



REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA



CASES OF GOOD MANAGEMENT PRACTICES



The Primavera Nuova co-operative

GENERAL INFORMATION

Area

Establishment of innovative forms of relationship with Public Administrations.

Abstract

The Primavera Nuova social co-operative is located in the north of the province of Vicenza and operates in the town of Schio mainly. The co-operative's staff is hired by private customers to take care of private green areas with maintenance and gardening work assignments. These assignments allow the company's disadvantaged employees to develop a professional curriculum. The co-operative also runs a social-educational centre for minors that the local health-care department recommend through its service for the protection of minors and infant neural-psychiatry. Moreover, it promotes educational actions at home for families and young adults with social difficulties, it organises and runs teaching laboratories (art & crafts, theatre) in some elementary schools and organises and runs the summer recreational centres for the municipality of Marano Vicentino.

The co-operative's main business is the **maintenance of local green areas** for the Public Administration. Over the years, this professional collaboration has become stronger and a relationship based on trust has grown. On one hand, this result is due to the good quality of the work provided, on the other hand it is connected to the interest the local administrations – particularly the Municipality of Schio – devote to social-related matters and the attention that they pay to the development of local green areas. A distinctive mark of the co-operative is the role of the social welfare assistant, who deals with all employment opportunities and takes care of the management of all the internal services and the contacts with the Welfare Services involved.

Apart from the good practice of public institutions outsourcing, Primavera Nuova co-operative is relevant as a member of the "Prisma" consortium in Vicenza. This membership has led to many positive results. As far as the acquisition of tenders and assignments is concerned, the consortium distributes the work opportunities among the member co-operatives, according to each co-operative's needs and possibilities. In the Consortium a "Green Areas Committee" gathers all people working for the gardening area in all member co-operatives. However, these opportunities represent only a small part of Primavera Nuova turnover, which mainly depends on its relations with public institutions. Being a member of the Consortium is also important because the co-operative has a chance to establish positive relations with potential competitors, which means to deal with other co-operatives working in the green areas maintenance. This task is accomplished by the consortium's committee.

Registry

Name Primavera Nuova
President: Ms. Cristina Conchi
Size (as of 31 Dec. 2005):
Number of members: 18
Number of non-members: 8
➤ 5 disadvantaged
➤ 3 non-disadvantaged

Turnover

Euro 700,000.00

Legal headquarters

Address: Via Lago di Tovel, 16 - Schio (VI)

Operating offices

Address; Via Lago di Tovel, 16 - Schio (VI)

Established in

December 1984

Business

Co-operative society, multi-profit

Activities

- Maintenance of green areas
- Management of thermal plants, biomass utilization
- Social-educational centre: afternoon activities for minors that the local health-care department recommend through its service for the protection of minors and infant neural-psychiatry
- Educational services at home for families and young adults with social difficulties
- Summer recreational centres
- Teaching laboratories in grade schools

Geographic context

Provincial territories

History

Primavera Nuova was established in December 1984 in the town of Schio (VI) by Father Giuseppe Gobbo and some volunteer citizens with the interest of the municipality. The goal was to offer a real residential support (a **shelter centre** run in agreement with the Municipality of Schio) and working opportunities (the maintenance of the green areas, in the town's dell and around the castle of Schio), for people with psychic, social and substance-addiction problems who were living in difficult situations and needed assistance. The choice of the business area – maintenance of green areas – is linked to the idea that these people's work must not be confined in test areas; on the contrary, it must be developed outdoors to help their social integration. The Italian law no. 381 issued in 1991 about co-operative companies, determined the **splitting up of the co-operative** – a fact its members had already agreed upon – thus producing a type-B co-operative – Primavera Nuova – dealing with employment opportunities and a type-A co-operative – Zattera Blu – managing educational services.

From Zattera Blu, four more co-operatives stemmed:

- Radicà, in Calvene (VI), which deals with youth issues and animation of communities
- Adelante, in Bassano del Grappa (VI), which deals with youth issues and animation of communities, too
- Samarcanda, in Schio (VI), which offers shelter and organises events for communities
- Entropia, in Torrelvicino (VI), which hosts people with special needs in a community and protected apartments.

