

THE LINZ APPEAL



PART B Social Firms & Different Approaches

Confederation of European Social Firms,
Employment Initiatives and Social
Co operatives



Part B

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Introduction

The 'Linz Appeal' outlines why there should be more Social Firms for disabled and disadvantaged people across Europe. The document makes a series of recommendations to the European Union for how the growth of Social Firms can be encouraged, in line with their employment and social exclusion agendas. The publication was launched at the 20th CEFEC Conference in Linz, Austria, 11 - 13th October 2007.

CEFEC (The Confederation of European Social Firms, Employment Initiatives and Social Co-operatives) and its members across many EU countries have gathered a wealth of experience over the last twenty years on Social Firm development. The issue of how to create paid employment for disabled and disadvantaged people, especially those with mental health issues, remains a challenge for all EU countries. Social Firms which operate on the open market have shown a successful way of integration and inclusion.

The 'Linz Appeal' presents the collective experience with our recommendations for all European countries, especially the new EU members.

PART B of the LINZ APPEAL concentrates on information gathered on Social Firms and co-operatives by members within CEFEC. The range of information includes background on national legislation, the current situation in each country, possible changes, efforts and initiatives to rehabilitate and integrate people with mental health problems and other disabilities and disadvantages into society and the economy.

Through these reports everyone is able to see what the situation is in other CEFEC member countries. Additionally, members can benefit and actively seek out transnational co-operations to broaden or enhance their activities, develop or promote their practices as well as integrate new methods and ideas. If you would like to be part of this movement then please do consider becoming a CEFEC member – further information on membership can be found on the website at www.cefec.org or you can request a membership application form from the CEFEC Secretariat at secretariat@cefec.org

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Practical examples of Social Firms from CEFEC member states

These examples describe the legal conditions and the practical approach of Social Firms in different countries

Practical example from Austria

Christian Rachbauer, Executive Manager of PRO MENTE Upper Austria, reports:

A written agreement between the NGO PRO MENTE and the users' organisation lays down rights and obligations. In the 150 local services and Social Firms in Upper Austria this agreement is monitored at management level and aims at empowerment of the users. They are able to influence concepts, staff and finance and this has led to the first user-run Social Firm.



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Practical example from Belgium

Bernard Jacob of AIGS reports:

In Belgium a special ministry for the promotion of occupation and employment was founded with good results: There is a nationwide agreement to coordinate the various legal regulations of the regions so that individual support can be organized on a long term sustainable basis. This has proven beneficial for disabled and disadvantaged people.

The project "Ecodipar" started its activities in 1999. It deals with people of special vocational difficulties and won a prize in Liege. The activities focus on garden and park maintenance, industrial and office cleaning and a "computer service at home project". It reaches 60% of the normal turnover and increased their staff from 10 to 49 employees in 2007.

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Practical example from the Czech Republic

Pavel Novak of FOKUS reports:

Fokus is an umbrella organisation for psychosocial and work facilities for psychiatrically disabled people. A special EU Programme is helping to convert one of their five sheltered

workshops into a Social Firm. In this way motivation among disabled users of the workshops who feel that step by step their work performance and level of achievement can be increased to reach open employment is being built up.



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fokus@fokus-praha.cz
www.fokus-praha.cz
www.socialnifirmy.cz

Practical example from Finland

Mika Vuorela, from the Finnish Central Association for Mental Health reports:

The Finnish concept links Social Firms closely with Vocational Training Centres and has produced a number of good results: The clients of the Training Centres can specially prepare for prospective jobs in the Social Firm. The work performance of the clients and future employees is often of a suitably high standard and during times of transfer there is individual coaching guaranteed by staff who are familiar with the disabled and their special needs. In this way employees and employers reach a high level of satisfaction.

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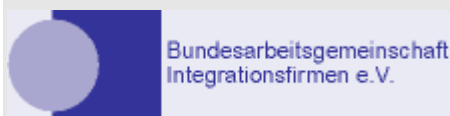


Practical example from Germany

Christiane Haerlin, BAG Integrationsfirmen reports:

Social Firms are exploiting the fact that food markets in smaller towns are closing down because they cannot compete with huge supermarkets. They are moving into these premises and using a franchise model of food market which was developed by the BAG to serve customers like older people who appreciate local shopping and delivery to their home.

