



CASES OF GOOD MANAGERIAL PRACTICES



The Ginestra Co-operative

GENERAL INFORMATION

Area

Fruitful integration of social enterprises with for-profit enterprises.

Abstract

The type-B social co-operative “La Ginestra”, based in Camposampiero (PD), works in the field of employment opportunities for disadvantaged people. Its main goal is to develop the individual’s centrality, adulthood and normalisation through the creation of a place for vocational training that works as a real bridge with local companies. The work areas include assembly, packing and counting of parts – which represent the co-operative’s traditional activities –, whereas the cultivation of flowers and vegetables in a green house and a small animal raising farm have been developed over the last three years.

Solid collaboration between La Ginestra and a large number of production companies base on trust and sharing of interests for social-related issues; On one hand these companies give the co-operative work assignments on a quite regular basis and support it, on the other hand the co-operative helps its partners comply with the regional law no. 68 of 1999 (which compels them to hire disadvantaged people in proportion to the total number of their employees), by giving employment opportunities to this target group. Another important factor that favours work assignments is that the co-operative ensures a high quality working performance, which yields good production results. Good quality is also ensured by the way the co-operative works: the pieces are checked one by one and even the tiniest mistakes are corrected. Besides, La Ginestra ensures flexibility and availability to the partners, meeting their needs and ensuring a complete service which also includes the transportation of the products from the co-operative to the requesting company.

These relations are also supported with different initiatives that aim to involve the partners and share the co-operative’s goals and results with them – e.g. local festivals, film showing, dinners and invitations to see how the co-operative is organised –, as well as the distribution of the “Il Gabbiano” paper, which is quite successful (1,000 copies are printed). Some of these events are directly organised by partner companies in order to support their collaborators and help the co-operative raise funds.

The Berti company, an important partner of the co-operative, is preparing a book on the co-operative, with the history of some people who have been part of La Ginestra.

La Ginestra presently employs 29 people (23 of them are disabled people) also through the sharing of the resources with the Il Graticolato type-A co-operative, La Ginestra stems from.

THE SOCIAL CO-OPERATIVE

Registry

Name “La Ginestra” social co-operative

President: Mr. Paolo Tosato

Size (as of 31 Dec. 2005)

Number of members and non-members: 29

- disabled: 23
- non-disabled: 6

Turnover

€600,000,00 (€510,000 of them yielding from the relations with the for-profit sector)

Legal headquarters

Via Pugnalin, 2/a

35010 Arsego di San Giorgio delle Pertiche (PD)

Operative headquarters

Via Borgo Padova, 106

35012 Camposampiero (PD)

Established in

March 2001

Business

Type-B co-operative

Activities

- assembly
- packing
- counting of items/pieces
- production of vegetable and flower
- animal raising
- employment opportunities

Geographical context

Provincial, particularly the town of Camposampiero (local health & care unit no. 15)

Web site

www.ilgraticolato.it

History

La Ginestra social co-operative started from the experience of the people working for Il Graticolato co-operative in the framework of employment opportunities for disadvantaged people.

Il Graticolato, a type-A co-operative, which was settled in 1988, has always dealt with the disabled, with the specific goal of meeting the needs and requests for employment opportunities that the families of young handicapped people express after their children graduate from school. The co-operative has run a number of day-time employment centres and, since 2003, a residential area. Since 1994, it has had a contract with the local health & care unit in North Padua.

In 1999, further to the regional law no. 68 that regulates the employment right of the disabled, local firms were required to hire disadvantaged people, but they did not have the proper competencies to do that, and not even the necessary cultural approach to deal with “diverse”. Numerous companies then turned to Il Graticolato co-operative for assistance. The main goal of the type-A co-operative has always been the social integration of the disabled and of ex-convicts. In their experience, the members of Il Graticolato saw that an important tool for social integration was employment integration, which was not considered as a goal, but as a tool for social rehabilitation and inclusion. To meet the growing demand of hiring disadvantaged people and the problem to proceed in a more systematic way with their professional integration, the members decided to establish a new type-B co-operative, in March 2001, which could share some spaces and services with Il Graticolato. The two co-operatives share some areas – accounting, education and management – to work in synergy and consider some aspects of the annual report at the same time.