In 1998, Primavera Nuova promoted the settlement of Labirinto association, whose goal was to protect citizens' rights – particularly minors' rights – and the rights of people who were suffering under difficult social situations. In 2003, Primavera Nuova was able to incorporate Labirinto association, after this had legally decided to move from a co-operative for employment opportunities to a multi-goal co-operative in 2002. Besides its ordinary activities (gardening and management of a day-time centre for minors), further initiatives were added, such as the management of a rest area for Rom and Sinti people (gypsies) (2005) and some local educational services (2000) – both in accordance with the Municipality of Schio.

The co-operative's chief executives have now decided to invest in a new project which is directly connected with the main business in the green areas maintenance: to run three biomass heaters. Their goal is to create a complete network system, by using the following:

- organic waste from their gardening business and from other co-operatives;
- waste that people bring to ecological recycling centres;
- waste material from carpentries, etc., thus contributing to the safeguard of the environment.

As far as the management of human resources is concerned, over the years the co-operative has made various decisions and deliberated changes, always after specific meetings. In fact, all employees had the same salary in the first 10 years, although people had different positions and responsibilities. This was not only due to the limited economic resources and no contract form was available for this type of employees, but also because the co-operative wanted to maintain a sort of equality among them. After a few years, though, thanks to new regulations and the experience of running a more complex co-operative, the management decided that it was fairer to differentiate the salaries, according to the employees' responsibilities. Even though a lot has been done since the co-operative was established, more attention must still be devoted to its pay policies, in order to create a more appropriate system so to ensure a better allocation of work and the correspondent retribution.

Mission

The co-operative's mission is based on the ideals of democracy, justice and equality and its goal is to pursue the interest of the local community with the promotion of people and the social integration of the citizens. Both the link with the territory and the active collaboration with other co-operatives are of utmost relevance for Primavera Nuova.

The co-operative's activities feature curricula for the vocational training of disadvantaged people and the promotion of educational services in support of minors and families with problems. Over the years, the co-operative has been able to give working opportunities to over a hundred disadvantaged people in the manufacturing industry and has offered an actual chance to recover one's own working potentials to the majority of them, thus promoting their employment in the labour market.

Through working experience, the co-operative intends to:

- create a protected space for the experimentation of rhythms and rules of the educational context;
- promote the recovery of people's remaining working skills and the acquisition of a professional capacity that can be then used in the regular labour market;
- encourage the overcoming of behavioural and relational difficulties so that people can really and independently access the labour market.

Through its educational services, the co-operative intends to:

- emphasize the individuals' uniqueness and give value to their differences;

- activate people's resources and potentials and devote them its services;
- encourage the educational promotion of the local community, to prevent conditions of social discomfort;
- collaborate and design activities and services with public institutions, social private people and volunteers.

Working context

Types of services:

Local education actions

In agreement with the Municipality of Schio, home-delivered education services are offered to minors of families of both *rom* and *sinta* origins as well as to young adults with behavioural or psychic problems.

Goals:

- focusing attention on the educational, relational and schooling needs of the people these services are addressed to. Besides, teachers/tutors can get in contact with the parents and establish a direct relation;
- actively observe the relational dynamics of families;
- promoting and supporting parental duties in families with minors;
- allowing the opportunity to attend social events and meetings with the mediation of a teacher;
- connecting various actions that consider the individual in his/her complexity and uniqueness, thus contributing to potential changes;
- promoting the integration of people and families with their local social context, thus increasing the well-being of final users and citizens themselves.

Summer recreation centres

Recreational activities (games, laboratories) and socialisation opportunities for children in kindergarten and grade schools of the town of Marano Vicentino. All this is possible thanks to the collaboration with the local administration and the school administration of Marano Vicentino.

Goals:

- promote peers' socialisation and establish a positive and fair relationship with adults;
- animate children's spare time in an educational and entertaining way, guiding them in expressing their needs and desires through games as well as through expressive and manual skills;
- meet families' needs for babysitting and caring of their children in summer, nonetheless considering the recreation centre as a place for personal growth.

