

Questions and answers concerning the Italian social co-operative system

Q: Do the private companies fulfil their legal responsibility to hire disadvantaged people through subcontracting from a social co-operative?

A: A recent rule included in a so-called "Biagi's Act" establishes that private companies which have to hire disadvantaged people can also comply with the obligation if they supply work to social co-operatives. In this way they can need not employ disadvantaged people directly.

Q: Does the social co-operative offer advice and support for companies who hire a disadvantaged person? What kind of advice and support?

A: Generally, this service is supplied by the public administration, such as employment centres dealing with demand-supply matching, and services delivered through health care for the support to job insertion. When considering the great experience some social co-operatives have in dealing with job insertion, this service is often entrusted to them either directly or through structured programmes. These include firstly an intern in a social co-operative, where the person's real abilities are tested, secondly the job insertion in a private company. In this case, the role of a co-operative includes:

- to support the person in their difficulties with the work;
- to deal with employers to understand how the person is working and help when problems rise (e.g. difficulties in managing the relationship between this person and the employer).

Q: Do the disadvantaged people have usual work contracts with the social co-operative - or is there perhaps some form of rehabilitation agreement?

A: We must distinguish between two extremely different situations: programmes for education/rehabilitation are not work, although they include work activities. These programmes are generally financed by the public health care institutions and managed through type-A social co-ops. People included in these programmes get a symbolic pay (so-called pocket money, which amounts to about € 200.00 a month). The people who work for a coop dealing with job insertion – type-B social co-ops – have regular work contracts and they get complete salaries. The coop does not pay for contributions (e.g. for provident fund), when it employs disadvantaged people; moreover, in order to be recognised as a social co-operative, one third of its members must be represented by disadvantaged employees, otherwise the coop cannot be considered social.

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