

## Sofia CoNet Network Meeting 25 - 27 February 2010 Social Enterprises to offer jobs or training



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With my input I would like to motivate you to seize all possible opportunities to create jobs for people with disabilities and other disadvantages. These projects should be an important part of integrated approaches to develop disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

The history and political and financial support of social enterprises differs very much between the European countries. I have sent you an overview based on the situation in the UK. I hope it was helpful for orientation. I will not repeat it again today (see attachment).

## People very far from the labour market – people with special placement difficulties (...special social difficulties) – homeless persons



### Occupation

- Provides colleagues, opens social networks
- Helps to develop interests in life, not **only occupation in oneself**
- Provides self-esteem and acceptance
- Provides own money and independence

I want to start by looking at some of the target groups. During my first professional years I was very much involved in social planning and research for the homeless. My husband and I have also spent time together with them as volunteers, we passed Christmas Eves in their dormitory house and we organized leisure activities.

- ▶ Homeless people are often very miserable, ill, suffering from alcoholic disease; psychiatric illnesses are very common.
- ▶ Some have been qualified professionals, who have suffered a big crisis in their life, which has thrown them off track.
- ▶ A bigger part of homeless people have a low I.Q. – bordering on being mentally disabled. Job trainers say that they have to pay more attention to avoid accidents, for example that they don't enter elevators with a ladder placed transversely – they cause more mishaps and have a lot of bad luck.
- ▶ Different crises in life have thrown them off track: Maybe it was the husband surprised too see the Italian man in his beloved wife's bed or maybe it was a dreadful accident. At the beginning of the 1980's there were still a lot of people, traumatised by war. I remember an old man, a former pilot, who couldn't overcome having thrown bombs during the war.
- ▶ Many of the homeless are very shy and mistrustful towards other people - if they have problems they prefer to go away.

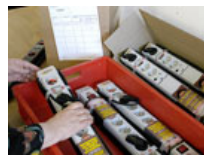
I talk about these people's lives to highlight 3 points:

1. Often it is not enough help to supply an individual room and meals. If there is success in getting them into regular occupation in protected jobs – it is very impressive to see, how they stabilise, feel better and get physically and mentally healthier.
2. Different job opportunities are needed, it is important to match the target groups, individual needs and potential. E.g. some of the homeless only accept work in the forest or in landscaping. They couldn't bear to work in closed rooms or too closely together with other people – in this case they would go away.
3. There are people very far from the labour market, who will never be able to work in the open labour market. But protected jobs are not free. They cost money to pay for the working place and for the professional staff, to organise the work – but it is worth while. Less healthcare costs are important, but the value of a person's social stabilisation and reduced suffering is priceless.

**Important for success:** 1. Independent social enterprises 2. Cooperation with the municipality 3. Professional management 4. Great variety of jobs 5. Decentralised locations of jobs, small groups 6. Trading activities near to the open labour market



Bicycle service point



Electric-Recycling



Forest and landscaping



Garden-Service



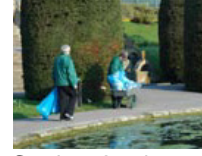
Clothes shop, social department



Paint work



Public transport services



Services for the Zoo



Neighbourhood services



Events, Party-service, Premises



Electrical assembly



Metalworking



Document destruction



Culture Centre, Theatre

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In the 1980's, the protestant church's social enterprise 'New Work' offered first 30, then 100 protected jobs for those people very far from the labour market. Now, in 2010, it is a big company with 1400 protected jobs in the Stuttgart region. These pictures show their most important trading areas. Similar structures nowadays exist in many other European cities.

In my opinion, key points important for success are to:

1. Build independent social enterprises or public enterprises outsourced from the municipality
2. Practise strong cooperation with the municipality and the job centre
3. Guarantee very professional management, professional bosses in all departments, enterprises and products certified by the responsible chambers of commerce and trade. It is important to have a real work milieu, with work ethics. It shouldn't only be seen as a social activity, where the quality of the work and products don't matter.
4. Provide a great variety of jobs – people are very different
5. Decentralise locations, have small working groups
6. Have trading activities very near to the open labour market and bigger enterprises. They have more impact, better performance and stability.

## Social enterprises offering qualified jobs to people with mental and other disabilities

### Steps of infrastructure development:

1. To offer job opportunities to normalise life
2. To qualify these jobs
  - to produce something of value on the open market
  - to enlarge the trading income
3. To differentiate jobs, so that they meet different talents
4. To offer more integrated jobs
  - less separation into specialised institutions and locations

1. All over Europe parents and other social activists have worked very hard, to create job opportunities for people with mental disabilities. Nowadays this element of the social infrastructure is becoming a matter of course – with this is a big step towards inclusion.

2. When I started working on consulting projects and social planning in this field, the aim was innovation - technology transfer. The products which were compiled in these enterprises were often rather unattractive for selling on the open market, so they earned very little money. To put it simply: the costs of the protected jobs (premises, facilities, staff) are paid for by the social system. The wages of the disabled workers have to be earned by the trading activities. With the primitive means of the social enterprises, they didn't have a real chance to earn money. But for people with disabilities, it is also important to earn at least a little of their own money. Products, which are not market-oriented or have no real value – also enforce prejudices like „People with disabilities are not able to do something of value for other people“. You will remember my input from yesterday: One way to fight prejudices is to prove them as being false.