Maintenance of public and private green areas

This sector offers public institutions, companies and private citizens the opportunity to maintain, design and deliver green area works.

Goals:

Training and work in the business of public and private green area maintenance addressed to people with social difficulties. This service features short-term customised projects for the acquisition and development of relational and professional skills in preparation for an actual job in the market.

Afternoon social education centre

A centre for minors that the local health-care department recommend through its service for the protection of minors and infant neural-psychiatry.

Goals:

- encourage socialisation, information and communication among children and between children and adults of various origins;
- promote the integration of children with physical and psychic troubles;

- increase the competencies of children through sound educational aid. The consequent self-esteem will help them in school and relationship with other children;
- acquire through active observation some useful information on how children interact with people around them;
- create an educational place that is different from those usually attended by the children; a place where also families may know each other and try new educational systems with their own children. This can help highlight the families' potential resources.

No. staff

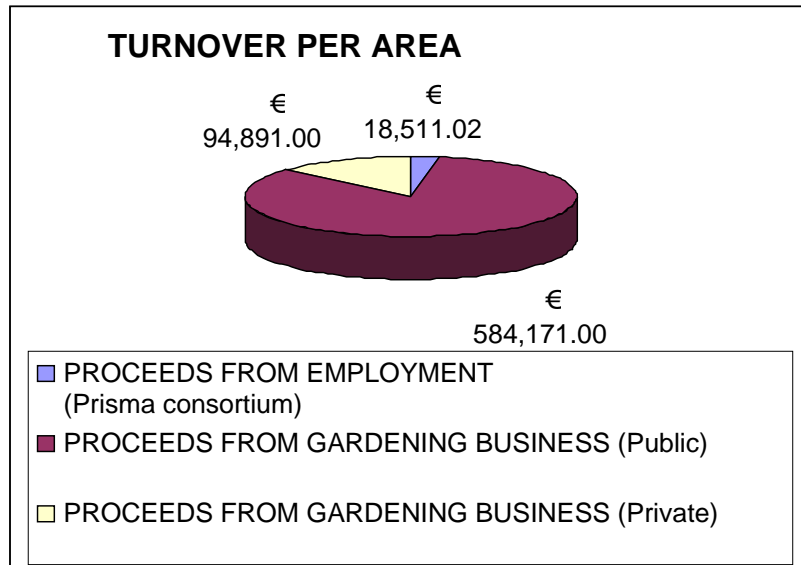
N.B.: the given information refer to the personnel who were in the Co-operative as of 31 December of each year

Turnover:

	GARDENING BUSINESS					PROFESSIONAL OUTCOME				
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
N° members	10	10	9	10	10	1	1	1	1	1
N° employees		1	1	4	3					

N° disadvantaged members	4	3	3	3	3
N° disadvantaged employees	3	4	3	6	4
N° interns	0	0	1	0	4

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
PROCEEDS from EMPLOYMENT (Prisma consortium)	€12,004.00	€24,757.91	€20,562.59	€18,227.35	€18,511.02
<i>percentage</i>	2%	4%	4%	3%	3%
PROCEEDS from GARDENING (Public institutions)	€344,181.00	€419,729.00	€450,341.00	€526,307.00	€584,171.00
<i>percentage</i>	67%	73%	78%	82%	84%
PROCEEDS from GARDENING (Private)	€157,340.92	€132,075.00	€102,936.00	€97,788.00	€94,891.00
<i>percentage</i>	31%	23%	18%	15%	14%
TOTAL	€513,525.92	€576,561.91	€573,839.59	€642,322.35	€697,573.02



Characteristics of other local main organisations:

The main local organisations dealing with gardening and green areas maintenance, such as a number of small-sized companies, have chosen to **join the Prisma consortium**, Primavera Nuova co-operative is also a member of. Thanks to the establishment of a Green Areas Committee with coordination purposes, this choice has enabled them to align their prices, to acquire important work assignments and to divide them equally among them according to the possibilities of each co-operative, to activate technical training plans for the staff, to collaborate for the participation in procurement tenders and special agreements, so to avoid competition and so to share their competencies. This however does not mean that there are not any other competitors (private gardening companies), but it helps keep the problem under control.

