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Annex II

Examples of collaboration between work integration social enterprises (WISEs) and conventional enterprises in Spain

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Examples of collaboration between work integration social enterprises (WISEs) and conventional enterprises in Spain

This report was drafted by Fernando Marhuenda Fluixá¹ in the framework of the project “Production and employment chains: new concrete opportunities for social cooperatives in Trentino” carried out by EURICSE with the financial support of Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Trento e Rovereto (Caritro).

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1. COOPERATION BETWEEN WISES AND CONVENTIONAL ENTERPRISES: BARRIERS, INNOVATION, LEGAL TOOLS

WISEs in Spain are part of the social economy and, as such, the representative employer organization is CEPES². CEPES is the organization representing the interests of all the social economy in Spain, which includes the following types of companies grouped in 29 organizations: cooperatives, labour societies, mutual insurance companies, work integration enterprises, special employment centres, fishing guilds and associations in the field of disability. Affiliation to CEPES is not compulsory (neither association to FAEDEI which is the employer representative of Spanish WISEs), but most companies do in order to have their interests properly represented in policy decisions. CEPES represents 10% of the Spanish Gross Domestic Product and it gathers over 43 thousand companies and more than two million jobs. WISEs include companies with different traditions and legal regulations on the employment of people with low employability and people who face barriers of different kinds to access the ordinary labour market.

There are three basic ways to facilitate employment for these people, all three with legal recognition, and many other ways to train people to improve their employability³ (Córdoba and Martínez, 2011; Llinares, Zacarés and Córdoba, 2016; Llinares *et al.*, 2018).

The first one is known as *Centros Especiales de Empleo* (CEE), i.e., Special Employment Centers⁴. These were first ruled in 1985, through the Royal Decree 1368/1985, ruling the particular special labour relation of handicapped⁵ people working in Special Employment Centers⁶. Their status and contribution have been extensively studied and the most recent research about them published in Spanish has pointed to their improvement and their update as well as the effects the latest reforms have had upon their aims (Echebarria, 2020; Sánchez, 2020; Salinas and Marhuenda, 2020). According to the change in the consideration of people with disabilities (PWDs), even if the Royal Decree is still valid, it has been adapted by measures such as the Royal Decree 1/2013 which approves the Unified Text of the General Law of rights of PWDs and their social inclusion⁷. There is general agreement, however, that very often CEE have resulted in relative ghettos in which PWDs enter and leave only when retiring or after a deterioration of their health, with hardly a promotion into the ordinary labour market.

A second measure, far more integrative from the point of view of social inclusion, is that of Supported Employment, also recognized by law, approved in the Royal Decree 870/2007, which rules the program of supported employment as a measure to promote employment of people with disabilities in the ordinary labour market⁸. Such a measure is aligned with the approach towards quality of life that is the overarching framework

² <https://www.cep.es>

³ This is, however, not the aim of this report.


⁴ The author of the report has done the translation of Spanish notions, terms and regulations into English, unless otherwise stated.

⁵ This was the notion used at that time: handicapped, *minusválidos* in Spanish.

⁶ <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1985-16663>

⁷ <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2013-12632>

⁸ <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2007-13588>




nowadays for most disability policies internationally, and that has been promoted and researched extensively in Spain by Miguel Ángel Verdugo and Francisco de Borja Jordán de Urríes, founders of the INICO⁹, a university institute promoting the integration of PWDs. Jordán and Urríes have explored issues on inactivity of PWDs (Jordán and Verdugo, 2014), quality of life (Verdugo et al., 2013), as well as on CEE (Jordán and Verdugo, 2012) among others. Supported Employment consists of a job in one or several conventional companies that are assessed, designed and supervised in order to employ a PWD able to fulfil the required tasks and to make proper use of his/her skills as well as to improve them. There is a professional role legally acknowledged, that of the labour trainer, *preparador laboral* as it is named in Spanish, in charge of providing the necessary support for the PWD to perform his/her work and also in charge of getting rid of the supports once the person is able to work without them, therefore increasing his/her autonomy. As opposed to CEE, Supported Employment does not necessarily have a previous step in another kind of work integration company, given that sometimes PWDs can proceed directly from education and training into ordinary work (with the necessary supports, but already in conventional companies).