They also share the mission, which is to develop in their clients a vision of themselves as adults through vocational training, either to lead them to a job in the outside world or to a position in a protected environment such as the co-operative itself. The mission is based upon 4 principles:

1. a person’s centrality
2. adulthood
3. normalisation
4. quality of life.

For the start-up of the new co-operative, the collaboration with the public institutions was important, as they recommended the disadvantaged people who needed employment, through internships managed by labour agencies/services (*SIL* and *CPI*).

The co-operative could not survive without the support of the local companies, as they supply work assignments even in hard times so to meet the co-operative’s needs.

At the beginning, the type-B co-operative had four for-profit partners – Fischer, Elit, Comeg and Berti – then, thanks to word-of-mouth and local informal contacts, the number rose to 27. La Ginestra’s philosophy, focused on quality, flexibility and availability, has helped establish steady relations with the for-profit enterprises, which in the Camposampiero area have always paid special attention to social issues.

Ever since its establishment, the La Ginestra has always had an increasing turnover, with always positive balances, with an initial turnover of €40,000.00 that reached €600,000.00 in 2005, also thanks to the development of a new activity in the green house business (for the cultivation of vegetables and flowers and the raising of farm animals). This recent business developed thanks to the assignment of some land in the territory of San Giorgio delle Pertiche (PD).

At the beginning of 2005, the project for a new bigger and more functional location for both co-operatives was started, to locate near the green houses in San Giorgio delle Pertiche. The project was self-funded for a total of €3,500,000 (only a small part of the cost was paid by the municipality: €300,000.00). the new headquarters are almost ready and the transfer will take place in September 2006.

The activities are always evolving and the co-operative is planning to start a new training area and to set up a collaboration for international projects with Brazil and Angola.

It is worth mentioning that the La Ginestra has always given a lot of importance to volunteers, trying to give value to internal training and external communication, also using a bi-monthly publication called *Il Gabbiano* (approx. 1,000 copies). There are about 100 volunteers who collaborate with the two co-operatives.

Working context

Offered services:

- assembly

- packing
- counting of items/parts
- production of vegetable and flower gardens
- animal raising
- employment opportunities

Clients

Firms in these fields: metallurgic-mechanics, electronic-technical, plastic, construction and furniture. Most of them are well-renowned medium-sized enterprises that work in Italy and abroad.

Most assignments come from the Facco company (17% of the turnover), Ge.fa company (12%), Berti company (8%) and Filippi company (6%).

The green house business produces both for the two co-operatives and for restaurants and some private people. moreover, as the co-operative mainly cultivates 3-4 types of flowers, these are exchanged with other co-operatives for partnership projects.

Associates

The social co-operative has now 45 associates, 28 of them are labourers, 10 are volunteers, 7 are family members of disabled people. The associates are extremely important to the co-operative and their participation ensures democratic decision-making and administration. They express their participation through an assembly and the election of the Board of Directors.

People included in the co-op:

- the mentally disabled (80%)
- the physically disabled
- the convicted and ex-convicted
- the post-traumatized
- alcoholics and ex-alcoholics
- the drug addicted and ex-drug addicted
- **trapiantati**
- socially troubled people

Other local organisations:

Over the years the Il Graticolato has had to deal with the presence of many local competitors. Today the situation is stable thanks to the presence of Federsolidarietà, which has promoted forms of collaboration among the various co-operatives.

On the contrary, there are not many “B” co-operatives that mainly deal with the care and maintenance of green areas, and it is mostly the public administrations that assign these services. The co-operatives that work in the same sector as the La Ginestra are small-sized organisations. With these organisations the La Ginestra has established a policy of collaboration, instead of competition, passing them some works and creating a sort of “lobby” in the Camposampiero area that enabled the La Ginestra to even receive important assignments as it could count on its production flexibility and response ability.

