

ROLE OF THE PRIVATE, PUBLIC AND THIRD SECTORS

Given the current political and institutional setting, we must think of Work Integration Programmes (WIP) in view of the different roles played by the public, private and third sectors in the work integration of vulnerable groups. These roles are changing, and the response to such complex issues as unemployment, poverty and social exclusion requires a significantly narrower cooperation between the three sectors.

A deeper reflection about the roles of public, private and third sectors may help you choose the best strategy for the design of your WIP, strengthen the argument of your proposals and bring about new outlooks regarding the creation of solutions encompassing all the sectors.

Firstly, we must question the role played by each sector and what hasn't been tried yet in that regard.

Private (for-profit) sector

As we know, some of the labour market's structural problems are rooted in poor human resources management practices, discriminatory selection processes and employment and dismissal policies that disregard ethical, social and other humanistic issues. Therefore, the primary role of the for-profit private sector is to approach corporate social responsibility principles seriously.

Together with social enterprises and the public authorities, it is up to the for-profit private sector to take up the responsibility of adopting a proactive attitude in the search for new solutions for local employment and social exclusion problems. One of the aspects of this social and corporate responsibility is precisely the respect for the power balance between all sectors.

Your WIP's design should include identifying, getting to know and engaging your for-profit private sector stakeholders, learning about their needs and the interests they share with your work in order to narrow your relationship. The challenge here is to approach collaborative relationships based on equality, reciprocity and mutual benefit.

There are many roles the private sector can play in the work integration of vulnerable groups:

- Integrating vulnerable individuals as part of their workforce (work experience for marginalised groups) testing different models;
- Provide expertise to work integration programmes who wish to develop for-profit approaches.
- Buy products and services offered by work integration programmes;
- Experimenting with forms of developing social responsibility policies through the relationships between social enterprises and their private sector supplier companies.

Public sector

The pressure on the sustainability of social protection systems over the last decades resulted in a general setting marked by change in social and employment policies. Some of the current main trends are:

- A decreased role of the State in the direct provision of social services and employment, either delegating or contracting out those functions to the for-profit private sector and third sector. Families are also requested to engage more directly in the care for their members;
- The introduction of increasingly demanding efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability criteria into policies supporting WIPs, privileging employability and job placement results which are often too ambitious in view of the vulnerable target groups;
- The search for mechanisms to replace public funding by private and corporate philanthropy and self-financed social services providers, namely third sector organisations self-financed by for-profit activities.
- Public sector roles can have a large scope in recognizing and supporting Work Integration Programmes at the local, regional and national levels:
- Statutory recognition and regulatory framework (tax benefits, labelling [of “social” products or features]);
- Financial support to WIPs so that these can support vulnerable people and enable them to build independent lives;
- Public sector procurement – it has the potential to have far greater impact if social value, as well as economic value, is taken into account when goods and services are being procured;
- Providing the conditions necessary for the development of social innovation and start-up companies focusing on employment solutions for vulnerable groups;
- Valuing education and training initiatives that contribute to a greater professional qualification and recognition of human resources working in this particular field;
- Improving the systems for assessing the knowledge and skills of these groups and promoting the status of workers undergoing integration;
- Improving dialogue with WISEs and the development of qualitative criteria enabling the Voice of workers undergoing integration processes to be heard.

Third sector

For the last quarter of the 20th century, WISEs were pioneers in finding new solutions to the problems of unemployment and social and professional integration. Numerous civil society initiatives emerged across several European countries, offering specific services based on social

integration through work. At first they lacked a legal framework, but the State would later recognise their specific legal status.

WISEs resulted from protest movements started by mental health professionals and mental patients' family members demanding the institutional release of a number of mental patients and their social reintegration through work and participation in social and economic life. They were also a result from the need respond to issues such as the unemployment of qualified young people trained the areas of social service and education, qualified factory workers excluded from the labour market and new problems related to school drop-out and marginalisation of young people in large urban centres.

Combined with public policies, over the last decades WISEs have created different models for intervention through work, providing a response to the needs of their target groups. More specifically, therapeutic and occupational models; sheltered employment; professional training and transition to the labour market; subsidised permanent employment and, recently, new models of tutoring, coaching and other forms of follow-up on particularly vulnerable groups during their integration in the regular labour market.

At a time when social innovation is establishing itself as a cornerstone of the EU Strategy 2014-2020, it is all the more important to remember the ground-breaking contribution of WISEs to the creation of those models, as well as the path followed together with public policies for the engagement of labour markets. The new social innovation paths lead to a narrowing of the gap between Work Integration Programme promoters and market agents, to the adjustment of the formers' economic efficiency and effectiveness tools with a view to greater sustainability and also to the increase of their income through the sale of goods and services. The paths taken should not, however, overlook the role of public policies or the social rights of vulnerable groups.

The third sector should think critically, be proactive and act together. It is important to take a stance with regard to current economic and political developments and act collectively as a political force. Apart from the roles of service providers and promoters of for-profit activities on behalf of their sustainability, third sector organisations should have a say about policy design and the people's needs. They should also support economic and political cooperation among each other (buy from each other).

Therefore, when you are designing your WIP you should ask yourself: who are your direct stakeholders? How can they benefit from your Work Integration Programme and what roles can they play in it? Who else may benefit from the programme?

Stakeholder Analysis can be a useful tool for this. It is a simple methodology that includes analysis tables and graphic presentation systems, among other easy to use instruments. It consists of:

- Building an inventory of all the individuals and organisations who may influence or be influenced by your Work Integration Programme;
- Sorting those into categories (funders, partners, target groups, etc.);
- Weighing each stakeholder's power, influence and motivation.

Moreover, if Stakeholder Analysis takes into account the nature (public, private for-profit, third sector) of your stakeholders, the information compiled may help setting up strategies for cooperation between the different sectors and clarify useful arguments for advocacy and lobbying activities aimed at the improvement and sustainability of social and professional integration models. Your Work Integration Programme's design may help finding effective and socially innovative solutions, such as:

- New intervention models (different from current work integration models) combining different methodologies, from intermediate labour market, to support in employment or Social Firms;
- New ways of collaborating, sharing technical (know-how) and material resources (physical infrastructures, computers, vans) between Work Integration Programme promoters themselves and also between them and local and regional authorities, businesses and teaching / training institutions, etc.;
- New sources and methods to obtain income and the exploration of opportunities to sell, trade and otherwise explore the complementarity of services among different organisations, based on strategies for the development and social cohesion of local territories and severely excluded groups.

Despite the traditionally soft voice of small third-sector organisations, such as many WISEs and social enterprises in relevant political decision-making, those promoting Work Integration Programmes have an important role to play. The challenge is significant:

- Contributing to the establishment of communication and bottom-up participation channels capable of expressing the target groups' experiences and standpoints;
- Influencing the design of more effective, long-lasting and sustainable policies capable of responding to the specific needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- Helping find new solutions based on a compromise between the three sectors, namely taking advantage of the opportunities offered by EU policy priorities regarding social innovation in employment and social inclusion as well as the – expressly acknowledged – role of social enterprises.