



IRELAND

WISEs FRAMEWORKS

NATIONAL CONTEXT

There is little information on the total number of WISEs in Ireland even though they are active. There are three types of WISEs:

- Sheltered Employment or “workshops” with a focus on persons with disabilities and/or learning difficulties. They are run by voluntary boards and they are non-profit organisations.
- Local development WISEs, which aim to provide community-based services and labour market (re)-integration of disadvantaged people.
- Social Economy WISEs which are linked to the national social economy programme and focus on the workers’ integration.

TYPOLOGY OF WISEs: LEGAL STATUSES, LEGAL FORMS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

No specific company law for social enterprises in Ireland. They take different legal forms. The most common would be “company limited by guarantee” often with charitable status.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION OF WISEs (Public recognition of the WISEs sector)

Ireland introduced the National Social Enterprises Policy 2019-2022 in July 2019 to support the development of social enterprises. Furthermore, social enterprises in Ireland are starting to make their way into parts of the government’s policies including the ‘Waste Action Plan for the Circular Economy’ and the ‘Future Jobs’ strategy.

EXISTING NETWORKS OF WISEs (Networks and mutual support of WISEs)

Community Resources Network Ireland (CRNI), Social Enterprise Republic of Ireland (SERI), The Irish Social Enterprise Network (ISEN), The Wheel, Irish Local Development Network CLG (ILDN), Irish Rural Link: Irish Rural Link (IRL), and Community Creating Jobs (CCJ)..

FUNDING SOURCES

- VAT exemption or reduced rate, at national level, in some cases for WISEs Typology 2 (charities).
- Subsidy for the recruitment of disadvantaged workers, at national level, for all types of WISEs.
- Social insurance costs for the disadvantaged workers employed, reduced or covered by subsidies, at national level, for all types of WISEs.
- Other fiscal breaks, at national level, for WISEs classified as Typology 2, exemptions for charities on some local authority rates

Overall, WISEs in Ireland use private sponsorship, general fundraising, microfinancing, social finance loans and crowdfunding as alternative mechanisms to governmental support to fund work based education providers.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF ADULT LEARNING

NATIONAL STRATEGIES OR LEGISLATION

Further Education and Training (FET) is principally publicly funded by the Department of Education and Skills, through SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority. SOLAS developed a strategy focused on skills, active inclusion and improving the quality of FET provision.

OBJECTIVES / TARGET GROUPS

Objective of the FET strategy: provide quality education and training solutions that respond to employer's existing and evolving needs while creating high quality portable skills for learners, valued by learners and employers nationally and internationally.

Community education aims to enhance learning, fostering empowerment and contributing to civic society and it is based on the needs of individuals and communities. Priority is given to engage individuals and groups who experience particular barriers to participation in adult learning.

SUPPORT MEASURES

FET is funded by the department of Education and Skills and administered by the Education & Training Boards (ETB). There are 16 ETBs across Ireland.

Public service gives often external support to adult work-based providers in areas that the organisation lacks (CV writing or IT skills).

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- General lack of awareness of social enterprises and their work.
- Lack of financial support: managers of social enterprises must balance revenue generation and social purposes.
- Access to finance: the legal structure of the organisation may prevent investment from investing bodies.
- Very few opportunities for public procurement even though it is slowly changing.
- No defined legal form for social enterprises which make it difficult to define a social enterprise.
- Little known about the social enterprise sector and all the organisations that make it up.