Other competitors are the for-profit companies, that use unconventional systems such as “black” labour or work-at-home assignments. This undoubtedly permits them to offer low-cost service, but the La Ginestra can give a service of higher quality: security at the legal level, always next to a complete service, that includes for example even the transportation of the products. This creates relationships with the suppliers based on trust, which is the key element for maintaining relations.

The green house business is the one where the competition is higher, especially from for-profit companies. In this case the co-operative is able to make it through thanks to the customers that include the network of the two co-operatives, including families, associates and partners, producing a

lot for self-support. With other competitors the co-op was able to create a partnership, exchanging products so to offer customers a wider variety of products.

With other organisations situated in the northern area of Padua, but in different municipalities, which share the same goal as the La Ginestra, networks were created through a project called “Agenzia Territoriale” (local agency), in collaboration with the Provincial Government of Padua, the Service for Employment Integration of the local social & health-care unit of Padua and the Veneto Insieme consortium in the framework of the European project “Sovvenzione Globale” (global grant). Such a project intended to be a laboratory where to experiment training curricula, share good methodological practices and identify competencies to be developed for mentors/coaches.

From the viewpoint of the number of people who are actually employed in a company and of the satisfaction of the co-operatives involved, the project has given good results that allowed to start collaborations with for-profit companies and local institutions. From the experimentation, a project proposal was elaborated to go on with the dissemination of the good practices and for the definition of the job-coaching activities divided into: orientation, education, employment opportunities.

From the project, the coordination of the northern area of Padua was born, for the purpose of developing a collaboration network between the various co-operatives so to also keep some small organisations alive and fight competition. It was initially composed of three co-operatives, now there are twelve and no longer receives funding from the provincial government but from the regional one.

Organisational structure

The assembly of members is composed of volunteers, parents and employees. The assembly elects the board of directors, which is composed of 5 people, who are responsible for the following:

- work supply
- work administration
- educational compatibility.

The board also nominates a director, who is in charge of administering the two social co-operatives.

Between the two co-operatives there are some areas that are jointly administered so to economise, share the competencies of both and jointly manage the entrepreneurial activities, that the equal opportunities group takes care of. The group was founded by the Il Graticolato, the La Ginestra and the Associazione Amici del Graticolato (association of the Il Graticolato’s friends).

A member of the group works as the director for:

- representing the co-op before public and private institutions
- jointly managing some of the services
- administering the sales area
- managing some administrative and financial practices
- allocating the educational and consulting activities
- assuring the quality standards management.

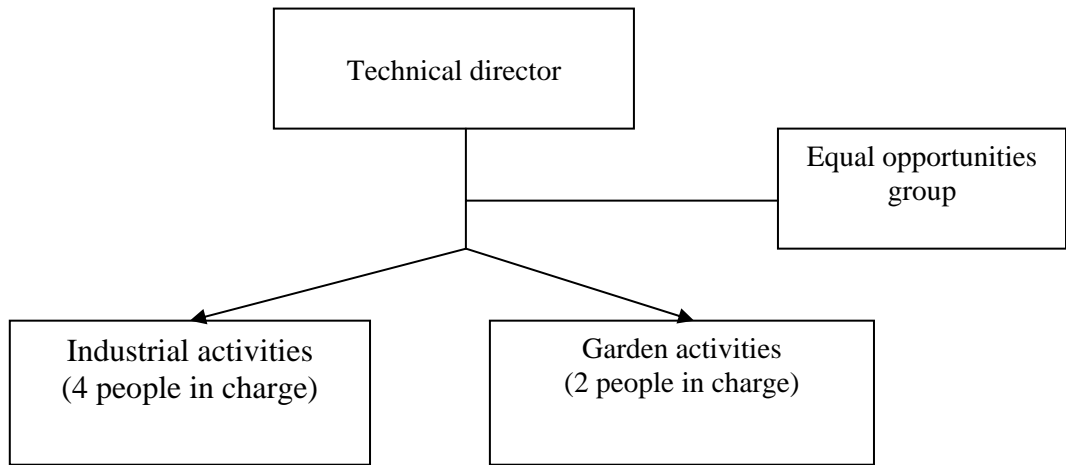
At the moment, the contract for the formal establishment of the equal opportunities group is being drawn up.