The German Disability Law allows social provides special funding if a substantial percentage of their workforce is disabled. This is why the firms can survive on their income and additional funding.



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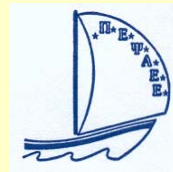
Practical example from Greece Athena Frangouli from PEPSAEE reports:

The legal form of cooperatives, used often in Greece by Social Firms, helps to implement democratic participation and empowerment of the users. They are shareholders and therefore in the position to influence the structure and decision making. There are regular monthly meetings to deal with practical issues of running the firm. There are also twice yearly official meetings to decide on financial matters such as how to divide the income between necessary investments and additional individual earnings on top of the regular pension schemes which are normally paid to the disabled employees.

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Panhellenic Union
for Psychosocial Rehabilitation
and Work Integration

www.pepsaee.gr



Practical example from Portugal Paulo Mendes, General Manager of ARIA Jardins reports:

The Social Firms of the NGO organisation ARIA, some of which are in the facility and gardening sector, allow disabled employees up to 2 hours per week of their paid working time for consultation concerning their health problems. Supervisors in the firms along with social workers and therapists at the administrative centre of ARIA are sensitive and open for consultation with an aim to early problem solving. In this way the Social Firms can reach a high level of motivation and work performance and a low level of sickness leave. This contributes to the firm's good working atmosphere.



ARIA Jardins

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Practical example from Slovenia Igor Pavel, Slovenian Association for Mental Health, SENT, reports:

The new law of 2004, issued by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs has led to the establishment of new Employment Centres for disabled people who are on benefits are not able to achieve employment in mainstream or Social Firms, but do not need sheltered workshops.

A new state funded foundation was installed which collects contributions from pension schemes and mainstream businesses who fail to fulfil the necessary quota of disabled

employees (between 2 – 6%). The employment centres encourage the disabled to train and prepare for open employment. The Social Firms benefit from the new law by being eligible for work contracts which help employers to fulfil their quota obligations.

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Practical example from the UK

Sally Reynolds from Social Firms UK, reports:

There is considerable interest in social enterprise by the UK government currently, and there are reforms ongoing to the welfare system to reinforce the sentiment that 'work is good for you', so these all stand in favour of Social Firm development. We have the DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) rather than a quota system, which we had previously and did not work because it was not enforced. A Social Firm can access any of the initiatives for employing disabled or disadvantaged people that any other employer has open to them, including a salary contribution scheme called 'Workstep' and equipment adaptation scheme called Access to Work, but there are currently no specific initiatives aimed at assisting Social Firms to start up or run, unlike the larger sheltered factories which still exist and are able to access financial benefits for their employment of more than 50% disabled staff.

SocialFirms UK

For more information please contact:

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Reports of CEFEC member countries

These reports give an account of present developments and outlines future work to promote Social Firms in 12 countries where CEFEC has members

The Situation of the Social Firms in Austria

1. The Legal Situation to support Social Firms

There is no special legislation and therefore no special funding for Social Firms.

2. The National Umbrella Organisation to promote Social Firms

There is not a special umbrella organisation, but “Pro Mente Austria” and “Pro Mente” in several provinces, such as in Carinthia, Salzburg, Tirol and Upper Austria is responsible not only for psychosocial projects but work projects and Social Firms as well. The biggest asset comes from “Pro Mente Upper Austria”, a large organisation for medical, social, vocation rehabilitation of psychiatric patients, including sheltered workshops and social firms.

3. The Number of Social Firms and business branches

The members of Pro Mente Austria run about 20 social firms, half of which fulfil the criteria of CEFEC. Personal services such as restaurants and catering predominate followed by joinery, laundries, copy shops and environmental services.

4. The General Situation and Perspectives of Social Firms

Psychiatric reforms in Austria are advanced and because of low unemployment there have been a whole variety of successful models and projects to place people with mental health problems back into work. However, despite good medical, social and vocational rehabilitation services, Social Firms are limited to the few regions mentioned above.

Government funding gives priority to job coaching and work assistance all aiming to place disabled people in the open employment market. Alternatively the majority apply for and receive an invalidity pension.

