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To: DRC D SE Consultation
Subject: Social Enterprise Policy 2023/2024

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To whom it may concern

Please find a number of recommendations in relation to the SE strategy.

The need for further investment in WISE (through CSP or other stream)

Work based SE plays an important role in Ireland's enterprise and social care landscape. For people from disadvantaged backgrounds who are not yet work ready, WISE can address these needs in a way that other programmes can not. Its unique features are:

- Supports can be provided over 2 - 3 years before an individual is ready to progress to mainstream employment
- It provides excellent workplace training to those who are not interested or able to engage in education based supports
- When considering the cost of subsidisation through CSP, this returns significant benefit at a cost little more than unemployment benefit and a lot less than the equivalent cost of third level training. A cost benefit analysis of this should be undertaken.
- Successful WISE should not have places capped if they are able to support larger numbers of people, i.e. funding should be dependent on impact and ability to serve clients, in a similar way to third level education.

Ensure that state agencies prioritize ethical procurement with a focus on engagement with SEs

As someone who runs a WISE I can confirm that for profit companies are far easier to engage with than state agencies, and these commercial enterprises see the value of SE partnerships. There is significant work for state agencies to do in relation to working with SEs to include these in their supply chain. There should be clear incentives for state agencies established (targets) and reporting mechanisms in place to support proactive engagement of ethical procurement.

Recommended changes to policy on WSS / SE integration

- WISE (often charities) should be able to employ disabled people under the WSS programme. This currently excludes charities, which means that disabled people are missing out on what could be excellent work opportunities in value based commercial enterprises. This makes no sense and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- Enterprise Ireland and other business supports should clarify that they support SEs in line with other for profit enterprises.

Improve the structure of the CSP programme for WISE

The means of assessing SEs in CSP have a number of significant flaws, which should be remedied, including the assessment of community need being dependant on a geographical area

where the business is based, as many SEs serve clients from target groups rather than catchment areas, i.e clients come from across Dublin.

Restore the criminal justice focus on SE

Probation has recently rescinded its focus on SE as a way to promote community integration of offenders, this has been a significantly retrograde move, especially considering the international praise for development over the last 5 years. This decision should be reversed.

Develop a capital investment fund for premises for SE (especially in circular economy)

WISE can contribute significantly to the circular economy landscape and there is need for the state to develop a capital investment fund to support purchase of plant required for business development in this area.

Kind regards,

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