Employees

The La Ginestra co-operative has 29 employees, consisting of:

- 23 disadvantaged individuals, 19 labourers in the industrial business and 4 people in the green house business
- 6 disadvantaged individuals, all employed in the administrative/managerial area (2 agro-food experts, 1 IT expert, 1 lorry driver in charge of logistics, 1 educator and 1 person in charge of assistance).

Structure of the La Ginestra



THE AREA OF MANAGERIAL EXCELLENCE

Ever since its establishment, the co-operative has been able to improve itself, both by reaching higher and higher turnovers, and by expanding its activities to new businesses, such as the cultivation of vegetables and flowers and animal raising. All of this was possible thanks to the development of solid local networks and especially to a careful administration of the relationships with the private work suppliers. Such relationships, which started out with informal contacts, later on consolidated through a clear managerial strategy: on one hand by assuring the companies that assistance would be given for the preparation of disadvantaged people to be employed, in compliance with the regional law no. 68 of 1999, and on the other hand by ensuring a high quality of the production, based on the observance of a certified quality system, as well as on the attention paid to accepting labour that is studied according to the possibilities of the employed disabled people.

Next to this, the co-operative has become flexible and available to meet the needs of the companies, which have exchanged the favour by assigning work even in hard times. This exchange creates a synergy that binds the partners together and make the relations more solid and lasting. In order to encourage these relations, the co-operative involves its partners as much as possible, also with moments of celebration, events and communications, to make them feel a part of their activities and results.

The partners themselves, being sensitive when it comes to social-related issues, not only collaborate with the co-operative, but also support and organise initiatives in favour of the co-operative, by promoting fund raises and contributions.

These collaborations enabled the La Ginestra to expand and develop new projects, such as the green house business, which has also a therapeutic role for the disadvantaged people, the opening of a vocational training centre and the involvement in international co-operation projects.

Human resources dedicated to the project

(presence and role)

The director takes care of the administration of both co-operatives.

La Ginestra has 29 employees, consisting of: 23 disadvantaged individuals, 19 labourers in the industrial business and 4 people in the green house business; 6 are non-disadvantaged individuals, and they are all employed in the administration department.

There are 7 employees as follows: 2 agro-food experts, 1 IT expert, 1 lorry driver, 1 person in charge of logistics, 1 educator and 1 person in charge of assistance.

The Il Graticolato co-operative offers a total amount of hours that equals the work of two accountants and one manager.

Partners and external organisations

Special attention is to be paid to the companies that supply work in the following sectors:

- metallurgic-mechanics
- electronic-technical
- plastic
- construction
- furniture
- agriculture.

The partner companies are:

- BERTI PAVIMENTI LEGNO S.N.C. DI BERTI G. & C. VIA RETTILINEO N. 81, 35010 VILLA DEL CONTE (PD)
- OFFICINE FACCO & C. S.P.A VIA VENEZIA N. 30, 35010 CAMPO SAN MARTINO (PD)