The Situation of the Social Firms in Belgium

1. The Legal Situation to support Social Firms

In 2004 the new law "Titre Service" helped to open more possibilities for Social Firms and another legal act permits public subsidies of two social workers for 20 employees in registered Social Firms.

2. The National Umbrella Organisation to promote Social Firms

There are different federations representing the vocational rehabilitation and training sector, such as CAIPS. The Social Firms have created umbrella organisations, such as ATOUT EI.

3. The Number of Social Firms and business branches

There are 79 Social Firms operating as cooperatives in Wallonia.

In general all Social Firms are open to people with all kinds of disabilities.

Mostly Social Firms operate in the service sector. Especially the cleaning sector has grown, due to federal legislation promoting private house cleaning.

4. The General Situation and Perspectives of Social Firms

There is a need to promote Social Firms and open them up to new business sectors to increase employment for disabled persons. There is also a need to tackle the problem, that additional social workers cannot be employed if the Firms have more than 50 employees.

Report by Bernard Jacob,
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The Situation of Social Firms in Bulgaria

1. Legal Situation to support Social Firms

Even before the political changes, legal acts concerning the resettlement of disabled people were in existence. Since the years of transition and the EU membership there have been numerous decrees and acts to improve the situation of people with mental health problems, but no special law to promote Social Firms.

A new law on the integration of People with Disabilities was adopted in 2004.

2. The National Umbrella Organisation to promote Social Firms

There is no such organisation as there are no Social Firms.

3. The Number of Social Firms and business branches

There are no Social Firms

4. The General Situation and Perspectives of Social Firms

Centres for social rehabilitation and integration are trying to move from the medical approach with big institutions to the social, vocational and training approach to resettle disabled persons and integrate them in society. Psychosocial care is being built up. However, due to structural reforms there is a high rate of unemployment which does not help the disabled.

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The Situation of Social Firms in Cyprus

1. The Legal Situation to support Social Firms

There is no special legislation supporting special schemes or social firms for disabled or disadvantaged people. There is, however, a National Action Plan (NAP) on Employment which has opened more possibilities for the employment of people with mental health problems.

2. The National Umbrella Organisation to promote Social Firms

There is no such organisation. The NGO "Cyprus Rehabilitation Counselling Association" (CRCA), however, is aiming to implement suitable structures.

3. The Number of Social Firms and business branches

There are no Social Firms in Cyprus

4. The General Situation and Perspective of Social Firms

The NAP has only had a small effect as there are not enough incentives for employers to give jobs to people with mental health problems. Groups with other disabilities are in a better position.

There are vocational training centres and some supported employment projects but a systematic approach is lacking and makes the situation for people with mental health problems difficult.

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The Situation of Social Firms in the Czech Republic

1. Legal Situation to support Social Firms

There is no special legislation concerning social firms or any other types of social enterprise in the Czech Republic

According to the Employment law there are some advantages for those who employ disabled people:

- A claim for state contributions can be made by employers whose workforce comprises 50% disabled people and there is the possibility of subsidies
- Tax advantage

The Employment law set up the quota system – 4% of disabled people should be employed in every company.

2. The National Umbrella Organisation to promote Social Firms

There is no special organisation for social firms but two umbrella organisations of the community mental health care providers (Fokus Association, Association of the community services) play an active role in development in this field. The member organisations are starting to set up social firms.

In the field of the social economy and employment of disadvantaged people the national thematic network of the Equal programme support some mainstreaming activities.

3. The Number of Social Firms and business branches

There is no official definition of social firms in the Czech Republic. More than 600 organisations report that 50% of the people they employ have a disability, but most of these could not be marked as social firms in accordance with CEFEC definition. They are more sheltered workshops. Approx. 30 organisations are moving in the direction of social firms, but they do not fulfil the criteria of CEFEC, yet. They usually operate as a part of NGO, which provide psychosocial and vocational rehabilitation (for example “Fokus” for people with mental health problems, “Sananim” for people who have been involved in drug abuse, etc.), or as a guarantee limited company. Besides these there are more than 40 production co-operatives for invalids.

