



**Cooperative business for
social inclusion in rural areas**

Research Report
Appendix
Case Studies



Co-funded by
the European Union



Acknowledgment

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Project: Coop4in - Cooperative business for social inclusion in rural areas nr. 2021-1-IT02-KA210-ADU-000034969

Author(s): BASE3

Dissemination level: Public

Version: 1.0

Delivery date: 25/05/2022

Keywords: research; report, cross-country analysis

Abstract: This appendix contains the main case studies identified in Italy, Spain and other EU countries on good practices and examples of social enterprises in rural areas promoting local development and/or the involvement of people with disabilities.

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1. Case studies

1.1 Case studies in Italy: Social enterprises in rural areas promoting local/social development

1.1.1 VA' ZAPP- Apulia, Italy

Vàzapp is a digital platform and a physical space, based on the idea that agriculture is not only hard work, but also a dream, aggregation, sharing.

The idea stems from the desire to give a future to the land and young farmers, involving them in a context of beauty and aggregation, bringing together videomakers, photographers, architects and engineers. Vázapp' is based on the short supply chain, which aims to raise the knowledge of young

farmers, making them aware that sharing, innovation and aggregation are the fundamental pillars to create a better future.

To develop this project, a number of formats have been devised. First of all the "contadinner", itinerant dinners to bring together young farmers and facilitate sharing and knowledge among them. The formula of the dinners is 20 20 20, that is: 20 dinners, 20 farms, 20 young farmers. In this way the professionals of the land have the opportunity to meet and tell their experiences, listen to each other, and then create common projects. During the dinner a questionnaire is distributed to all participants; it allows them to collect data on motivations, opportunities and threats, perception of markets and policies of farmers. The processing of this data is conducted by the University of Foggia. The idea of meeting precisely in the farms comes from the fact that farmers need to be talked to in the countryside, in the stables, in the evening. A new concept was born when farmers get together: "the true kilometer", which allows consumers to know who produces the products before tasting them.

Vàzapp' has also developed the project "grain amphitheater": the creation of an amphitheater made by young farmers, in collaboration with architects and volunteers, from bales of hay. A place intended to host dinners, meetings, theatrical performances and concerts.

For now Vázapp' is limited to Apulia, but the goal is to develop something similar at national level, also thanks to the support of the ministry.

Reference:

<http://www.vazapp.it/?fbclid=IwAR2cS0x-a4J20Qi3-AkiPpzNLCre6BPBq0kayyrPE1sz5aGPYqo6HWd2C34>

1.1.2 "RADICHIAMOCI" - From the road of the vegetable garden to the Workshop of Arts and Talents Lazio, Italy

Cooperative GEA coordinates the project "Radichiamoci", that combines nature and craftsmanship, teamwork and social inclusion for young people with disabilities. The background is the Landscape of Latium countryside, in what is now a place of sharing, full of opportunities.

For several years, Cooperativa Gea has been carrying out projects for the social and employment inclusion of disadvantaged people, through activities related to social agriculture.

The "Bottega delle Arti e dei Talenti" (Workshop of Arts and Talents) is an original project of GEA Social Cooperative, born from the comparison of ideas, insights and attitudes of everyone, synonymous with creativity, craftsmanship and inclusion. Added values that are based on the founding principles of the Cooperative and that make each creation under this brand unique and special.

Hence the intuition to bring together these two worlds, merging them into a single vision: Radichiamoci.

This is a project that combines many aspects, structured in workshops aimed at socialization, acquisition of autonomy and basic skills in different areas: agriculture, food, horticulture and crafts. "Radichiamoci" was born on the potential of a place that offers not only the possibility of developing agricultural activities, nursery gardening, horticulture, but also paths related to housing autonomy and good environmental practices. A project that combines the workshop part with the informative one.

The activities in the countryside, whether they are agricultural production or breeding, create an undeniable level of serenity and well-being, thanks also to the physical work that these jobs involve. Getting physically tired regenerates the mind, and both the plant and the animal return a tangible return in terms of satisfaction. All this creates relationships, both with the natural element and among the members of the group, and even the senses are stimulated differently thanks to the experimentation. A very fertile substrate for inclusion, collaboration, the discovery of new skills and attitudes.

Critical points have not yet emerged in their entirety, those that have emerged concern teamwork, not always easy to carry out. But collaboration is precisely one of the elements that this project intends to promote and is cultivated with time and experience. Other difficulties are related to the timing of nature, to which the group must necessarily adapt to get results.