- MORETTO S.P.A. VIA DELL'ARTIGIANATO N. 3, 35010 MASSANZAGO (PD)
- APROS SRL VIA ROMA N. 256, 35010 SAN GIORGIO DELLE PERTICHE (PD)
- BIDOIA SAS DI GIANFRANCO BIDOIA E C. VIA DELL'ARTIGIANATO N. 18, 35010 VIGONZA (PD)
- COMEG TECNOLOGIE SRL VIA MANZONI N. 27, 36040 GRISIGNANO DI ZOCCO (VI)
- COMEL S.P.A. VIA A. EINSTEIN - ZONA INDUSTRI. N. 6, 35020 CASALSERUGO (PD)
- FAIR SNC DI AGUGIARO G. & C. VIA CADUTI DI RUSSIA N. 10/12, 35010 CURTAROLO (PD)
- FILIPPI SRL VIA FORNACE STRADA S.N., 35010 SAN GIORGIO DELLE PERTICHE (PD)
- FONDO MELLA S.S. VIA VICENTINA N. 51, 36026 POIANA MAGGIORE (VI)
- GE.FA. SNC DI GENNARO E FACCO VIA DELLE PEZZE N. 21, 35013 CITTADELLA (PD)
- GERMOGLIO SOCIETA' CO-OPERATIVESOCIALE VIA BASSA N. 1, 35020 ARZERGRANDE (PD)
- KORAL s.r.l. ZONA INDUSTRIALE, 30036 SANTA MARIA DI SALA (VE)
- ALBERTO MAZZONETTO S.N.C. VIA SEGA N. 73/75, 35010 SAN GIORGIO IN BOSCO (PD)
- NITESCO SRL VIA DELLA FORNACE N. 15, 31023 RESANA (TV)
- OMAS S.R.L. VIA VICINALE G. MOMI N. 2/A, 35010 SAN GIORGIO DELLE PERTICHE (PD)
- O.M.T. SNC DI BONETTO M. & F. VIA PIOVEGO STRADA N. 7 35010 SAN GIORGIO DELLE PERTICHE (PD)
- OPES SAVE SPA VIA PACINOTTI N. 27, 35017 PIOMBINO DESE (PD)
- ARIES SRL VIA A.CECCON N. 3, 35010 LOREGGIA (PD)
- REHAU SPA VIA XXV APRILE N. 54, 20040 CAMBIAGO (MI)
- SARRAGIOTO DOLCIUMI GES.IND.I.SNC DI ZANON G.& C. VIA SIGNORIA N. 13, 35010 SAN GIORGIO DELLE PERTICHE (PD)
- SCATOLIFICIO GONDOLA TRIVENETO SRL VIA LOMBARDIA N. 2/A, 30030 PIANIGA (VE)
- NEWA TECNO INDUSTRIA S.R.L. VIA DELL'ARTIGIANATO N. 2, 35010 LOREGGIA (PD)
- TEKNOPRESS SRL VIA G. DI VITTORIO N. 41, 30029 SANTO STINO DI LIVENZA (VE)
- VALENTE PALI PRECOMPRESSI SPA VIA GALVANI N. 2/4, 35011 CAMPODARSEGO (PD)
- VENITEM SRL VIA BRIANZA N. 5/E, 30034 MIRA (VE)
- VEPAL DI MURAROTTO ROSANNA & C SAS VIA DELL'ARTIGIANATO N. 12, 35010 VILLA DEL CONTE (PD)

Other stakeholders are:

- The banks that have helped with the financial administration of the laboratory's internal productions and have funded the construction of the co-op's new building
- The local municipalities, which present the users and deal with the practices
- The education institutions and structures, which send their students to the co-operative for internships
- The families of the users, who promote and support the co-operative's services
- Networks of the third sector, which supply education services and legal, fiscal and tax counselling.

Development goals

The development goals of the La Ginestra are expanding.

There are at least three projects that the co-op wishes to carry out:

- The opening of the **new headquarters**, which is almost finished
- The opening of a new activity: a **vocational training centre**, for the purpose of integrating the assistance service with a complete training curriculum. The bureaucratic procedure has already been initiated. An agreement with another social co-operative will be set up and the region is finalising the accreditation so to be able to start in September 2007
- Implementation of the **co-operatives network**
- **Dissemination of good practices** concerning employment opportunities and investments in the social field
- **International co-operation**: with the support of the **CUAMM** of Padua and of clerical organisations, the La Ginestra is ready to participate in two international co-operation projects, one in Brazil and another in Angola. Such projects feature the professional education of local inhabitants and support the establishment of local enterprises.

For the future, the co-operative also intends to become involved in the integration of people from out of the EU and in the prevention of **deviances**, using its solid social network.

Researchers

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