- **The Martian:** He/she comes from a career outside WISEs but he/she decided to leave for-profit enterprises because he/she wants to give a different meaning to his/her work. He/she is younger than the other Personas and brings with him/her a dynamic and entrepreneurial mindset, open to the introduction of technology and digitalisation. He/she sometimes finds it difficult to tune in to the WISE, to adapt to a different



organisational model from the one he/she is familiar with; he is looked upon with a mixture of admiration and mistrust.

4.7.2.2 Supporters

Three Personas profiles related to **supporters** were then summarised:

- **The Professional:** He/she approached the WISE looking for work and was fascinated by it; he/she is now also fully involved in its social aims. He/she has a good schooling, uses digital technologies and is willing to learn, being aware that they will change the way he works in the future.
- **Buck:** He/she has always been in contact with WISEs, even though he/she made different career choices for many years. His/her desire for more authenticity and the needs of WISEs bring them together again. He/she has good technical skills, although not necessarily related to technological and digital aspects.
- **The Practitioner:** He/she came to the WISE as a WSN. He/she forged a successful path and is now a supporter. He/she has a low education, a vocation for manual work, possibly outdoors, and a very good relationship with his/her team. He/she is disinclined to use digital technologies and the introduction of digital procedures in the WISE irritates him/her.

4.7.2.3 Workers with Support Needs

Finally, with respect to **WSNs**, the following Personas profiles are present:

- **The Hard Worker:** Aware of past mistakes, he/she sees the WISE as an opportunity for redemption. A good worker, he/she has also rebuilt a positive personal and family life. He/she is willing to learn, although his/her low level of schooling makes it difficult for him/her to acquire digital skills beyond a certain level.
- **The Windless Navigator:** He/she has had a difficult life and fragmented work experiences; he/she is prone to feeling victimised and is fatalistic; he/she is happy with the job he/she found in the WISE but he/she feels partly misunderstood and undervalued is not investing in his/her training and does not aspire to greater responsibility. He/she is not interested in the digital world.



- **The Worker in the Middle:** He/she has had a difficult life: he/she dropped out of school and he/she worked little and poorly. In the WISE he/she is insecure: he/she fears judgement and being inadequate. He/she works better alone than in a group and he/she is also lonely in his/her daily life. He/she is not averse to technology but struggles to engage in learning.

- **The Naif:** He/she has a mental disability, approaches the WISE and life in general in an enthusiastic and happy way, is very grateful to supporters and very proud of his/her work, to which he/she devotes a lot of energy, even though he/she has considerable cognitive limitations that he/she cannot overcome.

4.8 Latvia

4.8.1 Scenarios



Currently, 29% of the companies included in the official register of social enterprises operate in work integration in Latvia. The main purpose of these enterprises is to give work opportunities to people at risk of social exclusion. 192 employees of target groups (109 women and 83 men) have started working in social enterprises, including 143 persons with disabilities or mental disorders, 34 who are formerly unemployed, 7 who are former prisoners and other 8 WSNs. However, we can note that 49 employees of the target group have stopped working in social enterprises. Some vulnerable persons from target groups such as refugees, the homeless, victims of trafficking and persons caring for a child after reaching the age of majority – a grandchild, a brother, a half-sister, a sister, a grandparent, a spouse from disability group I or a person with a mental disorder from disability group II – have not been employed in social enterprises. The last of these groups has been added relatively recently. The growth potential of the target groups involved in social entrepreneurship remains despite the fact that some target groups are currently not employed.

With regards to the sector of activity of WISEs in Latvia, they operate in various fields and meet a range of the needs of society. Their sector of activities are sport and leisure,



culture, education, the production of goods and the provision of services. Although the majority – or 58% – of work integration companies operate in the service sector, the number of manufacturing companies is growing. Concerning the percentage of the other sectors of activities, 36% of WISEs were active in the production of food and beverages, clothing, wood and furniture, paper and cardboard packaging, and 6% in agriculture and forestry at the end of 2021.

The great majority of officially registered WISEs in Latvia are typical Productive WISEs operating in the different sectors of activities such as manufacturing, production of food and beverages and clothing. Due to the legal framework, they must be registered as limited liability companies. This means that their businesses should be independent from the public bodies and should have at least 50% of their workers from socially vulnerable groups.

Even if the majority of WISEs are Productive WISEs, there are three or four Social WISEs, acting as NGOs, in the country, which aim to create socialising opportunities and sell the products created. They are perceived as a social service rather than a social enterprise.

Training WISEs are also present in the same quantity as Social WISEs. The objective of Training WISEs is to help socially vulnerable persons get on to the work market and create possibilities in this direction. Like Social WISEs, even these WISEs often fail to achieve economic conditions that make them autonomous units. However, the number of WISEs operating as NGOs is not clear in Latvia because no research has been done to estimate the amount.

The future of WISEs is moving towards something positive due to the creation, by many municipalities, of sheltered workshops for people with mental disabilities. They could sell creative products made in this kind of place.

The use of technology may depend on the sector of activity of WISEs. Indeed, in a WISE call centre, its use remains paramount and is quite high. Therefore, the company is aware of the digital transition and is ready to develop new skills in this area and use them to improve its capabilities. However, for some WISEs in the country, the use of digital technology remains rather average as only the equipment for the main activities is digital. Generally, supporters and enablers are aware of the need to learn new



technological trends and acquire new skills. Finally, other WISEs do not opt for technology in their daily work as its use is not necessary.

4.8.2 Personas

4.8.2.1 Enablers

Four Personas profiles of **enablers** can be explained in this way:

- **Enabler – Type 1:** She is a purposeful leader of a department of a five-person team. Her main education is in working with people. She has been through many courses of self-development and now she is learning coaching to help her workers solve their issues on their own. In her free time, she has many hobbies. Concerning her last experience, she was sales manager in a large company, and she decided to join the WISE because business development makes sense.
- **Enabler – Type 2:** She is a woman with a congenital disability, and her desire is to change the stereotypes about people with disabilities. She has a degree in business administration and technical manufacturing of fashion items. In the past, she has worked for commercial companies but now she is running two social enterprises in parallel related to the fashion industry. She is responsible for all the management of the company.
- **Enabler – Type 3:** She is the leader of the organisation and the mother of a person with a mental disability. Her daughter is part of the organisation's beneficiaries. She obtained her master's degree in social enterprise management. More than 15 years ago, she created an interest group, as an NGO, for parents of people with disabilities and created a social enterprise to divide the functions. During her free time, she is involved with religious organisations. Her personal motivation is reflected in her political engagement since she is a representative in her local municipality.
- **Enabler – Type 4:** He is the manager of an enterprise and runs the day-care centre for the last 25 years. As his sister has a disability, his mother created one of the first workshops for people with disabilities in Latvia and she was involved in social service provision. He has continued his work and tries to create new services and opportunities for people who live in their day-care centre or come to the workshops.



He is very knowledgeable, and he leads workshops and lectures on the topic of disability.

4.8.2.2 Supporters

Regarding **supporters**, we have one profile presented as:

- **Supporter 1 – Type 1:** He is an active professional, as he manages all the processes and workers. He has been educated in a different field and he works in a WISE as it is his passion. He worked for the first time with people with disabilities in a WISE. He is open, very supportive and gives instructions very clearly because he knows and understands the skills and abilities of all the workers with mental disabilities and are living in the group houses.

5.3.1.1 Workers with support needs

Finally, the following Personas are **WSNs** summarised as:

- **Workers with support needs – Type 1:** She is a person with a disability that has been acquired in the workplace from working in bad conditions. She might be from a socially lower class with fewer opportunities to choose well-paid jobs or originally from a region far away from the development centres. She obtained a vocational education where the salary is below average. She cannot work in every workplace because she needs special conditions to be productive due to her disability. She changed work a lot until she started to work at a WISE. She does not want to change her current job even if the salary is not high as she feels safe.

- **Workers with support needs – Type 2:** She is a Ukrainian refugee, fleeing war, who is working in a WISE for a short period. She has a congenital disability. She has a vocational education in the profession, and she has worked in her field for all her working life. This is her second job, found through online advertisement since she arrived in Latvia three months ago. Her family is also supporting her in her daily activities.

- **Workers with support needs – Type 3:** She is originally from socially bad conditions in the region of Latvia, and she has congenital mental disorders. She stayed in social



housing for five years and helped with farming. She was educated in a specialised education institution, and she went to workshops to learn crafts, but her first work experience was a WISE, which was related to her skills. She gained self-confidence and motivation to live an independent life. For that, she meets a personal assistant helping her with spending the money. Although she has a touchscreen phone and uses Facebook, she is not really open to learning digital skills, as she is afraid of the change.

- **Workers with support needs – Type 4:** He had a complicated childhood due to harassment in schools and this led to changing schools several times. He was diagnosed with a disability, and he moved to group housing for three years after the family member who took care of him died. Before, he helped his family in their business, and he graduated from a specialised school. This persona has been part of different workshops to learn crafts. He is writing his own poems and songs and he likes singing. He is very open and talkative and proud to go to the store alone.

- **Workers with support needs – Type 5:** She has been running her own businesses and was very active in the past, but this was disrupted by a diagnosis of oncological illness or accident. Her family were very supportive and helpful during this hard time. Wanting to regain her self-confidence after the diagnosis, she asked to be involved in the WISE and now she is a very good worker.

4.9 The Netherlands

4.9.1 Scenarios

The Netherlands



WISEs have been an important stakeholder in improving social integration in the Netherlands. Since political changes in 2015, WISEs can apply for more schemes making it easier to hire a broader target group. This stimulates the growth of WISEs and makes the social firms' sector more attractive as a business model. Although WISEs are an established concept in the country, less data is available on the entire sector. This is partly due to the lack of a dedicated legal status or structure for WISEs. WISEs operate under other existing legal forms: Association, Foundation, Cooperative, Private



company with limited liability and Public limited company/stock corporation. These enterprises are formally recognised under the legal form under which they operate but not as social enterprises or WISEs (even though they are in fact). There are no clear statistics on the number of WISEs. Therefore, estimations on the number of social enterprises, and more specifically WISEs, in the Netherlands vary widely.

There is no threshold of WSNs by law. WISEs in the Netherlands predominantly adopt a mixed strategy in which they offer both more permanent places as well as transitional occupations. Productive WISEs, Social WISEs and Training WISEs are present. In addition, three archetype scenarios can be distinguished: the Former Sheltered Workshop, The David to Goliath and The Rocket Ship.

The Former Sheltered Workshop is a large Productive WISE active in various sectors such as green maintenance, cleaning, catering work, transport and logistics. Moreover, the target group is also broad, and the main objective is to provide the target group a paid job with a conventional employer or a challenging job within the protected environment of the WISE. They employ between 600 and 3,500 WSNs, with between 10% and 20% of employees acting as staff and supporting staff. The way WSNs receive income differs. Some have a paid employment contract; some receive a supplement from a social benefit service. It uses various technologies and digital tools and can be compared to conventional companies. Technologies are used for internal communication and administration. Invoicing is done online and there are cloud services for e-mail, software, file storage, bookkeeping and hosting. It works with a target group where digital skills are often not or barely developed, and in which this will always be a major challenge.

The David to Goliath is also a Productive WISE, although it has a training dimension as its work method. The focus is on strengthening and educating WSNs. This WISE is most likely active in one sector or has some overlap with similar industries. It can be a specialist in hospitality, brewing, recycling/retail or facility management. It employs between 30 and 100 WSNs. Some of them are employed in the form of volunteer work or daytime activity, others have a paid employment contract and/or receive a supplement from a social benefit service. This type of WISE has an annual turnover from 1 million to 2.5 million euros per year, but the financial situation is not optimal. The WISE has a positive attitude towards the use of technology and believes that it



offers new ways to improve work integration; the only reluctance regards cost and time to implement such systems.

The Rocket Ship is a Productive WISE even if it has some training elements. The WISE uses a work method focusing on individual support, training and coaching by its own vocational training courses and offers training in different levels of education. The target group is vast and it employs between 150 and 1,000 WSNs. The way WSNs receive income differs. Some have a paid employment contract; some receive a supplement from a social benefit service. The sector of activity differs as it can be in brewery, recycling, retail or facility management and this WISE is interested in expanding to other sectors. The majority of its revenue comes from market income; it has grown in recent years, and this is expected to continue for the future. The income sources ensure a financially healthy organisation with an ability to grow. This WISE uses various technologies and digital tools and can be compared to conventional companies. However, there is a reluctance to continue digitalisation in the workplace due to the low digital skills of the workers.

4.9.2 Personas

4.9.2.1 Enablers

The following Personas are **enablers**:

- **The Idealist:** This persona either founded the WISE or was drawn to the WISE at a later stage because these enterprises and their goals are much in line with the worldview and ideal of the enabler. They are very passionate about the job and are therefore able to handle a huge workload. Their values include a social dimension and also environmental sustainability goals. The enabler uses various digital products at work and for private use, mostly means of digital communication, but also online marketing and management tools. Digitalisation in the company has so far not been a priority for them and they do not have extensive knowledge of the possibilities of technology support for employees.
- **The Social Entrepreneur:** This enabler either founded the WISE or joined the WISE at a later stage and made it into the successful company it is today. They are a natural talent in combining social goals and entrepreneurship. They are highly educated, highly



motivated and have strong communication and leadership skills. They have the ability to carry out challenging projects and enter into partnership with big clients. Due to their ambitions, the WISE has grown in recent years, and this is expected to continue. They are using various digital tools at work like digital communication, online marketing and management tools for time efficiency.

- **The System Thinker:** This persona came to an already established WISE and helps transition this large, former sheltered workplace into a modernised, ready-for-the-future WISE. This enabler is highly experienced and educated. They are driven by social missions, and they have a strong commitment to the company's goals. They attended training courses such as motivational speaking and project management to improve their skills. Due to their position, they are actively looking at the issue of digitalisation and the application of technology. For them, digitalisation can stimulate work integration and they are willing to make it deployable if it turns out to be necessary.

4.9.2.2 Supporters

We can distinguish three Personas profiles of **supporters**:

- **The Old Hand in the field:** With more than ten years in a WISE, this persona has had years of experience in the field of supporting WSNs. He/she has a medium-high level of education, is involved and keeps up with the new developments of the company. Approaching retirement age, they have less and less ambition to develop certain competencies. They use digital technologies in their work and have seen the use of it increase over the years. They are concerned about the ability to secure employment of WSNs if the workplace is further computerised. This persona thinks that technology is a threat to valuable work for the volunteers.

- **The Trained Helper:** With an educational background in job coaching or human resource management, they started working at the WISE with an intrinsic motivation. Beyond the diversity of age and previous work experience, they are all professionals looking for a challenge with social objectives. This persona is highly motivated and involved in the skill development of WSNs. This type of supporter also guides WSNs with digital challenges they encounter. Digitalisation is perceived as something that serves the growth of the company and as a useful tool to support people.



- **The Accidental Enthusiast:** They worked in many different sectors and workplaces before joining the WISE. Some came because they were missing a sense of social impact in their old jobs, some joined the WISE more randomly in search of a new job and experience. They do not have experience with supporting WSNs but the idea of working with a special target group appealed to them intrinsically. They are empathic, eager to learn and looking for new challenges. This persona has average/good digital skills and mainly uses digital tools for communication and administration. He/she thinks that technological innovation is convenient and makes work faster and easier.

4.9.2.3 Workers with Support Needs

Finally, with respect to **WSNs**, the following Personas profiles are presented as:

- **The Satisfied Employee:** He/she started to work in a WISE through an employment agency, benefits agency or through (re)integration trajectories. The competences of representatives of this persona are quite similar even if they have differences in age, educational background and life experience. They do not complain and are content with their job. This persona is ready to learn at quiet moments and he/she can take his/her time to master actions. He/she is also supported by his/her family for the administrative part and digital tasks. Besides using a mobile phone, their digital skills are not developed, as there is a little to no awareness about digital technologies. But they feel more independent by using their mobile phone.

- **The Hard Worker:** This persona started in the WISE through a social benefit service and has been there for a while. They had trouble finding/keeping a job for various reasons. In previous workplaces they did not receive the support they needed. They gain confidence and follow training courses to grow in their role and have gained responsibilities. There is an eagerness to learn, and they would like to see even more development opportunities within the WISE. They have digital skills but beside digital communication tools, technology is not relevant at their work. However, in their private life, the role of digital technology is more important, such as using phones, using computers for social media, online shopping, banking, etc.

- **The Slow Starter:** Being fairly young, without qualifications and maybe having had some run-ins with the law, this persona had some trouble finding their way into the workforce. They came to the WISE after being matched by the probation service, job centre or the municipality and had an intrinsic interest in facility services. Their main



objective is to hold a stable job and get a house. They are ambitious, as they desire to start their own company and learn with other young people with similar backgrounds. This profile mainly uses digital means of communication and using computer programs or apps is not a problem for them. Some equipment they work with operates mechanically and asks for some training but in general such equipment is not a highly technological tool.

4.10 Poland

4.10.1 Scenarios



According to the 2006 Act, social cooperatives can be established by both natural persons and legal persons (e.g., municipalities), but the establishment of a social enterprise is a long and demanding process. WSNs can be employed under normal conditions, in a WISE, with subsidised wages, but also in the sheltered labour market in any entity with sheltered workshop status (ZPCh) and in vocational activity establishments (ZAZ). We can also observe social employment taking place in the form of six-month training programmes in special training centres (CIS) with a possibility that workers find subsidised employment with regular employers and in social cooperatives.

The number of ZAZs at the end of 2021 amounted to 134 and the total number of employees was 8,203. The average number of employees per establishment was 61. We can observe that they are mainly engaged in manufacturing and service activities (75%) followed by 22% in services and 3% in production. The majority of the ZAZs have diversified activities, including gastronomy (such as catering), handicrafts, laundry services, cleaning services, printing, tailoring services, agriculture and horticulture, carpentry and joinery, assembly services, hospitality, rehabilitation services, etc.

With regards to social cooperatives in Poland, 1,547 were registered in 2019 and the average number of people employed per cooperative was 5 during the same year but with a large discrepancy between regions in Poland. The cooperatives perform diverse tasks, on average no less than two types of services, often from related areas such as



social care, care services, general construction and/or housekeeping services, education and culture and organisation of events. They operate in diverse sectors of activities: manufacturing; wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles including motorcycles and motorbikes; administrative and support services; and construction, accommodation and catering.

4.10.2 Personas

The four following Personas are **WSNs**:

- **Persona: Type A – Significant life difficulties and little support from the immediate environment:** The family of this person with a disability care for them and seeks various forms of education and rehabilitation that will develop his/her skills as much as possible. He/she received a primary or secondary education and functions well socially with his/her own circle of friends and pursues his/her interests. However, this persona can experience the breakdown of relationships with family and/or their immediate environment due to their difficulties. If support from the family/close environment is lacking, this exacerbates the isolation and makes the prospect of a positive solution to the difficulties less likely, which begin to deepen and perpetuate. Concerning the use of technology, this persona is at the level of meeting basic needs.
- **Persona: Type B – Significant level of hardship in life and strong support from immediate environment:** The parents of this persona care about them, but they are not able to provide, for various reasons, optimal conditions for development and equal education opportunities. The support of family makes it possible to lessen the difficulties faced and find the best solution to improve their life situation. Regarding technology, the conditions and perspectives are similar to those of the environment in terms of opportunities and needs. If a person grows up/lives in an environment where the use of technology-based devices is common, it will also be a natural process for them to use the current ones and implement new applications.
- **Persona: Type C – Slight life difficulties and little support from the family and social environment:** Their family is a dysfunctional environment. They are unable to provide education and emotional support to a person with a disability. This persona is socially withdrawn but has little independence and often relies on institutional support. The difficulties for these WSNs are temporary, although without the help of family or



social environment they can last for longer. They will not be keen to develop digital skills as they will first seek to overcome their difficulties.

- **Persona: Type D – Insignificant level of difficulties in life and comprehensive support from the family and social environment:** This persona has a minor or moderate degree of disability and is independent and communicates within their environment without problems. He/she receives primary or vocational education in mainstream public institutions and acquires social competences. The persona experiences difficulties in life, but these seem to be temporary due to the support from the immediate environment. People with this profile will use technology at a level similar to that observed in their wider environment. If there is a need and opportunity, they will also adopt new technologies.

4.11 Romania

4.11.1 Scenarios



In 2021, according to the National Institute of Statistics (INS), 227.500 people were unemployed in Romania. Of these, most people, 152.700, live in rural areas. Law 76/2002 titled “Stimulation of employers to hire the unemployed” provides in Art. 85: employers who hire for an indefinite period; unemployed over 45 years of age; unemployed who are sole parents supporting single-parent families; long-term unemployed or NEET young people. They receive 2,250 lei – the minimum guaranteed wage – each month, for a period of 12 months (18 months for persons with a disability) for each person employed in these categories, with the obligation to maintain the employment or service relations for at least another subsequent 18 months. In Romania, employers with at least 50 employees have the obligation to ensure at least 4% of the average number of employees in the company are people with disabilities; but public authorities and institutions, as well as legal entities, public or private, do not employ people with disabilities.



Protected forms of employment are a protected workplace and an authorised protected unit. In May 2022, 299 protected units were authorised in Romania, with 1,906 employees, of whom 1,227 were people with disabilities. According to the same source, in 2021, 35,213 people with disabilities were employed, which means that the employment rate of people with severe disabilities in Romania was 12%, the lowest in the EU.

The social economy Law No 219 of 2015 has given official recognition to this sector and certified companies as social enterprises. Article 8, paragraph 4 of the social economy Law 219/2015 highlights the criteria to be recognised as a social enterprise:

- a) act for a social purpose and/or for the general purpose of the community;
- b) allocate at least 90% of the profit earned to the social purpose and to the statutory reserve;
- c) undertake to transmit the assets remaining after the liquidation to one or more social enterprises.

The same law provided legal recognition of Social WISEs aiming at work integration. Social enterprises that ensure that at least 30% of total employment time is spent by vulnerable people and provide a work integration process for these workers may receive a social label from the county employment services. However, many social economy enterprises are integrating people from vulnerable groups into employment without being certified as social enterprises or Work Integration Social Enterprises. In Romania, there are currently 180 certified WISEs and nearly 160 have been certified in the years 2021–2022, under the start-up grants schemes financed through the European Social Fund Human Capital Operational Programme HCOP 2014–2020. The only WISEs with proven sustainability are those enterprises certified at least three years ago and there are eight enterprises that were certified before 2021. All are non-profit organisations/associations active in the social field, or commercial companies owned by them.

WISEs in Romania use technology at the level of other companies active in the same sector – the level needed for their stage of development and size. They are not active in technology-intensive sectors but rather in those needing intensive manual work such as second-hand shops. They use technology such as alarm systems, cameras,



computers and smartphones and can be active extensively on social media for marketing purposes.

