



NATIONAL PROFILES OF
WORK INTEGRATION SOCIAL ENTERPRISES :
AUSTRIA

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The "ELEXIES" Project

This project is specifically concerned with the different types of social enterprise for integration, also known as work integration social enterprise (WISE) in 12 EU countries. Its aim is to identify and describe their main characteristics as social enterprises, the type of work integration they provide, their numbers, and how they have developed and are supported. The ultimate goal of the project is to build a database accessible on internet.

The study is conducted using the EMES Network definition of social enterprise as a common reference point and guideline for determining the social enterprises to be included in the study. The EMES definition distinguishes, on the one hand, between criteria that are more economic and, on the other hand, indicators that are predominantly social.¹

Four factors have been applied to corroborate the economic and entrepreneurial nature of the initiatives.

a) A continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services

Social enterprises, unlike the traditional non-profit organisations, are normally not engaged in advisory activities as a major goal or in the redistribution of financial flows (as, for example, grant-giving foundations). Instead they are directly involved in the production of goods and the provision of services to people on a continuous basis. The provision of services represents, therefore, the reason, or one of the main reasons, for the existence of social enterprises.

b) A high degree of autonomy

Social enterprises are voluntarily created by a group of people and are governed by them in the framework of an autonomous project. Although they may depend on public subsidies, public authorities or other organisations (federations, private firms, etc.) do not manage them, directly or indirectly. They also have the right of participation and to terminate the project.

c) A significant level of economic risk

Those who establish a social enterprise assume totally or partly the risk of the initiative. Unlike most public institutions, their financial viability depends on the efforts of their members and workers to secure adequate resources.

d) A minimum amount of paid work

As in the case of most traditional non-profit associations, social enterprises may also combine monetary and non-monetary resources, voluntary and paid workers. However, the activity carried out in social enterprises requires a minimum level of paid workers.

¹ See C. Borzaga & J. Defourny (2001), *The Emergence of Social Enterprise*, London, Routledge, pp.16-18.

To encapsulate the social dimensions of the initiative, five indicators have been selected:

i) An initiative launched by a group of citizens

Social enterprises are the result of collective dynamics involving people belonging to a community or to a group that shares a certain need or aim. They must maintain this dimension in one form or another.

ii) A decision-making power not based on capital ownership

This generally means the principle of "one member, one vote" or at least a voting power not distributed according to capital shares on the governing body which has the ultimate decision-making rights. The owners of the capital are obviously important, but the decision-making rights are shared with the other stakeholders.

iii) A participatory nature, which involves the persons affected by the activity

Representation and participation of customers, stakeholder orientation and a democratic management style are important characteristics of social enterprises. In many cases, one of the aims of social enterprises is to further democracy at local level through economic activity.

iv) Limited profit distribution

Social enterprises not only include organisations that are characterised by a total non-distribution constraint, but also organisations like co-operatives in some countries, which may distribute profits only to a limited extent, thus avoiding a profit-maximising behaviour.

v) An explicit aim to benefit the community

- One of the principal aims of social enterprises is to serve the community or a specific group of people. To the same end, a feature of social enterprises is their desire to promote a sense of responsibility at local level.
- The database of work integration social enterprise has been produced for each country. Due to different circumstances in each country (especially legislative frameworks) there have been slightly varied approaches to mapping the sector. Researchers have generally made a great effort to ensure that the most interesting and progressive initiatives are represented. There are certain types of social enterprise which have their own legislative framework, and which are *exclusively* concerned with work integration. The second type, concerns those social enterprise which are exclusively engaged in work integration, but though they are recognisable as a distinctive type, they do not enjoy a complete and specific legal recognition, and thus generally operate under a range of different legal forms also used by organisations out of the field of work integration. Other types of social enterprise do not have their own specific legislation, and only a proportion of that type will be engaged with work integration. Researchers have made particularly strong efforts to ensure that the first two categories are included, but lack of data has meant that some of the latter category may be missing.

National Profiles of Work Integration Social Enterprises: Austria

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Introduction

Integration of people at a disadvantage on the labour market is regarded as a public task and makes part of the Austrian labour market policy. The main strategic actor defining criteria for support (both financial and social) is the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Labour. Some transnational programmes (like the European Social Fund or Employment Pacts) also co-finance integration measures. The Austrian Labour Market Service is the executing partner.