The third measure is also legally recognized since 2007, even if there has existed since long before (the first experience recorded in Spain goes back to the late 1970s), and it is properly Work Integration Social Enterprises or WISEs, *empresas de inserción* as they are known in Spanish. Insertion enterprises are ruled not by Royal Decrees as the two previous measures, but through a law, namely the Law 44/2007¹⁰, passed in the Spanish Parliament, therefore with greater legislative scope, even though this law was passed after almost a decade of failed attempts. This law has been articulated and developed differently by each of the regional governments, which provide differential financial and administrative support. In this case, the law establishes two relevant working roles, that of the “integration worker”, who is hired for a maximum period of three years in order to improve his/her employability and facilitate transition into the ordinary labour market, and the “accompanying worker”, i.e., a worker with an educational role that aims to support and plan an itinerary with the integration worker to improve his/her employability (González and Marhuenda, 2008; Abiétar, Ros and Marhuenda, 2018). There is also a third occupational role, that of “production workers”, i.e., conventional workers that are in charge of production processes and that do not necessarily support integration workers in their processes, as such support is expected to be provided by accompanying workers. In some cases, staff in WISEs combine both accompanying and production roles in the same workers, which some WISEs see as an opportunity to improve accompanying processes and some others perceive as a hindering factor. WISEs, as opposed to CEE and Supported Employment, are legally defined as transition platforms and their aim is to have integration workers ready to enter the conventional labour market after a maximum of three years. Remaining in the company after that period is not a chance¹¹, and some WISEs, conscious of the difficulties of accessing the conventional labour market, try to shorten the three-year period in order to boost the chances of the integration workers that they hire. WISEs have developed their own philosophy and

⁹ <https://inico.usal.es>

¹⁰ Available at: <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2007-21492>

¹¹ It is not legally accepted, with one exception: that the integration worker is hired as a conventional worker with no further support. This is an alternative that is sometimes used even though it is often avoided, as WISEs do not have the ability to hire that many conventional workers and they are generally clear about their transition aim.

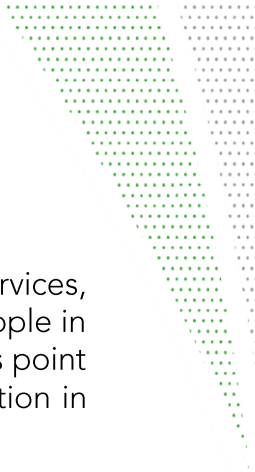


handbook (FAEDEI and AERESS, 2014) and they have struggled to work together in order to avoid becoming ghettos of integration workers and to strengthen connections with conventional companies not only as customers and providers, but mainly as destinations for the integration workers once they finish their itineraries within WISEs.

The current report will focus on WISEs, for they are the only work integration pathway that defines legally transition into the conventional labour market. Added to this, in the case of Supported Employment there is no WISE of origin (for destination into the ordinary labour market) and in CEE there is no conventional company for destination for the PWDs hired. They just remain in these Centers.

Therefore, if we look at labour market policies, WISEs are the most appropriate legal framework to improve and increase the employability of people at risk and to facilitate their integration into the conventional labour market through the promotion of learning trajectories (Chisvert *et al*, 2018; Marhuenda, 2009; Marhuenda, 2018a, 2018b). WISEs are promoted, by law, by institutions in the Third Sector of Social Action, be they associations, foundations or cooperatives. They must have a social aim, which consists often of a set of combined measures around the WISE, often before the integration worker is hired by the WISE, and sometimes also once the integration worker is finalising his/her itinerary. Therefore, WISEs can only be promoted by initiated, promoted and owned by at least 51% of the capital in hands of a non-governmental organisation (NGO), in order to avoid conventional companies or entrepreneurs setting up their own WISEs for other purposes. This was a deliberate decision when lobbying for the law, having learned the lesson from other experiences (in the field of the social protection of minors, for instance), where capital/business-oriented entrepreneurs entered the field with a for-profit aim ahead of the social aim; in the case of WISEs, it is the social aim, guaranteed by the non-for-profit organizations behind them, what avoids other actors entering the scene and destabilizing the landscape.

Among the former, the organizations promoting the WISE have training programs (Marhuenda, Berand and Navas, 2010) in several occupational domains (one of them always related to the occupational area of the WISE); they often offer the population they serve other kinds of support (legal -in case of pending judiciary cases, as well as in order to facilitate legal residence or working permits of people of migrant origin-, financial -often in connection to public social services but sometimes with their own funds, be it through acquisition of food, payment of bills (house rental, electricity or water supply), care for children-, educational -facilitating preparation and/or access to examinations to achieve the General Certificate of Secondary Education, or preparing people to have access to formal vocational education, or teaching Spanish (or some of the other official languages in different regions of Spain) to people whose mother language is a different one-, psychological -therapeutic support of people who is getting out of addictions, people with mental health issues, people who have suffered abuse of different kinds (racial, sexual), gender violence- and sometimes also under the shape of home provision -for people who are homeless, both adults as well as young people who at the age of 18 come out of the protection system of the authorities but have nowhere to go-). Therefore, WISEs are subject to many tensions (Martínez, Bernad and Navas, 2012) and they use organizational and managerial tools in order to overcome them (Martínez, Arostegui and Galarreta, 2018).



Among the latter, organizations promoting WISEs often offer intermediation services, facilitate support to prepare a CV, train people to face a job interview and put people in contact with conventional companies which are trying to hire workforce. It is at this point that WISEs face the greatest difficulties but also show their creativity and innovation in order to develop cooperative agreements with conventional enterprises.