4.11.2 Personas

4.11.2.1 Enablers

Regarding the **enabler**, this person can be described as:

- **Enabler – socially minded, empathic and results-oriented:** This persona could be a social entrepreneur, a social innovator or a founder of an enterprise. They are a very well-intentioned person who has seen a problem in society and has sought solutions. They are intelligent, with significant work power and determination. They are problem solvers, people oriented towards looking for the best solutions to social and work-related marginalisation. Though the environment from which they come may be different, the purpose is common: leave a better place than they found. The only problem they have is the short time and the multitude of projects they want to implement. They completed one or more undergraduate and/or master's degrees not necessarily linked to the work in the social enterprise – some have experience in social studies, social work or psychology, and some have business experience and/or studies. They have a sustainable business model in mind and are mindful of costs and revenues but the most successful and resilient are willing to try new business or social endeavours with their enterprises. They have very good management skills and the capacity to deal with both the social and the business side of the enterprise at an above average level. Their use of technology is at an average level and highlights the power of digital skills today. Their living style – which is sober and sustainable – is connected with professed values and they are frustrated with politics and the relationships with the public sector.

4.11.2.2 Supporters

The following persona is a **supporter**:

Some WISEs call them job coaches who are working directly with the target group in the production area. Generally, they are very well-trained technically, having more than 10 years working in the technical sector and in larger-size teams. Sometimes, they do not have experience in working with a specific group. This can create difficult situations, so



they need to be able to deal with people in general and be patient and dedicated to the social mission. However, most job coaches have extensive professional experience and some are towards the end of their professional career. They have the most responsibilities and interactions with WSNs as they coordinate, supervise, monitor and follow up with them. They fulfil both the role of a professional trainer and that of a social worker, therapist, confidant and support person. They are trained to a medium level, either through formal education or through vast on-the-job training and experience. They may have accidentally ended up in the WISE looking for a job or a place to put their skills to good use. They understand that the social part of the WISE is very important: they appreciate and respect it. They can also be part of the vulnerable groups. Through loyalty and work, they manage to have a thriving career inside the WISE. These people use technology every day and in general are open to learning new things.

Regarding social integration and education, they have an education in social professions – as psychologists, social workers and human resources specialists, for instance in special education. They are called counsellors or social coordinators. Their main responsibilities are recruiting WSNs and integrating them in the WISE's activity, holding individual and group discussion with them. Also, they try to support WSNs to continue learning and to change their attitudes by being more open towards learning. They underline that their job is full of new challenges, and it can be very tiring and difficult to get away from work physically, mentally and emotionally. They are motivated by their values and missions. Concerning their future perspectives, they desire to open a centre for adults with functional diversity, attending to more formations and pursuing further education related to the profession.

4.11.2.3 Workers with Support Needs

Finally, **WSNs** can be summarised as:

The WSNs have different types of disadvantages such as disabilities, harsh family backgrounds (poor or no connection with their families), lack of educational backgrounds and affective and behavioural issues. Some are persons confronted with various social challenges due to their family histories, social difficult lives abandoning school, health problems, no income, no housing or living with relatives, very low skills or no employment. They have a low level of education: some have difficulty reading, writing and counting, and they are ashamed by this situation. Consequently, the WISEs



provide full support to them to continue/finish their studies, as they are free to go to classes during working hours. Some of them are eager to share their stories and some are not, because they consider them to be about failure, which makes some of them even invent stories about their life. Some of them want to quit WISEs as they are not interested in developing the skills necessary for an independent life. They are employed and paid through a contract. The use of technology in their personal lives is for online shopping, internet banking and watching movies and series. They have difficulty in performing more complex technological tasks such as filling out an online form or placing an online order. Also, they need support to improve reading and writing skills and to manage personal budgets.

4.12 Slovenia

4.12.1 Scenarios



The WISE sector in Slovenia is mostly represented by small-scale enterprises. Outside of major cities, WISEs are usually staffed by no more than six people, including the legally required five workers and one enabler, who is also the legally required supporter. Typically, WISEs offer services such as managing green areas, assembly of non-complex factory products, cleaning, etc. WSNs in these WISEs are mostly overqualified for the type of work they are doing, but are not comfortable doing more, or more accurately, being under more stress and taking more responsibility. They are employed with full-contract remuneration, but the pay they receive is not high. Since the remuneration of WSNs is paid in part through a government scheme, WISEs are able to get by even when business is not good enough to keep a non-subsidised company afloat. This point shows a contribution to the lack of development because WISEs will continue to provide employment but will not develop beyond what is necessary. Some WISEs will occasionally find another WISE and then delegate workers that are better suited to the business to that respective WISE. We can also observe that persons with mental health difficulties are employed on the open market, but rather through ignoring their vulnerability than through acknowledging it.



All WISEs fall comfortably within the productive model. They exhibit some of the productive qualities listed – specifically, their budgets reflect their economic activity and all workers are employed via a full contract. Competition with non-WISE enterprises is limited, as WISEs seek to fill local niches and engage in low-skilled labour. They do not position themselves in low-profit sectors and sometimes monopolise certain services in local areas, occasionally with the assistance of the local government. They prioritise stability and employment for workers over profit and competition.

Training WISEs as such do not really exist in Slovenia, and if they do, they take the form of social care programmes that are not a part of the labour market. WISEs do have a training dimension, but there are few, if any, formal training procedures. Each WISE trains its employees for the labour they are expected to provide through the supporter system.

Social WISEs exist in Slovenia in the form of Social Activation programmes. These are not companies or WISEs in the traditional sense but programmes that are sometimes run by WISEs. These programmes are almost all the same, providing assembly services for large firms. These services are profitable for larger firms because they allow them to disregard the quota system in Slovenia.

Turnover is not very high and mostly happens with staff without disabilities. Vulnerable workers are almost never laid off, even when they are continuously hospitalised, absent from work, etc. It is essential to highlight that WISEs prioritise employment over profit. Investment in productive machinery is mixed. WISEs all try to invest in equipment that would allow them to maximise profits and minimise labour, but few have the funds to stay ahead of the curve. Most only replace dilapidated equipment and invest only when necessary to satisfy the requirements of a contract.

The WISE sector is very heterogeneous and many WISEs offer services beyond simple labour and would benefit extensively from digitalisation. However, they are facing two problems: a lack of knowledge of potential solutions and their benefits as well as a lack of funding to implement these changes. On the other hand, they do not benefit too much from digitalisation and upgrading equipment because their objective is employment and not profitability. But it is also possible that WISEs would benefit from more contracts, better effectiveness and other effects of digitalisation, as more profit would ensure better stability and employee retention.



4.12.2 Personas

4.12.2.1 Enablers

We can distinguish four Personas profiles of **enablers**:

- **The young entrepreneur**: Idealistic and competitive, they bring a fresh perspective and potential to stale concepts as they are mostly directors of newer WISEs. Some of them have taken over for retiring older directors. This enabler has little to no education or experience with social work and tends to be close with or paternalistic towards vulnerable groups. He/she often overworks or underutilises his/her employees due to their lack of experience in this specific work environment. He/she has poor understanding of the role of supporters and mostly does not use them in their intended capacity – to mentor employees.

- **The mature entrepreneur**: Older enablers who spent their time in the social economy sector. They are not social workers but have enough experience to guide their WISE through the complex Slovenian system of remuneration and government assistance. Their network of business and government contacts is significant as they have many years of experience. This is a considerable asset to secure funding. However, they do not desire to significantly change the manner that WISEs operate.

- **The young saviour**: They are social workers without business experience and have trouble maintaining profit, securing contracts and running their WISE as a business. They excel at assisting vulnerable workers and form bonds quickly. Being aware of their needs, they know how to use their supporters and are, by and large, effective rehabilitators. Their naivety prevents them from maintaining the necessary discipline and often leads to supporters taking on the mantle of authority within the WISE.

- **The mature saviour**: This profile has enough experience to manage the business side of things effectively. Although they know how to operate within the system, they lack the courage and familiarity to exploit it and generate profit.

4.12.2.2 Supporters

The following Personas are **supporters**:



- **The business assistant:** They often provide support for the professional skills and knowledge that directors who are inexperienced in the specific business of the WISE frequently rely on. The business assistant spends more time on providing skilled labour than assisting staff.
- **The mentor:** They assist staff, make sure that they are involved in the process and provide aid on complex tasks. The mentor is essentially a non-business-oriented employee whose main concern is to maintain the well-being of WSNs through job training, monitoring and basic counselling.
- **The CEO:** Most WISEs will not employ an additional mentor but simply have the enabler handle that function as well due to their small size. This leads to considering alternatives for economic necessity. The CEO is often overwhelmed by the business side of things, has little time to spend in a mentor role and may be absent for WSNs due to the requirements of the business.

4.12.2.3 Workers with Support Needs

Concerning the three profiles of the **WSNs**, they can be described as:

- **The worker in rehabilitation:** This persona is dealing with the immediate aftermath of their disability or are involved in the WISE because it contributes to their well-being. The worker in rehabilitation has little interest in the business and also in the financial compensation offered. He/she considers that the WISE is a part of his/her healing process and is employed in position with minimal stress and provides simple labour.
- **The temporary worker:** He/she is working temporarily in the WISE, as they are in rehabilitation but considers this work environment as a place for people to heal and not a legitimate business. He/she is sometimes highly skilled and has more autonomy compared to the first WSN profile. This is a temporary worker is highly educated and believes that they will, sooner or later, return to their 'real' and 'legitimate' careers.
- **The professional:** Skilled, experienced and loyal, they are among older staff and are good long-term employees. However, any attempt to modernise or change business models is stressful to their routines and might be received negatively. The professional has adapted the workplace according to his/her needs and he/she rarely shows ambition to transfer or improve.



4.13 Spain

4.13.1 Scenarios



The officially registered WISEs in Spain are typical Productive WISEs. The cases studied operate in three predominant sectors of activity such as cleaning services; restaurants, catering, foods; and packaging. However, they are involved in other sectors and this diversification is perceived as an asset for WISEs. Indeed, it allows economic losses in one business area to be offset by profits in another. In Spain, we can observe that there are three types of legally recognised WISEs known as: Special Employment Centres (CEE), Work Integration Enterprises (EI) and Social Initiative Cooperatives (CIS).

Special Employment Centres aim to integrate persons with disabilities into the labour market but also to provide the personal and social adjustment services they require, in line with their circumstances and in accordance with the regulations. They were created as an employment solution for persons with disabilities in the 1982 Social Integration of People with Disabilities Act. Concerning their workforce, at least 70% must be persons with disability grades of 33% or over. They represent 68% of WISEs in Spain and we can count 2,200 in 2020 employing 100,000 persons with disabilities. WSNs are mostly in temporary contracts and receive a salary similar to other workers in mainstream companies. In this form of WISEs, there are two different types: social initiative CEEs as non-profit, and entrepreneurial initiative CEEs as for-profit. However, all types of CEEs can benefit from the same aid and support schemes, except for reserved contracts. Their resources are mainly from the sale of goods and services and also from public subsidies. Indeed, they use this public support to defray the salaries of the WSNs and supporters. The amount is based on the number of persons with disabilities working in the CEE and the level of support required for them. Investment, profitability and turnover depend on the size, the sector and the stage of development of the WISE but also vary from one CEE to another. The main competitors of Special Employment Centres are mainstream companies, and this competition is present in all sectors of activity.



Social Initiative Cooperatives are non-profit organisations that aim to develop an economic activity in order to integrate persons at risk of exclusion in the mainstream labour market. Among these persons, there are women from single-parent families or victims of gender violence, migrants or refugees, and/or long-term unemployed or unemployed aged over 45. These WSNs are similar to other workers in mainstream enterprises in the same sector. They represent 26% of WISEs in the country. We can notice that they were 850 in 2020 and no data is available on the number of WSNs employed. Moreover, there is no required minimum number of WSNs in this type of WISE. Their main resources are mainly from the sale of goods and services and their turnover is low/medium. Contrary to the CEEs, the public subsidies received are not high and they are used to cover the labour costs of employees.

For the last type of WISE in Spain, Work Integration Enterprises work to develop training and work integration itineraries for persons at risk of social exclusion, who must make up at least 50% of the workforce. Els represent 6% of all WISEs; there were 185 in 2020, employing some 4,300 WSNs. The main goal is the transition to the open labour market, so they get personalised itineraries with a duration of up to three years. Els generate income from the sale of goods and services and this represents 78% of their revenue. Regarding their turnover, it is usually low/medium and depends on public contracts. Although they receive public support, this is not perceived as high because it represents around 20% of their income and it covers mainly the salaries of workers.

Regarding the use of technology, it may depend on the sector of activity of WISEs but also their size and the commitment of their management teams. We can observe that WISEs in Spain are more advanced in the digitalisation of management processes than in the digitalisation of services or production processes. The level of digitalisation of support systems for WSNs is low and not all enterprises have developed digital marketing strategies. The use of e-mail, video conferencing platforms and cloud storage systems is common in technical teams. However, the digitalisation of production processes can be seen as a threat to workers due to the risk of losing jobs.



4.13.2 Personas

4.13.2.1 Enablers

Regarding Personas of **enablers**, we can describe a general profile:

- **Juan (not his real name)**: he saw his father as a role model as he learned the skills of sacrifice and hard work. However, he does not want to pursue the family business, in the transport of goods, because he also has social concerns. Juan has an educational background in business administration and management and took a postgraduate course in Management and Administration of Social Projects. He was an intern in a company with a social and labour integration of young adults at risk of social exclusion. After his internship, he started as a freelancer and later as an employee in several companies in the industrial sector. He joined a WISE in the accounting department in a middle management position. Juan is a determined and hard-working person, and this was noticeable from the very beginning, as he proposed implementing an Enterprise Resource Plan (ERP) to streamline administration, achieving very positive results. He brought up the idea of replicating the digitalisation of management processes in other departments of the company, which ultimately led to implementing a digitalisation strategy for all management and production processes.

4.13.2.2 Supporters

For **supporters**, we have one profile presented as:

- **Almudena (not her real name)**: She always knew that she wanted to help others and this aspect was demonstrated when she was young, at school, as she supported her classmates who had difficulties in studying and interacting with others. Therefore, she obtained a degree in social work and a master's degree in social intervention. Concerning her professional background, she began as an intern social worker in an Employment Support Service. She wished to focus more on accompaniment and monitoring those in need of integration, helping them to keep their jobs after noticing that some were coming back to the service looking for a job since they had lost their jobs, they could not meet the expectations or they had not had their contracts renewed. That is how she started working in a WISE as a support technician for a work centre in her home province. Almudena has shown strong commitment, flexibility and involvement, and she has proposed an Individualised Care Plan for each WSN. She



focuses not only on labour issues, but also on the worker's social family and housing concerns. This can lead to work overload, as it is complicated to combine all the tasks such as coaching, recruitment and training at once. She supports the use of digital technology in the workplace as it would improve the time spent on each task and the organisation of documentation, while an increase in the number of computers would offer more training opportunities for WSNs.

4.13.2.3 Workers with Support Needs

Finally, **WSNs** are summarised as:

- **Ana (not her real name):** It was difficult for her to find a job in the mainstream labour market. So, when she received a positive answer for her current job in a cafeteria, she was very happy. Her family was also overjoyed because they had seen the difficulties that she faced. The first few weeks were the hardest due to having adapt and take orders, but her workmates showed their support. Over the course of several months, she acquired more skills, and she became very quick at taking orders. The cafeteria decided to start using a digital order taker to speed up the service. The use of this technology was complicated for Ana although she attended a course to learn how to use the tablet. Having noticed Ana's anxiety, her manager proposed that she spend two weeks with a colleague in order to learn how to correctly use the tablet and without any mistakes. Ana does not want to leave this workplace as she receives a lot of support, and she sees them as her second family.



5 Conclusions

5.1 The main outcomes

The following pages summarise our conclusions and arguments based on the results shared on the previous pages. Finally, we will propose an analysis that will feed the subsequent phases of the project.

A transversal assumption needs to be clarified for everything that will be discussed in this final chapter. The considerations offered are intended to refer to the 'normal situation' of the WISEs of each country (with all the difficulties of defining this concept). In any case, the report seeks to avoid a narrative referring to the 'excellences' that are also present. It is an approach that is not commonly used, since, for many purposes (e.g., promotion of the WISE movement, external communication, press office) there is a tendency to give prominence to the excellent cases that also exist in the different national contexts. For example, if we ask ourselves about the presence of specific advanced technological and digital solutions, we will surely find some cases in which they are adopted, but the point of view with which we will approach this chapter is: are these common, widespread, frequent solutions? The narrative based on excellence certainly has an important value: it has contributed and still contributes today to remove prejudices, of which the WISEs are still victims (e.g., being unentrepreneurial,





unprofessional, a little 'approximate' in organisation – things that are actually preconceptions that do not correspond to reality), helps to promote awareness of what WISEs can do and stimulates weaker WISEs to find the practical inspiration that 'they also can succeed' – and are encouraged to do so – from such excellent experiences. But a narrative based on excellence is of little use when the aim is to strengthen the skills of WISEs on a wide scale, thus addressing a much broader audience: an audience that in some countries is composed of a few tens of WISEs, but in others includes thousands of units, with all the complexity that having to deal with a universe that is consequently very diverse implies.

5.1.1 Soundness of the WISE system and support policies

A first consideration concerns the relationship between support policies for WISEs and the degree of development of the WISE ecosystem in each country.

There are two variables to be considered, related to each country's WISE ecosystem.

The first variable concerns **the intensity of support** WISEs can receive in a country. This is a complex issue to capture because, as highlighted in the D1.1 Report ('WISE resources', p. 73 ff.), in addition to the revenues from the sale of goods and services, there can be additional source of income that may support WISEs financially:

- subsidies (grants from the state, local authorities);
- low-interest loans;
- tax benefits specifically linked to work integration or to WISE status (which do not generate additional income, but lower expenses, which, however, has the same result on the WISEs' profit and loss account);
- explicit forms of remuneration of the social work, variously configured (for example with payment or contributions for the cost of the work of the supporters or payment or contributions linked to the number of integrated WSNs);
- contributions for investments or specific projects.

Although this does not directly concern public policy, it should be noted that WISEs can also receive support from private entities, which recognise the value of their work for the benefit of the community; this includes non-monetary resources (volunteering, use of spaces or tools, posting of workers by other companies, etc.). Except in specific



cases, and even if it can be of great interest for the reasons mentioned above, the number of resources granted to WISEs by private benefactors is usually limited overall.

Beyond the complexity of accounting for individual measures, everything can be summarised in one question: what is the share of the revenues deriving from the sale of goods or services produced by the WISE? Here, 'Sales revenues' are, for example, revenues from cleaning or environmental services, from a good sold in a shop, from catering or restaurant meals, from cleaning services, and so on. 'Other income' means any revenue that is not from the sales of goods and services such as income for reintegration services, employment services, training activities, social assistance of WSNs, contributions from public bodies, daily income for WSNs and income for the work of supporters.

Although the answer may be more complicated than it appears – for example because of occasional elements such as participation in a European project or a contribution from a foundation having a contingent effect in a specific year – a clear distinction emerges from all the cases studied between:

- Countries where WISEs benefit from significant support (e.g., Austria, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain). In these countries, income from activities other than the sale of goods and services to private or public customers usually ranges from 25% to 50% and, in some cases, exceeds 70%. 'Sales of goods and services' include, for example, revenues from cleaning services, environmental services, a good sold in a shop, catering or restaurant meals, cleaning services and so on. Income for reintegration services, employment services, training activities, social assistance of WSNs, contributions from public bodies, daily income for WSNs, income for the work of supporters and so on are understood as 'Other income': other than sales of goods and services.
- Countries where this support regime is non-existent or in any case very limited (e.g., Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Slovenia, Romania). This group encompasses different situations, ranging from cases where there is a complete absence of support to cases where there are limited though not insignificant forms of support (e.g., in Italy, there are tax exemptions that lower labour costs of WSNs that can account up to 8% of the turnover).



This distinction does not necessarily coincide with the one concerning the legal recognition of WISEs (cf. D1.1 Report, chapter 'WISE recognition', p. 60 and ff.) – there may be cases with weak legal recognition and a significant support system (e.g., Austria and the Netherlands) that is not linked to a particular form of WISE – but to the type of activity carried out (for example with contributions commensurate with the number and type of persons integrated, whatever the enterprise that hires them).

Although it is a more difficult element to assess as a percentage, it should also be considered that an intensive and widespread use of reserved contracts has de facto similar results to those of economic support. Reserved contracts are to all intents and purposes to be included in 'Sales of goods and services' as used here, but they have such characteristics as to in fact represent a valid form of support for WISEs. In other words, even where turnover is entirely linked to revenues from the sale of goods and services, if a significant proportion of those goods and services are sold under reserved procurement, this produces a significant supporting effect, for several reasons:

- to ensure revenues are removed from the harsher aspects of market competition (although sometimes with some competition between WISEs), exempting WISEs from engaging in fierce downward competition;
- to offer a certain time horizon for return on investment, giving a relative security that allows investments to be planned and thus strengthen the WISE.

In the history of WISE development in some countries (e.g., Italy and France), this second form of support has been greater than the direct economic support; but it equally supports the development of a robust WISE ecosystem.

The second variable is **the relevance of the WISE phenomenon** in each country. Again, this distinction is a simplification and there are intermediate cases. Two situations can be identified: countries with a strong WISE ecosystem and countries with a weak WISE ecosystem. Table 10 summarises some of the characteristics that help us identify strong and weak national WISE ecosystems.



Table 10 - National WISE ecosystems

	Countries with a strong WISE ecosystem	Countries with a weak WISE ecosystem
Number of WISEs	Thousands	Dozens
WSNs hired	Tens of thousands	Dozens/hundreds
WISEs' dimensions	Several WISEs, spread over a large part of the territory, with several million euros in turnover and hundreds of workers	WISEs with tens of thousands of euros in turnovers and few units of workers
Integration characteristics	Normal wages, structured training and care	WSNs' wages about €100–200 per month
WISEs' structure	Corporate functions (including supporters) performed on a professional basis, high-level leadership	Weak company structure, informal roles, difficulties in management turnover

In countries with weak WISE ecosystems, there are only a few dozen WISEs and the WSNs hired are only a few hundred. The turnover is minimal in many cases (in the order of a few tens of thousands of euros up to a few hundred thousand euros) and there are often dozens of WSNs included in a WISE, circumstances that mean remuneration per capita is necessarily limited (€100–200 per month).

On the other hand, in strong national WISE ecosystems, there can be several thousands of WISEs, in which tens of thousands of WSNs (and other workers) are included. Although there are small WISEs even in these countries, it is also easy to find WISEs with turnovers of several million euros, substantial investments, high technology levels



and high-quality management team in several parts of the country; these WISEs offer market wages for full-time work to WSNs.