In the view of the Austrian Labour Market Service, the longer the unemployment period, the lesser the chances of getting a new job. The long-term unemployed often have a low level of qualification, or no professional qualification at all, which makes it more difficult for them to find a job. But the period of unemployment itself also has a negative effect on their ability to find a job. The reasons hereto are manifold: demands for qualifications are changing over time, thus rendering obsolete vocational training received in the past; unemployed people are also deprived of on-the-job training, which is of high importance for low-qualified workers; a long absence from the labour market also has negative effects on the motivation to look for a new job; important social competencies - like teamwork, time management, punctuality - get lost; and employers are aware of these negative effects of long-term unemployment and are therefore more reluctant to hire long-term unemployed. The tense situation on the labour market pushes the long-term unemployed into a vicious circle; temporary employment in a social integration enterprise gives the long-term unemployed a chance to break this vicious circle.

Besides the negative effects affecting them on the labour market, the long-term unemployed also risk social exclusion, which in turn may lead to severe social and health problems. The loss of income very often means the beginning of a debt crisis which all too often ends in isolation and addiction to alcohol and drugs.

Integration measures in Austria try to stop this downward trend. Since the early 1980s the Austrian Labour Market Service supports initiatives, projects and enterprises that fight the two major problems caused by long-term unemployment: growing inhibitions to take up a new job and social exclusion.

Social integration enterprises offer temporary employment for discriminated and/or (socially) handicapped persons. Their main feature is the combination of the production of goods or services and a social mission of integration through employment. These enterprises pursue two – sometimes contradictory – goals:

- improving the social and economic situation of their target group;
- achieving good commercial performance.

In the field of social integration through employment there are mainly two types of social enterprises in Austria:

- socio-economic enterprises;
- non-profit employment projects/companies.

Besides these two types of enterprises there exist also so-called "work training centres" (*Arbeitstrainingszentrum*). In 2001 there were 6 such centres in Austria. The main difference between these three types of enterprises lies in the financial guidelines defined by the Austrian Labour Market Service for each type of enterprise. Work training centres were not included in the present study, because their economic dimension is very limited and they are mainly targeting people with psychological problems.

These three types of enterprises share the following main characteristics:

- they employ long-term unemployed people for a limited period of time, in general one year;
- they pursue the same goals: offering employment for their target group, acting as an economic enterprise on the market, supporting the integration of their target group through socio-pedagogic assistance;
- the integration part is financed through public funds, usually in contracts approved for one year, making it necessary for all enterprises to apply every year for a renewal of their financing contract.

Socio-economic enterprises

1. Brief historical description

The emergence of measures to fight unemployment and exclusion from the labour market dates back to 1980, when the first social integration enterprises were founded. The former Minister for Social Affairs, Alfred Dallinger (1980 – 1989), actively promoted new types of employment policies and created a positive climate for different types of innovative initiatives aiming at the qualification and integration of the unemployed. One of the first of these new measures were social economic enterprises (*Sozialökonomischer Betrieb*, or SÖB).

2. Key features

2.1. Legal form(s) and structure of ownership

SÖB are non-profit making associations or non-profit making limited liability companies.

2.2. Pursued goals

The goals pursued are three-fold:

- employment goal: creating jobs;
- social goal: integration of the unemployed;
- economic goal: qualification of the target groups through work within an enterprise producing goods or rendering services.

2.3. Types of jobs provided

Two types of jobs are provided:

- permanent jobs for professional personnel (managers, socio-pedagogic personnel, skilled workers);
- jobs of limited duration (usually one year) for defined target groups, to offer them training, employment and support for the re-integration into the labour market.

All the jobs provided offer a labour contract corresponding to all regulations of the Austrian labour legislation.

2.4. Weight of training

The weight of training depends on the type of employed workers and the economic field in which the enterprise is active. All enterprises practice on-the-job training combined with theoretical training periods; some enterprises run their own courses, while others enable their employees to attend vocational schools to obtain a formal certificate.

2.5. Types of employed workers

The target groups of SÖB in Austria are people experiencing discrimination on the labour market:

- the long-term unemployed;
- the disabled;
- young people with social handicaps;
- women above 45 and men above 50;
- women after a family break;
- problem groups like the homeless, alcoholics, drug addicts, released prisoners, etc.

2.6. Types of resources

The financing of SÖB is based on own revenue (approx. 40 %) from the sale of goods and services and the remaining approx. 60 % are funds from the Austrian Labour Market Service, the European Social Fund, the provincial government, the regional administration, special funds for disabled people and - to a very limited extent - from private sponsors.

