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Pathways to social integration for people with mental health problems: the establishment of social co-operatives

Comment Paper, CEFEC



on behalf of



European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs
and Equal Opportunities

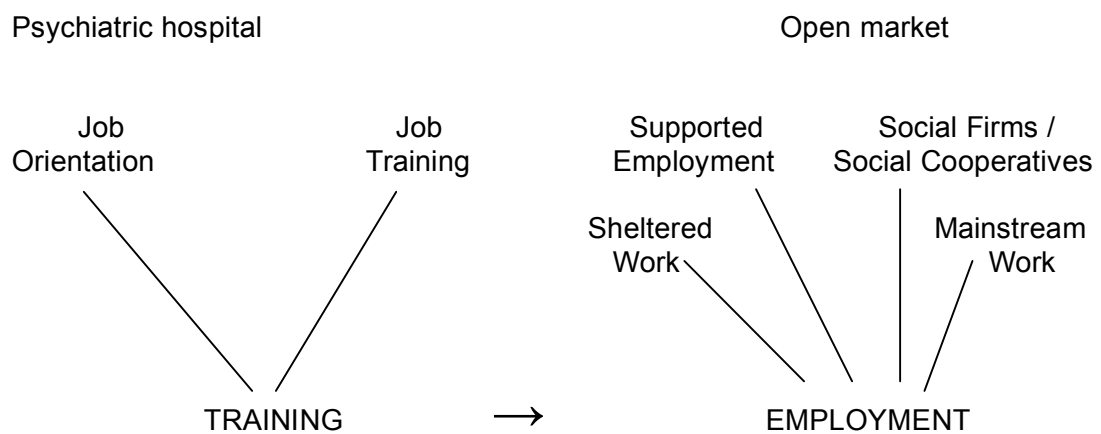




CE FEC (Confederation of Social Firms, Employment Initiatives and Social Co-operatives) is an umbrella organization representing more than 300 social firms and cooperatives for disabled, particularly with mental health problems, in Europe, since 1987.

It works under the CE FEC principles (see diagram)

CE FEC FRAMEWORK



CE FEC offers :

- the networking between its members
- the Turin Guidelines on how to set up Social Firms – Social Cooperatives
- the Charter of Rights to help on the political and legal level to campaign for the employment of disabled and particularly those who suffer from psychosocial problems
- the Principles for best practice of how to run a Social Firm – Social Cooperative
- an annual Conference

At the 16th CE FEC Conference, 2003, held in Athens, the model of the KoiSPE was presented and discussed among the participants. Points that were found of interest to European participants were :

- The members with psychosocial problems working at the KoiSPE could maintain their social benefits



- KoiSPE function under the law 2716/1999 of the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity
- They operate on a tax free basis
- They can provide the work environment that the principles for best practice, demand (adopted by the CEFEC General Assembly, 1996 in Linz, Austria)

The Social Firm defining characteristics are :

- a social firm is a business created for the employment of people with a disability or other disadvantage in the labour market
- it is a business which uses its own market oriented production of goods and services to pursue its social mission
- a significant number of its employees will be people with a disability or other disadvantage in the labour market
- every worker will be paid a market wage or salary appropriate to the work – whatever their productive capacity
- work opportunities should be equal between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged employees. All should have the same employment rights and obligations

The model of KoiSPE favours the implementation of these principles.

- The co-existence of mental health professionals was not favoured by some members. It was implied that the relationship “professional – patient” in one way or another, would continue in this new frame of work. It means that the professionals should be trained to give the space and time to the people suffering from psychosocial problems to develop their skills and potentials in a real work environment.

Questions:

- How the KoiSPE could benefit from the experience of small and medium social firms and cooperatives existing in Greece and in Europe?
- What kind of training will the employees have so that success will follow the attempt and not frustration?
- How the governing board would support and not hinder the development of the entrepreneurship of the employees?
- What will be the expert support structure? (example of Germany, United Kingdom)
- Is the model of KoiSPE functioning under the principles of the social economy or the public sector?