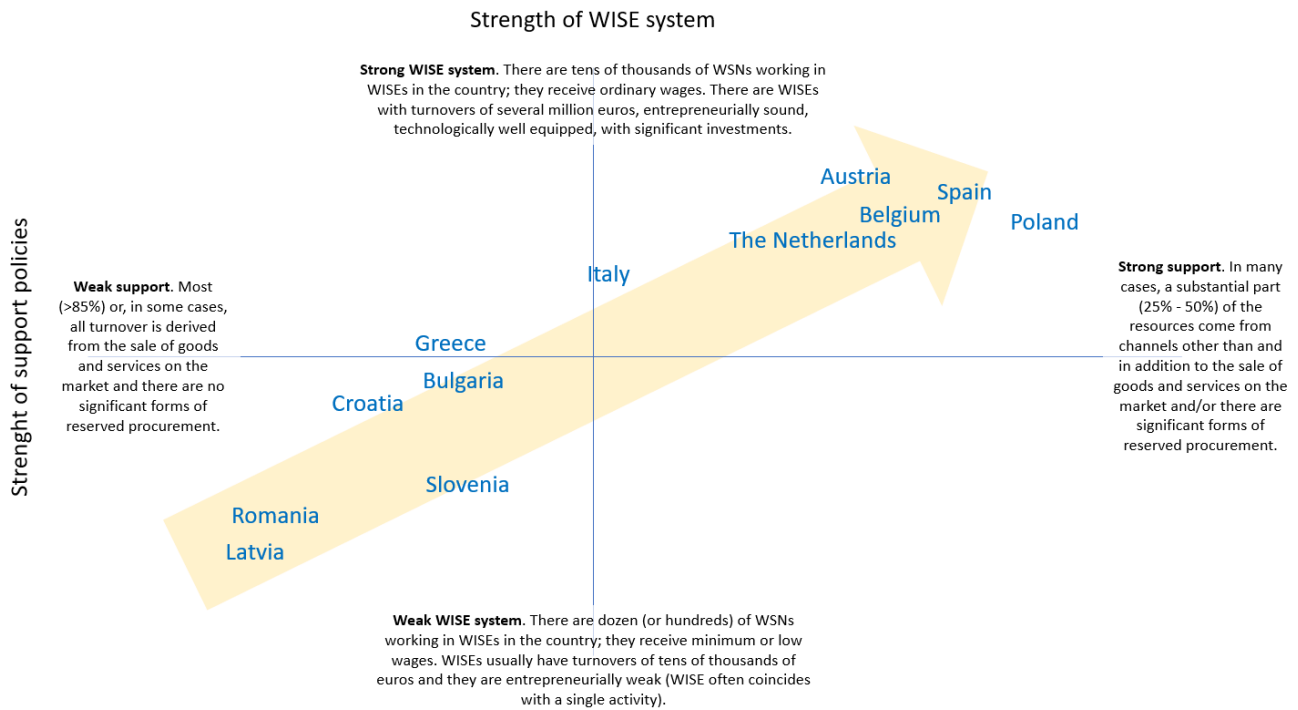
Of course, this classification would require introducing more refined variables, for example comparisons with the size of the population, the size of the target population or the cost of living in each country. But the data is so well defined that the distinction between strong WISE ecosystems and weak WISE ecosystems is self-evident.

This should absolutely not be considered a value judgement about the ability or inability of the persons involved. Beyond the dimensional differences, all the case studies have highlighted the presence in all countries of organisations and persons who spend all their energy and their lives with commitment and dedication to improve the condition of the WSNs. But this does not exempt us from noting that the differences exist and are significant.

One of the outcomes of the work carried out is that there is an **almost integral correspondence between countries with a developed WISE support system and strong national WISE systems**; and therefore, between **national systems with minimal or non-existent support and a weak national WISE system**. There are some partial exceptions, but on closer inspection they are not in contradiction but instead reinforce this assertion. This will have to be taken into account when outlining future policies on WISEs: skills-building activities must set objectives consistent with the possibilities of each national context.



Figure 4 - WISE systems and support policies



The precise location of each country within a quadrant is incidental; a more precise version of this graph would require more in-depth analysis.

This calls for further analysis, which was not carried out as it is not directly related to the objectives of the B-WISE project.

Where the level of support is sufficiently high, work integration actions do not need to be compensated by additional resources that are normally attracted by non-profit organisations (widespread volunteering, donations, etc.).

Thus, both from the case studies presented and from the debates in different countries, it is easy to see that the actors promoting WISEs can be very different.

In some cases, all WISEs are non-profit organisations. Some WISEs are promoted by religious bodies, associations of persons with disabilities and their families and persons with strong ideals of social change. There are WISEs that can rely on significant contributions from volunteers, have volunteers or semi-volunteers as managers, collect donations from citizens or charities and so on. In these cases, WISEs are clearly 'social'



(in a broad sense) organisations. On the other hand, where the level of public support makes work integration more sustainable, there are organisations that tend to perceive work integration as an economic activity. These WISEs are, of course, conscientious companies in terms of social responsibility, willing to emphasise the social value of their work, but they may assume some of the characteristics of private for-profit companies too.

This circumstance is not surprising: in every sector of public interest where the conditions for profitability are created, profit-seeking entrepreneurial actors intervene, e.g., in many countries a large private for-profit sector in health care or elderly care has emerged. Work integration may also attract traditional enterprises seeking profit. In these cases, the inclusion in the WISE universe is questionable, since the explicit purpose of work integration (and not the remuneration of investors' capital) is one of the founding characteristics of WISEs. This is a borderline case, requiring further analysis; although the topic has not been elaborated, it might therefore be interesting to analyse the implications of the coexistence of private and third-sector actors in the field of work integration.

5.1.2 Productive WISEs, between ideal and ideology

This work started with a re-reading of the WP1 materials that suggested the presence of three different ideal-typical situations, sometimes present in pure form, more frequently combined with each other (as is normal in an ideal-typical approach): the models of the Productive WISEs, the Social WISEs and the Training WISEs, which are discussed and analysed on [p. 33 ff.](#) For further analysis of the report, it is useful to highlight, with reference to other points in the report, how there is clearly a tension across the European continent towards the model of Productive WISEs. As already mentioned in the D1.1 Report, the PW model appears to have a significant appeal not only in countries where it has traditionally been prevalent, but also where models were originally more linked to a care approach as in the case of sheltered laboratories:

Sheltered workshops have indeed shifted from being mainly socialising spaces tailored to PWDs into full-fledged enterprises, the rationale being to provide regular employment for PWDs and in some cases more broadly for people with other disadvantages. Against this background, sheltered workshops have started



to be structured so as to trade on the open market. While in the past, many sheltered workshops were mainly focused on the production of gift items or commodities incorporating a rather low added value, those that have shifted towards a stronger entrepreneurial stance offer today high-quality items and, in some cases, highly professional services. (WP1 Report, p. 41)

This is a major dynamic that must be understood in all its complexity.

First, this dynamic can be evaluated in positive terms, as an entrepreneurial, dynamic, autonomous structure of the 'European model of job placement'. Management teams with a strong orientation towards development, innovation and professionalism have turned many WISEs into excellent companies in their fields and sectors of activity, a clear departure from the negative perception of work integration as 'assistive'. However, like all phenomena, this perceived cultural orientation has some aspects that require caution.

The first, evident in the work of WP2, is the tendency of WISEs to call themselves 'Productive WISEs' even when their nature is clearly different (although equally meritorious). The fact that even a WISE with a turnover of €50,000–80,000 and 20 or 30 WSNs identifies itself as a 'Productive WISE' is an indication of the ideal success of the model, but at the same time also of the difficulty of perceiving the richness of different models.

The second aspect is more sensitive and deserves special attention. There are undoubtedly cases (e.g., Austria, Belgium and Spain) where WISEs with high entrepreneurial strength, supported by policies that adequately reward social and training functions, are setting up systems that hire in tens of thousands of WSNs, provide them adequate working conditions and training and, at least in many cases, bring them into the mainstream labour market. These are the cases where, at least in certain circumstances, the three 'WISE models', with their three functions – productive, training and social – are integrated into a single organisation. Where this happens, there is a virtuous combination of stimulating public policies and strong and dynamic WISEs. However, in many other countries (and even those mentioned here) the emphasis on the entrepreneurial nature of WISEs has led to policies neglecting their social function. This is because policymakers, after recognising WISEs for their great ability to do business and at the same time integrate WSNs, conclude that therefore the



WISEs 'can do it themselves' because they draw resources (even to provide quality inclusion pathways) from the market. And, in a kind of 'Stockholm Syndrome', WISEs themselves have often embraced this ideology, proudly presenting themselves as subjects that are able to achieve entrepreneurial, training and social results 'for free', without any additional resources, only through the margins of market activities. This idea is fascinating, but data shows that usually it is not true; and is dangerous in relation to the priority of implementing appropriate support policies for WISEs. This also warns against the emphasis on 'excellent cases': WISEs that succeed in achieving quality work integration and being excellent enterprises only with the resources from the sale of goods and services. But this is the exception rather than the norm. It is instead likely that, except in for excellent cases, without adequate support there will be negative consequences: a crowding-out effect for severely disadvantaged workers, lower quality of work integration, less development of the WISE ecosystem and the number of WSNs employed, organisational vulnerability of WISEs and so on.

Two very different cases can be representative of what has been stated. Italy is a country with a great tradition of WISEs that have been historically supported, even more than by economic facilitation, by the benefits provided by 'reserved contracts' (long before the introduction of the European directives). When even this second instrument was reduced, the WISE system, while maintaining significant size, gradually showed elements of fatigue (it became increasingly difficult to remunerate social and training functions, to promote exchanges of management teams, to implement transitional projects even in suitable WISEs; WISEs are impoverished due to downward competition, etc.). Romania is a country where WISEs are aware of the need to combine entrepreneurial dynamism with social and educational value. However, as policy support is very limited, this results in WISEs of minimal size, supported within spin-off programmes of social organisations, the resources of which can be very limited. The result is a socially interesting phenomenon and some excellent experiences, but with a very limited overall dimension.

Going beyond the Stockholm Syndrome mentioned above, it should be borne in mind that it is not realistic to fully finance social and training functions through market margins; or that in any case, this is limited to a few excellent cases and cannot be applied to the majority of WISEs.



This also tells us that if a skills enhancement action is not to be merely an end it must be part of a broader transformation affecting the policies and directions of the development of WISEs. Technological reinforcement of WISEs, in fact, requires at the same time improving people's awareness and competence, implementing organisational strategies and ensuring sufficient policy support to enable WISEs not to work constantly under the pressure of economic conditions at the limit of sustainability.

5.1.3 Social WISEs and Training WISEs: WISEs as a part of a Social Economy Group

In the first outline phase of the working hypotheses, the presence of Social WISEs and Training WISEs was assumed as an evolution of organisations operating in the welfare or training fields, later developed in an entrepreneurial sense, but retaining some of the original characteristics. However, the evolution of protected laboratories, as in the D1.1 Report (paragraph 2.2.2, p. 20 ff.), can be observed in certain situations and it is consistent with this hypothesis. There are cases where Social WISEs have evolved over time in a productive sense; however, they retain some original characteristics related to the presence of social professionals or training, social management of the people they employ, etc. In these cases, an intermediate type (Social and Productive WISEs) is the result of a transition (Social Wises originating Productive WISEs – S2PW).

However, during our research other circumstances were also identified that are common to many participating countries, particularly those that do not provide significant support for the social and training functions of WISEs. These are cases in which a 'parent' organisation in the welfare field (less often in the training field) recognises the need to complement its social function with one or more activities aimed at promoting the employment of WSNs or, at least, bringing them closer to an employment status; this may include various aspects such as learning a trade, socialisation to the working environment, a sense of satisfaction with the low remuneration received, etc.

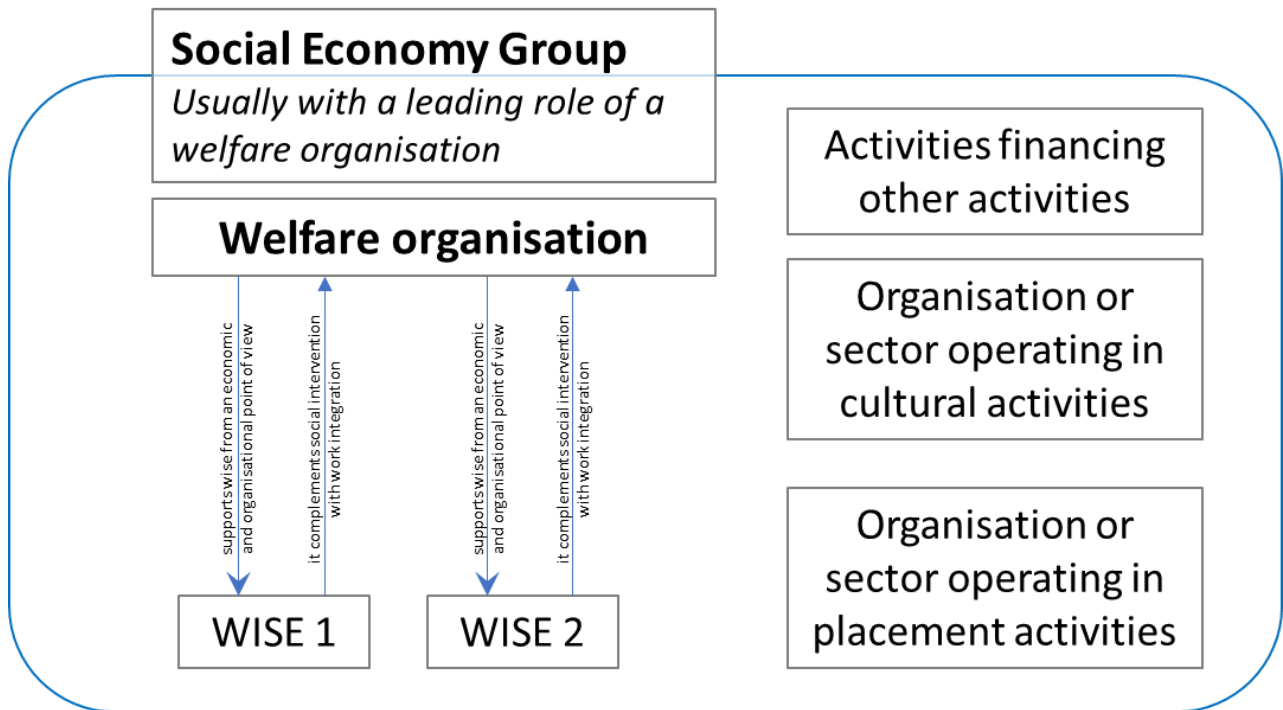
These WISEs can manage both workshop activities and activities open to the public; in this second case, with the dual purpose of facilitating the link between WSNs and customers and showing citizens that WSNs are able to carry out quality work. These



activities are often very small in scale and coincide with a single workshop, shop, restaurant, hotel, etc. Their annual turnover (if considered separately from the parent organisation) is a few tens of thousands of euros, and sustainability is ensured by the parent organisation in various forms. Non-WSN staff are often partly remunerated by the parent organisation as social workers, part of the equipment or real estate is paid for and made available by the parent organisation, etc. On the other hand, it should be emphasised that the mentality of the 'WISE sister' is strongly oriented towards achieving an economic balance, and that it does not perceive the activity as an appendage of a welfare service but sees itself as a company that must try in every way to become as economically self-sufficient as possible (sometimes with real chances of success, sometimes not). Basically, there is a symbiosis between the parent organisation and the WISE sister: the social project of the parent organisation would be incomplete without the WISE sister, and the WISE sister would not be able to sustain itself independently without the parent organisation at least in the short term. By understanding this phenomenon, it is possible to better define intermediate cases of WISEs that show productive and social characteristics or (less often) productive and formative characteristics at the same time. Although these aspects go beyond the scope of B-WISE, it is important to point out that the study of WISEs as part of a Social Economy Group could be very interesting and fruitful.



Figure 5 - Example of a Social Economy Group including some WISEs



A different path leading to mixed cases of productive and social or productive and educational WISEs is that of Productive WISEs that developed significant forms of social management (P2SW). This can be because they are part of a significant national support system that is able to support these functions. In other cases, this may happen even in national systems without this type of support: for a limited number of excellent WISEs, thanks to the particular entrepreneurial skills that create a consistent economic margin that is allocated to support social functions; and in other excellent WISEs able to aggregate community resources of various kinds (donations, institutional philanthropy, widespread volunteering, etc.) to equip themselves with structured social care.

5.1.4 Technologies

When it comes to technologies, it is useful at this point to ask in what aspects WISEs can have advantages over, and are similar to, mainstream companies, and where there is a risk of being a step behind, at least compared to more technologically advanced non-WISE companies. Answering this difficult question requires articulating the technology-related analysis into several items; as will be seen, WISEs may be ahead of,



at the same level or further behind other comparable companies depending on the specific aspect we examine.

The topics of technology and digitalisation, which are central to B-WISE, are not only constantly mentioned in the different sections of this report but are also the subject of a specific annex. However, some of the main outcomes of this work are briefly recalled here.

1. Internal communication. These are digital technologies to facilitate communication between workers, such as the use of WhatsApp groups or other messaging applications or internal newsletters. WISEs show a widespread aptitude for the use of these technologies that allow continuous and immediate interaction between employees; this contributes to building a corporate community, creating a pleasant internal climate and spreading the WISE's values among employees. It is likely that the level of digitalisation for this item is higher than in non-WISE companies. Internal communication does not seem to be one of the issues where action is most needed, although some less structured WISEs might need support in this area. In addition, widespread use of internal communication technologies does not necessarily mean that all users also possess the necessary communication or collaboration skills to use the technology efficiently and effectively. Therefore, it makes sense to provide adequate training and, given that both supporters and WSNs use digital communication and collaboration tools significantly more at home than at work, WISEs should also pay attention to the need for digital skills in other contexts, outside of the working environment.

2. External communication. These are tools used for corporate marketing, to promote products or services and to spread a company's mission. The majority of the WISEs have a website and an active social channel (usually Facebook), while the most popular channels among young people (e.g., Instagram and TikTok) are not usually used. Some WISEs also try to create multimedia content to describe the company mission and the activities carried out, to make the buyer aware of the social implications connected to their products; this content is published mainly on YouTube, but often there is a very low degree of diffusion. External communication technologies are more widespread in WISEs operating in the catering sector – restaurants, shops, hotels, etc. (cases where WISEs' activity consists in selling directly to people) – which tend to invest more on external communication. WISEs should invest more both in the quality of their external communication products and in strategies for their promotion.



3. Training and support. Two different sub-themes are included in this category: 1) basic aspects of digitalisation as an object of training and consultancy activities towards WSNs and 2) the use of technology and specifically of online e-learning platforms as a tool for carrying out training activities.

Regarding the first topic, we found some WISEs offering training support to WSNs (and other workers) to improve common practices such as looking for information, dealing with public administration, communicating with other people, buying an object, etc. This is a positive specificity of WISEs that should be recognised and valued.

Regarding the second topic, many companies have started to provide distance training, through online e-learning platforms; this happened mainly because of the pandemic. However, as can also be guessed from the interview, not all workers appreciate these teaching methods, because they prefer to be accompanied in person and not online. WISEs could invest in flexible and hybrid training systems combining face-to-face training and easy forms of e-learning. This may require developing customised e-learning platforms, accessible even by WSNs. Enabling e-learning to be used on both smartphones and computers is key.

4. Administration and accounting. This refers to technologies to support office work and accounting, such as software for electronic invoicing, payroll management, time and attendance, and employee administration. Some cases have been documented in which they are still predominantly paper-based, but the level of digitalisation appears generally good and comparable to that of non-WISE firms of similar size. Generally, WISEs use dedicated software for administrative tasks; some WISEs have developed apps and sometimes WISEs have adopted solutions that interconnect the different software, causing a significant increase in efficiency.

An area that deserves specific attention concerns the tools for digital management of working integration. For example, 'digital cards of WSNs' would allow supporters to manage, with the necessary guarantees of privacy, information relating to the persons who have entered the WISE and the path taken (for example periodic checks on the progress of the work integration, on the learning carried out on the job or through training courses or on the results of verification sessions carried out jointly with public services that have the person is in charge of). This kind of support is not absent from the world of WISEs, but in most cases, it is considered a bureaucratic burden to the



supporters' work or perhaps even a formula that takes away warmth and immediacy from the relationship with the people involved; in fact, such support appears to be used by a small minority of WISEs.

5. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP). Enterprise Resource Planning is software for the integrated management of various activities of the organisation, such as accounting, procurement, project management, risk and compliance management, operations and the supply chain. Few WISEs use ERP. The use of an ERP system would especially allow WISEs that are already digitising different aspects of management and administration to integrate all the different functions in a single software, providing a single, complete and constantly updated view of the data relating to different business areas.

6. Customer Relationship Management (CRM). CRM software helps WISEs to manage, analyse and optimise interactions with their customers and potential customers. A large minority of WISEs uses or is implementing CRM. CRM may be useful to WISEs with more direct contact with customers and to WISEs with a greater amount of data related to them (B2C companies – Business to Consumer).

7. Data storage. These technologies consist of hardware devices, infrastructure and software dedicated to the permanent storage of large quantities of information in electronic format. WISEs integrating digital systems for storing and sharing data and files appear to be substantially aligned with non-WISE companies.

8. Technologies for products/services and production processes. This is about several technologies for carrying out production activities. These technologies can vary significantly in relation to various factors, primarily the sectors of activity. There are WISEs that integrate various technologies, some of which are cutting-edge, which make them competitive with traditional companies. On the other hand, there are WISEs that still carry out manual activities and that have no intention of automating their processes, either because they believe that it is not necessary for the type of activity or because they believe that this can cause problems for WSNs. One problem regards humans being replaced by machines, while WISEs think that technology 'due to its intrinsic complexity, is perceived as unsuitable and not very accessible to WSN': digitalisation is not perceived as an opportunity, but as a form of increased complexity, especially for WSNs, according to the equation 'less technology = greater ease of



execution and greater employment opportunities for WSNs'. Furthermore, there are some WISEs that despite wanting to innovate are unable to do so due to limited financial resources.

9. E-commerce. E-commerce means the sale of products and services online, through a website or by using special intermediation and distribution platforms, such as Amazon. Even though the majority of the WISEs analysed have their own website, few use it for online sales. E-commerce is more widespread in those sectors in which the sale of products is carried out. Among the WISEs, in fact, the most advanced from this point of view are those that deal with the sale of clothes and handicrafts, the hospitality tourism sector due to online booking channels and those with activities in the catering sector. WISEs do not appear fully aligned with non-WISE companies of the same size and belonging to the same sectors in this aspect.

10. Assistive technologies. Assistive technologies are those technologies created ad hoc to make IT products accessible and usable by people with disabilities. Unlike mechanical or electronic components that are supportive in the activities of daily life (e.g., wheelchairs), assistive technologies only concern products that are related to IT and are generally composed of a whole complex of hardware and software integrated into a standalone device. Although in some cases there is some integration of assistive technologies within companies, greater investment by WISEs in this area could have been expected. We would also have expected the development of original and innovative solutions, given the specialisation of many WISEs in productions involving WSNs.

11. Emerging technologies. Emerging technologies are technologies whose development, practical applications or both are still largely unrealised. These technologies are generally new but also include older technologies finding new applications. Emerging technologies are often perceived as capable of changing the status quo. Emerging technologies include a variety of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data, the Internet of Things (IoT) and machine learning (ML). The use of emerging technologies was not spontaneously mentioned by any WISE participating in the case studies. On the other hand, surveys in WP1 show that at least a modest number of WISEs have experience using them. Apart from creating awareness and sharing good practices and lessons learned, subsequent research could investigate the use of emerging technologies in the various sectors.