2.7. Links with public policies

The basic legislation for SÖB are § 28/4c and 34/4c of the Labour Market Promotion Law. They are part of the National Action Plan for Employment and the regional employment pacts. Most enterprises have links with the regional administration.

2.8. Basic data

In 2000 there were 59 SÖB offering 1,700 temporary workplaces; in the course of the same year, a total of 3,888 workers belonging to the target groups were employed and trained in these workplaces. SÖB employed 455 professionals and generated an own income of € 21.6 million. Public funding accounted for 63% of resources.

3. Relation to the EMES socio-economic criteria

3.1. A continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services

All SÖB are continuously producing goods and/or selling services. They are mainly engaged in the following fields:

- textiles;
- woodwork;
- restaurants;
- construction;
- metalwork;
- production, sale and repair of different goods;
- clearing out and waste disposal;
- home services.

3.2. A high degree of autonomy

SÖB are independent legal entities. The members of the board of directors are managers of SÖB, regional politicians, private persons interested in promoting the social sector etc. SÖB depend on public funds; therefore, the guidelines of the different donors have to be met.

3.3. A significant level of economic risk

To a large extent, SÖB are operating on the competitive market and are therefore bearing the economic risk of their activities. The subsidies are only used to cover personnel costs, including training and qualification.

3.4. A minimum amount of paid work

The remuneration of all employees (both permanent and temporary) is set according to the collective agreements of the branch the enterprise is engaged in. Usually there is no voluntary work in Austrian SÖB.

3.5. An explicit aim to benefit the community

The main goal of SÖB is to offer employment and qualification to people excluded from the labour market and having problems to re-integrate it. Besides this goal, most enterprises seek close co-operation with the local communities and offer services to them if possible.

3.6. An initiative launched by a group of citizens

Many SÖB - especially in the beginning - were initiated by social workers or other private persons. Some established associations also started an SÖB.

3.7. A decision-making power not based on capital ownership

SÖB are run by managers who bear the economic risk of the enterprise. As far as decision-making is concerned, the professional staff (including the managers) act as a team and temporary employees are granted a say in all matters concerning their personal affairs. In other words, decisions are made "in team", but the last say is with the manager; however, the decision-making power of the latter is not based on capital ownership, but laid down in a contract.

3.8. A participatory nature involving persons affected by the activity

In general, SÖB promote the self-reliance and responsibility of the temporary employees, including participatory approaches in the daily activities.

3.9. A limited profit distribution

SÖB are not entitled to any profit distribution. Any surplus generated at the end of a business year is repayable to the donors, thus reducing their financial contribution

(more accurately, surplus generated in one year is deducted from the following year's grant).

4. The supporting umbrella structures

There are informal meetings and formal networks at the provincial level and there is an established SÖB Association (*Verband der sozialökonomischen Betriebe*) in Graz. SÖB are also part of the BDV (*Bundsdachverband für soziale Unternehmen*), a federal association bringing together all social initiatives in Austria.

5. Innovative features

SÖB combine training and employment and the temporary employees get support to solve their individual problems throughout the time they stay in the enterprise. The stay in the SÖB is structured in several phases (preparatory phase, introduction phase, training and employment phase, job-seeking phase, concluding phase and follow-up). The stay in the SÖB is documented, goals are set together with the temporary employee and the progress is regularly evaluated.

Non profit Employment Projects/Companies

1. Brief historical description

As mentioned in the former identification sheet, the emergence of measures to fight unemployment and exclusion from the labour market dates back to 1980, when the first social integration enterprises were founded. Since socio-economic enterprises (SÖB) - one of the first of the new measures implemented - could not take care of all problem groups among the unemployed, the so-called non-profit employment project or companies (*Gemeinnützige Beschäftigungsprojekte / Gemeinnützige Beschäftigungsgesellschaften*, or GBP) were founded, around the early 1990s. Their main aims and target groups vary in the different provinces of Austria, since the Labour Market Service of each province sets its own priorities and develops programmes to meet them.

2. Key features

2.1. Legal form(s) and structure of ownership

GBP are non-profit making associations or non-profit making limited liability companies; they are often attached to big charity organisations and/or are created in partnership with local governments.

2.2. Pursued goals

The main purpose behind the setting up of GBP was the will to support specific target groups and offer them jobs. The main goal is to offer the workers temporary employment and practical training, in order to prepare them for integration in the regular labour market.

