

Experiences of success factors of Italian social co-operatives

This document is a supplementary enclosure to the good practice example "Supporting employment and social integration through labour" (Italy).

Further factors contributing to the success of Verlata:

- Verlata is located in an area with a low rate of unemployment (3–4%) and a large number of industrial plants (metal and plastic) that need production employees.
- There are many social co-operatives that have operated for a long time, and the local entrepreneurs have contacts with the co-operatives through business, but also through personal and social relations (spare time activities, schools, etc.). Contacts on a personal level are important. The social co-operatives have become an inherent and trusted part of the social fabric.
- Thanks to the strong contact network, the companies trust that the two-year job integration and training process of the social co-operatives will produce workforce with satisfactory skills. For example, the productive operations and services of Verlata are to a large extent similar to those of the local regular companies.
- The local co-operatives have originally been established as part of the social activities of the Catholic church. Most people have a high regard for the church and trust its activities.
- In general, reputation is a key success factor. The social co-operatives and their operating models form a well-established and acknowledged nationwide network.
- The co-operatives founded by the Catholic church have originally got their premises and basic funding from the church, which has made their start-up phase easier than for other similar operations.

However, not all social co-operatives are reaching good results. The challenges have to do with following factors:

- The social co-operatives are located in more remote areas with a high rate of unemployment also among people without disabilities. Local companies have little need for workforce. People with severe disabilities encounter most difficulties in finding employment (in Verlata's case, they become employed in the co-operative).
- There are few social co-operatives in the area and they have been newly established. A network of contacts within the community has thus not yet been formed.
- Some co-operatives have their roots in the communist ideology, which may hamper their success with regard to some private companies.

Source: Interview with Alberto Roncon, Project EC.CO.MI., March 2007 / Pekka Saukkola