Technological developments and lifelong learning. The framework outlined here implies some consequences for the skills enhancement strategies. It should be considered that the future labour market will demand that people take control of their development and employability more than ever before. Technological developments such as robotisation and digitalisation have a fundamental impact on how work is carried out. The requirements imposed on workers are changing. Jobs are disappearing and new functions are created at the same time. The gap between those who can keep up and those who are lagging behind in the labour market is growing. In order to be successful now and in the future, it is important that employers and workers constantly anticipate and adapt to change. In the current crises, this is even more the case than ever. A lifetime of development (LLO) maintains knowledge and skills and keeps workers permanently employed. For employers, the employability of human capital is essential for their competitiveness, innovation and productivity, which increases the competitiveness of nations internationally. For example, in Dutch government policy, more and more emphasis is placed on people's own responsibility to be and remain sustainable. It is up to them to take control over their own direction. However, it is not yet self-evident how one should take responsibility for sustainable employability. For employees with support needs, dictating their own direction is a challenge while 'staying in place' is especially important to them. WISEs are companies that create both employment and education in the workplace. They aim to maintain the supply of employees as well as their level of the professional competence, now and in the future. Encouraging self-regulation of sustainable employability is an important task in this respect. But how do you stimulate your own direction? Encouraging self-regulation on development and employability is a complex subject that depends on many factors. What does and does not work? How do you go from a work company to a learning company? How do you offer learning in an integral and methodical way and how do you create good preconditions? How do you ensure that employees who need support have control over their development processes? The problem is not that there is insufficient knowledge, but that too little knowledge is shared and pooled.

Additional remarks about technology and digitalisation. WISEs are not technology companies and rapid growth using the leverage of technology is usually not their goal; there is not any case in which WISEs register patents or other forms of intellectual property. However, many WISEs are aware that the adoption of technologies and



pursuit of growth can lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness, and the larger size equates to greater impact and the employment of a larger group of WSNs.

The limits of WISEs are probably due to several reasons:

- WISEs have an entrepreneurial culture oriented towards slow but constant growth rather than rapid and, inevitably, more risky growth. They have a culture that sees possible bankruptcy as very serious because it would force people to be laid off, while high-tech entrepreneurs have a higher tolerance for failure.
- WISEs report 1) the lack of resources (e.g., budget, skills, people, etc.) to invest in this direction and 2) the lack of significant (economies of) scale.
- There seems to be significant room for improvement where WISEs invest in open collaborations with other actors (companies but also research centres and universities), which would also serve to include skills not currently available in WISEs. Relations between WISEs and institutions of research and technological development (first of all universities and specifically engineering faculties) are not completely absent, but in most national contexts they are episodic and linked to the excellence of the WISEs rather than to the general nature of the subjects.
- There is a low involvement of technological and scientific profiles in WISEs' management. People with such profiles could on the one hand support the integration and development of new technologies, and on the other hand profitably relate to people of similar profiles in other organisations, in particular in technologically advanced companies, research centres and universities. The study of the personas is indicative of the enablers having a humanistic, social or human sciences training and in a few cases economic or managerial training, but the cases of technical enablers (engineers, computer scientists or even people with lower educational levels but a technical view of production plants) are very rare.
- Finally, it is important to underline that significant improvements in adopted and developed technologies can be facilitated by public interventions. It is no coincidence, in fact, that the largest and most developed WISEs are in the countries where attention to these subjects has been and is highest.



These points can intersect different types of WISEs; there are then some considerations on each type of WISE, which shows, with respect to technologies and digitalisation, strengths and possible criticism.

Productive WISEs: The strength of this type of WISE lies in the entrepreneurial culture and thus in the focus on any element that can make the enterprise more competitive. Many of these WISEs in fact already integrate technological and digital elements in a significant way and are well prepared to introduce elements of innovation in their production cycle. In general, even with the limitations that may characterise them, even WSNs are sometimes urged to learn new approaches that integrate technological elements. The point of weakness, at least in those countries where no specific support exists (and with the exception of some excellent WISEs), is that the strong productive characterisation makes these WISEs in general little inclined to organise structured actions to support WSNs. In some cases, the 'supporter' is actually a work colleague who works full-time in production, without dedicated time to take care of the work integration process; and the WSN does not carry out actions other than work in the WISE. In this context, the supportive actions that the WISE offers are often entrusted to the informal instinct of workmates; this organisational set-up, centred on the immediate needs of production, appears to be little oriented towards supporting programmes of skills strengthening. The situation is very different in countries (e.g., Spain, Belgium, Austria and the Netherlands) where Productive WISEs have adequate support; in these cases, we have an ideal combination of 1) an entrepreneurial mentality, attentive to technological development, 2) investment aptitude and thus availability of technologically advanced tools and 3) competence-building initiatives structured and permanently embedded in the business organisation.

Social WISEs: These WISEs are very attentive to people's growth and therefore can easily involve themselves in a project concerning competence-building; the idea of carrying out training related to the technological or digital sphere addressed to WSNs may be carefully considered by these WISEs. On the other hand, many of these WISEs may have a limited entrepreneurial orientation and thus may not be very keen on developing their daily productive work in a technological sense and digitising or may consider that such advanced technologies are discriminatory for the employed persons who are not able to use them. The risk is therefore that the initiatives proposed by B-WISE result in training activities but not in organisational changes and therefore have a limited impact on the company's daily production work.



Training WISEs: These WISEs undoubtedly present some significant strengths, since competence-building actions are a founding aspect of these WISEs. Even when they are limited in size, they are careful to organise their production activities with technologically appropriate tools, sometimes used jointly with a parent organisation operating in the educational field. These WISEs are usually culturally attentive to the technological innovations that they have to take into account in their training programmes and they have a management that looks at these phenomena with interest. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that – in countries with limited support for WISEs – these enterprises are limited in size and not very widespread in most of the countries considered; often the WISE offer a specific activity (e.g., a restaurant where people from cookery courses are employed) and therefore the actual entrepreneurial translation of the changes advocated by the project may not be significant in practice.

5.2 Guidelines for WP3 (and policies)

WP1 and WP2 together leave a significant legacy for WP3 in terms of knowledge of WISEs and consequent possible hints for the work that will follow. They also deliver numerous elements that must be carefully considered to better frame the paths of skills enhancement.

As a preliminary point, it should be noted that the issue of WISEs' technological enhancement includes different items ([p. 240 ff.](#)): from technologies such as soft skills for WSNs to technologies for production, from communication technologies to assistive technologies and others. In some of these areas, WISEs appear to have developed stronger general attitudes than comparable companies; in this case, we can analyse how to adequately promote this. In other cases, there is a negative gap to the detriment of social enterprises and therefore it is a question of identifying the actions to strengthen the skills useful to bridging it. It is worth highlighting some cross-cutting issues here.



5.2.1 Strengthening skills: enablers and supporters

A first element concerns the Personas who work in WISEs. A large portion of the management of WISE does not express significant distrust about digitalisation and indeed seems aware of the importance of developing their organisations in the direction of greater investment in technology. There is certainly some caution about possible exclusionary effects of technologies against WSNs, but this does not seem to be one of the factors that discourages greater investment in technologies; but there are other aspects that deserve some attention.

Usually, enablers and supporters have a high level of education, are culturally vibrant and have meaningful relationship networks, but, in most cases, they have characteristics that can be problematic with respect to the objectives of a greater diffusion of technologies in WISEs.

The first characteristic, which has already been mentioned, concerns their backgrounds, which are usually humanistic, pedagogical, educational or related to humanities and social sciences. This feature is typical of a significant proportion of enablers and supporters. On the other hand, there are few people with technical and scientific training. This means that cultural awareness about the relevance of technology (and, usually, good confidence in the personal use of office and communication technologies) is not accompanied by a mentality inclined to naturally see the possibility of productive and entrepreneurial application of technological innovations and even less to think about entrepreneurial developments in smart areas. Paradoxically, it is not certain that training these enablers about technologies is the most efficient strategy compared to bringing young engineers, computer scientists and technicians closer to WISEs and training them with respect to the mission of WISEs. To achieve more intense use of digital technologies in order to facilitate the development of WISEs, it would certainly be useful to strengthen relationship with research centres and with scientific university faculties (e.g., engineering and computer science) and with the people (teachers and students) who work there.

Alongside the question of previous training, the personal aspect must be considered, especially in contexts where WISEs have inferior support from policies. In this situation, the remuneration of the management groups of WISEs is often disproportionately low compared to the commitment and responsibilities (and sometimes the managers are



volunteers or pensioners) and this inevitably self-selects enablers who identify themselves very strongly with the mission of the WISE and whose motivations are strongly linked to religious or secular values of solidarity. For reasons that cannot be discussed in-depth here, it may be more difficult in such organisations to reproduce the same adherence to ideals in new generations of executives, with the consequence that often the enablers remain the founding group that gave birth to WISE many years ago. It is therefore easy to find management groups with people approaching the end of their working careers and belonging to a generation that grew up in a non-digital universe. These two elements discourage investment in digitalisation: these enablers, generally already overwhelmed by multiple daily tasks related to the management of the WISE and with the prospect of a limited number of years of work, are not given to making a substantial investment in training that leads them to review established aspects of their way of operating and their personality.

5.2.2 Skills enhancement in WISEs

Case studies have shown that WISEs implement actions to strengthen the skills of WSNs. At the same time, such actions in many cases are placed in a framework that makes them little noticeable and little recognisable. Skills enhancement:

- takes place mainly 'on the job' and not in the classroom and does not take place at defined times;
- does not give rise, in most cases, to the recognition of qualifications or training credits;
- is not carried out by professional trainers, but by supporters who, moreover, at least in some cases, operate as 'work colleagues' and therefore in the absence of a clear mandate regarding the strengthening of skills;
- often, does not concern aspects that can be immediately codified in the context of training profiles but concerns soft skills;
- does not only take place in the form of a specific training experience to be carried out at a given time (such as a training course) but tends to accompany the entire work integration process.



Although there are some cases in which one or more of these claims are disproved, the central theme is that in the majority of WISEs this happens and that this approach ‘goes under the radar’ that generally identifies skill enhancement actions.

As a result, it is necessary to work on two different and complementary fronts. On the one hand, it is useful to verify to what extent it is appropriate that the WISEs also include traditional actions to enhance skills in their operations such as classroom activities, specific figures in charge of training, specific skills related to the production sector in which they operate, etc. On the other hand, it is necessary to outline models of skills enhancement that do not distort WISEs and that do not undermine their strengths. For example, it is one thing to support the opportunity that a limited number of hours per week are specifically dedicated to skills enhancement, but it is another thing to ignore the original added value offered by a learning model that arises from everyday work and the proximity of supporters. WISEs should not be transformed into what they are not but must be helped to develop and to enhance their own model of intervention.

5.2.3 Skills enhancement and policies

In assessing the possible (realistic) impact of action to foster capacity-building in a WISE, account should be taken of the emphasis on the role of support policies in strengthening a country’s WISE system ([p. 229 ff.](#)). In synthetic terms and in the awareness of the problematic nature of the statement, it is possible to affirm that an action to strengthen skills is all the more effective the less a WISE is in a situation of ‘organisational distress’; and the organisational distress is instead directly proportional to the lack of policies, which forces the WISE to bear, without adequate support, an unrealistic complexity of functions.

This does not mean avoiding actions to improve skills in national contexts in which WISEs are poorly supported or in individual WISEs that seem to be in a condition of greater organisational distress; but it means that 1) the expectations of the impact of these actions must be adapted to the ability of each organisational context to incorporate them and that 2) probably, actions to strengthen skills must be adapted to different situations. It would be illusory to think that an action can transform a weak, disorganised WISE into a technological start-up.



Probably, in some contexts, the most reasonable goal is a step forward in office automation, moving from paper-based office management to more advanced systems. In other cases, a WISE can take up or strengthen actions that consider technology as a soft skill by which to empower WSNs, for example where technologies are necessary to carry out ordinary actions of daily life (for example in national systems where the relationship with the public administration increasingly takes place in a digital way).

In some cases, we will find WISEs capable of implementing technological solutions in their production cycle that are already practised, but that are not adopted by all, especially medium-small companies: orders in the WISE managing restaurants (from the example already proposed), computerised management of the warehouse in the WISEs that manage shops, the use of barcodes to trace the different phases of a laundry cycle, etc.

In other cases, there may instead be WISEs that can credibly apply to develop original and patentable solutions in the field of assistive technologies or that have a cutting-edge production structure that can take a further step forward thanks to digital solutions.

What is certain is that the objective of skills improvement must be adapted to the different situations that the case studies have highlighted.

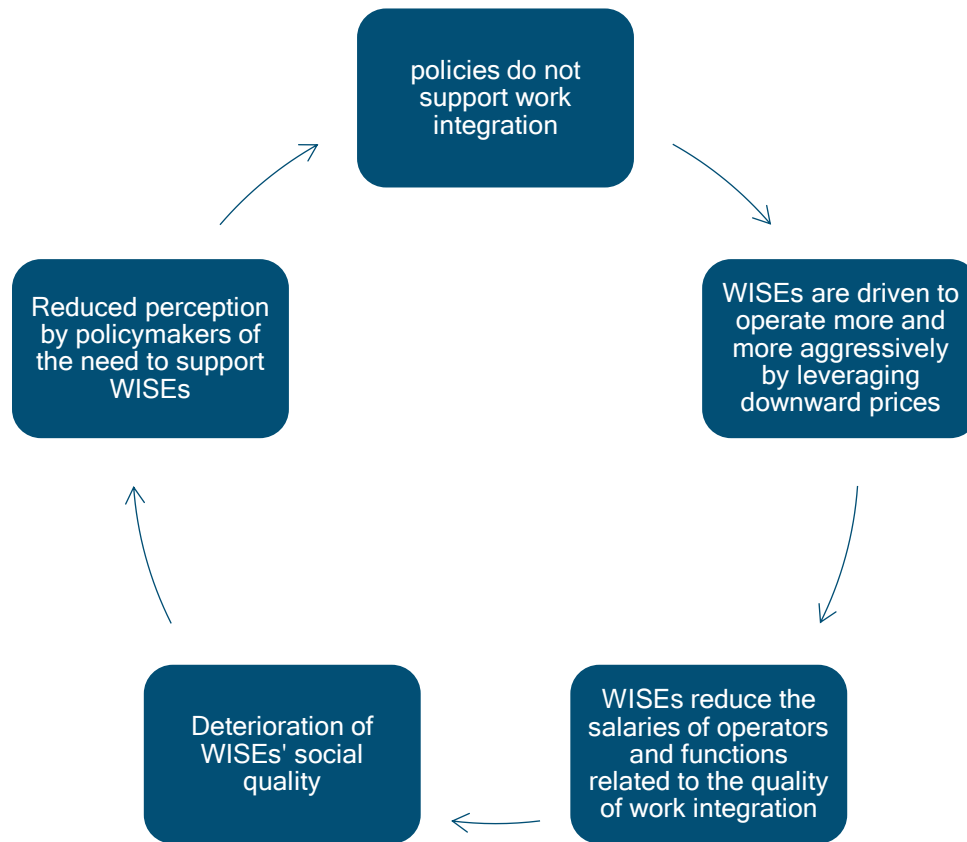
In all cases, however, we must always bear in mind that skills enhancement, in the sense of training, is only one piece in a broader programme that starts from the understanding of the organisational situation of the WISE and from its development strategies, which takes into account 'the human element' both on the part of WSNs and of enablers and supporters, and, above all, that places the training within the framework of a project of organisational evolution designed together with the WISE and strengthened with adequate accompanying actions.

This, of course, is without considering certain issues of greater importance in general political terms, but which goes beyond the theme of B-WISE. From what emerged, it is possible to affirm that thinking about the development of WISEs without a framework



of adequate support policies is illusory and not very effective. Therefore, a political action that brings the WISEs out of a 'starvation circle' is a priority.³

Figure 6 - WISEs' starvation circle



The WISEs' starvation circle appears evident in some national contexts: in the face of policies that withdraw support for work integration, WISEs are driven to operate more and more aggressively by leveraging reduced prices; to do this, they reduce the salaries of operators and the functions related to the quality of the work integration, which causes the slow deterioration of its social quality and therefore engenders a reduced perception by the policymakers of the need to support the WISEs and so on. In this

³ With this expression, Carola Carazzone, president of DAFNE (European Network of Foundations), highlights the risks for social enterprises, squeezed between insufficient funding and a mentality inclined to sacrifice the functions (training, research, networking, etc.) that ensure quality to the enterprises.

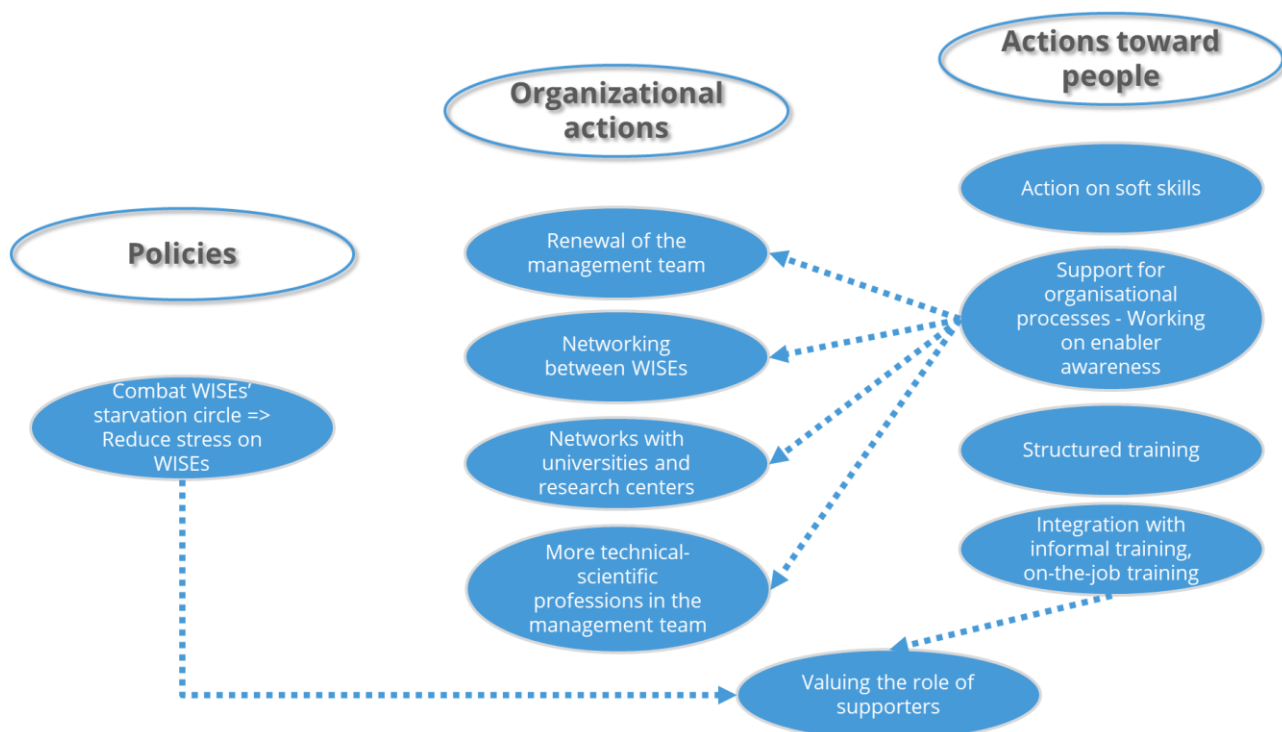


context, actions taken to improve skills risk being ineffective. However, this is a broader discussion that goes beyond the limits of this project.

However, what needs to be emphasised here is that 1) competence-building is not limited to people-directed activities and 2) people-directed activities do not end with traditional classroom training. On the contrary, a competence-building programme requires a set of actions:

1. **on the policy side**, to ensure that WISEs do not operate under conditions of excessive stress, which prevents them from devoting due attention to competence building;
2. **on the organisational side**, by promoting a renewal of the managerial class (ensuring, among other things, a greater presence of people with a technical background) and investment in strengthening networks between WISEs and with universities and research centres;
3. **on the people side**, on the one hand by promoting structured training, on the other hand by fully enhancing the vocation of WISEs to act on soft skills and to offer WSNs growth paths based on informality and on-the-job skills strengthening.

Figure 7 - Skills enhancement





B-WISE
Skills for the future : WISEs ready!



6 Annex A: Case studies: summary table





Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Austria 1	2E 3S 4W	PW	Sewing, textile cleaning and ironing work clothes	52	44	Low remuneration	Women with psychological difficulties, many with immigrant backgrounds	1,600,000	600,000	37.5%		Unstructured, relying on the availability of supporters
Austria 2	4E 4S 4W	PTW	Office work, storage, textile sorting, fixing electronic devices, sales, online shop	104.4	69.4	Different remuneration due to funding agency	Long-term unemployed. Addiction background and different social problems (debts or former imprisonment)	3,000,000	1,500,000	50%		Language skills and training material do not match 100%
Austria 3	2E 3S 6W	PSW	Metalworking, woodworking, packaging/co-packaging, assembling/disassembling, paint shop, printing/dispatching, series production, completion, quality control, office services, kitchen, laundry, operation of waste materials collection centre	730	579		Persons with disabilities (different forms ranging from physical to psychological), long-term unemployed	12,200,000	9,516,000	78%		



Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Austria 4	1E 5S 3W	STW	Production, textile, wood workshop, office activities	61	36		Long-term unemployed persons. Persons with mental illness, persons with addictions	2,200,000	1,600,000	72.7%		The main focus is training (concentration training, discussion with staff) for a period of 12-15 months
Austria 5	1E 3S 4W	TW	Digitising analogue media	35	24	1st year €150 pm 2nd year €200 pm 3rd year €250 pm	Young adults with physical disabilities	(Quite low?)				Individual and adjusted training is possible due to enough personal resources
Austria 6	1E 3S 4W	TW	Rework, reuse and repair of washing machines, dishwashers and electronic cookers. Computer disassembly, delivery, office and sales services	24	18		Long-term unemployed, severe psychic disabilities, addiction	1,000,000	280,000	28%		Seven weeks of application training and other content that supports social, mental and vocational stabilisation of people



Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Austria 7	3E 3S 5W	STW	Metal, wood, kitchen, creative sector	44	18	240€ monthly	Young people with every type of disadvantage (the main disadvantages are social-emotional)	720,000	3	0.42%		Vocational training, IT training, training on polite behaviour and correct interactions
Austria 8	3E 3S 4W	PSW	Mailing, printing and construction	39	14		Long-term unemployed with addictions	671,000	221,000	33%		
Austria 9	2E 2S 4W	PTW	Repair and processing of used bicycles		40		Unemployed young people with health issues (addiction, depression)	4,299,800	2,700,000	60.93%		Work training, social care
Austria 10	1E 3S 2W	PTW	Second-hand/antiques shops	171	115		Long-term unemployed and WSNs	7,000,000	4,299,800	60%		Training in sales, logistics, upcycling, bike repair



Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Greece 1	1E 1S 4W	PW	Food and cleaning sector	59	54	Paid regularly according to the national legislation	People with severe mental health disorders	700,000–900,000	Derives its resources exclusively from the sale of services and goods			
Greece 2	1E 2S 4W	PW	Cleaning, catering – waitering, oil painting, green care, carpentry, tailoring; canteens, candle factory, farm and winery	147	82	Paid regularly according to the national legislation	People with mental health disorders and psychosocial problems	1,400,000	Derives its resources exclusively from the sale of services and goods			
Greece 3	1E 2S 2W	PW	Cleaning service				People facing psychosocial difficulties		Derives its resources exclusively from the sale of services and goods			Continuous training of the employees





Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Croatia 1	1E 1S 3W	PW	Textile waste management and production	45	38	Full salary higher than the average salary in textile production	People with disabilities and members of marginalised groups	1,064,889		90%		
Croatia 2	2E 1S 2W	TW	Vocational school: personal services, fine arts and design, forestry, textiles, haberdashery	30	22		People with disabilities and people who work in protective positions	400,000				Students have the opportunity for training and being employed after graduation
Croatia 3	1E 2S 3W	SW	Providing services in the community (psychosocial support, help at home, economic consulting, financial management), organic cultivation	17	17		People with disabilities and WSNs	200,000			Yes	
Bulgaria 1	2E 4S 6W	PTW TW	Bistro	30?	15	Half of the minimum salary (part-time)	People with both physical and mental disorders	150,000				Training in culinary arts, foreign language lessons, soft skills





Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Bulgaria 2	2E 3S 5W	PW SW	Children's educational games: handicraft items	45	27		Person with disabilities and reduced working capacity; long-term unemployed	50,000-100,000				WSNs constantly improve their skills in a safe environment
Bulgaria 3	1E 4S 4W	PTW TW	Manufacture of chocolate products		18		Long-term unemployed, people with permanent disabilities, unemployed young people	50,000-80,000				The main focus is on the workers' training and improving their professional qualities





Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Belgium 1	1E 3S 4W		Woodworking, metalworking, assembly and services	930	729			28,574,607	16,228,385	57%		342 employees attended a total of 8,116 hours of formal training, 184 employees attended a total of 963 hours of informal training
Belgium 2	2E 3S 4W		Textiles, e-commerce, assembly, recycling, packaging, in-company services, finishing of printed material and woodworking	280	230			7,169,363	3,142,514	44%		128 employees attended a total 3,843 hours of formal training, 13 employees attended a total of 192 hours of informal training





Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Belgium 3	1E 2S 4W		Logistics, packaging, mailing, digital services and green maintenance	350	235			11,340,831	6,473,751	57%		39 employees attended a total of 3,259 hours of formal training, 21 employees attended a total of 198 hours of informal training
Belgium 4	1E 2S 3W	PW	Sewing workshop, green maintenance, ironing service, local shop, bar	95	77			2,515,676	1,271,289	50.5%		28 employees attended a total of 227 hours of training





Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Belgium 5	1E 2S 4W		Reuse centres, catering services, green maintenance, cleaning services, ironing services, energy scans, creative workshops	1,029	900					58.6%		A total of 5,504 hours of training was provided to employees
Spain 1	2E 3S 4W		Industrial laundry	305	30-50	Salary similar to that of other workers in mainstream enterprises	Persons with different disabilities, predominantly cerebral palsy			55%		
Spain 2	3E 3S 4W		Restaurants, catering, food	120	100	Salary similar to that of other workers mainstream enterprises	Persons with psychosocial disabilities			40%		





Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Spain 3	2E 3S 4W		Packaging	5,800	4,872		Persons with high support needs (psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, physical and sensory disability)	220,000,000		70%-75%		
Spain 4	2E 3S 5W		Cleaning services	300	26-50%	Salaries are comparable to those in mainstream enterprises	WSNs (women from single-parent families or victims of gender violence, migrants or refugees, long-term unemployed or unemployed aged over 45)	5,000,000		87%		
Spain 5	2E 3S 4W		Restaurants, catering, food	20	3	Salaries are lower than those of workers in the same sector	Persons with intellectual disabilities and young adults formerly in foster care	1,000,000		50%		





Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Spain 6	3E 3S 4W		Cleaning services	900	More than 80%	Salaries are similar to those of other workers in the same sector in mainstream companies	Persons with physical or organic disabilities					
Spain 7	2E 3S 4W		Cleaning services	73	73%	Salaries similar to those of other workers in mainstream enterprises in the same activity sector	Persons with different kinds of disabilities	7,500,000		More than 75%		
Slovenia	1 Mentor 1E 5W		Graphic design	7	5		People with disabilities	165,000				Rehabilitation, training and employment of people with disabilities





Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Slovenia 2	1E 5W		Repurposing and activities necessary for repurposing objects (recycling plastic)	6	5		WSNs	200,000				
Slovenia 3	1E 1S 8W		Washing and ironing services	10	8		Vulnerable groups	200,000				
Slovenia 4			Landscaping and maintenance of green areas, arranging cemeteries, individual maintenance work and cleaning facilities, additional subcontracting work for companies	17	12			570,000				Like digital training, it can be more economic
Slovenia 5	1E 5W		Accessible tourism	6	5		People with reduced working capacity and mental disorders	238,130				
Slovenia 6	1E 1S 11W		Environmental management, cleaning of businesses, sports	13	11		Wide range of workers with wide range of disabilities	300,000				





Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Slovenia 7	1E 1S 8W		Sewing, interior decoration, product assembly and restoring furniture	10	8			245,000				
Italy 1	2E 4S 3W	PW	Selective waste collection, cemetery management	150	45	More than contracts (ristorno)	Drug addicts, convicts, people with disabilities	6,500,000 (high profits)	6,500,000	100% (8% minor cost for minor WSNs taxation)	High relevance	
Italy 2	2E 2S 3W	SW (WISE within a welfare organisation)	Catering and food service in events sector	8 (80 in entire organisation)	5	'On-call' work. Normal hourly wage, but with few working hours => very low monthly wage	People with mental deficiencies	100,000	100,000	100% (8% minor costs for minor WSNs taxation. Cooperation with welfare sector)	No reserved contracts	Continuity with the work of the welfare parent organisation



Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Italy 3	3E 3W	TW (born from a professional school)	Restaurant	8	3	'On-call' work. Normal hourly wage, but with few working hours => very low monthly wage	Former pupils with mental deficiencies	100,000	100,000	100% (8% minor costs for minor WSNs taxation). Significant volunteer work	No reserved contracts	
Italy 4	3E 1S 4W	PW	Assembly and packaging, filmmaking and many other activities	38	19	Normal contractual wage	People with disabilities	1,500,000 (WISE attempting to emerge from a period of crisis)	1,500,000	100% (8% minor costs for minor WSNs taxation)	No reserved contracts	
Italy 5	3E 4S 3W	PW	Agriculture, tourism, recycling, craft activities, cleaning	51	13 (the other 51 workers are not recognised WSNs. They operate in the WISE as trainees)	Normal contractual wages	Different categories of WSNs	1,164,000	768,000	66% (flows of funds from Church bodies and other sources)	No reserved contracts	



Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Italy 6	2E 2S 3W	PW	Gardening, cemetery management, selective waste collection. This WISE merged with a social enterprise operating in the welfare field, today it is in its sector	98	43	Normal contractual wages	Drug addicts, convicts, few people with disabilities	2,950,000 in only the WISE's activity (8,630,000 overall, including welfare activities)	2,950,000	100% (8% minor costs for minor WSNs taxation)	No reserved contracts	
Latvia 1	1E 1S 3W	PW	textiles	8	4	Normal contractual wages	Woman in difficulties and with disabilities			100%	No reserved contracts, all private customers	
Latvia 2	1E 1S 4W	TW	Cooking industry	6	4	All workers are paid	People with disabilities			100%	No reserved contracts	Main goal is skill enhancement and to let workers move to other workplaces
Latvia 3	1E 1S 3W	PW	Call centre for private companies. Social telephony	29	16	All workers are paid	People with disabilities	200,000	200,000	100%	No reserved contracts	



Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Latvia 4	1E 1S 3W	SW-TW	Sells goods created in a workshop that works as a social service, managed by a linked organisation	7	5	All workers are paid	People with disabilities and other WSNs			100%	No reserved contracts	Main goal is skill enhancement and to let workers move to other workplaces. It is linked to a welfare organisation
Latvia 5	1E 1S 2W	S-TW	Sells paper and packaging, produced in cooperation with social care services	6	4	All workers are paid	People with mental disabilities			100%		The aim is to support, train and integrate groups at risk of social exclusion
Netherlands 1	1E 3S 3W	PW	Recycling, urban mining, upcycling		150	Salaries are similar to those of other workers in the same sector in mainstream companies		2,100,000			No reserved contracts	Individual support, training and coaching
Netherlands 2	3E 2S 4W	PW (ex PSW)		866	729	Salaries are similar to those of other workers in the same	Many types of WSNs. WISE transition-oriented	31,000,000			No reserved contracts	Strong commitment to training



Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
						sector in mainstream companies						
Netherlands 3	1E 2S 3W	PW	Network of 30 second-hand shops. Aim to grow to 50 shops in a few years	1,500	1,000	Salaries are similar to those of other workers in the same sector in mainstream companies	People with disabilities, refugees, convicts, young people				No reserved contracts	Strong commitment to training
Netherlands 4	1E 3S 3W	PW	Cleaning services	600	228	Salaries are similar to those of other workers in the same sector in mainstream companies		12,000,000			1%	





Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Netherlands 5	2E 4S 2D	PTW	Gardening, cleaning services	600	3,000	Salaries are similar to those of other workers in the same sector in mainstream companies	People with disabilities, refugees, convicts, young people. WISE transition-oriented	43,500,000				
Netherlands 6	1E 3S 4W	PW	Cleaning services (windows)	14	7	Salaries are similar to those of other workers in the same sector in mainstream companies	Young people and others WSN types	1,000,000				Strong commitment to training
Netherlands 7	2E 1S 3W	PW	Recycling, reuse, shops	131	44	Salaries are similar to those of other workers in the same sector in mainstream companies	People with psychiatric or psychosocial problems	1,200,000				





Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Romania 1	2E 3S 2W	PW SW	Recycling and circular economy industry	13	4		WISE employs persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. WISE tries to adopt transition model	30,000			No reserved contracts	
Romania 2	2E 5S 4W	PW SW	Fast food, textile sewing workshop	35	12		People with disabilities, single mothers, victims of domestic violence and victims of human trafficking	130,000	104,000	80% (20% donations)		Housing solution for WSNs. Professional training
Romania 3	2E 3S 4W	TSW	Second-hand shops	31	20	Wage 'administrated' by WISE	Young people with a harsh family background, people with disabilities. WSNs are hosted by WISE. WISE to adopt a transition model	248,153 (323,294 including recruitment activities)				Housing solution for WSNs



Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Romania 4		PW	Reuse of waste from electrical and electronic equipment. Social farm	44	31		Vulnerable people from social services and from prisons. WISE to adopt a transition model	900,000	837,000	93%		
Romania 5	2E 3S 2W	TW	Bakery. WISE was created by a welfare organisation	9	4		Young people leaving the protection system. WISE to adopt a transition model	85,000	42,500	50% Resources integrated by parent organisation	No reserved contracts	WISE is committed to training WSNs
Romania 6	2E 1S 3W	SW	Accommodation services in a hostel. WISE was created by a welfare organisation	6	3		Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds from parent organisation	30,000	15,000	50% Resources integrated by parent organisation		WISE integrates beneficiaries from a parent welfare organisation
Romania 7	2E 3S 5W	PW	Archiving, tailoring, typography, manufacturing products, roasting, recruitment and placement of people with disabilities/occupational safety services	33	20		Young people from vulnerable groups. WISE to adopt a transition model	2,514,262				



Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Romania 8	1E 2S 3W	STW PW (Borderline. It may not be a WISE)	Kindergarten - nursery school	7	4			43,293				
Romania 9	1E 1S 3W	PW (Difficult to put in a model: it is in start-up phase)	Catering									
Poland 1	1E 1S 1W	SW	Catering and gardening. Welfare activities (note: members are from local public administrations)	5 (and 2 trainees and another 9 collaborators in welfare activities)	3	€490 pm, corresponding to minimum wage	People with disabilities	393,000	214,000	54.5% (every year the cooperative obtains funds from the National Training Fund)	No formal reserved contracts, but solid relation with local administrations	
Poland 2			Catering (note: founded by local administrations)	5 (and another 5 collaborators)	5	Regular wage, higher than minimum wage	Various types	150,000				



Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
Poland 3	1E 1S 5W	TW	Catering, gardening and cleaning	30	10	€300 pm part-time	People with disabilities	310,000	34,000	11%		Structured training activities. Spontaneous care work
France 1	1 E 2 S 2 WSNs	PW	Rework of electronic devices, recycling	82	58	Minimum wage	Long-term unemployed, NEETs, immigrants	3,800,000	2,800,000	74%		Social support (professional interviews, training, help for social issues)
France 2	1 E 2 S 2 WSNs	PW	Temporary work company	30	25	Just above minimum wage	Long-term unemployed, NEETs, immigrants	1,250,000	Not specified			Social support (professional interviews, training, help for social issues)
France 3	1 E 1 S	PW	Temporary work company	76	71	Just above minimum wage	Long-term unemployed, NEETs, immigrants	2,119,000	Not specified			Social support (professional interviews, training, help for social issues)
France 4	1 E 2 S 2 WSNs	PW	Food sector (catering and restaurant)	30	17	Minimum wage	Long-term unemployed, women, immigrants	1,200,000	Not specified			Social support (professional interviews, training, help



Country	Interviews	Scenario	Sector	Workers	WSNs	WSN remuneration	Type	Turnover	Turnover from sale of goods and services sales	%	Reserved contracts	About social care and training
												for social issues)
France 5	1 E 2 S 2 WSNs	PW	Circular economy, cleaning	200	120	Minimum wage	Long-term unemployed, immigrants, NEETs	8,000,000	Not specified			Social support (professional interviews, training, help for social issues)
France 6	1 E 2 S 2 WSNs	PW	Circular economy (waste management)	445	250	Minimum wage	Long-term unemployed, immigrants, NEETs	19,000,000	Not specified			Social support (professional interviews, training, help for social issues)





B-WISE
Skills for the future : WISEs ready!



7 Annex B: Report on the adoption and use of technologies by WISEs*

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Thanks to Lieven Bossuyt (Lichtwerk) and Lisa Messely (Groep Gidts) who wrote the paragraphs about the results of WP1.





7.1 Introduction

Failure to integrate all potentially productive workers in the labour market can create ethical, civic and economic problems. Work is crucial to self-realisation and meaning, and non-productive citizens can place burdens on other people and the entire society (Yeo and Moore, 2003).

Unfortunately, labour market constraints, information imperfections and information asymmetries sharply reduce employment opportunities for some workers (Borzaga and Defourny, 2001). This is especially the case for WSNs and many policies have been introduced to integrate them, e.g., regulatory policies oblige all or some enterprises to hire a minimum percentage of WSNs; compensation policies compensate enterprises for the lower productivity and/or the higher costs of the WSNs employed; and support policies provide dedicated tutors, coaches, trainers or supporters to facilitate the selection and training of enterprises integrating WSNs.

Labour market failures, policy failures and innovative policies have led to new alternative initiatives (Petrella and Richez-Battesti, 2016) that have been named WISEs. A WISE can be defined as an institutional mechanism of supported employment that favours workers discriminated against by conventional enterprises and provides them with appropriate on-the-job training (Borzaga and Loss, 2006).

In this research project funded by the European Commission, 73 case studies of a variety of WISEs have been conducted to analyse the development of the WISEs in Europe (see Table 1).

Table 11 - Characteristics of the cases analysed

Country #	Country	Number of cases	Average number of employees	Average turnover (€)
1	Austria	10	140	3,454,556
2	Belgium	5	537	12,400,119
3	Bulgaria	3	31	96,667



4	Croatia	3	31	554,963
5	France	4	209	8,700,000
6	Greece	3	103	1,100,000
7	Italy	6	59	2,052,333
8	Latvia	5	11	200,000
9	The Netherlands	8	633	15,200,000
10	Poland	3	19	223,135
11	Romania	9	22	497,589
12	Slovenia	7	10	274,019
13	Spain	7	1,074	58,375,000

Note: the averages in each country are calculated using the data available (some cases did not provide all data)

The cases show a high heterogeneity among the analysed countries. Indeed, even if the average turnovers and the average number of employees in each country are not indicative of the characteristics of WISEs in that country, it can be noted that the numbers vary significantly.

The research has shown that some of these organisations have been successful and have grown in recent decades, especially in countries with effective supporting policies. In other countries, few WISEs have been created and the existing ones have remained very small.

Indeed, as highlighted in the case studies and reported in the WP1 report of this project, the WISE sector in Europe is very heterogeneous.

The heterogeneity in terms of sectors, size of the organisations and policies in different countries make it difficult to analyse the causes behind the lack of growth of many



WISEs. However, we can hypothesise a gap in the adoption and use of scaling technologies.

For this reason, we have analysed the case studies developed during the B-WISE project in 2022 to highlight common issues and possible suggestions for the WISE sector, for providers of educational and training activities, and for policymakers.

The main information and data regarding the cases is provided in a table in the main report. These cases have been developed by interviewing enablers, supporters and WSNs.

Given the above-mentioned heterogeneity, it is not possible to evaluate the overall technological development of the WISE sector. However, it is possible to shed some light on the adoption and use of specific technologies.

Table 2 at the bottom of this report and the following paragraphs detail the adoption and use of different technologies and possible developments.

In particular, thanks to the case studies in the different countries, a series of technologies and main application areas have been identified and each WISE has been analysed in relation to them. The technologies and areas of application identified are:

- 1) Internal communication
- 2) External communication
- 3) Training
- 4) Administration and accounting
- 5) Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)
- 6) Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
- 7) File and data storage
- 8) Technologies for products/services and production processes
- 9) E-commerce
- 10) Assistive technologies
- 11) Emerging technologies (artificial intelligence/machine learning/big data)

In addition to the case studies, the data on technology and digitalisation collected through both the face-to-face and online surveys from WP1 is also used to compare the findings from the 73 case studies. The WP1 surveys carried out between October and



December 2021 not only included 403 face-to-face interviews with three target groups (enablers, supporters, WSNs), they also consisted of an online questionnaire with a subset of questions of the face-to-face interviews, completed by 175 enablers (e.g., CEOs, CHROs, CFOs, staff managers, area coordinators, project managers and ICT specialists).

Below, a short section is devoted to each one of the above-mentioned technologies and areas of application. These sections present and explain the technology and then focus on the results from the case studies, first as a whole and then concerning the different sectors. Next, the relevant insights from the WP1 surveys are listed. Finally, each section is completed by a discussion on possible improvement proposals for WISEs.

7.2 Results

7.2.1 Internal communication technologies

What they are: these are digital technologies to facilitate communication between workers, such as the use of WhatsApp groups or other messaging applications or internal newsletters. They represent basic-level digital functions, which generally do not require specific skills or dedicated training and which in most cases require skills that are already widespread among workers, including WSNs. In addition to instant messaging, there are online communication applications, such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams, which allow workers to meet virtually and work remotely. They too do not require special digital skills and are therefore easy to use.

What the cases say: the WISEs show widespread aptitude for the use of these technologies. Most of them declared that they use e-mails and instant messaging apps, in particular WhatsApp and Viber, to disseminate service and organisational notices and communications inside the company. These tools require basic skills and are easy to use even for WSNs, who usually also use them in daily life. Furthermore, they allow continuous and immediate interactions between employees. These interactions help to further develop an inclusive corporate culture, a culture that values employee involvement and already characterises the WISEs. Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic represented a significant push in this direction: many companies were forced to resort



to teleworking to continue their business. Several WISEs have claimed they keep using Microsoft Teams or Zoom for employee meetings.

From the point of view of WSNs, it is possible to observe different attitudes towards these technologies. Some people show an aversion to them because they are afraid of using the internet. Workers from the Greek WISE explain that they are wary of technology and in particular of the dangers of communicating via the internet. They confess a fear of 'damaging' something on the computer or smartphone and of being victims of online fraud. Some believe that the use of smartphones and PCs is 'dangerous, and harmful to health'. Workers of the WISE Netherlands 3 wonder about the long-term consequences of digitalisation in society: 'what about radiation, control of people by technology companies or privacy?' It is evident that some are worried and frightened by the use of the internet, which in the eyes of many still appears as a new and completely unknown world, full of dangers. This is also confirmed by one of the employees of a French WISE who is always afraid when she is faced with a new instrument: afraid of not being able to master it.

On the other hand, most of the WSNs interviewed have now overcome these fears: they use WhatsApp, and other similar apps, daily to communicate with colleagues, but also with relatives and friends outside the WISE. Many have their social accounts, especially on Facebook and Instagram, where they publish multimedia content. Among these, some, such as the employees of two French WISEs, use their smartphones a lot but hardly ever the computer because they believe it is much more difficult.

Sectoral differences: the interviews did not reveal, for this type of technology, significant differences between the various sectors. Internal communication is developed homogeneously in all WISEs, as this aspect is not linked to the specific activities, but rather to a culture of inclusion and awareness that is the basis of the concept of social enterprise, and which therefore unites all WISEs.

What the WP1 surveys show: according to the collected data, 73.3% of supporters used communication skills at work and 78.8% used them at home, while 27.8% of WSNs used communication skills at work and 65.9% at home. Communication skills include sending/receiving e-mails; participating in social networks; having phone/video calls over the internet; and uploading self-created content to any website to be shared.



Examining the level of endowment of the digital skills related to communication and collaboration through digital technologies, 9% of enablers have a low level, 24.7% of supporters have no or a low level of digital skills and 30.3% of WSNs have no or a low level of digital skills.

Especially since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, teleworking has gained a lot of importance all over the world. This is also the case for the WISEs interviewed, where 74.2% of enablers use tools that facilitate teleworking or online collaboration. Enablers were also asked about the use of the same tools by supporters and WSNs within the WISEs. According to them, 66.3% of supporters and only 25.8% of WSNs use teleworking tools. In 18% of WISEs, none of the target groups use tools for teleworking. In particular, small WISEs do not use tools for teleworking.

Conclusions and suggestions for improvement: as previously mentioned, the WISEs show a widespread aptitude for the use of these technologies, probably even in terms that are higher than the generality of companies. The WISEs are inclined to pay particular attention to this aspect because they manifest a business culture particularly oriented to creating a pleasant internal climate and sensitising all members, including WSNs, to the values and mission of WISEs. For these reasons, they are inclined to develop channels of rapid communication such as those mentioned above.

Therefore, improvement actions do not seem necessary for most WISEs. However, it may be interesting to support the ones that use only e-mails as a means of internal communication: they could be helped to also use instant messaging apps, to make communication more immediate and less formal, making workers feel more involved and at ease. In addition, widespread use of internal communication technologies does not necessarily mean that all users also possess the necessary communication or collaboration skills to use the technology efficiently and effectively. Therefore, it makes sense to provide adequate training and, given that both supporters and WSNs use digital communication and collaboration tools significantly more at home than at work, WISEs should pay also attention to the need for digital skills in other contexts, outside of the working environment.



7.2.2 External communication and marketing technologies

What they are: these are tools used for corporate marketing, to promote products or services and to spread the company's mission. Companies create their websites or pages on the main social networks, in which to share information and promotional messages to keep customers informed and win new ones. To manage these pages, it is necessary to have digital skills slightly greater than those necessary to manage the internal communication tools. For this reason, these activities are often not managed by WSNs.

What the cases say: the majority of the WISEs interviewed have a website and an active social channel. The most used is Facebook, while there is less propensity to use the most popular channels among young people today, such as Instagram and TikTok. Some companies also engage in the creation of multimedia content, published mainly on YouTube, to describe the company mission and the activities carried out, and to make the buyers aware of the social implications connected to their products. However, these contents have a low degree of diffusion, thus showing some limits of the products/services or the strategies for their promotion. Another limitation of some WISEs, such as the WISE Greece¹, is that the use of social media for marketing purposes is very basic, mainly for information purposes and rarely for promotional purposes.