4. The General Situation and Perspectives of Social Firms

In the Czech Republic interest in the creation of social firms only began in the last few years. The first move was to change sheltered workshops into social firms. This came from the providers of mental health or generally social health care. The second move was led by enterprises, which wanted to obtain state contributions or EU funds. Over the last 3 – 4 years EU programmes focussing on employment have been set up in the Czech Republic and numerous organizations now aim to promote social firms in

the Czech Republic as a suitable model for employment of disadvantaged people on the open labour market (disabled people including people with mental health problems as well as socially disadvantaged people). There is chance to set up a social firm platform and to pave the way for future association.

Politicians and public administration officials have begun to take an interest in the social economy sector and financial tools have been proposed for its development as part of the national allocation of EU funds. On the other hand, the new government has prepared reform steps to cut the state budget, including support for the employment of the people with disabilities.

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The Situation of the Social Firms in Finland

1. The Legal Situation to support Social Firms

The act of Social Enterprises was implemented in 2004 and prepared with various disability organisations. A "Social Enterprise" is the equivalent term of the CEFEC Definition of "Social Firm". 30% of the employees in such a project have to be disabled, including long term unemployed who are registered with the ministry of labour. In the 2007 reform the aim is to raise the wage subsidies and the length of time and to employ more people with a **long term unemployment** background.

2. The National Umbrella Organisation to promote Social Firms

The umbrella organisation and network of Social Firms SOFI was founded in 1999 and has 200 members and a thousand addresses. It has so far helped to build up a support structure for the management of Social firms and for the cooperation with main stream firms.

3. The Number of Social Firms and business branches

There are 13 projects and organisations, supported by Equal aiming to set up social enterprises. Innovative business plans are drawn up and refined to enable them to employ disabled persons. So far there are few projects which support employees with mental health problems.

In June 2007 the total number of social firms is a hundred and covers all business branches.

4. The General Situation and Perspectives of Social Firms

The Social Firms movement started with the EU Horizon Programme in 1997 and was taken up by the national organisation of VATES which then led to the start of SOFI. A special campaign throughout the country reached 15,000 small businesses to inform them about the new Act and motivate them to employ disabled people.

The aim is to employ more people with mental health problems and to better the situation of disabled employees by reforming the Act of Social Enterprises.

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The Situation of the Social Firms in Germany

1. The Legal Situation to support Social Firms

There has been long standing supportive legislation for the disabled in Germany. A special framework for Social Firms was issued in 1999 and the following subsidies are available to them:

- Funding for each new workplace
- A wage subsidy of 30% for each disabled employee
- A grant for psychosocial support of the employees
- Coaching and support for business expertise

Main stream businesses whose workforce does not comprise 3 – 6% disabled people have to pay a fee which is then used for projects and the above named subsidies.

2. The National Umbrella Organisation to promote Social Firms

The umbrella organisation, "Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Integrationsfirmen" (BAG), has represented Social Firms in Germany since 1987. The political and lobbying activities helped to influence legislation and the continuous setting up of Social Firms over the last twenty years.

3. The Number of Social Firms and business branches

There are 700 Social Firms in Germany with an estimated 10,000 employees. 25% of them have a mental health problem and 25% have other disabilities.

The decreasingly dominant business branch is the industrial service industry including electronics and crafts. Growth is to be seen with emerging branches such as catering, hotels and restaurants, gardening and food markets.

4. The General Situation and Perspectives of Social Firms

Politicians have learned that Social Firms are successful models, also for other neglected target groups and for the costly sheltered workshops which are beginning to develop Social Firms out of their resources and organisations. However, with high unemployment rates public funding is becoming scarce and new Social Firms which want to start are being hindered. The managers of Social Firms have become increasingly better qualified over the last few years but they need more financial and personal resources to keep high standards and initiate further developments.

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The Situation of the Social Firms in Greece

1. The Legal Situation to support Social Firms

A new law in 1999 (2716, article 12) gave a new framework for Social Cooperatives of Limited Liability ("Koispe") The law helped to overcome difficulties with the employment of the disabled, especially for people with mental health problems.

2. The National Umbrella Organisation to promote Social Firms

The Pan-Hellenic Union for Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Work Integration ("PEPSAEE") is the Umbrella Organisation with 200 individual and 20 organizational members.

3. The Number of Social Firms and business branches

There are 11 Social Cooperatives starting or in action with 150 disabled employees, mainly with mental problems and further 200 disadvantaged persons. Most of the residential homes are trying to set up social enterprises. According to the law all business sectors are feasible. The present firms cover the service sector, the industrial, environmental and tourist sector. There are a small number of social firms (ca. 5 firms) that are working in the open market as a regular business. This situation is very difficult and creates hazards and extra burden. We try to include them under the law for KOISPE 2716/99.