2. EXPLORATORY CASE STUDIES

2.1. Selection

Two case studies have been selected according to the guidelines given. One case corresponds to guideline C, i.e., cooperative relation developed in the frame of specific labour market measures). That is the case of Mapiser E.I., which is a member of AREI. The Government in Aragón was the first one to legally facilitate access to accreditation of prior learning for workers in WISEs. Furthermore, the same government (*Diputación General de Aragón*) reached an agreement with AREI to provide the land to settle some of the companies that are members of AREI for a period of 75 years in the outskirts of Zaragoza. There is an active engagement of the regional government in considering WISEs as appropriate actors in integration into the labour market.

AREI, the Association of WISEs in Aragón, has very good relations with the regional government of Aragón (*Diputación General de Aragón*), and the city of Zaragoza. These have resulted in long-term contracts of different WISEs to provide services to the Government, and in a long-term agreement with the municipality of Zaragoza that has provided land in an industrial park for WISEs to use and to rent. Furthermore, the relation between AREI and the government of Aragón resulted in open processes of accreditation of prior learning (Chisvert *et al.*, 2015) and occupational experience for WISE workers, leading this process in Spain¹² (Guillera and Chisvert, 2018; Chisvert, 2019).

Mapiser was the first company to move to this industrial park and to invest in the factory hall, and it was the leading company of AREI for a while. Mapiser holds agreements with several companies and institutions, it suggested Pardo as a conventional company for the kind of cooperation that they have, implying a large investment and opening a new location, as well as for the youth of this partnership and the commitment of the conventional company, which is well-established well-known multinational.

The second case study corresponds to guideline D, i.e., cooperative relation independent from any support policy and/or legal requirement: the WISE(s) and the conventional enterprise share and explicitly pursue a common objective, being to facilitate the work integration of persons with support needs. That is the case in the region called Comunidad Valenciana, no policy framework is provided to facilitate these processes and it is every individual WISE which has to establish its own cooperation agreements with conventional companies, hence disseminating the purpose and convincing them.

AVEI, the Association of WISEs in Valencia (*Comunidad Valenciana*), was one of the first to be established in Spain and one that has held relations with governments of different political parties. AVEI has been led by Reciplana for a long period, and Reciplana is one of the oldest WISEs in the region. Reciplana was promoted in a middle size

¹² Staff from WISEs in AREI, together with staff from other WISEs in Spain, FAEDEI and staff from the University of Valencia produced a handbook on accreditation of occupational experience for WISEs. See: Guillera and Chisvert (2018).

industrial town in the North of the region, and it has become a member of the social network Koopera a few years ago, like some other WISEs promoted by Caritas (the social branch of the Catholic Church), not without trouble. However, staff from Reciplana took over relevant responsibilities in Koopera from the moment they joined it, particularly related to accompaniment processes and training of accompaniment staff.

One relevant feature of Reciplana is the fact that it attempts to reduce itineraries to two years, therefore speeding up the process of integrating workers and moving them to search for a position in the conventional labour market before they start to feel accommodated by Reciplana.

Reciplana suggested Fontasal as a conventional company for it is a company in a different sector of activity that, however, employs former Reciplana staff and because they have a relationship based upon trust.

2.2. Case study 1: Mapiser and Industrias Pardo

- *Context*

Mapiser¹³ is a WISE located in Zaragoza and established in 1997 that has evolved in the services it provides, looking for a variety of services that covers four different areas. The first one is related to the manufacturing and manipulation of industrial products, such as packaging, picking, and other such processes. The second area is in the domain of moving both for individual customers as well as for institutions such as schools, universities and public administrations. The third area is in the sector of painting, covering activities such as cleaning graffiti, industrial and decorative painting. The fourth occupational area is gardening, both for particular customers as well as for companies, offices, and administrations such as municipalities.

Mapiser has been a promoter and an active partner of AREI, the association of WISEs in Aragón, most of which are located in Zaragoza, where most of the population in the region is located, but Mapiser also provides services to the provinces of Teruel and Huesca, as well as to customers in other regions in Spain.

The decision of Mapiser to work in these four different sectors of activity is an intentional one, in order to provide alternatives for employment in several profiles. This allows integration workers to be able to find a vocation they want to follow, but it also facilitates the allocation of people with particular needs in a sector or area in which he/she is able to cope with, particularly in the first stages in the company.

Such diversity in occupations and profiles allows Mapiser to hire approximately 30 integration workers at a time. This being a large amount of integration workers for the usual size of Spanish WISEs, Mapiser considers itself however a small company. The size is something that Mapiser is concerned about: according to the regional standards of the regulations that rule funding to support WISEs, all that exceeds 14 integration jobs is not eligible to be supported. However, the variety and amount of production that Mapiser

¹³ For more information, see: <https://mapiser.com>

has been able to contract in the market has allowed it to more than double its staff with itineraries. This means, of course, that Mapiser generates enough benefit so as to be able to accompany its workers through its own funds. The technical profile of integration workers is not very high, with people working in maintenance services, warehouses, manufacturing, packaging, etc.