If, on the one hand, there are WISEs, such as Croatia² and Spain⁴, that have obsolete websites that should be updated and improved, on the other hand there are WISEs that take great care of this aspect, such as Bulgaria³, which even promotes its business in some television programmes. This WISE, furthermore, carries out an information campaign through relations with the main Bulgarian media and newspapers.

There are cases, especially in Spain, in which marketing strategies are outsourced and companies do not create their website but use the one of a parent cooperative. Other WISEs, such as Romania⁷, on the contrary, have a specialised department for online marketing.

Even though not all the WISEs are well developed from this point of view, most of them appear to be aware of the importance of marketing: an example is the WISE Italy², which 'appears aware of the growing weight that apps, digital technologies and e-



commerce have and will have in implementing and retaining their customers and donors. Our WISE intends to keep up with the times and therefore we know that we cannot avoid the use of new technologies, even if the current customers are of advanced age, not too inclined to use digital tools’.

Sectoral differences: from the analysis of the cases, it is possible to note that external communication technologies are more widespread in WISEs that operate in the catering sector or in those that have shops. This is consistent with the behaviour of traditional businesses in the same sectors and is linked to the nature of the activities carried out, which require more direct promotional activities. However, even the WISEs of the other sectors appear to be quite developed from this point of view, and no substantial differences can be highlighted.

What the WP1 surveys show: almost all WISEs that participated in the surveys have their own website. Only in Croatia and Greece approximately a third of the WISEs do not have a website (respectively 33.3% and 28.6%). In Italy, Latvia, Poland and Spain, 16.7% of WISEs do not have a website. WISEs have a website mainly to pursue promotional objectives (in 77.5% of the cases) and informational objectives (in 65.2% of the cases). 64% of the WISEs are satisfied with their website and merely 7.8% of the WISEs are very dissatisfied with their website. Only 16.9% of the WISEs state that their website meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards. Conversely, a large part (46.1%) of the WISEs do not know what WCAG standards are and if their website meets them.

Looking at the results of the surveys, it can be seen that most WISEs (88.8%) use social networks like Facebook and LinkedIn. Almost half of the WISEs (47.2%) use multimedia content sharing websites such as Instagram or YouTube.

Conclusions and suggestions for improvement: the majority of WISEs appear not dissimilar to other companies of comparable size. The style of communication varies according to the culture of the company, being sometimes more oriented to presenting the products sold, and sometimes more oriented to communicating the mission of the WISE and the social value of the activities carried out.

WISEs could pay more attention to social communications, using the most popular social networks today, especially among young people, and constantly updating their websites, with higher-quality multimedia content. Furthermore, they could invest more



(marketing budget) to make the contents reach a good level of diffusion, which is now often limited and probably only 'organic', i.e., linked to the visibility given by the platforms' algorithms. Investments in marketing could have a relevant impact as the social value of the initiatives could attract great interest and media attention.

7.2.3 Training and support

What they are: two different sub-themes are included in this category: 1) training and consultancy activities to help learn how to use new technologies and (digital) tools, especially for WSNs and 2) the use of technology and specifically online platforms as a tool for carrying out training activities.

Concerning the first theme, technologies as an object of training, we refer to initiatives such as training courses, support desks or other ways to help workers use technologies and (digital) tools that impact their working or daily life.

Concerning the second theme, we refer to e-learning platforms that are integrated systems of interactive services to support and manage online learning and training. They provide a complete learning experience where users can enrol, attend courses, test their knowledge and receive certificates of participation. Many companies manage training activities through Moodle, an open-source IT environment for managing courses. Thanks to their modularity, Moodle and other digital platforms allow users to personalise the learning environments and develop additional customised features. E-learning platforms enable the learners to follow the courses and the other training activities wherever they are and at any time.

What the cases say: a good number of WISEs pay attention to training and support initiatives on technologies and digitalisation. This is coherent with the attention that the WISEs attribute in general to training, in particular for WSNs. Many WISEs provide digital literacy courses, with which they help WSNs to enter the digital world. These courses are not aimed only at the production activities or other needs of the workplace, but also at other aspects of daily life. These are technologies to be able to better carry out common practices making life easier for people, e.g., searching for information they need, dealing with public administrations, communicating with other people, buying a product, enjoying multimedia content, etc. For many WSNs, some of these tools, which are often simple, are not easy to understand immediately, representing



obstacles due to cognitive or physical limitations; and it is precisely to help these people that many WISEs also create technological support desks, managed in most cases by the company supporters themselves, but sometimes also by IT experts, as is the case for example in Austria⁷ and Italy¹. Some companies have started specific projects for digital literacy: this is the case of the DigiCoach project of the WISE Austria³, a project aimed not only at WSNs but also supporters. Similarly, Digifit, a project by Austria⁹, aims at the digital fitness of WSNs. These cases highlight that the WISEs are aware of the importance of digitalisation and desire to develop as much as possible in this direction.

The majority of WISEs recognise the importance of this type of support, as one of the supporters from Austria¹⁰ states: workers with special needs 'need basic support and skills in digitalisation, they need a basic qualification and training on online skills, on online banking, on how to use a digital signature, how to use e-mail, how to use online applications for social benefits, how to find and book a doctor, how to pay taxes online [...]. Competence in information and research would also be important: how do I find reliable news on the internet, which resources to trust, which not to trust, how do I use job platforms, and how to apply online'. Workers of Italy⁶, which has activated a specific consultancy desk aimed at its employees, agree with these words. The supporter following this initiative states that 'everyone should have basic training to understand how to access the cooperative's e-mail for information and to download the payslip. Our desk also advises on the use of technology to simplify daily life (enrolment in the Public Digital Identity System, secure online payments, booking of appointments with the public administration)'. During the interview he also clarifies what the attitude of WSNs towards this initiative is, explaining that the differences between who accesses the IT consultancy counter and who does not are 1) the level of curiosity, 2) the resistance to the use of technology in general and 3) the level of education. He adds that 'from the second meeting with the counter, the workers requested other appointments and support because a relationship of trust was created. Languages must be calibrated according to the user and his/her cultural/motivational level'. It is evident, in this WISE, that for the support desk, but also the training courses on technology, the role of the supporter who accompanies the learning is fundamental. The supporter must create homogeneous groups coherent with professional and educational levels, motivation and knowledge. If the groups are organised in the right way, the learners keep sharing knowledge and help each other after the educational



activities. In any case, the resistance from some workers is strong and there is an explicit request to simplify the technological notions as much as possible. Many ask to be accompanied by the supporter in person and not online, especially for the technical training.

It emerged that it is also important to have a motivator among the workers, a person recognised by the group as a leader, who explains to the group why it is useful to use new technologies in the company. 'Innovations cannot be handed down from above. Doing so would only raise a wall of resistance and frustration by those who are not used to the adoption of new technologies'.

The cases allow us to also understand the use of technology and specifically online platforms as a tool for carrying out training activities (the second sub-theme of this section on training technologies).

Especially following the Covid-19 pandemic, many companies have started to provide distance training, through online e-learning platforms. However, not all workers appreciate these teaching methods, because they prefer to experience the training in person and not online. One of the WSNs of Italy⁶ stated that 'the online mode is not liked because it is boring and because there is a violation of privacy in keeping the camera on at home'. Had he been attending in person he would have been more motivated to learn. Privacy is a deeply felt issue. It represents one of the greatest problems and fears for people in difficulty. For this reason, it is often the subject of training courses in the WISEs, as is the case, for example, in Netherlands².

Regarding online training, some workers from Slovenia¹ and Slovenia³ say : 'it was tough because sometimes I couldn't speak or couldn't listen or answer questions and 'in my opinion, these lessons make it much more difficult to concentrate'. Furthermore, for others, this learning method is complicated due to cognitive and physical deficits, for example, a worker from Slovenia⁷ who has hearing problems said that it was very difficult for her as she could not read lips.

While a large proportion of workers are not inclined to online training, some of them have expressed positive opinions. Among these, there is for example a worker from Austria⁷ according for whom e-learning is manageable as long as it focuses only on one or two disciplines. Another worker, from Slovenia⁶, appreciates distance learning: he



considers it more comfortable, because it does not require him to be around other people.

If there are conflicting opinions among workers and negative opinions often prevail, the opposite happens for enablers and supporters. They believe, as one from Slovenia⁴ states, that these methods are very effective, above all because they allow for saving time and economic resources.

A major concern when it comes to participating in e-learning is the availability of digital devices. In Belgium, WSNs were also asked about personal ownership and use of devices: out of a total of 38 WSNs, 68% reported having a computer, 47% a tablet and 82% a smartphone. 5% reported having no devices at all.

Sectoral differences: there are no particular differences between the various sectors. As expected, technological training is more developed in companies that are more technologically advanced. On the other hand, as regards the online learning methods, they have been adopted by the majority of WISEs due to force majeure (pandemic) regardless of the sector they belong to.

What the WP1 surveys show: the face-to-face and online surveys addressing enablers investigated both internal and external training initiatives promoted by WISEs for their employees.

Most WISEs interviewed do not provide training on digital skills themselves. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions: all the WISEs in Austria that have been interviewed provide training on digital skills; 83.3% did in France, 66.7% in Spain and half in the Netherlands. In the remaining countries, only 40% or less of the WISEs do it. The larger the WISEs, the more likely they will provide training on digital skills.

Among the three target groups, the main beneficiaries of training initiatives on digital skills are enablers, while WSNs' participation in training activities aimed at improving their proficiency in digital skills is lower. This makes sense, since digital skills are considered more relevant for enablers to carry out their tasks. The fact that the level of endowment of digital skills is high for enablers shows that the current training initiatives meet their needs.



Overall, a limited share of the WISEs interviewed (16.9%) have established partnerships with other local/regional organisations to promote external training initiatives for WSNs. The exception to this are French and Belgian WISEs (respectively 50% and 40%). In particular, medium-sized WISEs rely on external partners to provide training initiatives, probably because large WISEs provide more training initiatives themselves. However, the online survey provides different results: according to the data, the share of WISEs that established partnerships to provide training on digital skills is higher, and it also includes large WISEs.

Conclusions and suggestions for improvement: training is an area in which WISEs may be more effective than non-WISE companies. While some traditional businesses may find this aspect of empowerment outside their mission, the WISEs can pay a lot of attention to it and invest resources in it thanks to their commitment to improving the conditions of WSNs.

This hypothesis is partially confirmed in the cases because at least 32% of WISEs that were interviewed show a high commitment in terms of training and e-learning platforms. However, considering the significant boost given by the Covid-19 pandemic to these activities in all companies worldwide, it is not possible to say with certainty that the WISEs are more active on this subject and these technologies than comparable non-WISE companies.

The data collected from the surveys from WP1 also nuances the above-mentioned view: WISEs are certainly committed to training their employees, but in the area of digital skills training, and particularly for their WSNs, much progression is definitely still possible.

Beyond the productive and working context, technology helps to simplify the performance of many activities of daily life; however, for people like those belonging to the WISEs, with cognitive and physical deficits, even the simplest operations can be extremely complicated. Therefore, it is essential that the WISEs that do not currently provide support for digitalisation develop in this direction: in this way, WSNs will be able to interact more easily with the outside world and integrate into it. Obviously, by providing adequate technical training to workers, WISEs can also obtain higher digitalisation of their processes. Therefore, this would not only benefit the WSNs but the entire company.



One line of development regarding training activities and technologies is related to personalisation. WISEs could invest in customising online training and hybrid training (training partially online and partially in person) to the different needs of those who must learn. For example, a flexible system could allow some people to follow in person, others online; some to view the speaker's face zoomed in for lip-reading, others not to show their name and video for privacy reasons. Some of these innovations could be integrated into new customised e-learning platforms, optimally accessible also by WSNs. These platforms could be ad hoc developments of open-source platforms such as Moodle. Enabling e-learning to be used on both smartphones and computers is key.

7.2.4 Administration and accounting

What they are: this section considers the technologies to support office work and accounting, such as software for electronic invoicing, payroll management, time and attendance, and employee administration.

What the cases say: this appears to be one of the areas in which the technology is more used in WISEs. The firms examined generally appear to have a good level of use of technologies to support office work. Some cases have been documented in which the companies are still predominantly paper-based, but the level of digitalisation appears generally good and comparable to that of non-WISE firms of similar size. Most WISEs equip their office workers with hardware devices with personal productivity software, use electronic invoicing (which has become mandatory at least in some countries) and implement digital payroll applications. Generally, the WISEs use dedicated software for various administrative functions (accounting, attendance recording, etc.), sometimes with solutions that interconnect the different software, determining a significant increase in efficiency. Furthermore, the digitalisation of these documents, such as timesheets, and organisation of shifts and payrolls, often allows workers to be able to consult them simply and immediately through dedicated apps or portals. There are a few cases in which this does not happen, for example in Romania², where it was stated that 'they do not have an internal platform for employees because not everyone would be able to manage it'. In response to this problem, however, one of the workers of a French WISE states that the management of administrative activities should not be excessively problematic because 'if they think about it, they get there or ask for help'.



An area that deserves specific attention concerns the tools for digital management of job placement paths. For example, 'computerised personal folders' relating to the WSNs involved would allow supporters to manage, with the necessary guarantees of privacy, information relating to the persons who have entered and the path taken (for example, periodic checks on the progress, on the learning carried out on the job or through training courses and the results of verification sessions carried out jointly with public services that have charge of the person who has been inserted). This type of solution, in addition to being useful for the management and monitoring of the employees, would allow, especially for larger WISEs, for easy extrapolation of useful data both to verify the results achieved for internal improvement purposes and to document the work done for the stakeholders. Solutions of this kind are not absent from the WISEs (for example, some French cases have tools of this type and some Italian WISEs have developed them over the years), but in most cases they are considered a bureaucratic burden to the supporters' work or even a practice that takes away warmth and immediacy from the relationship with the people involved. For these reasons, they appear to be used by only a few WISEs.

Sectoral differences: almost all the WISEs analysed are aligned with non-WISE companies and no relevant differences between sectors have been highlighted.

What the WP1 surveys show: the digitalisation of management processes (e.g., digital organisation of work schedule, e-invoicing) is indeed the most significant domain in which WISEs apply technologies and digitalisation processes. Almost all WISEs that participated in the surveys believe these technologies or digitalisation processes are relevant. Consequently, the level of reliance on them is rather high and the differences between large, medium-sized and small WISEs are rather small.

The surveys also clearly show a high relevance of these technologies in the next five years. Only 6.7% of WISEs think they will not be relevant and 70.8% of the enablers declare that the level of reliance on digital management processes will be rather high in the years to come. 20.2% of enablers believe they will reach a low level of reliance on digital management processes. Almost all large WISEs attribute great relevance to the digitalisation of management processes in the next five years; nevertheless, small and medium-sized WISEs also plan to digitise management processes to a certain level. Over 60% of them consider that the level of reliance on digital management processes will be high.



A particular aspect taken into account in the surveys was the digitalisation of the invoicing process. 62.9% of WISEs already use e-invoices, i.e., invoices in an electronic format and in a standard structure suitable for automated processing. Nevertheless, not all invoices issued by WISEs are already suitable for automated processing. 60.7% of WISEs still use invoices in PDF and JPEG formats, and send them via e-mail, while 38.2% of WISEs still send paper invoices. Small WISEs are lagging behind: only 53.8% of small WISEs use e-invoices suitable for automated processing.

Conclusions and suggestions for improvement: a systematic comparison between the level of digitalisation of WISE office work and that of comparable companies by sector and size is difficult, but in the cases no systematic gaps in the WISEs emerge in this regard. As already mentioned, the WISEs seem from this point of view to be aligned in terms of development concerning comparable non-WISE companies.

According to both WP1 and WP2, this area appears to be the one in which there is the greatest degree of digital and technological development in almost all WISEs, and this can also be linked to the fact that WSNs are not usually the ones who have to deal with these activities. The administrative and personnel management aspects are also well managed because they intersect with formal needs (laws) and objectives (employment of WSNs).

7.2.5 Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)

What it is: Enterprise Resource Planning is a software for the integrated management of various activities of the organisation, such as accounting, procurement, project management, risk and compliance management, operations and supply chain. ERP systems relate the different processes to each other and helps in sharing information between different departments and the analysis of data. They offer the possibility to monitor the overall functioning of the organisation and intervene to make the processes more efficient and effective in different areas and departments of the company (e.g., finance office, human resources office, technical office, marketing office).

What the cases say: ERP software can be considered an evolution and an extension of the administration and accounting software seen in the previous paragraph. These are more complex tools that, depending on the type of activity carried out, can then be



interconnected with other software, for example for warehouse management or for the detection of specific actions of workers (e.g., places where the worker must perform cleaning or waste collection actions). This software can have a significant impact on administrative, financial, technological and work management objectives.

From the analysis of the cases, it emerges that only a few WISEs integrate ERP systems within them. It is more common in Spanish companies. Most of them have declared that they use ERP software for their processes. The WISEs Austria³ and Belgium¹ are also quite developed from this point of view. They use SAP, which is among the most widespread and advanced software. In particular, these WISEs use ERP for automating time recording, vacation approval, quarantine and leave notifications and for process optimisation. Other WISEs, such as Italy¹ and ³ and France², have instead declared that, even if they do not use it yet, the implementation of an ERP system is planned. In some cases, it is believed that this type of technology is not suited to the skills of WSNs. As stated in Italy³, 'the normal management systems on the market are not very accessible, and this is why we intend to develop a new software that increases the autonomy of the workers'.

Sectoral differences: from the analysis of the case studies, no particular differences are highlighted related to the sectors to which the different WISEs belong. The few companies, among those interviewed, that integrate the use of ERP systems internally belong to different sectors. As a matter of fact, these systems can be adapted to any sector and business need.

What the WP1 surveys show: 33.7% of the WISEs that participated in the surveys have already implemented an ERP software package. Nevertheless, there are large differences between countries. None of the WISEs in Greece, Italy and Latvia use an ERP software package. Conversely, more than half of the WISEs in Austria, Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Spain use this software. Furthermore, the size of the enterprise plays an important role: 81.3% of large WISEs use an ERP software package, while the large majority of small WISEs (80.8%) does not. This makes sense considering the fact that small enterprises mainly use CRM software.

Conclusions and suggestions for improvement: as mentioned above, not many WISEs are developed from this point of view. However, the integration of ERP systems, although not a priority for many WISEs, helps to optimise the management of



companies and this would also lead to an increase in their productivity. Especially for WISEs that are already digitising different aspects of management and administration, the use of an ERP system would allow them to integrate all the different functions in a single software, providing a single, complete and constantly updated view of the data relating to different business areas.

7.2.6 Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

What it is: Customer Relationship Management software helps companies manage, analyse and optimise interactions with their (potential) customers. The goal of CRM is to find and manage new customers, understand and improve the ability to satisfy their customers and, in general, allow for the creation an ongoing relationship with customers and constantly improve relationships and value for the company and the client.

This type of software allows monitoring, automating and improving marketing processes. In general, it can be stated that CRM will be mainly used by younger and small to medium-sized enterprises, whereas fast-growing, mature and large enterprises will prefer ERP. In many cases, the CRM module will then be part of the ERP.

What the cases say: the use of CRM software is not very widespread within the WISEs that are the object of the case studies. Less than 10% of the companies interviewed said they use or are implementing digital services for customer management. Only one WISE spoke properly of a CRM system, the WISE Latvia³. The latter is a company that provides call centre services where all employees work digitally and use CRM software in their daily operations. Despite the high digitalisation in all operations, the workers of this WISE state that ‘they are not worried about the fact that in the future technologies can replace their work since the human touch must always be perceived in the calls of the call centre’. The company recognises as its strength the individual approach to each customer, the attention to the internal processes of its customers and the provision of good-quality services.

In the Netherlands, the digitalisation of customer management appears to be quite widespread. Most of the companies interviewed are integrating new technologies in this area. In particular, Netherlands⁶ customer service is managed with the HubSpot software (one of the most widespread and effective CRM software), and the company



declared that it 'is open to a new digital customer tracking system as a development of WSNs skills and for new activities. The only barrier is represented by the cost and time to implement such systems'. This shows that, among the main obstacles to the digitalisation and technological development of these companies, there are problems related to finding financial resources.

Sectoral differences: among the analysed WISEs, few use CRM systems; therefore, it is not possible to outline the differences among the different production sectors. Given the nature of the tools, it seems quite logical that they are used more when the company has more customers and more direct contact with the customers and has to manage a greater amount of data related to them (B2C – Business to Consumer – companies).

What the WP1 surveys show: fewer WISEs implement a standalone CRM software package compared to an ERP software package (25.8%). Especially Austrian, French and Romanian WISEs use CRM software (66.7% or more). None of the Belgian, Greek, Italian, Polish or Slovenian WISEs implemented a CRM software package. Moreover, there are less noticeable differences between small, medium-sized or large WISEs. 19.2% of small WISEs, 33.3% of medium-sized WISEs and 37.5% of large WISEs use CRM software. If WISEs do implement CRM software, they use it mainly to collect, keep and make information on customers accessible to different departments within the WISE. The analysis of information about WISEs' customers for marketing purposes is less common today.

Conclusions and suggestions for improvement: the integration of CRM software is not widespread within the companies interviewed. As regards these systems, we can partly refer to what was said previously for ERP software: if companies used it more, they would be able to simplify some management processes, in this case of customers, and consequently the processes of acquiring and retaining their customers.

7.2.7 File and data storage

What they are: these technologies include hardware devices, infrastructure and software dedicated to the permanent storage of large quantities of information in electronic format. Among these technologies, today cloud storage services play a leading role. This data-retention model requires data to be stored on multiple virtual



servers generally hosted at third-party facilities or dedicated servers. This system allows access and downloads by multiple users at the same time and does not have limits in terms of space occupied.

What the cases say: WISEs that use digital file and data storage systems seem aligned with non-WISE companies. Indeed, several of the WISEs analysed store data on the cloud, and share files, not only through e-mail or other communication systems but also through online sharing programs. In particular, among these solutions, the most popular are Microsoft OneDrive and Google Drive.

Once again, the Dutch companies are among the most advanced in this field. Almost all the WISEs of this nation have declared that they have integrated cloud systems for e-mail and data storage within their companies.

Sectoral differences: for this type of technology there are no relevant sectoral differences. Nowadays, all types of companies find themselves having to archive and manage large amounts of data, regardless of the sector they belong to.

What the WP1 surveys show: 56.2% of WISEs that participated in the surveys buy cloud computing services over the internet. However, there are major differences between countries. In countries such as Belgium, Croatia, France, Latvia, the Netherlands and Spain, more than 60% of the WISEs make use of them. Mainly large and medium-sized WISEs buy these services, respectively 68.8% and 71.4%. Conversely, only 46.2% of small WISEs buy cloud computing services.

Conclusions and suggestions for improvement: as previously mentioned, the WISEs that integrate digital systems for storing and sharing data and files appear to be aligned with non-WISE companies. However, most of the companies interviewed in the case studies did not mention the presence of such technologies within their companies. These companies could benefit from investments in this area because these systems help to simplify management and business activities. In addition, these technologies are easy to use and facilitate information sharing and collaborative work. Finally, these technologies can also be used in the private sphere. Training courses in these digital technologies, therefore, have a double impact: they can be useful both at work and at home.