Critical aspects of success:

- membership of the Prisma consortium
- attention to the quality of services
- since 1994 an analytical accounting has been applied
- availability of a social care operator in the co-operative
- the municipal administration supports social co-operatives.

Strengths and weaknesses compared to other local organisations:

STRENGTHS:

- focus on quality and development of competencies and machines over the years;
- availability of a social care operator;
- the attempt at building a system to recycle green waste/residue;
- the positive relations with public institutions.

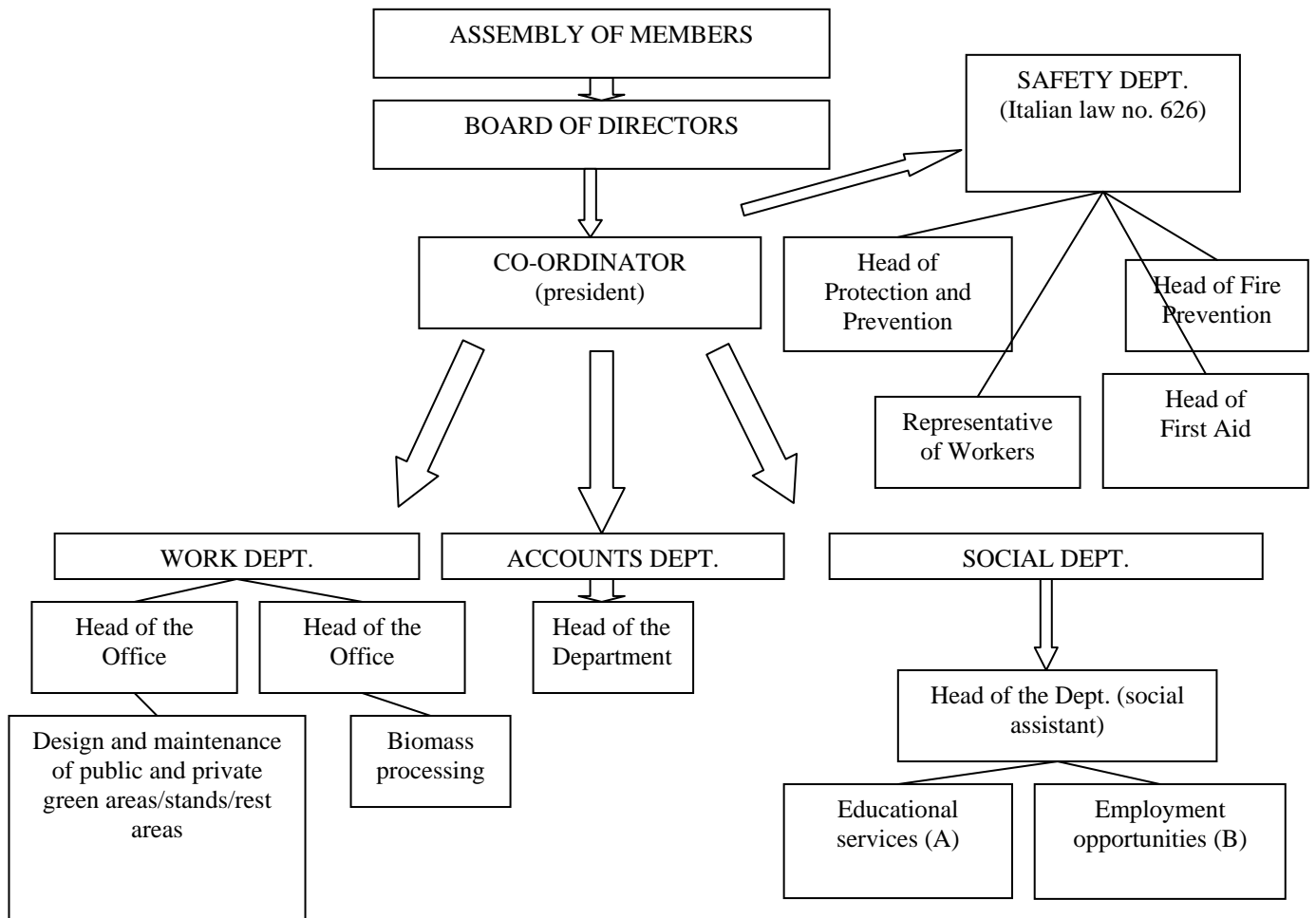
WEAKNESSES:

- difficulty in creating new sectors of success;
- difficulty in making the co-operative “visible” and so attract young people willing to work in this context (they normally prefer working for profit companies).