- *Partnership structure*

Because of the kind of services it provides, Mapiser has many conventional companies as customers, and this is a good way to know possible destinations for the transition of its integration workers. However, precisely because they are customers, Mapiser is cautious to keep differentiated roles and to keep customers satisfied is a relevant aim (like in any conventional company). Therefore, the key element for sending an integration worker at the end of his/her itinerary to the conventional company is the fact that there is a need for an occupational profile for which Mapiser has the right person ready to jump into the ordinary labour market. Such match is necessary in terms of the skills profile and the role to perform. If Mapiser decides to send a worker to the conventional company, this still holds its own selection process. It is Mapiser and not the Foundation Picarral¹⁴, which is its promoter and lies behind it. In this relation with conventional companies, Mapiser adapts to the needs of such companies, some of which demand the establishment of a cooperation agreement while most do not. When such agreement is signed, it often consists of Mapiser accepting to submit several candidates whenever the conventional company invites it to send someone to fulfil a job vacancy.

What conventional companies often demand to Mapiser is the facilitation of access to the financial support provided by the Employment administration of Aragón (INAEM)¹⁵, which has a Decree of measures of financial support not only for WISEs, but also for conventional companies hiring people coming out of WISEs at the end of their process. These measures are established under the assumption of lower productivity of workers who are undergoing or have undergone an accompanied itinerary as part of their integration process. Given that the financial support for conventional companies is so scarce, the result is that conventional companies hiring staff from Mapiser do so for the quality of the service -the training and preparation of workers- that Mapiser provides.

The keys to success that Mapiser identifies are the matching of the person to the job and, in order to succeed, Mapiser is always responsive to any need that might arise in the accommodation of the newly appointed to the conventional company. This is a process that intends to be minimized, though sometimes may require lifetime support, depending on the circumstances of the person employed. This accompaniment in the conventional company uses several strategies, such as weekly telephone calls to check the progress, on-site visits to the company previously agreed upon, and specific training provided to improve the occupational skills of the person employed, be it through deepening the training already acquired or by supplementary training to cover areas that the person had not been skilled enough while in the WISE. There are also training evenings in Mapiser, where training pills are provided to former and current employees,

¹⁴ For more information, see: <http://fundacionpicarral.org>

¹⁵ For more information, see: <https://inaem.aragon.es/empleo-en-aragon>

as well as employees from conventional companies that are invited to sessions where Mapiser transfer its own knowledge.

However, the after-WISE accompaniment provided tends to not exceed six months to one year, as accompanying staff in Mapiser is conscious that the general abilities that have not been developed along the three years of the itinerary are hard to achieve afterwards, once the support is less and limited. However, as said before, in some cases such support has been provided up to three years after leaving the WISE, be they employed or sometimes also during an unemployment period following employment in the conventional company.

Mapiser has been successful in sending people into the conventional labour market: 9 in 2017; 14 in 2018; 3 in 2019; 6 in 2020 and another 3 in 2021. There is a rotation of around 20% of the staff every year. These workers usually go to work in companies that are also customers of Mapiser, and Mapiser rarely loses them; it has established a long-term relationship with many customers, one that goes back 25 years in some cases.

The obstacles that Mapiser identifies among conventional companies are fear of the unknown -hiring people that have been in integration itineraries-, a fear which sometimes is masking prejudice. However, workers also have fear to go out into the conventional labour market and they feel so comfortable in the WISE that they do not want to leave it. The WISE organizes sessions where former integration workers come to show current integration workers that there is a way out and that success is possible, sometimes also obstacles that they have to overcome. Conventional companies tend to value the commitment of former Mapiser workers and their willingness to work.

- *Impact and prospect*

The cooperation agreement that is part of this case study is between Mapiser and Industrias Pardo I¹⁶. Industrias Pardo is part of the metal sector and a partner of the Pikolin Group¹⁷, the second largest group in Europe in the area of the bed and bedding sector, both in domestic homes as well as in hospitals and residences. Pardo hires approximately 100 workers, and it produces beds for hospitals, geriatric homes as well as home beds, particularly electrified-articulated beds.

Pardo has been a customer of Mapiser in the past 7 years, and they signed an agreement 3 years ago, one that is renewed every three years and which provided guarantee to Mapiser in order to invest in setting up a new plant in the industrial park in La Muela, next to the plant of Pardo. The relation with Mapiser was established for two main reasons: first, the social cause of facilitating integration and also the reduction of costs, to which Mapiser contributes. Based upon this relation, hiring of former Mapiser workers has been possible, and Pardo has hired 4 different workers, one of which holds nowadays a fixed position, two of them were not able to continue due to the reduction of staff caused by the Covid-19 -something that also affected other staff in Pardo-, and the fourth one did not continue for failing the expectations of Pardo.