7.2.8 Technologies for products/services and production processes

What they are: this section does not consider a single technology but several and the integration of technological tools and solutions into products/services and processes for carrying out production activities. These technologies can vary significantly in relation to various factors, in particular the type of company and the sectors in which the company operates. For example, for a production company, it is important to evaluate the technologies used in production plants, such as the machinery that automates the production processes. For the catering sector, it is appropriate to evaluate the tools used to digitise the customer experience or the activities in the kitchen, such as tablets to take orders. In general, therefore, in this section it is not possible to identify and describe a single technology. In the following, we will highlight the most interesting technologies in terms of products/services and production processes that emerged in the different cases.

What the cases say: from the analysis of the case studies, it is possible to highlight two different situations. On the one hand, there are WISEs that integrate various technologies, some of which are cutting-edge, which make them competitive with traditional companies. On the other hand, however, there are WISEs that still carry out almost only manual activities and that have no intention of automating their processes, either because they believe that automation is not necessary for the type of activity that they carry out or because they believe that this can cause problems.

There are cases of WISEs, generally of large dimensions, that are equipped with state-of-the-art production facilities compared to the technologies available on the market. Among these cases there is, for example, Croatia³, which is equipped with the best technology and the latest machinery, which allow it to create high-quality products and therefore achieve high customer satisfaction. Also, in its SWOT analysis, France³ identifies the mechanisation of some positions as an opportunity to 'keep up with the times and be able to accommodate more types of waste'. Also of interest is the emergence of rapid prototyping, as in Belgium¹: through 3D-printing and laser cutting engineers designed and created tools and objects to make production possible or to adapt individual workplaces. The goal of the engineers of Belgium¹ was 'to go from design to realisation in four hours'. This way, the WISE can adapt workplaces very quickly to respond to the production demands and the quality needs of their clients.



However, automation is also identified as a threat, because ‘mechanisation must be adequately supported in order not to lose sight of the mission of inclusion’. This WISE is not alone in considering technology as a threat to job inclusion: Netherlands⁵ also sees the digitalisation of standardised production processes as a threat to employment and argues that ‘to create jobs for all employees, many activities will remain manual’. Poland³ also operates in a completely traditional way because ‘direct contact, close relationships, attention to others and sensitivity to their needs are of great importance. A WISE is an enterprise in which stability and predictability, tranquillity and a “familiar” and calm space of professional activity are important. In this perspective, the use of technology – both today and in the future – is out of focus. The important thing is to be with the other person, build a professional path for them and accompany them on that path. Digital technologies are not yet part of this concept, as they cannot replace the other person and the time saving they can bring is not important’. In addition to the managers, this vision is sometimes shared by the workers themselves, as claimed by a worker from Slovenia⁴ who states that ‘they lose their jobs because of machines; once they are bought, they no longer have a job’.

In addition to the problem of the replacement of humans by machines, another issue raised by some WISEs is related to the lower skills that WSNs frequently have. For example, Italy⁴ makes very little use of technology because ‘due to its intrinsic complexity, it is perceived as unsuitable and not very accessible to WSNs’. The main difference between this WISE and the other Italian WISEs can be found in the approach to digital technologies: in this WISE, they are not perceived as an opportunity, but as a complexity, especially for WSNs. In the management team, the equation ‘less technology = greater ease of execution and greater employment opportunities for WSNs’ is widespread. One of the Netherlands² supporters holds views in line with this conviction: ‘digitalisation can be impersonal and there is a risk of loneliness for people who are unable to keep up with it’.

These fears, however, do not always lead to a total absence of digitalisation: there are, in fact companies, such as Croatia¹ and Belgium¹, that carry out a ‘hybrid’ production, automating only some phases of the production process, while others are still carried out manually to favour labour integration.



Furthermore, there is no shortage of WISEs that, while wanting to innovate, are unable to do so due to limited financial resources. As one of the supporters of Austria4 says, 'digitalisation is expensive and social enterprises cannot afford it'.

Sectoral differences: in this context, the sector in which the various WISEs operate is fundamental for two reasons. The first is that some of the companies interviewed argue that the integration of technologies is not required in their sector, as it is not necessary for their activities. These companies claim to have intentionally identified simple (sometimes economically secondary) productive activities, because they are more suitable for offering job opportunities to workers with physical, social and cognitive limitations, who consider themselves extraneous to the reasoning relating to technological innovation and digitalisation.

The second reason why the sector is relevant for technologies related to products/services and production is that, depending on the different types of sectors in which the companies operate, it is possible to identify common technologies.

From the analysis of the cases, one of the operational sectors of WISEs in which digital and technological tools are used the most is the catering sector. In this sector, for example, there are several WISEs that use state-of-the-art kitchen appliances and tools, such as Greece1 and Croatia1, or that are investing in order to do so, such as Spain5. According to France1, food production is evolving enormously in terms of new technologies and culinary techniques (low temperature cooking machines, cooling cells, vacuum packaging, etc.), so even the WISEs must find a way to 'keep up'. Another technology widely used in this sector is the combination of tablets and software for receiving orders and for direct communication of them with the kitchen. Nowadays, these are not very innovative technologies, but they show attention to introducing elements of digitalisation and 'not being left behind'. Furthermore, the fact that these technologies are not complex represents an advantage for these WISEs because they can easily integrate them within their companies, allowing them to be used even by WSNs.

Another sector in which various technologies have been introduced is the sector of cleaning and environmental services. In this sector, we could expect the use of mainly manual tools, as is the case, for example, of the WISEs Poland3 and Greece3, while several interviewed companies are digitising their activities. This is the case of Spain7



where the cleaning department uses cloud-based software to manage its activities, such as monitoring incidents and resolution times, issuing work orders and notifications, and assigning and planning work. Spain⁴ is also at the forefront of technology and is experimenting with a window cleaning drone. Netherlands⁴ is also very developed in this sector: robots are used for cleaning and geolocation tools are used to monitor their movements, driving speed and emissions.

Some WISEs that own production plants have also introduced technological innovations. Among these, for example, are Austria¹, which is investing in technologies for automating the cutting of clothes, and Latvia⁴, which is equipped with different technologies, such as printing machines, machines to produce stamps and sewing machines.

What the WP1 surveys show: the relevance of the digitalisation of standardised production processes varies within and across countries in Europe, from not relevant (24.7% of WISEs) to highly relevant (18% of WISEs). Data indicates that mainly large WISEs see the relevance of these technologies and they rely on them moderately or highly (62.5%). Medium-sized and small WISEs seem to consider these technologies as less relevant, and as a consequence they rely less on them.

According to the surveys, 71.9% of WISEs plan to digitise standardised production processes at a certain level in the next five years. 28.1% of WISEs think there will be a rather low level of reliance on digital production processes and 43.8% of WISEs think the level of reliance will be rather high. However, 25.8% of the enablers indicate that for their WISE, the digitalisation of standardised production processes will not be relevant within five years. Up to half of the Italian WISEs, 55.6% of the Slovenian WISEs and 40% of the Dutch WISEs do not think it will be relevant. The face-to-face survey showed no relationship between the desire to digitise standardised production processes and the size of the WISE. Nonetheless, the results of the online survey indicate that it is mainly large WISEs that plan to digitise standardised production processes in the near future.

Conclusions and suggestions for improvement: as mentioned above, it is not possible to outline a single framework regarding technologies for products/services and production activities within the WISEs. Cases of WISEs that are as technologically advanced as non-WISE companies of the same size and belonging to the same sectors have been documented. And it has also been shown that these technological WISEs



occur in the most diverse production sectors. Therefore, it can be assumed that all types of WISEs can, through adequate efforts and investments, develop technologically without having to give up their main focus, the integration of WSNs. This innovation effort is in many cases essential to remain competitive in the market.

Providing more precise indications regarding the adoption of these technologies would require a more in-depth analysis of the different case studies and a greater number of cases. Only in this way would it be possible to identify and propose ad hoc solutions for every type of company and sector.

7.2.9 E-commerce

What it is: e-commerce is the term generally used for the technologies that facilitate the sale of products and services online, through a company website, or by using special intermediation and distribution platforms, such as Amazon.

What the cases say: even though the majority of the WISEs analysed have their own websites, their use for online sales is still very limited. Among the most developed WISEs in this area are Latvia¹, where sales are mostly made through an online store, and advanced tools and services are used (e.g., online chatbot, Canva, Chatra, Isolta). Netherlands⁴, in addition to online sales, has developed software for managing its online activities (sales and customer service).

Many WISEs, although not yet active in this aspect, know that online commerce is taking over traditional commerce and, for this reason, have declared that they have already planned investments for the implementation of e-commerce. This is the case, for example, of Austria⁹ and Netherlands⁴.

Sectoral differences: it is evident that the development of e-commerce is more widespread in those sectors in which the sale of products is carried out. Among the WISEs, the most advanced from this point of view are the ones that deal with the sale of clothes and handicrafts. However, also in other sectors, online marketing methods are being integrated. For example, some WISEs operating in the hospitality tourism sector use online booking channels and some WISEs in the catering sector also carry out deliveries via online platforms.



What the WP1 surveys show: considering e-commerce, it can be noted that most WISEs do not sell goods or services online. If WISEs do sell goods/services online, they do this mostly via their website or via an app. In general, e-commerce forms a relatively small part of the total turnover of the WISE. Only 6.6% of the WISEs that participated in the surveys indicate that e-commerce generates more than 20% of their total turnover.

12.4% of WISEs that participated in the surveys intend to start selling goods or services online in the next 12 months. Not only large ones, but also small and medium-sized WISEs plan to implement e-commerce activities in the near future. The online survey shows an even greater prevalence of small WISEs planning to sell goods and services online in the next 12 months.

Conclusions and suggestions for improvement: WISEs do not appear fully aligned with non-WISE companies of the same size and the same sectors in this aspect. This may be because WISEs have lower sales volumes and more local customers. At the same time, this situation could be a consequence of the lack of e-commerce and not a reason for its absence. The lack of e-commerce, combined with deficiencies in marketing strategies and investments, could be the reason for low and localised sales volumes. For this reason, and because of the increasing diffusion of online commerce, the WISEs that deal with the sale of products should think about developing their e-commerce or starting online sales through intermediary platforms (e.g., Amazon). Some WISEs are aware of the potential of these technologies for sales growth and expansion into other geographic areas: for example, an enabler from Slovenia¹ recognises the opportunity in expanding online business, which would allow them to access different markets and even international ones.

7.2.10 Assistive technologies

What they are: assistive technologies are technologies created to make IT software and tools accessible and usable by people with disabilities. Unlike aids, which are made of mechanical or electronic components and are supportive in the activities of daily life (e.g., wheelchairs), assistive technologies only concern products of an IT nature and are generally composed of a complex of hardware and software integrated into a standalone device. A central aspect of assistive technology is its human-machine interface: the system that allows interactions with the environment despite the



difficulties and limitations in a physical-spatial sense or in terms of the user's interpersonal relationships. Such technologies are often configured as interfaces to be added to existing systems to make them more usable and accessible. Examples of assistive technologies are screen readers, touch screens, special keyboards and speech recognition software.

What the cases say: WISEs should be the type of companies that most of all integrate assistive technologies into their processes, however, the analysis of the case studies shows that there are still few WISEs investing in this field. The most developed region from this point of view seems to be Flanders (in Belgium), where almost all the WISEs interviewed have made, or are willing to make, major investments in assistive technologies that help WSNs to perform the most complex tasks. For example, Belgium² states that it 'has a positive attitude towards the use of technology because it sees it as a means to offer new ways to improve work integration'. Similar is the thought of Austria⁵, the only one among those studied in that country that is making progress in this direction. In this WISE, both enablers and supporters expressed their positive opinion on assistive technologies: 'digitalisation simplifies many things, especially as regards support for young people with disabilities' declared an enabler, while a supporter argues that 'assistive technologies are supporting young people with disabilities and digital devices and tools represent an opportunity for them'.

Among the cases analysed, the most advanced WISE seems to be Spain³. This WISE is led by enablers united by the firm commitment to the digitalisation and improvement of the support offered to their workers with disabilities, in particular those who require more help. To this end, they have designed a 360° adaptation strategy which consists in analysing and adapting not only the workstations, but also the spaces, people and activities, to identify and remove any accessibility barriers. A team of engineers is assigned to design the customised support required by each worker, such as special monitors and speech recognition software. Supporters also play a fundamental role in this company: they carry out training and awareness actions with department heads to generate a culture of adaptation and accessibility at 360°.

The WISE Netherlands² has also integrated different types of assistive technologies into its production processes, such as language computers that convert spoken language into a readable format (speech recognition) for people with hearing impairments and the HoloLens AR device to provide cognitive support to employees. In addition, it is



testing new assistive technologies, including VR glasses that illuminate where something needs to be mounted and a smart projector for viewing manufacturing instructions.

Assistive technologies are a deeply felt issue within WISEs, even by those who are against digitalisation. In an interview, one of the supporters states that 'digitalisation can be impersonal and there is a risk of loneliness for people who are unable to keep up with it, but, despite this, he declares himself 'an advocate of technical support options for employees'.

Sectoral differences: there are no particular sectoral differences regarding the integration of assistive technologies. Indeed, these technologies are born to support people with difficulties in the most varied activities and all sectors. The WISEs are companies that have as their main purpose the integration of WSNs, so we would expect even more efforts in the introduction of assistive technologies, regardless of the sector to which the WISEs belong.

What the WP1 surveys show: in the surveys targeting enablers, three different categories of assistive technology were considered: 1) assistive technology for physical support, 2) assistive technology for social support and 3) assistive technology for cognitive support.

Taking into consideration assistive technology in the domain of physical support, the results of the face-to-face survey show that 91% of the WISEs do not use them yet. Only 2.2% of WISEs use exoskeletons, 4.5% of WISEs use industrial robots and collaborative robots (cobots) and 4.5% of WISEs use service robots for activities such as surveillance and cleaning. Almost all WISEs indicating that they use assistive technology for physical support are large WISEs.

Looking into the use of assistive technology in the domain of cognitive support, 94.4% of enablers state that their WISE does not use assistive technology for cognitive support. Merely 1.1% of WISEs use Augmented or Virtual Reality applications via portable devices, only 3.4% of WISEs implemented industrial Augmented Reality via projection technology in their WISE and there are even fewer WISEs (1.1%) making use of personalised interfaces. The larger the WISE, the more assistive technology for cognitive support implemented.



The last category investigated is assistive technology in the domain of social support. 96.6% of interviewed WISEs do not use assistive technology for social support. None use Augmented or Virtual Reality via smartphones, tablets or smart glasses with the purpose of offering social support. Only 2.2% of WISEs apply smart e-coaching or e-health apps in their workplace. Finally, none of the WISEs involved in the research use social robots. It would be reasonable to think that, as happens for other technologies, large WISEs adopt more assistive technologies for social support compared with small WISEs. However, due to the small number of WISEs in the sample declaring they use assistive technologies, no significant trends in their use can be detected.

Overall, the relevance and the level of reliance on the technological adaptation of individual workplaces is diverse across the EU: 36% of enablers indicate that this domain is irrelevant and 7.9% of WISEs state that they reached a high level of reliance on these technologies. Nevertheless, overall, the relevance and the level of reliance on technological adaptations of individual workplaces is lower compared to the digitalisation of standardised production processes and the digitalisation of management processes, as only a small percentage of WISEs reach a high level of reliance on these assistive technologies. Furthermore, it can be noticed that all Austrian WISEs interviewed deemed this category of technology/digitalisation irrelevant, 66.7% of Latvian and Slovenian WISEs think it is irrelevant and half of Italian and Dutch WISEs do not see the relevance of the technological adaptation of individual workplaces for their businesses today.

Considering the size of the WISEs, the same tendency can be observed as the results for the digitalisation of standardised production processes showed. Mainly large WISEs indicate that the technological adaptation of individual workplaces is relevant and there is a higher level of reliance on these technologies in large WISEs compared with small and medium-sized WISEs.

Looking toward the future, a high percentage (37.1%) of WISEs do not think these kinds of technologies and digitalisation processes concerning the adaptation of individual workplaces will be relevant in the five years to come. Only 29.2% of WISEs believe that there will be a high level of reliance on them in the near future and 30.3% of enablers state that their WISE will reach a rather low level of reliance on the technological adaptation of individual workplaces. The results of the online survey show a slightly higher reliance on this domain than the face-to-face survey. Only 16% of enablers do



not believe the technological adaptation of individual workplaces will be relevant. 42.3% of enablers indicated that the level of reliance will be rather high in the near future and 41.7% of enablers indicated that the level of reliance will be rather low in the near future.

The face-to-face survey showed no relationship between the desire to implement technological adaptations in individual workplaces and the size of the WISE; this contrasts with the results of the online survey, which indicate that it is mainly large WISEs that plan to implement technological adaptations to individual workplaces.

Conclusions and suggestions for improvement: although in some cases the integration of assistive technologies within companies is present, greater investment by the WISEs in this area could have been expected. We would also have expected the development of original and innovative solutions, given the specialisation of many WISEs in productions involving WSNs. Assistive technologies are rarely mentioned in the case studies. A traditional organisation of work and tools seems to be the norm in the WISEs, even for people with disabilities. WISEs rarely seem to be protagonists or co-protagonists in the search for original assistive solutions, even if they are the business subjects that could be most interested in developing them. The introduction of such technologies could be an important step toward the technological innovation of all WISEs: by supporting WSNs in carrying out various productive activities, companies would generate, in addition to greater integration and inclusion, an increase in the productivity of these human resources. Furthermore, they would allow the latter to be able to use even more technological tools more easily, making it easier for the company to technologize production processes, products/services, and in general to introduce other technologies. Different studies show the efficacy and relevance of assistive technology (e.g., Huang 2018; Bosch and van Rhijn, 2017). Therefore, it is important to collect and spread good practices to make assistive technologies more mainstream.

7.2.11 Emerging technologies

What they are: emerging technologies are technologies whose development and practical applications, or both, are still largely unrealised. These technologies are generally new but also include older technologies finding new applications. Emerging



technologies are often perceived as capable of changing the status quo. Emerging technologies include a variety of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data, Internet of Things (IoT) and machine learning (ML).

What the cases say: few of the WISEs in the case studies spontaneously mentioned the use of emerging technologies in their business.

What the surveys show: the surveys targeting enablers explicitly questioned the implementation of AI/ML, big data and IoT.

It can be noted that almost none of the WISEs interviewed have already implemented AI/ML applications. If WISEs apply AI, it concerns technologies analysing written language (5.6% of WISEs) and technologies converting spoken language into a machine-readable format (5.6% of WISEs). Most of these WISEs are large enterprises. Furthermore, the willingness to use AI/ML (in the future) is relatively low. Over 80% of WISEs do not consider using it today or in the future.

Another important element investigated is big data. Only 12.4% of WISEs performed a big data analysis (themselves or by engaging another organisation). Once more, the results show that mostly large WISEs use big data analyses. WISEs using big data perform analyses on different kinds of data sources: data from smart devices or sensors, geolocation data, data generated from social media, etc.

IoT is the use of interconnected devices/systems that can be monitored or controlled remotely via the internet. Today, almost 20% of the WISEs interviewed use these kinds of devices. 43.8% of large WISEs apply the principle of the IoT in their organisation. For small and medium-sized WISEs, this is less than 15%. WISEs use technologies such as smart measuring devices, smart lamps, smart thermostats, movement or maintenance sensors, radio-frequency identification (RFID) or internet protocol (IP) tags, internet-controlled cameras, etc. The applications are very diverse.

Conclusions and suggestions for improvement: the use of emerging technologies was not spontaneously mentioned in any WISE participating in the use case studies. On the other hand, WP1's surveys show that at least a modest number of WISEs have experience using them. Apart from creating awareness and sharing good practices and lessons learned, subsequent research could investigate the use of emerging technologies, in the various sectors.



7.3 Conclusions and future developments

WISEs are not technology companies and do not normally aspire to paths of rapid growth. They are not born with a focus on growth and revenues but on their social mission. However, the adoption of technologies and growth can lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness, and a larger size can translate into higher impact and the employment of a larger group of WSNs.

As we have previously seen, several WISEs are technologically in line with traditional companies. However, many lag behind and require support. Very few have leveraged technologies for significant growth. In no case study, for example, are original inventions and innovative technologies or patents and other types of intellectual property cited.

An area in which significant and interesting technological developments seem possible is marketing and sales, for example in terms of strategies and investments in digital strategies, e-commerce and CRM.

Subsequent research could investigate the use of specific technologies, productive and otherwise, in the various sectors. However, advanced technologies did not emerge in WISEs in any sector. There are no known theoretical limits to the development of new technologies in WISEs, but the lower availability of investments and specialised personnel with advanced skills is certainly a limit to their development.

These limits are probably also linked to a different entrepreneurial culture, more attentive to slow but constant growth than to rapid and, inevitably, more risky growth: a culture that takes a possible bankruptcy of the company very seriously because it would force to lay off employees. On the contrary, high-tech entrepreneurs and in general entrepreneurs who aim to build large businesses have a higher tolerance for failure. They have ambitious goals that attract talents and economic resources with the hope of significant results, but also the awareness of the possibility of failure.

In the previous sections, we have indicated some avenues for possible developments in terms of technologies and innovation. A final consideration concerns the advantages that the WISEs can have compared to other companies. In addition to the advantage of a social mission that can resonate positively in the decisions of different customers, WISEs could leverage their specificities in terms of innovation. In particular, analysing



and satisfying the needs of their workers can push them to modify or create new products and services that can then be adopted by other organisations and customers. As highlighted, for example in the case of training technologies, WISEs could work on the need for personalisation in terms of privacy, screens and visualizations, hybrid training, etc. Other examples of areas of possible innovation are 1) technologies for work placements and the monitoring and integration of workers in the organisation and 2) assistive technologies and in general the personalisation of work environments, i.e., the areas in which the WISEs have significant challenges to be faced and solved.

The reasons why WISEs have not seized these opportunities were included in the surveys of WP1, but need to be investigated further. Based on the outcomes of the surveys of WP1, there are different factors hindering WISEs from implementing technologies or digitalisation processes, but the main ones seem to be, in order of importance, 1) lack of priority, 2) lack of relevance, 3) lack of budget and 4) lack of skills or capacities of the organisation.

We can deduce from the results of the surveys of WP1 and the use cases of WP2 that 1) the lack of resources (e.g., budget, skills, people, etc.) and 2) significant (economies of) scale are main factors hindering WISEs from implementing technologies or digitalisation processes. Two partial solutions could derive on the one hand from the collaboration between WISEs to increase the resources available and the critical mass, and on the other hand from the collaboration with other organisations (Open Innovation). Collaborations with other actors (companies but also research centres and universities) would also help to involve skills not currently available in the WISEs. Relations between WISEs and organisations devoted to research and technological innovation (first of all universities and specifically engineering faculties) are not completely absent, but in most national contexts they are episodic and linked only to the largest WISEs.

The lack of external collaborations is, however, understandable considering a last important aspect on which WISEs could improve in terms of technological innovation: the employment of people with technological and scientific profiles. People with such profiles could, on the one hand, support the integration and development of new technologies, and on the other hand, interact with sufficient knowledge and experience with people possessing a similar background of the other organisations, and in



particular with the personnel of technologically advanced companies, research centres and universities.