The co-operative is divided into 3 main areas:

- social
- working
- educational

Organisation



AREA OF MANAGERIAL EXCELLENCE

Primavera Nuova co-operative has a sound **relationship with public institutions** and it is quite clear that, ever since the beginning, the co-operative has been given the approval by the local administration, which devotes special attention to social-related matters. In order to support it, the Municipality of Schio has assigned work to the co-operative through procurement tenders. Because of new national and regional regulations, the co-operative has recently checked the possibility to set up procurement tenders including the obligation to employ disadvantaged people and the adoption of specific programmes to give employment opportunities to these people. Moreover, the Municipality of Schio has given the co-operative more work – such as the management of rest areas for Rom and Sinti people and the building up of booths/stages.

Even the local health & care department has established some stable contacts with the co-operative by sharing projects to promote employment, the assignment of the maintenance works of the green areas at the Schio hospital and finally the inclusion of 5 minors in the educational centre.

Through procurement tenders the co-operative also ensures the maintenance of public green areas for other public administrations, such as the Municipality of Sarcedo (VI) and the Municipality of Torrelvicino (VI).

Beside these important relations, Primavera Nuova has chosen to establish a **collaborative approach with other local co-operative companies**. To this end, in 1994 the co-operative joined the Prisma Consortium. It turned out to be a winning choice, especially with regards to the acquisition of work, as the consortium divides the assignments among its members, according to each member's needs and possibilities. There is a Committee with coordinating functions, whose members are all the people in charge of the green areas maintenance of the various co-operatives. However, for Primavera Nuova these opportunities are only a small part of its turnover, which mainly depends on its relations with public institutions. Being a partner of the consortium is also important because the co-operative has a chance to establish positive relations with potential competitors, that means with the other co-operatives dealing with green areas maintenance. The consortium's committee helps the co-operatives work in a non-competitive framework, and divide the labour according to the needs and possibilities each organization expresses. The Consortium has also established an Agency for Employment Opportunities, whose main goal is to promote the connections between the public institutions, that identify the disadvantaged people who need a job or some professional training, and the co-operatives that can possibly help these people.

Human resources dedicated to the project

(presence and role)

Internal person in charge

Within the co-operative there are **three main areas** – each one headed by a person:

- social department
- working department
- accounts department

With regards to the Working dept., there is not a unique person in charge, but a manager for each sector the co-operative deals with.

There are 25 employees working in the green areas maintenance.

Partners and external organisations

- Municipality of Schio
- Municipality of Sarcedo
- Municipality of Torrelvicino
- Municipality of Arsiero
- Municipality of Marano Vicentino

- Local social, health & care unit no. 4
- Prisma consortium.

Development goals

As far as the development of new projects is concerned, the co-operative intends to accomplish an ambitious plan: based on its success in the maintenance of green areas, they aim to create a whole **production network** where the all types of waste – above all from pruning – are recycled. This could help solve the problem of getting rid of them; at the same time, would start a new service for the supply of alternative energy.

Presently, the co-operative runs three biomass heaters in agreement with the Mountain Community of Leogra Timonchio. Organic waste is used to produce combustion material, as it is chopped and burned in the machines to produce work.

Another idea is the cultivation of fast-growing trees, which may be used as a resource for the production of the same energy.

Next to these projects, the co-operative also will consolidate its relations with the local public administrations by promoting a **direct agreement strategy**: this strategy would enable both parties to skip the procurement tender procedure for assignments below the European standard amount of Euro 200,000.00 and so save time and resources.

In the next future, the co-operative will be actively committed in the search for types of business, which may offer different employment opportunities (for example, to women) than those represented by the green areas maintenance.

Researchers

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