Reference: <https://www.coopgea.it/maria-elena-mannino-radichiamoci/>

1.2 Case studies in Spain: Social enterprises in rural areas promoting the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities

L'ESTOC: This social cooperative produces and designs furniture from recyclable materials with workers with intellectual disabilities. Its aim is to eliminate polluting waste and integrate people with disabilities into society. This project started after finding out that there were 378,000 people with disabilities in Catalonia, but only 78,000 of them were employed. The company offers them a salary and the possibility of doing interesting activities that encourage creativity. Moreover, it raises awareness about the abilities and skills of people with disabilities. <https://www.lestoc.com/>

L'OLIVERA: This company produces ecological wine and oils and incorporates among their employees people with psychic disabilities, in particular those in the most disadvantaged social situations who actively participate in the production process. Their objective is to enhance their personal and social

skills through their regular integration in the common life, their work and the relationship with the village and the region where the wine and oil is produced. <https://olivera.org/es/nosotros/>

Support of entrepreneurship (EmcA): This project is supported by ONCE Foundation and funded by the European Social Fund, aimed at promoting entrepreneurship among people with disabilities and entrepreneurial skills for those who have particular difficulties in entering the labour market. They developed a portfolio of services that can be carried out by this group and a entrepreneurship methodology with support that was tested with the people and beneficiaries enterprises; and defines, among other aspects, the profile of the participants, their specific needs, the training developed for the beneficiary target group, the functions of the trainer and the role of the families.

<https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/sin-categorizar/emprendimiento-apoyo-nuevo-horizonte-empleo/>

TEIXIDORS: is a textile company that produces home textiles and accessories through wooden looms, the same as it was used in the 19th century. This company is composed of an expert team of weavers, made up of people with intellectual disabilities, with a great sensitivity for the trade and valuable experience. The production of high quality fabrics, mostly for export, has been the company's commitment in recent years. This sector has allowed them to maintain a workforce of people with disabilities (around 50 workers) and a turnover of 635,225 € in 2010. This company is located in Terrassa (Barcelona). <https://www.teixidors.com/>

Cooperactivas: is an association composed by entrepreneurs, companies, professionals, associations and public organisations that actively cooperate to incubate, network, grow, promote, consolidate economic activities within the principles and values of the social economy and regional development <https://cooperactivas.com/>

1.3 Case studies in Europe: Social business models for rural enterprises

1.3.1 Agrargenossenschaft Trebbin eG (Germany)

Type of social enterprise: Cooperative

Website: www.agt-eg.de

The company is based in the former East Germany (Federal State of Brandenburg, county Teltow-Fläming), and stems from an agricultural production cooperative established in 1958.

The main sector of activity of the cooperative is agriculture (both livestock and crops). The company is also active in other branches of business such as the hire of construction and agricultural machinery, repair and agricultural engineering services for commercial vehicles and tractors, a vehicle painting centre, the domestic engineering and service division, a country hotel and a canteen.

The agricultural cooperative AGT Trebbin eG, as a relatively large agricultural cooperative enterprise, manages a total of 4,000 hectares of arable and grassland and cultivates mainly grain, corn and rapeseed.

The first two missions of the company are: "Long-term safeguarding of existing jobs in rural areas and in agricultural production and preservation of the cultural landscape as a means of production and living space". The achievement of these goals is characterised by sustainability in economy and ecology as well as social responsibility.

Opportunities and threats

Since 2012, the AGT eG cooperative has been investing massively in modern, digital and sustainable animal and plant production, supplemented by other related business areas. Due to the extensive qualification of the employees and the training of skilled workers inside the company, the company has good prospects of securing the existing jobs and ensuring training at a high technical level in the future.

The threats continue to be the extremely severe drought in East German agriculture, which has grown worse since 2017, and the effects of European agricultural policy, including the trend in the milk price.

With regard to employment, there is a risk that qualified personnel suitable for every job cannot be found (not all apprentices remain on the farm, since some study after their training or move to another location).

1.3.2. Panato (Poland)

Type of social enterprise: Cooperative

Website: www.panato.org

PANATO is a new brand in the textile and clothing market, established by the network of social economy organisations. Thus, PANATO is more than a market product – it is an initiative of enterprises employing people with disabilities whose common goal is providing the highest quality service and production offer tailored to the requirements of contractors, while at the same time being based on

social values. The bags and backpacks they produce are made locally, while respecting employees' rights and the principles of sustainable and ecological development.

The average unemployment rate in Poland is 3.2%, although decent pay sometimes remains an issue. Among people with disabilities, the unemployment rate in 2015-2018 decreased from 13% to 6.2%. According to data for quarter 3 of 2018, the economic activity rate of working age disabled people was 30.2%, whereas the employment rate was 28.2%. Therefore, any initiative that allows the employment level in this group to increase is noteworthy. This is the core of PANATO's activity and their will to increase production capacity.

The cooperative has implemented a successful model of cooperation with subsuppliers. The cooperative is an outwork employer – the organiser of production, which wins contracts and shares them with 12 sewing rooms employing people with disabilities. This is too small a scale for any trade unions. PANATO takes on this responsibility, taking care of the working conditions of its subcontractors.

Opportunities and threats

A natural division of roles within the network has been observed: WSS PANATO is responsible for promotion, advertising and distribution of the finished products, while the production is handled by 12 sewing rooms that employ people with disabilities.

PANATO has 12 social cooperatives in its network, with only two of them work entirely for the cooperative. The rest diversify orders, but the cooperative still fills 50% of their production capacity. This makes approximately 50 people in total throughout the country.

PANATO is already the main producer of advertising bags in Poland and has the possibility of expansion into other markets. Only two of the 12 social cooperatives work entirely for PANATO. However, a company offering more products could follow in the footsteps of PANATO and propose prices low enough for the network to stop being profitable. For this reason, PANATO needs to invest more in its network and tighten its cooperation.