

WINS launching event

To celebrate the start of the WINS project, Diesis Network, with the support of the whole partnership, organized the launching event of the project. This event was composed of two online meetings that took place in February 2021. The objective of the event was to present the project and to have the chance to discuss the topics of the project with all the main national and EU-level stakeholders of the field. The first day was a workshop on ICP rights while the second day emphasized the cooperation between trade unions and social economy organizations on this topic. Both the days had also a focus on workers' buyout (WBO).

Day 1: WORKSHOP ON ICP RIGHTS. Social Economy Enterprises as a tool for recovery and development, trade unions and social economy – challenges and solutions

10th of February 2021, 10.30/12.30 am

The objective of the first day was to present the project, the framework of ICP rights in the partner countries of the project (Spain, Italy, Slovenia and North Macedonia) and also to present some good practices on workers' buyout.

Welcoming words - what is the WINS project?

Pedro Blazquez Rubio, Project Coordinator, [COCETA](#)

Mr. Blazquez presented the project: WINS aim at promoting workers' involvement in social economy enterprises (SEEs) in Europe. It aims at strengthening transnational co-operation between workers' and employers' representatives, as well as between social economy enterprises and trade unions in respect of employee involvement. The main outcomes of the project will be an online knowledge platform to collect information on the topic of ICP rights, national and transnational workshops and events organized in partner countries to implement peer learning activities and raise awareness on the topic as well as creation of information materials.

Roundtable discussion: ICP rights in the project countries

Moderated by Melinda Kelemen, Senior labor market expert, [Diesis Network](#)

- **Italy**

Stefano Nunziatini, ETUC Participation of workers and company policies Committee Member, [CISL](#)

Mr. Nunziatini gave to the audience a general legal framework on ICP rights in the country. He mentioned that the history of industrial relations and participation is related to the history of the country. These are the main legislative sources framing ICP rights in Italy:

- The Italian constitution - 1947, where employees right to be informed and involved is cited;
- Statute of workers (Statuto dei lavoratori) - 1970, that strengthen workers' rights in terms of participation and collective bargaining. The role of trade unions in promoting democracy within the companies has been key;
- Protocol on the Right of work (Protocollo sul diritto del lavoro) – 1993, first agreement at national level related to employment, with a chapter devoted to ICP rights;
- Law decree 25 of 2007 implementing the European directive 2002/14/CE: this is an ex-post act regulating existing procedures on procedures ICP rights. Nevertheless, thanks to the EU directive, the country had the opportunity to improve the situation: the law decree established a common framework related to the company and has impacted the working conditions, including participation modalities and collective bargaining process. All these rights have a collective dimension, these are not individual rights.

In Italy, other forms to involve the workers are:

- Presence of workers in the board of companies;
- Tax benefits for bonuses paid to workers related to productivity in companies involving the employees in decision making.

Fabrizio Bolzoni, Director and Responsible for Industrial Relations, [Legacoop Produzione e Servizi](#)

Mr. Bolzoni underlined that the ICP topic is very important and is part of cooperatives values and therefore of Legacoop Produzione e Servizi. Legacoop P&S is an association that brings together over 2,000 cooperatives, that represent 150,000 employees, of which 80% are working members.

In the cooperatives that Legacoop represents, there are different models of participation. Because of the diversity of the enterprises, in some cases, these are very advanced in others less. Legacoop tries to promote a correct and healthy management for the cooperative, which is essential to develop activities and give prospects to the members. In this sense, WBO represents a very interesting experience, which puts in place very strong forms of participation.

Of the main obstacles in a good implementation of ICP rights, is the often distorted use of the cooperative form, which is why there is a need for legislation that safeguards the cooperative form from using it as a false tool to exploit people and workers. The problem is very serious because it affects the reputation and public opinion of cooperative enterprises. Mr. Bolzoni underlined that the cooperative form is recognized at the national, EU and international level, and aligns with the values of the 2030 agenda and SDG. Legacoop is trying to find solutions to this issue.

Regarding the relations between cooperatives association and trade unions, Mr. Bolzoni mentioned that despite the difficulties that sometimes they face, the collaboration is good. Indeed, sometimes it is difficult because trade unions try to protect the workers' rights, and the cooperative must pay attention to the social aspect. Nevertheless, the recent agreement between the main cooperative associations and trade unions for the promotion of WBO is a good example of collaboration.

- **Spain**

Paloma Arroyo, Director, [COCETA](#)

Ms. Arroyo started by underlining that WINS is a very important project because there is a great need for employees to be informed on their rights and duties. The cooperative model facilitates workers' participation, and allows to build a fairer society: indeed, a cooperative is built on the work and on people, not on the capital. Cooperatives promote a model where workers' are involved because they are the owners of the company itself. In many international arenas, such as the ILO and the UN, it has been underlined that cooperatives are the best formulas to obtain a just and equitable society. Moreover, the cooperative model stands for a greater gender balance, work-life balance, and equality.

