

RREUSE's Feedback on Strengthening Social Dialogue in the EU

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Final Feedback

As the international network of reuse, repairing and recycling social enterprises promoting the social and circular economies, the RREUSE network has a long tradition of contributing to the implementation of the principles of the Pillar, including the following:

- Education, training, and lifelong learning (1),
- Equal opportunities (3),
- Active support to employment (4),
- Inclusion of People with Disabilities (17).

Additionally, circular social enterprises and other social economy actors are central actors in the proximity economy, contributing to local green job creation and strengthening social cohesion in the communities where they reside. In this regard, the national networks of social enterprises play a crucial role to ensure social dialogue with national administrations, making sure they are aware of key features and challenges of local actors and that national policy frameworks are adapted to their needs.

RREUSE welcomes the upcoming initiative for a well-functioning Pillar. However, social dialogue at the European level is stronger if the one at the national level is first properly supported. The EC Communication and proposal for a Council Recommendation stemming from this initiative should then encourage the Member States to increase support towards national networks of social enterprises for better social dialogue, in line with the goals of the 2023 Council Recommendation for Framework Conditions under the Social Economy Action Plan. In fact, national networks of social enterprises often rely on funds coming from project-based activities and lack a funding mechanism to sustainably provide resources to engage with national administrations and in turn represent the interests of local and regional actors. Therefore, RREUSE believes operational funding - whether in the shape of successful programmes such as EaSi or co-financed by ESF+ in cooperation with relevant ministries - should be stressed to provide a steady contribution to reinforcing their capacity to partake in social dialogue at the national level and fostering the implementation of the principles of the Pillar.

Taking into consideration the variety and contextual specificities of activities associated with reuse, social enterprises of the RREUSE network create between 20 and 140 jobs per 1,000 tonnes collected with a view of being reused. This on average translates to a social enterprise creating 70 jobs per the same amount collected. Equally, circular social enterprises provide green skills and lifelong learning opportunities for low-skilled underprivileged categories, such as in sorting, collecting, as well as restoration skills, including extending the life cycle of products via repairing. While their contribution to implementing the Pillar is noteworthy, sustainable access to funds is key to upscale their impact.

In addition to funding, RREUSE believes the EC should encourage the Member States to further strengthen social dialogue by ensuring the involvement of social partners when designing and implementing the National Reform Programmes NRPs of the European Semester (ES). The ES can be an important instrument to monitor the measures provided in support of the actors contributing to the implementation of the Pillar and, in this context, to support the ecosystem via measures that mainstream further links between the social and circular economies in their NRPs. Equally, encouraging that environmental, social, and economic dimensions underpin the NRPs in terms of short-term and long-term policy goals is key to achieving the objectives of the Pillar in line with the goals of a green transition that leaves no one behind.

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