¹⁶ For more information, see: <https://www.pardo.es/es>

¹⁷ For more information, see: <https://www.grupopikolin.com/?lang=es>

Second, Mapiser has been mounting mattresses, something that Pardo could not do directly because of the investment it should have done in their own location, as metal processes could cause danger of fire that the mattresses could not support. For three years, Mapiser was mounting mattresses in their own location; through the agreement, Mapiser has hired an industrial premise in the same industrial park where Pardo is located. Both companies work in such a way that they share their accounts so that there is a balance along the year between wins and losses, in case the account goes red for Mapiser for some months. Therefore, Pardo feels responsible for Mapiser through this agreement.

The activity sector facilitates this agreement, and the support of the public administration exists though it is very limited, through the payment of the social security costs of former WISE workers hired by conventional companies. This is however not the reason why Pardo hires this staff and more -and more specific- support by the administration would be welcome. Regarding the way Pardo addresses former WISE workers, the company's behaviour is the same as with any other worker and any other conventional company practice: there is a selection process, the interview is relevant, and they hire staff first upon temporary basis and only move into stable contracts if they are satisfied with the workers' performance.

Because of the size and relevance of the company, Pardo has a welcome handbook that is handed to all new workers, and they also establish a mentoring process with newly appointed workers. In this regard, once Pardo hires a worker it makes no difference whether he/she comes from a WISE or not. It is true, however, that the staff hired from Mapiser has low qualification levels and therefore they work in manufacturing processes that do not require more sophisticated occupational skills, like welding or handling laser machines; former WISE workers are employed basically as manual labour.

Pardo refers to Mapiser as an incubator where people eager to work can then promote into Pardo. However, Mapiser would expect some more proactive disposition by Mapiser demanding of Pardo appointment of new employees, instead of only reacting to the demands expressed so far by Pardo. Anyhow, Pardo refers no obstacles in their relation to Mapiser. This conventional company would appreciate a larger effort by the WISEs in supporting their integration workers into achieving either a formal vocational qualification or to enter processes of accreditation of work experience; something astonishing given that Aragón was the first region where processes of accreditation of occupational experience were set up specifically for WISE workers, already in 2017, and no worker in Mapiser has undergone this process so far, while other WISEs members of AREI have already used it successfully.

Pardo has had contact with Special Employment Centers as well, even though this is a completely different account as the relation they have with Mapiser. They have no contact with other WISEs in Aragón, and they have shared their experience with Mapiser with other companies of the Pikolin Group although there has been no further opportunity for cooperation within the group so far.

2.2. Case study 2: Reciplana and Fontasal

- *Context*

Reciplana¹⁸ is a company established by Fundació Tots Units¹⁹, a foundation that started as long as 1991, promoted by Caritas Castellón together with the Castellón Confederation of Small and Medium Enterprises. Totsunits promoted Reciplana Recuperacions in 1995 as a company (there was no regulation for WISEs in the country yet) with the purpose to promote integration through work, in the area of recycling (clothes, paper, domestic appliances); and it was then legally established as a WISE in 2010. In year 2019, Reciplana offered 19 jobs for workers undergoing a process of social inclusion, all of them submitted by the welfare system with an official statement on their condition of social exclusion and all of them previously registered in the Employment Department as job-seekers. Tots Units is in charge of training, preparing and selecting people that will be hired by Reciplana, and it takes also the responsibility to facilitate the transition into the ordinary labour market of WISE staff at the end of their itineraries. In this regard, Tots Units has staff responsible to conduct company search, contact and cooperation agreements, both formal and informal, for the purpose of facilitating transition. In order to do so, they use their own funds but also private funding from institutions like banks, that is the case of the Incorpora²⁰ program, funded by Fundació La Caixa, nowadays Caixabank, and that is the largest private provider of funding of social services run by the Third Sector of Social Action.

In this regard, Incorpora program has taken over the motto used by Tots Units since before joining the Incorpora network: “we foster people that increase the value of companies, and companies that provide opportunities to people”. The result of such a motto for Tots Units is that they do not search, but gain conventional companies to the cause of Corporate Social Responsibility understood in a very particular way: such a responsibility is not whitewashing, it has to be true and consist of a sensibility towards social inclusion that is embedded in the way that labour relations are established in the company.

That is precisely the way how Fontasal, an ordinary company, approached Tots Units, after knowing them in a seminar on Corporate Social Responsibility promoted by the municipality of Villareal, where Totsunits and Reciplana are located, in 2018. Anyhow, in this first approach, Fontasal behaved as many other companies, searching for the benefit that they could get out of the cooperation with Reciplana. In their view at that moment, such benefit could consist of hiring staff with low risk and hiring former WISE staff with long term itineraries and with the extra support of accompanying workers.

Fontasal is a company in the area of industrial -not domestic- plumbing, located in Villareal, in the same industrial park as Tots Units. Fontasal hires 11 workers, three of whom are partners/owners of the company and the rest are hired as workers. Among the staff, two current workers come from Tots Units, one of them with a stable contract in Fontasal while the other one does not, for financial reasons of the company.