To develop ICP rights and the cooperative model, there should be a strong link between cooperative associations and trade unions. COCETA has a long-lasting relationship with the two main trade unions of the country, to raise awareness about cooperatives in general and workers' involvement in particular. Moreover, closer cooperation should take place to evolve collective bargaining, nowadays based on traditional companies, which makes it difficult for cooperatives and cooperatives associations to be involved: this is one of COCETA main objectives in its relation to trade unions. In our work with trade unions, we also pay particular attention in promoting the role of women and to share the importance and advantage that the cooperative model shows to women and work-life balance.

During the pandemic, as an umbrella association in the social economy field, COCETA signed an agreement with the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy to set a social dialogue committee, involving organisations of the social economy, trade unions and other ministries, to further develop social economy in Spain.

- **North-Macedonia**

Aleksandra Iloska, Researcher and policy analyst, [Public](#)

Aleksandra Iloska started her presentation by pointing out that in North-Macedonia the situation is different as it is not an EU's country. As a matter of fact, in the country, the practice of WBO is a practice and ICP rights, in general, are underdeveloped.

With the Yugoslav socialism model companies were socially owned and managed from social councils. As soon as the country gained independence, the process of privatizations started and these examples became were market by a negative note, mainly due to the bad implementation and management.

Therefore, a legislative framework lacks yet. The country only possesses a law on working relations that regulates all form of employment. Despite this regulatory framework, in practice, there are not very successful examples of employees' involvement. Moreover, there is a weak social dialogue in the country and the role of trade unions is limited.

Nevertheless, there is an emerging social economy sector, that is in development. This emerging sector provides very positive examples of the involvement of marginalized groups.

- **Slovenia**

Sebastjan Pikel, [Social Economy Slovenia Association](#)

Mr. Pikel is a co-founder and manager of a social enterprise in Slovenia, so he started from his personal experience. Mr. Pikel shared that in his social enterprise, they were implementing co-ownership and co-management, before the country had a specific legal framework on it. Moreover, he discussed to the importance of knowledge in a social enterprise: this is the backbone of the relationship between employees and management. In his social enterprise, the management wanted to include workers, which came from disadvantaged backgrounds, in the decision making of the enterprise. One of the main topics discussed was the work-life balance and the possibility of having flexible working hours. It took sometimes for the workers to get familiar with the involvement procedures: this is what made the management realize that education and knowledge on participation are fundamental.

Starting from this experience, Mr. Pikel is now part of a team that is writing the Slovenian law for WBO based on the ESOP model (coming from the United States). For sure, education and knowledge about the cooperative model and ICP, for employers and employees, will be included, because it is the key to unlock participation potential.

WBO best practices

- [Els Nou Rals](#) (Spain), presented by *Ricard Caba*

The Els nou rals bookstore was founded in 1979. Since 2013, the bookstore is a cultural cooperative in Viladecans (Barcelona), linked to critical culture and social movements in the city. The main activity is the sale of books and the programming of different events or cultural proposals: presentations, exhibitions, talks, courses, workshops, etc. as a cultural meeting point for the city.

The bookstore became a cooperative with a workers' buyout process, after one of the firsts flash mobs of the country.

- [PIRINOLI](#) (Italy), presented by *Enrico Vola*

PIRINOLI is a cooperative specialized in the production of multilayer and single-coated carton board for foldable boxes and grey cardboard for packaging, cores, interlayers and tubes.

After 140 years the industry failed and closes its doors following ups and downs. In 2014 the workers decided that the history of the industry could not end. 70 of them created the cooperative with the support of Legacoop and Coopfond. In 2015 they managed to buy all the plants at auction. To do this they had to make initial sacrifices, such as to reduce their pay slips by 20% for several months. The result is that PIRINOLI is now one of the most successful and large examples of workers' buyout in the country.

- [Raviplast soc. coop.](#) (Italy) presented by *Carlo Occhiali*

Raviplast is an industrial cooperative from Ravenna that produces flexible plastic packaging. It was founded in 2013 by a group of workers who had lost their jobs following the cessation of the activities of the Pansac Group. Today the cooperative - jointly associated with Legacoop, Confcooperative and AGCI - has a turnover of around six million euros and employs twenty-nine people, of which twenty-four are members.

DAY 2: Information, consultation and participation rights: focus on Workers' Buyouts. How trade unions and social economy enterprises make it happen together!