4. The General Situation and Perspectives of Social Firms

Social Firms are currently having difficulty finding staff from a social work background with enough “know – how” in business strategies. There is a general motivation in psychosocial centres to set up social enterprises and if possible social firms.

More information:

- Hadjantonis, d.(2003) “The Social Cooperatives of the Law 2716/99.....” in “Social Economy, European Social Firms Cooperatives..” 16th CEFEC Conference 2003, Athens
- Seyfried, E and Ziomas, D. (2005) “The establishment of Social cooperatives in Greece...” Synthesis Report. Peer Review on behalf of the European Commission. (www.peer-review-social-inclusion.net)

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The Situation of the Social Firms in Portugal

1. The Legal Situation to support Social Firms

There has been longstanding legislation since 1998 which helped to set up Social Firms. However, there is a need to improve this legislation so that users are protected in a better way. Also more technical and financial support is needed, especially during the start-up phase of a Social Firm.

2. The National Umbrella Organisation to promote Social Firms

There is no umbrella organisation in Portugal.

3. The Number of Social Firms and business branches

In 2001, two years after the first Social Firm was started, more than 130 Social Firms with 1,230 employees with integration problems were in existence.

There is no updated documentation on these numbers.

The core branches of the Social Firms are in child rearing, the domestic and catering sector, gardening, handicrafts, graphic art and building sector.

4. The General Situation and Perspectives of Social Firms

Because of the general economic squeeze and rising unemployment there has been a lack of support for Social Firms. The fight against stigmatizing groups of disabled and

disadvantaged persons goes on. A number of Social Firms dating back to the early days have had to close down.

There is a great need to create an umbrella organisation to support the structure of Social Firms, to fight for better legislation and subsidies for starting firms.

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The Situation of the Social Firms in Slovenia

1. The Legal Situation to support Social Firms

In 2004 a new law on vocational rehabilitation and employment of the disabled was issued and implemented in 2006.

2. The National Umbrella Organisation to promote Social Firms

There is no special umbrella organisation for Social Firms only but the Slovenian Association for Mental Health, SENT, is the biggest organisation catering for people with mental health problems. Amongst other activities it has set up Social Firms. Other organizations are OZARA and ALTRA.

3. The Number of Social Firms and business branches

There are 160 Social Firms in Slovenia with 6,000 disabled employees.

Dominant business sectors are farming, cleaning, gardening, office and administrative work.

4. The General Situation and Perspectives of Social Firms

In 1976 a movement within sheltered workshops started to develop and convert them into Social Firms. This process went on till 1988.

The firms are mostly concerned with the effects of hospitalisation of the former patients. The training aims at coping with the change of role to an employee in the Social Firms. The aim is to employ more disabled people with mental health problems in the future.

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The Situation of the Social Firms in Spain

1. The Legal Situation to support Social Firms

In Spain there is no special legislation for people with mental health problems. Social firms are supported by general legislation about social inclusion and employment, and there is an old specific regulation of Social firms for people with disability, which are called "Special Employment Centres" (CEE) in Spain.

In Andalusia employment programs for people with disabilities (included people with severe mental disorders) are supported by a regional public agency: the "Andalusian Employment Service" (SAE).

2. The National Umbrella Organisation to promote Social Firms

Andalusia is the first region that has created Social Firms for people with severe mental health problems, with IDEA ("Andalusian Employment Initiatives") as an umbrella organisation. IDEA is a specific organisation set up by FAISEM ("Andalusian Foundation for Social Inclusion of Mentally ill People") and ONCE ("National organization for Blind People"). FAISEM, in close coordination with the Mental Health Services, develops vocational programmes for people with mental health disabilities, with vocational training and orientation, sheltered workshops, social firms and supported employment programmes.

In the last years IDEA has promoted a national umbrella organisation of social firms for people with mental health problems: ADECEM.