¹⁸ Reciplana website: <http://www.reciplana.com>

¹⁹ Fundació Tots Units website: <https://totsunits.org>

²⁰ For more details, see: <https://www.incorpora.org>

Fontasal approached Tots Units in search of workers, after having failed at hiring successfully at the Employment Department. The manager in Fontasal, having attended the seminar on Corporate Social Responsibility promoted by the municipality, took the initiative and consulted Tots Units, the promoter of Reciplana, taking the chance that both were neighbours in the industrial plant. Fontasal offered its vacancies and demanded workers, with the only requirement not to have a disability, for the kind of work (always in industries, often working in the heights).

In this regard, sometimes Reciplana and Tots Units feel that they “sell people”. Of course, this selling is much easier with integration workers that perform very well, that produce high quality work, that have social and family support, that have been able to “reinvent” themselves, and are in fact apt for the conventional labour market whatever it was that brought them to the WISE. Conventional companies have a fear and they ask what is wrong with integration workers, where do they come from, what happens to them; they attribute a stigma to integration workers, and part of the work of Tots Units is to contribute to getting rid of this stigma. Tots Units attempts to help conventional companies to perceive integration workers as plain workers: that is their main concern, and this is hard, for conventional companies tend to appreciate integration workers as an opportunity to benefit from fiscal benefits.

The interview with Fontasal confirms the use that they make of Reciplana as a provider of workers, they refer to Reciplana whenever they have vacancies and they are highly satisfied with their relationship. They are sure that Reciplana will not send them just any worker, but one that is able to fulfil their expectations.

- *Partnership structure*

The trust relationship that Reciplana has been able to develop with conventional companies has resulted in certain fidelity, which is the case of Fontasal. Such trust facilitates the transition from WISE into the conventional company, and Reciplana uses such trust to promote entering the ordinary labour market where Fontasal supports them finishing their itinerary already within the conventional company. Along the years, this company has facilitated opportunities for manual labour, to allow people to work in a different sector, through the appreciation of attitude and willingness to work. Reciplana has been able to prepare its staff ready to become an apprentice at the age of 50, which is not an easy task but, however, lies at the core of the mission of WISEs.

An example of this is an Italian worker of Reciplana, who left it to enter the conventional labour market but was back into unemployment due to the Coronavirus crisis. He is currently employed in Fontasal, benefiting from his training in handling pipes and equipment. Even though this experience was not enough for the job he was being given in Fontasal, his willingness to help and the trust that Fontasal had in Reciplana facilitated the selection process. Being over 50, he took this opportunity and despite certain conflicts in the beginning moments, with younger colleagues, he received support from the accompanying worker in Reciplana to help him cope emotionally and he has

progressed with the expectation that both he and the company have nowadays to give him a stable contract.

There is no formal agreement signed between Reciplana and Fontasal, and none of them considers it is necessary, mutual trust and successful cooperation since 2018 have satisfied their needs. Fontasal does not have and does not want a formal agreement with Tots Units, they do not need it. They have not had support from the regional or national administration, but because of their small size they do not expect it nor need it; they can do without this support, and the bureaucracies it implies would be a burden. It is mutual trust, both in Tots Units and in the person in charge in Tots Units: the manager in Fontasal refers a highly satisfactory professional relation to the person responsible in Tots Units.


Certainly, the cooperation agreements with conventional companies cannot be the same according to size: large companies tend to use Corporate Social Responsibility as a way to hire certain staff that may give them fiscal benefits and with a low-risk profile. SMEs, on their side, allow WISEs to guide them, they get to know the legislation on the integration of people at risk or with disabilities, and they get to know how to work with people with such circumstances.

In the case of WISE, it is the condition of social exclusion of the worker that has to be certified by the welfare department (municipal social services); certificate of disability is not a requirement because it is of medical nature, and this disability certificate is only accepted if it implies as well the condition of social exclusion, as stated by the 2007 Law. Therefore, Corporate Social Responsibility does not apply to this process. That is the case for instance of the Pamesa Group, one of the largest ceramic groups, or large export orange companies, which tends to hire people on a temporary basis. In small companies, they speak a different language and Social Corporate Responsibility is not a relevant issue: SMEs appreciate the fact of giving opportunities to people, to individuals, and to workers whose lives have not been easy. They tend to appreciate a face-to-face relationship, and here it is where Reciplana tries to establish close links, approaching the conventional company manager.

Anyhow, cooperation agreements are handled differently by the managers and executive staff in both WISEs and conventional companies in comparison to how technical staff make use of them: Here, meetings and seminars with the support of the local and regional administration tend to facilitate their contact, as well as the support provided by the companies' customers of Caixabank and that are invited to join Incorpora for the benefits they may find there. The complaint by Reciplana, however, is that WISEs remain largely invisible to the administration and that the introduction of social clauses is far from being applied.