24th of February 2021, 10.30/12.30 am

The second day of the WINS launching event was an EU conference with high-level speakers. In the first part was discussed the role and the importance of the ICP rights topic in the upcoming EU's policy development and initiatives, and then there was a focus on WBO in some EU countries. The whole event tried to underline the positive outcomes from the collaboration between trade unions and cooperatives associations. This event was moderated by *Melinda Kelemen*, labour market expert at *Diesis Network*.

Welcoming words: what is the WINS project?

Gianluca Pastorelli, Executive President of [Diesis Network](#) and *Luis Miguel Jurado*, President of [COCETA](#)

Mr. Pastorelli and Mr. Jurado opened the event by mentioning the important mission of the WINS project: letting the workers, especially the workers in social economy enterprises, know their rights. Moreover, the project wishes to create a link between companies of the social economy and the trade unions.

Stand Up for the Social Pillar Alliance

The Stand up for the Social Pillar is an alliance of social economy enterprises, trade unions and civil society organisations that has been set up to encourage Governments and EU institutions to fully implement the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Giuseppe Guerini, President, *CECOP*

Mr. Guerini started his intervention by highlighting that in cooperatives, the involvement of the workers in compliance with ICP rights, is not an issue of negotiation as these rights are part of the identity and operating model of the company. The dialogue and involvement promoted by the European Pillar of Social Rights is already part of the values and operational mode of cooperatives. Dialogue and involvement are at the base of the cooperative enterprise form, especially in WBO processes.

Nevertheless, Mr. Guerini pointed out that there is no public policy without a good fiscal policy. In this sense, fiscal policies need to be more integrated with the political objectives. He also underlined the need of a tax system that helps the development of social economy enterprises.

Mr. Guerini finished by saying that new technologies represent a great tool to facilitate this social dialogue and information rights, that we should all embrace.

Marina Monaco, Advisor, *ETUC*

Ms. Monaco started by reminding the audience that the social economy organizations have a mission which is very close to the trade unions' one, and so is their story. Nevertheless, the time has come to

look ahead: the Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) draws a new way to manage the economy, growth, development and transitions that must be sustainable from an environmental, well-being and a social point of view. Ms. Monaco stressed that, when discussing social sustainability, we need to aim to greater equality, justice and redistribution. The biggest concern that the EU must raise is the reduction of inequalities, which are the main obstacle for our future.

The Alliance, made up of social economy organisations and stakeholders, aims at informing the business world, trade unions and civil society and at involving citizens, making them an active part of the decision-making process. Organizations that are part of the Alliance must involve citizens and allow them to contribute to designing the future of Europe.

European Pillar of Social Rights and the Social Economy – Towards the Action Plan

Ann Branch, Head of Unit Job Creation, DG Employment, European Commission

Ann Branch started by stressing that social economy is a topic of key importance for the EC and in particular for Commissioner Schmit, who was mandated by President Von Der Leyen to prepare the Action Plan on social economy. The Commission wants to improve enabling conditions for the development of the social economy in the EU. In the post COVID-19 crisis context, the social economy is seen as a sustainable way of doing business and supporting people, therefore it offers excellent solutions to help with the recovery. Employment rates in the social economy vary considerably between Member States, demonstrating strong potential for further development. Moreover, the social economy is a way of doing business and present in a multitude of economic sectors, which also offers potential.

A lot has been done by the European Commission over the last 10 years to improve visibility, framework conditions, access to markets, digitalization, strengthening social economy in non-EU countries, etc. Ms. Branch mentioned that the EC will build on this experience in developing the new Action Plan. To do so, they are engaging extensively with stakeholders.

In addition, she mentioned that the Action Plan on Social Economy is complementary to the Action Plan on the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The latter addresses all aspects of a social Europe. The social economy can help with implementing the Social Pillar. The social economy contributes to all three areas of the pillar.

Ms. Branch also recalled the EU acquis concerning ICP rights. The Commission would be interested in the results of the project on how effectively employees are consulted in social economy organisations, the relationship of social economy with trade unions, the role that social economy holds (or not) within the sectoral or cross-sectoral social dialogue system of the selected countries, and insights on worker buy-outs.

To conclude, Ms. Branch stated that in preparing the Action Plan the Commission will look at the current needs that can be addressed at the EU level. The EC will publish a roadmap on the Action Plan for the social economy in the upcoming weeks. Ms. Branch underlined that feedback is welcomed, as participation is at the heart of the model.