The study of the personas highlights that the majority of the enablers have humanistic, social or human sciences training and only in a few cases economic or managerial training. Technical enablers (engineers, computer scientists, or people with high-school-level technical education) are very rare. Among the supporters, we rarely find 'nerdy' elements, or people inclined to develop and experiment with their own initiatives and tools for technological innovation. The fact that often enablers and supporters have high levels of education and a culturally dynamic profile means that they are confident with the personal use of technologies and they are open to the possible introduction of technological solutions. But their profiles are hardly such as to put them at the centre of autonomous digital innovations. Furthermore, different profiles highlight how the people who lead the WISEs are loaded with different tasks and responsibilities, so that the innovation front can hardly be their main investment area. Moreover, in some cases, at the helm of the WISEs we find people of advanced middle age and in no case 'profiles from Silicon Valley', or young people with a marked propensity for innovation and high digital skills. If one wishes to intervene on these aspects, it is clear that it is not a question of proposing training initiatives but of thinking about organisational aspects that are today strongly characterising the WISEs.

Finally, it is important to underline that significant improvements in terms of technologies, both to be adopted and developed, can be facilitated by public interventions. It is no coincidence that the most developed and largest WISEs are in the countries where the attention for these organisations has been and is highest. The WISEs thrive in countries where their fundamental role from an ethical, civil and economic point of view is recognised.

7.4 References

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8 Annex C: The adoption and use of technologies by WISEs





Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
Austria 1	Sewing, textile cleaning and ironing work clothes	E-mail			Digital technologies mainly used for the administration of protected work Administration and accounting software		Customer documentation systems		Investments in new technologies for the automation of cutting clothing			MEDIUM Partially equipped with technologies that are good for the office, old for production
Austria 2	Office work, storage, textile sorting, reworking electronic devices, sales, online shop			Well equipped with state-of-the-art IT and software Moodle-based online learning platform	Electronic time recording for supporters has recently started					The development of a web shop is planned		HIGH Well equipped with state-of-the-art IT and software
Austria 3	Metalworking, woodworking, packaging/co-packaging, assembling/disassembling, paint shop, printing/dispatching, series production,	Meetings via Microsoft Teams Use of shared calendars		Moodle and blended learning Digi-Coach project for further training	System for managing participants in the implementation phase	Use of SAP to automate time recording, vacation approval, quarantine and		Data stored in the cloud Intranet for internal				MEDIUM-HIGH Equipment with necessary hardware, old production



Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
	completion, quality control, office services, kitchen, laundry, operation of waste materials collection centre	and sharepoints Access to intranet for internal information sharing Signal messenger for communication with workers		on digital skills, first for supporters and then for workers Courses for workers on the use of social networks, smartphones and privacy issues		leave notifications		sharing				machine already replaced, innovative digital systems, training for workers Assistive technology lacking
Austria 4	Production, textile, wood workshop, office activities			Reha-Com and Fresh-Minder	HR360 to document the attendance of workers New program for creating delivery notes and outgoing invoices							LOW Too little hardware available, existing hardware is too old, not up to date in the area of digitalisation
Austria 5	Digitising analogue media			Using Microsoft OneDrive for	Work diary in Microsoft Office Access						Huge development in recent decades	MEDIUM Up-to-date computers and other



Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
				distance training								equipment, assistive technologies are outdated
Austria 6	Rework, reuse and repair of washing machines, dishwashers and electronic cookers. Computer disassembly, delivery, office and sales services			Investments in e-learning but only used by supporters					Production sector with little technology			LOW Hardly equipped with technologies
Austria 7	Metal, wood, kitchen, creative sector	Use of Signal and e-mail for communication with workers		Investments in e-learning Use of Moodle Presence of an IT trainer	Attendance registration via DPW app Intranet, administrative and documentation software used only by supporters For supporters, mobile signatures through their portal							MEDIUM-HIGH Well equipped with technology
Austria 8	Mailing, printing and construction				BMD software for							MEDIUM



Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
					control and accounting BOSnet personnel management system							Up-to-date software
Austria 9	Repair and processing of used bicycles	Communication via intranet between the various departments Use of a cloud phone system.		Digifit project development aiming at digital suitability of WSNs					Sales software (checkout system, billing and ordering system, pricing, codes with warehouse management)	Online store not yet available, but in preparation		HIGH Well equipped, at the height of market standards in hardware and software
Austria 10	Second-hand/antiques shops			Provide digital skills to workers	Personnel administration database				Digital cash registers in stores App to track containers by code			MEDIUM Digitalisation focuses on internal processes as well as on providing skills for WSNs
Greece 1	Food and cleaning sector		Use of Facebook for information purposes		Only basic office equipment available (PC, basic				Well-equipped professional kitchen, tablet for delivery requests from	Deliveries via online platform		MEDIUM Basic equipment in



Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
			and rarely for promotional purposes		software, etc.)				the online platform			administrative sector, a bit more advanced in food and catering
Greece 2	Cleaning, catering – waitering, oil painting, green care, carpentry, tailoring; canteens, candle factory, farm and winery				Basic technological infrastructure for administrative support				POS devices			MEDIUM-LOW Only technological equipment necessary for its operation, no innovations
Greece 3	Cleaning service	Meetings scheduled via Skype and Zoom. Use of Messenger and Viber for communications.	Social media widely used to communicate with customers		Electronic invoices and spreadsheet programs to track communications with suppliers and customers				Use of typical manual cleaning equipment			LOW Basic technologies only to facilitate internal communication
Croatia 1	Textile waste management and production	E-mail and messaging apps, such as WhatsApp,	Direct and telephone communication. Use of e-mails,		Electronic invoices and e-banking.				Only some parts of the process are still done manually, for			MEDIUM Equipped with



Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
		MSN and Viber	online platforms and social networks, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Google Business, Instagram, TikTok, Zoom, Google Meet		Digitalisation of accounting operations and monitoring of the flow of goods and services.				the sake of job integration.			medium-quality machines (advanced technology is not possible). Mail, applications and Social networks for internal communication
Croatia 2	Vocational school: personal services, fine arts and design, forestry, textiles, haberdashery	E-mail, telephone communications and messaging apps	Use of a website, which, however, is not maintained and updated						Use of hand tools for WSNs			LOW Low-to-medium level of digital skills (smartphones, applications, social networks, e-mail)
Croatia 3	Providing services in the community (psychosocial support, help at home, economic consulting, financial)	Messaging and social networking app	Communication with customers via e-mail and the Zoom platform.		Working time monitoring system linked to the payroll system				Equipped with the best technology and the latest machines to work in all business segments and			HIGH Top technology and latest machines for work in the textile





Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
	management), organic cultivation		However, insufficient investment in marketing: there is no strategy						production processes			industry, haberdashery and wood industry
Bulgaria 1	Bistro	Messaging apps, such as WhatsApp and Viber	Website and Facebook page						Latest-generation kitchen appliances and machinery HD screens where customers can view the menu and choose			HIGH Well-equipped technologies for working in the kitchen, webpage, social networks and application for internal communication
Bulgaria 2	Children's educational games: handicraft items		Website and social media						Intends to purchase new 3D printing software	Website also used for sales		LOW Internet platforms and social media
Bulgaria 3	Manufacture of chocolate products		Information campaign through relations with the						Digitalisation of the production process in recent years			MEDIUM Well-equipped website





Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
			main Bulgarian media and newspapers Website and Facebook page									and social media
Belgium 1	Woodworking, metalworking, assembly and services				Attendance registration via an easy-to-use badge system	Process optimisation via SAP			Digital work instructions through Augmented Reality light guides, robotisation through cobots		Particular attention to assistive technologies that help WSNs to carry out more complex tasks and that help them meet deadlines	MEDIUM-HIGH Frontrunner in technology . Assistive technologies, optimisation of administrative processes, digital work instruction through Lightguide Augmented Reality, robotisation through collaborative robots, time registration easy-to-





Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
												use badge system
Belgium 2	Textiles, e-commerce, assembly, recycling, packaging, in-company services, finishing of printed material and woodworking										It is considering investing in assistive technologies	MEDIUM-LOW Open to investing in new technologies such as assistive technologies after knowing the outcome of the strategic analysis
Belgium 3	Logistics, packaging, mailing, digital services and green maintenance										Has started investing in assistive technologies on the work surface	MEDIUM-LOW Open to new technologies. Has taken the first step towards more assistive technologies on the workforce





Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
Belgium 4	Sewing workshop, green maintenance, ironing service, local shop, bar										Has invested in assistive technologies to ensure the work integration of its target group	MEDIUM-LOW Invested in assistive technology to guarantee the work integration of its target group
Belgium 5	Reuse centres, catering services, green maintenance, cleaning services, ironing services, energy scans, creative workshops										No significant steps have been taken to date	LOW There is a large gap between the level of digitalisation of the WISEs and of the companies in the regular economy. No significant steps concerning assistive technologies and other digitalisation





Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
												on processes
Spain 1	Industrial laundry					Used by supporters to record and share information related to the support processes carried out with each of the workers			There are still several manual processes that could be automated			MEDIUM The digitalisation-technology level is medium; the management processes are digitalised
Spain 2	Restaurants, catering, food		It does not have a marketing plan and website but uses that of the parent cooperative			Management processes digitised through ERP			In hotel, restaurants and catering sector, use of tablets to take orders Food-traceability software is being developed			MEDIUM The digitalisation-technology level is medium; management processes are digitalised
Spain 3	Packaging			Working on the development of a	Digital signatures in all procedures						Team of engineers to develop technological	MEDIUM-HIGH





Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
				digital training platform linked to Microsoft Office 365 tools	Paper is being eliminated for all management processes						adaptations of all workstations for people with disabilities who require it (digital monitoring/evaluation of integration results, voice recognition software, etc.)	In addition to having digitised services and production processes, it is committed to developing technological adaptations of all workstations for person with disabilities
Spain 4	Cleaning services	Messaging apps, especially WhatsApp.	Runs several social accounts and has its own website, which needs improvement			Developed by an external supplier and then adapted to the needs of WISE			Experimenting with a window cleaning drone	E-commerce functions require more development		MEDIUM Management processes are digitalised. Workers have smartphones provided by the WISE. The WISE manages several





Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
												social media accounts and has a website
Spain 5	Restaurants, catering, food		Social media management and digital marketing strategy are outsourced. WISE does not have its own website but uses that of the parent cooperative		Payment management software				PDA to take orders It is planned to introduce new machinery in the kitchen			LOW The WISE does not have a website, the Wi-Fi connection is poor
Spain 6	Cleaning services				The IT department is working on a tool to manage inbound/outbound workers, hours, vacation periods, etc.	ERP analyses are ongoing due to identified shortcomings						MEDIUM Management processes are digitalised. The IT department is working on a tool for cleaning and communit





Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
												ycare service
Spain 7	Cleaning services	Use of apps for exchanging company information			All workers use a time and attendance app	At the executive or management level, it has a cloud-based business intelligence service, which provides data for strategic decision-making by enablers through a desktop interface. There is a tool to monitor the consumption of supplies			The cleaning department uses cloud-based software to manage its activities, such as monitoring incidents and resolution times, issuing work orders and notifications and assigning and scheduling work. A workload redistribution program is also used			MEDIUM-HIGH Cloud-based business intelligence service, cloud-based software to manage the cleaning department. All workers use apps. An articulated bed is being tested
Slovenia 1	Graphic design			During the lockdown they held					They will invest in graphic design		They have no plans to invest	LOW





Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
				virtual lessons					programs (e.g., CAD)		in this type of technology	No plans to invest in tech adapted for people with disabilities
Slovenia 2	Repurposing and activities necessary for repurposing objects (recycling plastic)	Gmail										LOW Basic level (use of Excel and Gmail)
Slovenia 3	Washing and ironing services	Gmail		They plan to use online courses in the future								LOW Basic level. Would like to use digital technologies but does not have funds
Slovenia 4	Landscaping and maintenance of green areas, arranging cemeteries, individual maintenance work and cleaning facilities, additional subcontracting work for companies	Gmail		They conducted online lectures on security and ISO standards	VASCO for accounting, Excel for scheduling							LOW Basic level. Do not see the benefit of digitalisation



Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
Slovenia 5	Accessible tourism	Gmail and Zoom			VASCO: central system for keeping track of people, for entering and transferring data, etc.							LOW Technologically fairly advanced
Slovenia 6	Environmental management, cleaning of businesses, sports								Use of basic tools (e.g. computer, GPS, radio) The purchase of motorised equipment is foreseen			LOW Computers, basic landscaping equipment, cars, GPS and radio stations
Slovenia 7	Sewing, interior decoration, product assembly and restoring furniture	Gmail										LOW Does not need a lot of technology : computers, calculators, Excel, Gmail, sewing equipment
Italy 1	Selective waste collection,	WhatsApp groups with all workers	Website and social network	There is a computer engineer	Each worker has their own profile on an				The workers assigned to environmental			HIGH



Country	Sector	1. Internal communication	2. External communication	3. Training and support	4. Administration and accounting	5. ERP	6. CRM	7. File and data storage	8. Production	9. E-commerce	10. Assistive technologies	Technological level
	cemetery management	in which operational service indications are sent, operational criticalities are shared and resolved, etc.	(Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube) to make the company visible in its area and to search for personnel	for the digital literacy of workers	internal platform, on which payslips, CUs and other documents are loaded Management software for the organisation of services, which communicates with the payroll system				hygiene services are equipped with smartphones and a reader with which to mark buckets and bins for separate waste collection, once emptied			Significant use of technology for production cycle and management functions. High investments, quality certifications
Italy 2	Catering and food service in events sector		Traditional websites, social networks and platforms dedicated to commercial activities, catering (Google, TripAdvisor, etc.) and fundraising		Digitalisation of ordinary administrative activities (accounting, payroll, work shift management, attendance, etc.)							MEDIUM-LOW Limited use of technology. Attention to digital communication aspects
Italy 3	Restaurant					Intention to develop a			Management software for orders and		Cases with icons that facilitate the	MEDIUM



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						software for warehouse management, because the management systems on the market are not very accessible for workers			boxes with icons that facilitate the use of technology even by children with disabilities Kitchen programs are also used (e.g., for vacuum packing)		use of technology even by children with disabilities	Medium use of technologies, in order to train WSNs
Italy 4	Assembly and packaging, filmmaking and many other activities								Current production processes do not require digital technologies			LOW Low-level use of technologies
Italy 5	Agriculture, tourism, recycling, craft activities, cleaning	Use of social networks	Use of social networks		Use of accounting and personnel management programs	Use of management software			The use of digital technologies for productive uses is intentionally limited in order to numerically increase the need for manpower			MEDIUM Normal use of technologies in management, choice to use few technology





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									However, it is attentive to the development of technologies and also participates in experimental projects, for example with the Faculty of Agriculture, for the development of robotics and artificial intelligence in agriculture			es in production so as not to limit the work of WSNs
Italy 6	Gardening, cemetery management, selective waste collection. This WISE merged with a social enterprise operating in the welfare field, today it is in its sector	Use of e-mails, WhatsApp groups and file sharing on OneDrive		A literacy programme on basic technology is underway, with internal training courses Presence of an IT consultancy desk for digital literacy	Period: management that records the balance of workers' activities. The software is being transposed to an app to make it easier to use Altamira: staff management software	Work is underway to develop new software		Sharing files on OneDrive				MEDIUM-HIGH Good use of technology in offices, normal in the production sector. Digital counter for WSNs





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				and technological support. The desk also gives advice on technologies for everyday life (e.g., SPID)	Pulse: for personnel attendance and payslip display Dylog: for personnel administration							
Latvia 1	textiles								Four different printers, professional printing, sticker printer	Sales are mostly done through an online store In e-commerce they use many paid services, such as an online chatbot, Google Drive, Canva, Chatra, Isolta, etc.		MEDIUM-HIGH Online store. Important productive technology





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Latvia 2	Cooking industry								Kitchen equipped with professional technologies			MEDIUM Normal for sector of activity
Latvia 3	Call centre for private companies. Social telephony						All workers use CRM systems for daily operations		Workers use computers, telecommunications and call centre programs			MEDIUM-HIGH Quite high, all of the call centre workers are working digitally
Latvia 4	Sells goods created in a workshop that works as a social service, managed by a linked organisation								Equipped with various technologies, such as a printing machine, stamp-making machine, sewing machines	Selling products online		MEDIUM-HIGH Online shop and workshop equipment . Ready to learn about new technologies
Latvia 5	Sells paper and packaging, produced in cooperation with social care services								Use of some technologies in production	Selling products online		MEDIUM Medium technology use



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Netherlands 1	Recycling, urban mining, upcycling	Social networks and e-mails	Website and social networks, such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram		Use of technologies for administration. New system for human resources information management Online billing			Cloud services for e-mail, software and data storage				MEDIUM-HIGH Prominent use of technology, both in production and in administration
Netherlands 2		Social networks, e-mails, virtual meetings	Website and social networks, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube	Presence of an internal IT department for training (especially on privacy) and support	Use of technologies for administration Online billing Digital worker monitoring system			Cloud services for e-mail, software and data storage	IoT used for thermostats, lamps and meters		Language computers that convert spoken language into a readable format (speech recognition) for people with hearing problems HoloLens to provide cognitive support to employees It is testing the use of VR glasses that illuminate where something needs to be mounted	HIGH Very high level of digitalisation. Digital counselling for workers





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											Testing of an intelligent projector for displaying manufacturing instructions	
Netherlands 3	Network of 30 second-hand shops. Aim to grow to 50 shops in a few years	E-mail and social networks	Website and social networks, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube	E-learning platform where everyone has their own learning environment based on their functions and needs Presence of an internal IT department	Use of technologies for administration Online billing Workers can access their payslips and time sheets.		In the back office, all customer contacts are centralised and digitised Store customer tracking system	Cloud services for e-mail, software and data storage	Tablet to plan online routes and delivery and collection times Automated book-pricing system Digitised clothing sector Automated cash register that also records the best-selling items and the average price customers pay			HIGH High level of digitalisation
Netherlands 4	Cleaning services	E-mail and social networks	Website and social networks, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube		Use of technologies for administration Online billing		Customer service management software	Cloud services for e-mail, software and data storage	Geolocation of devices and moving objects Machines have interfaces to track their	Online sales and online business management software (sales and		HIGH High level of digitalisation. Issue about WSNs' use of



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			Use of big data to generate information from social media						usage, which is monitored in an application Use of cleaning robots The data traffic of the cars is also regulated in this way, collecting data on driving speed and emissions Digital control box for notifications and orders	customer service)		digitalisation
Netherlands	Gardening, cleaning services	E-mail, social networks and teleworking	Website and social networks, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube	Internal IT department for support Staff receive professional training on how to use technologically	Use of technologies for administration Online billing			Cloud services for e-mail, software and data storage	The digitalisation of production processes is seen as a threat to employment In warehouses and at the production site, IoT is used for thermostats,		Language computers that convert spoken language into a readable format (speech recognition) for people with hearing problems	MEDIUM-HIGH High level of digitalisation in office works, medium-high level in production . Issue about





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				advanced cars					lamps and meters. IoT is also used to monitor the movement of vehicles or products Most of the cars used are electric			WSNs' use of digitalisation
Netherlands 6	Cleaning services (windows)	E-mail and social networks	Website and social networks, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube		Online billing Task management via Trello		HubSpot to manage sales and customer service	Cloud services for e-mail, software and data storage				HIGH High level of digitalisation
Netherlands 7	Recycling, reuse, shops			Peer-to-peer learning method			Wants to insert digital customer tracking method		iPad to plan the route, estimate the number of products and plan the work	Aims to further digitise in the field of online sales		HIGH High level of digitalisation. Further digitalisation in a few years
Netherlands 8	Recycling and circular economy industry	WhatsApp groups, e-mails			Use of technologies for administration			Cloud services for e-mail, software and		Intends to invest in a web shop		MEDIUM



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					Online billing Digital payroll application implemented			data storage				
Romania 1	Fast food, textile sewing workshop								Invested around €20,000 in computer and production equipment and a van			MEDIUM-HIGH Good level of technology , partnership with other countries
Romania 2	Second-hand shops	WhatsApp groups and telephone communications	Social network (Facebook and Instagram) and website Promotional videos have been made on YouTube	All employees receive initial training	It does not have an internal platform for employees because not everyone would be able to manage it				Advanced technologies in barn cleaning, feed preparation and milking Restaurant equipped with specific technologies for the sector		Investments in machines that make work easier and help workers perform their tasks	HIGH Comparable to those of non-WISE companies operating in the same business sector
Romania 3	Reuse of waste from electrical and electronic equipment. Social farm	WhatsApp groups and file sharing via Google Drive. Zoom is also used	Social network (Facebook and Instagram)					Google Drive for file storage and				MEDIUM Comparable to those of non-WISE



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								sharing				companies operating in the same business sector
Romania 4	Bakery. WISE was created by a welfare organisation				Financial and office software programs							MEDIUM Comparable to those of non-WISE companies operating in the same business sector
Romania 5	Accommodation services in a hostel. WISE was created by a welfare organisation								Technologies used in production			MEDIUM Comparable to those of non-WISE companies operating in the same business sector
Romania 6	Archiving, tailoring, typography, manufacturing products,								Basic technologies, e.g., smart locks	Online booking system		LOW Base level of technology





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	roasting, recruitment and placement of people with disabilities/occupational safety services											
Romania 7	Kindergarten – nursery school		Social network, articles and website Presence of a department specialised in online marketing					Electronic archiving service	The premium roaster is equipped with automated and programmable equipment managed by support operators			HIGH Good level of technologies, 'the challenge is to find a balance between digital technology what can be done manually by workers with disabilities'
Romania 8	Catering	Gmail, WhatsApp and google suite	Facebook, Instagram and website, the contents of which are designed through Canva									





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Romania 9	Sewing, textile cleaning and ironing work clothes				Two computer programs for the administration, but used only by the manager				Kitchen equipped with technological tools			MEDIUM-HIGH Good level of technologies
Poland 1	Catering and gardening			Training courses to introduce, for example, the elderly to the use of mobile phones or computers	Use of digital programs for administration				Most of the work is still done manually			MEDIUM-LOW Medium digitalisation in office work. Low digitalisation in production
Poland 2	Catering	Groups on Messenger	Website and social network, especially Facebook						Low use of technology in production activities			LOW
Poland 3	Catering, gardening and cleaning				Digitised office work				Low use of technology in production activities			MEDIUM-LOW Medium digitalisation in office work. Low digitalisation in production



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France 1	Restaurant	E-mail		Use of URAI software for training Three annual training courses for all employees: HSCCP, Snacking, theatre/sport skills (hospitality, customer relations, recruiter, conflict, role-playing, link building: very positive result on teams)	Online software to monitor employees MING for career tracking				Application for orders in student canteens Digital cash register			LOW The use of digital remains limited for the moment
France 2	Cleaning and Environmental services			Training courses for employees		Implementing an ERP with a logistics optimisation						LOW The leader declares that the positioning





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						application, linked to HRIS, which will provide more detailed knowledge of the business						of his company is rather on the 'low tech' end of the spectrum but identifies an important shift towards digital technology
France 3	Environmental services			Training courses dedicated to learning digital tools for employees	Online bulletin board, which allows all supervisors who meet the same employee to record their feedback							LOW
France 4	Reuse of electronic devices		Website, Facebook and after-sales service	Organisation of various workshops and internal training courses						Use of Black Market and Lebon coins		LOW



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Gianfranco Marocchi et al. (2022), Report understanding user (digital) skill needs in WISEs

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