

Building up Social firm - learning by doing

The Social Psychiatric Association in South Ostrobothnia

is an independent, non-profit association. It is giving services mainly to people having mental problems.

Today our important developing process is to create work training services and build up social firms.

We have just finished a basic study about the possibilities to start social firms in three different areas in South Ostrobothnia. We are looking forward to find a place for social firms in Finnish society. Social firm is quite a new thing in Finland. We don't have that kind of ways to get work to people who has some limitations or special difficulties.

We have got recently some money from ESF and we are starting the development work. One big question is that how can a social firm make business without harming unsupported business or how to find a fair supporting systems from government. We are going to get our first law about social firms in next few month. And we already know that the compensation because of the lower efficiency of the workers is going to be only for 2-5 years and that it is the same sum of money that is given as a normal benefit to the employer who gives work to unemployment person.

Any way our first social firm is going to be started in the area which is the biggest in furniture industry cluster in Finland. In our study we made also questions to the furniture industry and 8 from 10 companies told us that there is a need to make more subcontracting. Some companies even wants to give out parts of their production to the other companies from which they could buy components in the future.

We are just in the beginning. There is some multiservice centers in Finland which are like social firms. What we are doing now is, so do we think, one other new model of social firm. Until this day we have learned a lot and we know that there will be even bigger questions and challenges in near future. But we can tell more about them next time.

We have learned that good co-operation is the best way to build up something new. Our co-operation partners are Social and welfare officers, Labour officers, Local governments, Finnish government, financiers, Adult education centres, economic life, Furniture industry and the workers and many other people and officers.