ICP rights and Social Economy - The case of workers'-owned cooperatives and business transfers to employees

- **The example of Spain: challenges and opportunities**

Paloma Arroyo, Director, COCETA

Ms. Arroyo started by underlining that more than 400 companies have been transformed into cooperatives in Spain in the last 3 years. Therefore, more than 1000 workers that could have been unemployed did not lose their workplace. They did so without a proper legal framework promoting the transformation: this was possible thanks to bargaining with trade unions.

COCETA wishes to change mindsets and to promote the cooperative model in Spain, and in particular as a model for the WBO process, that allows to save and create job places. COCETA aims at doing so in collaboration with other stakeholders: trade unions, employer associations and public authorities. For this reason, COCETA tries to work with these stakeholders both at the national and European level.

Trade unions and cooperatives association share the same values and goals, this is why closer cooperation between these actors is needed in Spain. COCETA is promoting in Spain a work to reform the legislation regarding WBO and ICP rights. Especially in these difficult times, we should avoid bank ruptures and the loss of job places. COCETA wishes and is working for new national and European legislative frameworks. Social dialogue, involvement of workers and the promotion of the cooperatives model will contribute to fighting the challenges issued from the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Arroyo concluded by stressing that solutions exist and should be further implemented: it is not simple, but it is not impossible.

- **The example of Italy: Agreement between social economy enterprises and trade unions**

On the January 2021, an important agreement was signed between AGCI (Associazione Generale Cooperative Italiane), Confcooperative (Confederazione Cooperative Italiane), Legacoop - the three main national-level associations representing cooperatives - and CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro), CISL (Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori), UIL (Unione Italiana del

Lavoro) - the three main trade unions of the country - for the promotion and development of worker buyouts (WBO). Mr. Bianco resumed the political willingness and Mr. Zampiga shed a light on the main points of the agreement.

Gianluca Bianco, Coordinator of CISL National Department of collective bargaining, CISL

Mr. Bianco started by saying that this agreement is the result of years-long work. The agreement was reached because there was a common willingness to act together to create stable and qualified employment. The parts tried to exploit the support provided by the law on WBO, starting with the Marcora law and the 2021 budget law, which provides a system of incentives.

The objective is to be able to intervene in three main situations: 1) financial crisis of an enterprise and bankrupt, 2) difficult generational transitions and 3) the use of goods confiscated by organized crime. The overall aim is to build a strategic action and a systemic vision of the WBO phenomenon. The agreement also underlines the fundamental role of the social partners, trade union and the importance of bargaining. The hope is to promote a cooperative business culture.

Antonio Zampiga, Responsible for Industrial Relations, Legacoop

The first main point of the agreement, indicated Mr. Zampiga, is the establishment of a national discussion table on WBO: this should act as a common space to jointly work on the theme of the WBO. Plus, it should also promote new initiatives.

Moreover, Mr. Zampiga underlined the fundamental role of the local network and local trade union service operators, as this is essential to effectively promote WBO at the local level. Mr. Zampiga also stressed the importance of reaching other targets too to raise awareness on WBO: workers, citizens, etc. In this sense, dissemination and information materials must be developed and used as a vehicle for information. Finally, local administrations and institutions are the key to enabling this process and must be involved.

To conclude, Mr. Zampiga reminded that new actions must be taken to facilitate the path of a WBO transitions: the WBO process should be made more easy and new tools are needed.

- **ESOP and Marcora: Two models for European WBO schemes**

Tej Gonza, Managing Director and Co-founder, Institute for Economic Democracy, Slovenia

Dr. David P. Ellerman, President and Co-founder, Institute for Economic Democracy, Slovenia

Mr. Gonza started by explaining that the Institute for Economic Democracy in Slovenia carries research activities but has also a practical involvement: they work with companies, develop pilot projects, and work on policy activities. Indeed, they publish papers and write legislations for Slovenia. Mr. Gonza and Dr. Ellerman presented two possible models for Slovenia, built upon good practices from other countries. The two main problems identified so far are: the retirement of an entrepreneurial generation and a flood of insolvent SMEs. A solution to both of these problems is workers' buyout, this is why the Institute proposes two models:

- An ESOP model, coming from the USA and adopted for Europe and Slovenia. This is different from the traditional WBO because it is the company that finances the buyout.
- A generic Marcora model written for Slovenia. IED is working with the government and the European institutions, based on Slovenian best practices, on a legislative proposal that may become reality in the next years.

Mr. Gonza concluded by mentioning that employees-ownership is not only good in itself but is a tool to address other problems such as promoting economic democracy, finding a solution for successions, insolvencies and addressing the platform economy.

Closing

Mr. Pastorelli closed the event by thanking the participants, the speakers, the partners of the project and the organizers of the event. He also reminded that in the upcoming month, the WINS project will develop other activities and events will be organized (hopefully in person), to further address these topics.