

# Social Innovation and the Employment Industry

## What does Social Innovation mean for the employment industry?

### 1 How is Social Innovation defined by the employment industry?

Social innovation is the implementation of new solutions for working, learning and social protection for the benefit of workers, employers and society in general.

### 2 What does the employment industry see as the goals of social innovation?

#### Contributing to better lives through sustainable and inclusive labour markets

- Employers and individuals that can easily adapt to changing types of jobs and work.
- A labour market that enables all employers and individuals to participate and flourish in the world of work.

#### Improving employers' performance

- Sustainable growth of organisations through securing access to a diverse and skilled workforce.
- Higher productivity of people within organisations.
- Mitigated risks for employers.

#### Improving access to work, working conditions and employability

- Equal access to the labour market and to social protection for all individuals.
- A decent (working) situation for individuals, providing them with a sense of purpose.
- Empowered individuals that take responsibility for their working lives.
- Mitigated risks for individuals in the labour market.

### 3 What are examples of social innovation?

#### Working: develop supportive living conditions to facilitate access to the labour market

- Provide suitable childcare facilities to enable parents to enter the labour market and remain active.
- Secure access to housing (mortgage or bank guarantee to rent a flat for temporary contracts).
- Encourage balance between working and private lives (telework, working-time saving accounts).

#### Learning: provide life-long skills development and career support

- Set up individual training drawing rights.
- Provide individuals the flexibility to combine work and training (dual learning, evening or weekend courses).
- Expand opening hours (24/7) of educational institutes (open on-line courses).
- Develop prior learning assessment and recognition schemes.

#### Social protection: implement safety nets suited for diverse forms of work

- Develop portable and transferable rights for all workers.
- Equip individuals with personal accounts that regroup all social rights.

### 4 Conditions

#### Which conditions support social innovation according to the employment industry?

##### A set of values, norms and behaviour (culture) that contribute to change

- A growth mindset: searching for opportunities to learn and valuing failure as a learning opportunity.
- An open attitude based on trust and respecting other perspectives and ideas.
- A way of working focused on co-creation and experimenting.
- A recognition and appreciation of diversity and the need for tailor-made solutions.

##### A set of institutional conditions that contribute to change

- Sustainable regulation.
- Cooperation and dialogue between stakeholders.
- Funding, for instance to facilitate transition periods.
- Technology development, for instance smart use of data.
- Innovative and high quality education.

### 5 How can the employment industry's stakeholders contribute to social innovation?

#### Employers ...

- ... can create an environment conducive to discussion, co-creation and trial and error within their companies,
- ... can initiate innovative experiments, provide funding and offer ideas to improve regulation,
- ... can invest in life-long learning and skills of individuals.

#### Policy makers ...

- ... can encourage experiments and stimulate innovation through funding and adapting regulation,
- ... can (re)design the educational system to deliver more skilled people and support life-long learning.

#### Workers (and representatives) ...

- ... can invest in life-long learning and sustainable skills,
- ... can organise themselves, identify issues and come up with solutions.

#### Educational institutions ...

- ... can adjust their educational programmes to equip students with future skills,
- ... can innovate their systems to facilitate life-long learning.

#### Communities ...

- ... can organise themselves to identify pressing (social) issues and find solutions.

#### The employment industry ...

- ... can collaborate with stakeholders to test, advance and implement social innovation,
- ... can develop, collect and share best practices with stakeholders.

### 6 Stakeholders

### 6 What are potential benefits and risks of social innovation for the employment industry?

#### Benefits

- Social innovation can create business opportunities for the industry, for instance by providing new services.
- Social innovation can improve the skill level of the industry's workforce.
- Social innovation can increase the industry's appeal for individuals.
- Social innovation can improve the industry's reputation and the value of its work.

#### Risks

- Social innovation increases costs for the industry while having uncertain returns, making it less competitive.
- Social innovation can decrease the industry's competitiveness, for instance through a loss of focus.
- Social innovation can increase inequality between (potential) workers.

#### About this Map

This Definition Map frames and describes the concept of Social Innovation as it is perceived by the employment industry. By workers we mean all individuals that are or want to be active in the labour market, for example employees, self-employed and jobseekers, but also trainees and apprentices. This Map is created on the basis of two working sessions with members of WEC during the WEC Conference in Dublin in June 2018 and a final session with WEC. De Argumentenfabriek thanks all the participants for their contributions.