3. The Number of Social Firms and business branches

In Spain there are many social firms and social enterprises for people with disabilities, but only a few of them have workers with severe mental health problems. At the moment ADECEM has 28 Social Firms (with about 500 workers with these kinds of problems), 9 of them in Andalusia, coordinated by IDEA, and with 220 workers with severe mental health problems (429 workers in total)

There is a variety of business branches such as carpentry, gardening, printing, catering, domestic care and cleaning, telecommunication, computers etc.

4. The General Situation and Perspectives of Social Firms

Andalusia has experienced a successful psychiatric reform and developed psychosocial and work programmes as well as Social Firms over the last 20 years. There is a great need to spread the experience of this region to other parts of Spain.

General information

Spain is a Federal State with 17 autonomous regions with a high degree of autonomy in some health and social policies. Andalusia is one of these regions, with about 8,000,000 inhabitants and with some specific situations in terms of mental health policies and services, as a result of the Psychiatric Reform started in 1984.

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The Situation of the Social Firms in Switzerland

1. The Legal Situation to support Social Firms

Lobby groups are trying hard to get special legislation to promote Social Firms but they have not yet been successful. At present a revision of the invalids act is being prepared and it is hoped that there will be more rehabilitation activities and perhaps support for Social Firms instead of granting pensions on a large scale. There is no legal obligation on main stream firms to employ the disabled as exists in Germany. Therefore only few employers care for disabled people.

2. The National Umbrella Organisation to promote Social Firms

There is no umbrella organisation but recently a work group, including the *Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz*, has been formed, which is interested in the subject of Social Firms. In addition, INSOS, the federation for sheltered workshops, has decided to become a member of CEFEC.

3. The Number of Social Firms and business branches

There are a few projects which are similar to Social Firms. As there is no legal basis for these, they only receive very limited public subsidies for disabled employees and therefore need to invest their own capital to start a firm.

4. The General Situation and Perspectives of Social Firms

There are great hopes for innovative legislation to come and promote the start of Social Firms. There is a movement in the country to support employment and provide job coaching. Financial pressures might positively add to this perspective.

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The Situation of the Social Firms in United Kingdom

1. The Legal Situation to support Social Firms

There is no special legislation for Social Firms in the UK. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) introduced in 2005 should provide some protection for disabled people in employment, but it has yet to be really tested.

2. The National Umbrella Organisation to promote Social Firms

The umbrella Organisation "Social Firms UK" is a charitable company formed in 1999 to lead and develop the Social Firms sector in UK. There are over 300 members and the aim is to promote firms and provide support, represent members at government level, to promote research in this field, create new opportunities, maintain a Resource Centre and encourage best practice.

3. The Number of Social Firms and business branches

In 2006 there were 67 Social Firms and a further 70 emerging Social Firms. Combined, they have 1,652 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs, of which 52% were filled by disabled people. While many of the firms created employment for people with any type of disability, 34 Social Firms focus only on creating the minimum of 25% of jobs for people with mental health problems. The level of employment retention is high and there are an average of 841 trainees who benefit from Social Firm involvement each week.

Over 80% operated in the sectors of service industries including maintenance and catering. There is a wide variety of niche market businesses, but also mainstream furniture industry and window glazing.

4. The General Situation and Perspectives of Social Firms

There is general government support for the social enterprise, but still a very low understanding of the Social Firm model within the relevant government department (Department for Work and Pensions – DWP).

People with mental health problems still have the lowest employment rate of all disability groups, in spite of requirements on employers to make adjustments in order to employ this target group.

There will be more research done on Social Firms. That will help with government lobbying to show the amount of money saved. When disabled people work they contribute to the gross national product and also score health gains from being employed.

CEFEC History

CEFEC - The Confederation of European Social Firms, Employment Initiatives and Social Co-operatives, has been in existence as an NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) for approximately 20 years. Started as an informal network of pioneers in the field of work rehabilitation and employment for people with mental health problems, CEFEC is now a Europe-wide organisation with representatives from 16 countries, which focuses on the development of Social Firms¹. The members no longer represent the needs of only those with mental health problems but other types of disability and disadvantage as well. It is well acknowledged however that those with mental health problems are probably the furthest removed from the labour market for whom the Social Firm approach is particularly suited.

