

# WINS

Promoting Workers' INvolvement in Social Economy Enterprises

## WINS Local Workshop - North Macedonia

3<sup>rd</sup> of March, 2022 – 11:00 am to 12:00 pm CEST

### ZOOM

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Online – ZOOM  
NOTES

**Short information on the objectives of the meeting, logistic information (date, venue, number of participants).**

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The meeting was held online on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, 2021 via ZOOM platform. There were in total 17 participants in the meeting.

This online event was an excellent opportunity to gather representatives from various stakeholders such as public institutions, social enterprises, social service providers and the business sector, to jointly discuss and explore the possibilities of creating inclusive workplaces and review the relevance of the existing practices on information, consultation and participation rights.

The world of labour is changing. The pandemic has shaken the old models of managing and retaining the workforce, while at the same bringing completely new opportunities for increasing democracy at the workplace. However, these new opportunities, if not supported with adequate policy responses, might increase the social exclusion and create new vulnerable categories of citizens. The institutional responses to changes in the labour market and the approaches to contribute to modern business challenges are taking on a new form. Unused human capital catalyzes corporate challenges related to shortage and lack of dedicated workforce.

This event was dedicated to exploring ways on how to design and implement the institutional support for people who are excluded from the labour market, what support should be offered by the business sector in the light of creating inclusive workplaces through policies for information, consultation and participation.

The main issue that was emphasized was the role of the methodology: social mentoring, innovation of "Public", which has the role and power of amalgam, a binding tissue for different sectors, with the intention to connect the needs of businesses, their intentions, measures and laws what institutions bring, as well as the activities of civil society organizations working with vulnerable people who need support to be included in our society. The mother of a 38-year-old son with a mental disability also spoke about her experience and the challenges in the job search process. Her attempts to find him a job where he would stay longer.

### **Key inputs from presentations and discussion between participants**

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The event was opened by the Executive director of the Association for research, communications and development "PUBLIC", Klimentina Iljevski. She emphasized that this event might be an excellent point to develop long-term, multi-stakeholder partnerships for addressing pressing issues in the labour market and issues related to information, consultation and participation rights among employees, including employees that come from marginalized groups.

*"Cooperation and strong relations in this triangle (public institutions, social enterprises and traditional business sector) can make a difference in terms of addressing labour shortages, in terms of workers outflows, practice of ICP rights and activation of marginalized groups (persons with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, Roma, youth that is not in education nor in training/employment, single-parent families, long term unemployed persons etc). Here, we are talking about potential workers who are able to work, and what they need is support in the process of work integration, their strengthening, as well as strengthening of the working environment. When we are talking about ICP rights of vulnerable categories of workers, that primarily means revision of policy framework, revision of the internal policies and internal procedures of employers in the light of making them more sensitive to inclusion. In this way, we will ensure diversity at the workplaces, better inclusion and at the very end equality"- said Iljevski.*

A year ago, Deloitte conducted a global survey showing that a significant majority of companies intend to redefine their diversity promotion programs into inclusion programs in their business strategies. Ilijevski, also elaborated that this is a very good sign and it demonstrates that businesses are starting to understand that the goal is not only to be more opened to a diverse workforce, but it also means what you do to integrate, retain and develop that workforce. In response to the existing and the emerging challenges in the labour market and in the practice of ICP rights, the Association “PUBLIC” created a methodology named “social mentoring” (mentoring for work integration).

The program has already been verified, there is already a profession - mentor for work integration - the first groups of mentors in North Macedonia and the region (Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania).

After the official opening of the event, two videos have been broadcasted, to demonstrate the benefits for the company from diversity in the workforce and the practice of ICP rights.

The first video from Charlie Felgate, Global Innovation Leader at Decathlon, France and the second one from I-Diverso, Belgium.

Afterwards, two of the certified social mentors, Magdalena Chadinoska Kuzmanoski and Nikolina Nikolovska, provided brief discussion on ICP rights of vulnerable groups, with focus on practices from North Macedonia, what do social mentors see as a benefit of practicing ICP rights in the company.

Afterwards, the policy researcher Aleksandra Iloska, added that available research evidence shows that inclusive organizations are twice as likely to meet or even exceed their financial goals. And why is it important from the point of view of the State and the institutions? Because it enables the users of social assistance to become productive, instead of being passive users of support. The civil society sector is the partner that provides the service because in the new social systems, the institutions are not involved in providing services directly, but in creating an enabling environment for those services.

Ms. Iloska also briefly discussed, the general role of social enterprises in the light of reforming the ICP rights. She added that reform in ICP rights is needed to better address the challenges of marginalized groups when exercising these rights.

Public institutions were represented by a team from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, which expressed openness and readiness to apply social mentoring, especially because, as the representatives emphasized, *"we see a need to carefully review the available regulatory framework with regard to ICP rights, especially when it comes to marginalized groups. This represents an entirely new perspective"*.

A representative of the business sector mentioned that the biggest problem is the legal measure how to hire the person or how, perhaps, in a certain situation, to fire him. It is a risk that companies are not willing to undertake. Therefore, a point of connection that would give us the answers to these questions would be of great importance to us.

The researcher, Katerina Mojancevska, in the presentation on the main features and benefits of social mentoring said that the intention of social mentoring is to profile professional staff to work with people who face difficulties in integrating into the labour market. In this way, the gaps in the work skills and skills for self-confidence and self-realization are filled. But it also means directly assisting business companies in the process of work integration, coherence with the national system of social protection. Change requires time and commitment.