The social enterprises for people with disabilities are being ever more professionalised - they do market research, marketing, they are equipped with modern machines. And if you visit an open-day at an such enterprise and see how intensively people with mental disabilities can often work, you really admire what is done there. This esteem and the cooperation of these social enterprises with other enterprises – that is part of inclusion in the economy.

3./4. But a lot of inclusion activities still have to be done to overcome the borders of separation, prejudice and alienation to enable a full and equal life together. You'll remember from yesterday: contact, living and working together helps to fight prejudices.



School-Hill Mensa Mölln – Social enterprise ‚Lebenshilfewerk‘, running the canteen of a school and event centre – Architect: Petersen Pörksen Partner, Architekten und Stadtplaner, Lübeck

Foto links und rechts unten: © Lebenshilfewerk Mölln-Hagenow gGmbH  
Foto rechts oben: © Stephan Baumann, [www.bild-raum.com](http://www.bild-raum.com)  
Architekturbüro petersen pörksen partner, architekten+stadtplaner, lübeck

But how to offer a greater variety of jobs – also in this field people are very different – and how to have more integrative jobs ? These questions are connected and very up-to-date. We are still very far from inclusion and full and equal living together. In the year 2007 the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was protocolled in Europe and will step by step have more legal status.

One possibility is to choose an income-generating area, which offers a lot of personal contacts. I very much like the project which was awarded last year - a central canteen and meeting centre in a big school complex which is managed by mentally disabled people. (This same social enterprise also offers other companies the possibility for them to run their canteens).

Living together – inclusive solutions – less separation in specialised institutions where the people with disabilities are alone with each other



© Lebenshilfe Baden-Württemberg, Kampagne „Hier fehlt einer“, Fotograf Patrick Werner

These potential projects might be especially interesting for our integrated approaches on the neighbourhood level.

- ▶ Can the social enterprise outsource jobs into the neighbourhood?  
(often social enterprises outsource jobs into the companies they work for as suppliers).
- ▶ Can you support a mentally disabled person to work integrated with in a local company?
- ▶ Can you build up an integrative social enterprise, where people with mental disabilities are a small minority?
- ▶ Can they offer services to the neighbourhood – like a small supermarket, a cafe or a canteen?

Social enterprises within neighbourhood oriented approaches,  
 e.g. building: to better living conditions and to generate jobs



Let me summarise my recommendations regarding „social enterprises within neighbourhood oriented approaches“...

1. Do it! Generate new job opportunities within your Local Action Plan. Use the potential of the neighbourhood – market and networks – to supply jobs.

Within Local Action Plans in deprived neighbourhoods, citizens, professionals and politicians would very much appreciate the generation of new job opportunities, especially for the long term unemployed, not only to better the framework conditions (like incentives to create jobs, to better job placements and to strengthen employability).

2. But a mixture of city-wide and local job placement structure is sometimes best. The commonly heard motto „People living in the neighbourhood working for the neighbourhood“ – doesn't always work. It is sometimes better to get away from the influence of neighbours and narrowmindedness – especially in a social milieu of unemployment, where a working person might earn ridicule.

3. Get good business advice:

It is said, that the potential for jobs in social services is far from exhausted, e.g. home help, care of the elderly, care of children, youth work. Many cities are loosing vital services provided at a local level, like corner shops, grocers, post offices and pubs and this is also seen as a market for social enterprises. But in reality it is not so easy – projects or enterprises which deliver this kind of service are often not sustainably financed. For free, badly paid or without subsidies, these jobs and social enterprises are often insecure. Nevertheless that's often better than nothing.

## Recommendation: Social enterprises within neighbourhood oriented approaches

1. Do it
2. Mixture of city wide and local projects
3. Good business advice
4. appreciate local initiatives as a starting point
5. develop strong professional partners
6. Finding partners to generate jobs – coordinative, cooperation

4. The vision and enthusiasm of individuals driven by a strong motivation to improve quality of life for the disadvantaged, often leads to fantastic and convincing projects.

„Social enterprises should be regarded as one of the potential problem solvers in partnership with public and voluntary sector organisations“\*.

5. But in the long-term, try to find or develop strong partners, social enterprises which can develop professional capacities and enlarge activities.

•The statistics are obvious: bigger social enterprises are more stable. A fragmented structure of many very small social enterprises is not very effective. To run a business, comply with employment regulations, apply for grants and so on is a demanding job – best done by professionals.

6. Coordination, cooperation and networking, the basic activities in neighbourhood management – generate much potential to find partners, generate jobs, organise job placements and so on. Use these chances.

\* ECCO, European Community Co-operative Observatory (no year) : Does social enterprise work? The lessons provided by policy and practice in five European countries. Introduction and summary, Report Nr.1, page 14