2.3. Type of jobs provided

Two types of jobs are provided:

- permanent jobs for professional personnel (managers, socio-pedagogic personnel, skilled workers)
- jobs of limited duration for defined target groups, to offer them practical on-the-job training, employment and support for re-integration into the labour market.

2.4. Weight of training

The weight of training depends on the type of employed workers and the economic field in which the enterprise is active. All enterprises practice on-the-job training combined with some theoretical training periods.

2.5. Types of employed workers

The target groups of GBP in Austria are people experiencing discrimination on the labour market:

- the long-term unemployed;
- the disabled;
- young people with social handicaps;
- women above 45 and men above 50;
- women after a family break;
- problem groups like the homeless, alcoholics, drug addicts, released prisoners, etc.

2.6. Types of resources

The financing of GBP is based on own revenue (approx. 25 %) from the sale of goods and services and the remaining approx. 75 % are funds from the Austrian Labour Market Service, the European Social Fund, the provincial government, the regional administration, special funds for disabled people and - to a very limited extent - from private sponsors.

2.7. Links with public policies

The basic legislation for GBP are § 28/4c and 34/4c of the Labour Market Promotion Law. They are part of the National Action Plan for Employment and the regional employment pacts. Most projects have links to local communities or big charitable organisations.

2.8. Basic data

In the year 2000 there were 120 GBP, offering around 1,900 workplaces for temporary employees; in the course of the same year, 2,720 workers belonging to the target groups were employed and trained in these workplaces. The GBP employed 475 professionals and generated an own income of € 14.4 million. Public funding accounted for 73% of the resources.

3. Relation to the EMES socio-economic criteria

3.1. A continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services

Most GBP are continuously producing goods and/or selling services. They are mainly engaged in the following fields:

- administration/office work;
- social services;
- environment;
- renovation;
- art/culture/research;
- tourism;
- crafts and trade.

3.2. A high degree of autonomy

Some GBP are independent legal entities, but most of them are part of a big organisation. GBP depend on public funds; therefore, the guidelines of the different donors have to be met.

3.3. A significant level of economic risk

GBP act in the non-market and in the market spheres. The scope of GBP is very wide: some support very little economic risk, because they offer occupational therapy for disabled people, while others run economic activities, competing on the market with the private sector.

3.4. A minimum amount of paid work

The remuneration of the employees (both permanent and temporary) is either set according to the collective agreements of the branch or there are special agreements for individual target groups. Voluntary work is performed only to a limited extent.

3.5. An explicit aim to benefit the community

The main goal of GBP is to offer employment to people excluded from the labour market and having problems to re-integrate it. Some GBP have close links to local communities and offer activities that cannot be provided by the private market.

3.6. An initiative launched by a group of citizens

Most GBP were launched by communities, local governments or big charitable organisations. Only a small proportion was initiated by social workers or other persons interested in social work.

3.7. A decision-making power not based on capital ownership

GBP are run by managers who bear the economic risk of the project/company. As far as decision-making is concerned, within the project/company, the professional staff (including the managers) act as a team and temporary employees are granted a say in all matters concerning their personal affairs. In other words, decision are made "in team", but the last say is with the manager; however, the decision-making power of the latter is not based on capital ownership, but laid down in a contract.

3.8. A participatory nature involving persons affected by the activity

In general, GBP promote the self-reliance and responsibility of the temporary employees, including participatory approaches in the daily activities.

3.9. A limited profit distribution

GBP are usually not entitled to profit distribution. Any surplus generated at the end of a business year is either repayable to the donors, thus reducing their financial contribution (more accurately, surplus generated in one year is deducted from the

following year's grant), or, in big organisations, special agreements on re-investing the surplus can be made.

4. The supporting umbrella structures

There are informal meetings at the provincial level. Since there are many differences among GBP, there is no formal organisation representing this type of social integration enterprises. However, GBP form part of the Federal Umbrella Association for Social Enterprises (*Bundeschverband für Soziale Unternehmen*, or BDV), a federal association bringing together all social initiatives in Austria.

5. The innovative features

GBP were founded to support also specific target groups within the unemployed. Especially in the field of art/culture and research, new projects for offering jobs were created, for example assisting in archaeological excavations or renovating old buildings. Other GBP are supporting tourism by training tour guides for special occasions. They give assistance to museums or are engaged in environmental projects.

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