- *Impact and prospect*

Reciplana wonders whether cooperation is based upon synergy; in the view of the person interviewed, there is some use -perhaps even abuse- of social services, who once workers are hired by the WISE consider they are out of their reach, hence relying exclusively upon WISEs and increasing the work and care WISEs have to provide to their employees. In the end, the transition into the ordinary labour market is an issue of



matching integration workers to jobs, and finding appropriate opportunities for people that are still looking for their place in the world and that may even need accompaniment in this process. Of course, training support is also relevant, and here work experience is particularly relevant: once WISE staff has experience, transition into the ordinary labour market proves appropriate, and experience trains better than formal courses or workshops.


Cooperation agreements are common with large companies, over 50 workers, though they are basically formal. Reciqlana tends to develop informal agreements with companies based upon trust, even though this may result in formal agreements signed by the managers. A difference between managerial and technical staff is clear in this regard: cooperation works at the technical rather than the political level; transition into the ordinary labour market and hiring policies are under responsibility of human resource staff, at the technical level, and not of the company managers or owners, who rely upon their technical staff. Companies often do not feel tied by formal agreements, it is the personal relation established among technical staff that favours cooperation. On the contrary, formal agreements tend to facilitate whitewashing as a malpractice of Corporate Social Responsibility.

The WISE has also gained experience through this agreement and Reciqlana has introduced in its process the tools that contribute to satisfying the needs of conventional companies: provision of certificates to handle industrial trucks within warehouses is now available to all integration workers, as it was a common demand by conventional companies. The next step will consist of fostering the acquisition of the driving license among integration workers, as jobs in industrial parks mostly require the possibility to drive in and out of them, particularly in the region, given the lack of public transport.

The lack of a driving license -a responsibility of the person rather than the WISE- is an obstacle nowadays, but the most relevant one is the fact that most jobs offer part-time contracts, which is also the case in the WISE to allow for more availability of jobs. These working conditions do not allow people to have earnings to make a good living and therefore proper planning is needed, for instance, in order to save to invest in the driving license.

Another obstacle is the tendency of conventional companies to confuse WISEs with Special Employment Centres, not to differentiate between certified medical disability and social exclusion (also certified, by the welfare system); for conventional companies, there are conventional and non-conventional workers. Furthermore, when it comes to hiring policies, conventional companies are more open to the inclusion of people with disability, as it seems easier (and it is widely accepted in society); while the inclusion of people with a record of social exclusion proves somewhat worrisome for them: what was the reason why these persons were socially excluded and are they reliable, can we trust them?

That is not the case in Fontasal, which over the years and through the cooperation with Reciqlana has become clear about the difference between Special Employment Centres and WISEs; and it is WISEs what Fontasal is looking for. Fontasal relies upon the work done by Reciqlana in training people and fostering their readiness and interest to work, and they are satisfied with the quality of the integration/transition/qualification work conducted by Reciqlana. It is those objective features (qualification, training, readiness,



availability) that make workers trained in Reciplana attractive for Fontasal, and staff at Fontasal are after these years of cooperation free of common prejudice in the ordinary labour market, i.e., hiring workers over 50 (Fontasal provides an example of having hired a former worker of Reciplana over 50 who is a productive and reliable worker).

Tots Units prepares workers in different ways that Fontasal appreciates: despite the circumstances that brought them to WISEs, they are ready to work, punctual, if for some unexpected reason they cannot attend they give information in advance; they are able to work in groups (which is fundamental in Fontasal as everyone has to work in teams); and they have enough training even if they do not have the specific vocational qualification - therefore, being limited to be employed as assistants or to have to do further training. Reciplana has provided training and experience in the area of plumbing, they are able to know different stuff, they know the tools. Therefore, Tots Units becomes a reliable partner for Fontasal, which values the good preparation it provides in its WISE and side services.

3. PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CHALLENGES OF LABOUR POLICIES VIS-À-VIS WISES

From a legal perspective, a relevant achievement for WISEs was the approval in 2015 of the “Law31/2015, that modifies and updates regulations upon self-employment and adopts measures to promote and foster self-employment and the Social Economy”²¹. This Law explicitly refers to WISEs as institutions providing services of general interest and, as such, they become an element within the architecture of public services. In fact, this means that WISEs become units of the catalogue of opportunities and services for the most vulnerable people. This is seen by the WISE sector as one of the major challenges in terms of labour policies, to become aware of the relevance of this Law and to apply it in its full consequences. This would imply articulating measures and making WISEs part of the General Budget of the State, as local or regional administrations, the same as universities or the public health system.

Otherwise, WISEs are reduced to be part of the Active Employment Policies, which are not stable and which are not expected to produce relevant results.