The Social Firm movement in Europe led to the first meeting in Berlin in 1987, Torino 1988 and Maastricht in 1989. The most significant development came when the European non-profit organisation of CEFEC became constituted. The CEFEC Charter published on 26th April 1990 agreed according to Belgium law contains the main facts, goals and beliefs. The first impact came from the Italian movement of co-operatives and the German movement of Employment Firms in the early eighties. The emphasis was on the worker's role rather than the patient's role as an act of autonomy. This attitude also led to a clear distinction between sheltered workshops and their disabling structures and Social Firms modelled on normal work conditions.

In 1986 a European meeting was held in London on Occupational Therapy supported by Mr. Partick Daunt, who was in charge of the EU office „Disability Affairs“. It was his vision to support the setting up of employment for people with mental health problems, an area which had been neglected up to that point. This led to the creation of CEFEC and a series of meetings followed which soon became an important gathering and event in the form of annual CEFEC conferences.

1987 in Berlin, a first meeting was held to get to know working in the area of employment for people with mental health problems;

1988 in Turin, we worked on guidelines on how to set up Social Firms with strong participation from the workers/users;

1989 in Maastricht, the movement of Social Firms and co-operatives broadened;

1990 in Southampton, CEFEC became a legal body;

¹ Social Firms are market-led businesses set up specifically to create employment for people with mental health problems and other people with disabilities and disadvantages in the labour market. They will have at least 30% of their workforce who are disabled and or disadvantaged people and will generate at least 50% of their income through sales of products or services. The full definition for Social Firms, as agreed by CEFEC members in 1996, is available on the CEFEC website www.cefec.org

1991 we realized that the honeymoon was coming to an end; only an auxiliary meeting near Amsterdam was held;

1992 in Delphi, we had to face reality and deal with the problems;

1993 in Londonderry, new Horizons opened up and...

1994 in Spa, again the workers voice was heard at a transnational forum and not just in the local enterprises;

1995 in Turin the user participation increased;

1996 in Linz there was a large-scale conference with a busy Trade Fair;

1997 in Zaragoza participants started coming from outside Europe;

1998 in Athens the culture of users was continued. An Award was given to best practice firms – continued in the years to come;

1999 in Helsinki a country started to set up Social Firms;

2000 in Lisbon local initiatives and their work projects were exhibited;

2001 in Berlin the method of “open space” to develop CEFEC was experimented with;

2002 in Guildford a varied programme was on offer but no host for the next year’s conference was forthcoming;

2003 in Athens the hosts had a hard job organising the conference and still managed to offer a range of post-conference workshops around the country;

2004 in Thun, Switzerland, questions such: ‘Is the ethical challenge and profit orientation compatible?’ ‘How do we realise the vision of bringing ethical businesses and profit orientated Social Firms closer?’, were put forward.

2005 in Novo Mesto, Slovenia, members of the CEFEC family brought rich and long-term experiences a year after the *Law for Employment Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled* has been passed in the country;

2006 in Seville, Spain, the main points were methods and suggestions for improvement of employment programmes and the role of Social Firms and other alternative forms of work integration for people with mental health problems.

2007 in Linz, Austria. Once again, after ten years, promente Austria has invited us to Linz to raise awareness about the changing nature of work and how this could impact on people with disabilities around Europe. Also discuss and debate how Social Firms might play a role in the future of work policies around Europe.

The number of members has increased and decreased according to European support schemes. Apart from annual meetings, a great many projects, programmes, written news bulletins, activities and investigations have been developed by members. A good proportion of the work in the past has been supported by the European Community.

CEFEC has grown and attracted people and organisations not only from Western Europe, but also from Eastern Europe and far reaching countries such as Japan, Canada and USA.

CEFEC has become a movement believing in one major principle: To help organisations establish Social Firms that create employment for people with mental health problems and other disabilities and disadvantages. For CEFEC, in Social Firms it is normal to create a good social atmosphere and leave space to each employee/user to develop his own capacity, knowledge and speed, as well as empowering people economically by paying wages. The economic basis & management plays as important a part as the social aims.

The Social Firms and their programs aim to meet the needs of the employees, the local open market, cultural particularities and the needs to reform delivery of services to those recovering from mental illness or dealing with the barriers of having a disability or other disadvantage in the labour market.

The main beliefs and goals of CEFEC are laid down in:

An Introduction to a European Organisation for the vocational Integration of people with mental health problems with the CEFEC Charter, principles, Guidelines and Statutes.

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