WISEs should also increase their professionalization, they still have a low scale in Spain and they lack more visibility in representative networks. WISEs, as actors, should be considered more relevant actors than funding mechanisms such as those produced by banks or the foundations behind them. However, since the Great Financial Crisis in 2008, it is mainly private banks rather than national and regional governments themselves which are funding integration programs and measures to access the labour market. By funding these, these private institutions are gathering data from the actors at the practice level, therefore generating large databases (often better than those produced by the public administrations) and they are fed by professionals in WISEs and their promoting institutions. These data are then used by those private institutions to take their own decisions, but every WISE and promoting institution behind them can only have access to their own data, not those of the other WISEs. The generation of knowledge is therefore beyond the reach of WISEs, even if this knowledge is the result of them feeding those databases.

Regarding cooperation among WISEs and conventional companies, some regional governments²² have provided funding for these agreements and fostered measures for the transition processes. In the meantime, WISEs tend to perceive Corporate Social Responsibility as an issue of marketing rather than actual cooperation policies. This makes it hard for conventional companies to understand transition processes into the ordinary labour market, even though WISEs tend to provide an added value in terms of both training and motivation of their staff.

At another level, WISEs should get rid of the fear they have when approaching conventional companies: employers, conventional employers, must be seen as partners. It is a facilitator in that regard the increasing visibility of WISEs, which has improved largely in the past decade: conventional companies know that they can rely upon WISEs,

²¹ Available at: https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2015-9735

²² Valencia, Madrid and Canarias among them.

and that integration workers that move into the ordinary labour market are thankful and reliable workers.

Another challenge is that of innovating in terms of the sectors of activity: WISEs cannot remain attached to their traditional sectors such as managing waste or textile; more creativity is needed in terms of activities. In this regard, European efforts to move in the direction of a green economy and of digitalization of different services should be considered by WISEs in order to take these into account and to join this movement, something that should not be difficult, for these are values well embedded in WISEs and the institutions promoting them. Social innovation consists not only in providing social support, but also in contributing to help people move into the newest areas of production.

3.1. Challenges, impact and prospects: an overview


Considering both cases presented, several features seem to be important for the success of cooperation agreements:

- A relationship of trust is built and developed between staff in the WISE and in the conventional company. Trust is based upon personal knowledge and it assures quality in the cooperation. Cooperation starts from the basis, upon small steps.
- A good commercial task on the side of WISEs staff is necessary. WISEs have to promote their services and train their workers to facilitate their transition into the open labour market, but they have an approach to Corporate Social Responsibility different to the usual one which applies rather to large companies: in the case of conventional SMEs, it is mutual trust what facilitates relations.
- Conventional companies cooperate with WISEs facilitating the transition of former WISE workers into them for three reasons: a) they face labour shortages and they need to hire staff; if former WISE workers match the profile, they are seeking to solve their problem to mutual benefit; b) social corporate responsibility; and c) whitewashing, as they need to take care of their own image and they use WISEs for such purpose. No matter which is the reason, WISEs must take advantage of this in order to raise consciousness among technical staff in conventional companies.
- Strengthening cooperation between employment and welfare administrations is a challenge: a) the agreements are still scarce and weak, and more efforts must be taken in this direction; b) administrations do not provide enough support, no matter what: social services forget about integration workers once they are employed by a WISE, and the employment administration behaves similarly; c) cooperation with large multinational companies should be sought, in order to facilitate large structural agreements across different regions.

- Cooperation is mainly a matter of individual WISEs. Even in advanced regions like the Basque country or Aragón, even in regions where WISEs are locally rooted like Valencia, it is in the end each particular WISE which has to take responsibility for agreements, upon the basis of trust.
- Four dimensions can be identified as factors fostering and hindering impact of the cooperation upon welfare and employment: a) integration of former WISE staff happens mainly among those with higher employability, whose employability is close to that of workers in the ordinary labour market; b) it is only upon the basis of trust developed over time that hiring the less employable former WISE workers finds an opportunity, though these are scarce; c) WISEs do not want to risk their contacts, which means that the least employable find it hard to have access to jobs in the ordinary labour markets; and d) when conventional companies need to hire low qualified labour, the cost of hiring them among former WISE workers is very low: WISEs carry on the selection processes of staff for conventional processes when it comes to low qualified positions, and this is something WISEs assume even if it is a service they provide for free, though this also allows them to put their former workers within the conventional labour market.
- The prospect for WISEs is good for several reasons: a) the increasing reputation of WISEs, thanks to the professionalization of their processes, even though there is still certain prejudice, not without foundation, that WISEs are rather social than professional services; b) some WISEs are innovating, both in terms of sectors as well as in accompanying processes and, what is also relevant, in communication to conventional companies and society as a whole.
- Cooperation agreements are built company to company, though the role of the regional associations of WISEs could be more supportive here, supplying them with management and commercial staff in order to sign agreements with large companies, and the role of CEPES could be of larger commitment here, for it is better known and has a much greater capacity to negotiate and lobby with the administrations than FAEDEI, due to its size. CEPES being a well-established actor in the economic landscape is better positioned to fight for the interest of their associated institutions, like FAEDEI.

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