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**The role of Industrial Relations systems in creating new form
of jobs and enterprise to protect the local economy**

Progetto *Riqualfichiamo il lavoro* - Fai-Cisl Imperia

Progetto *La Nuova Futura Società Cooperativa* - Femca-Cisl Mantova



Agnesi – pasta factory

1824: Paolo Battista Agnesi bought a mill in Pontedassio and gave life to “Ditta Paolo Agnesi e Figli”.

1920’: The enterprise was at its top.

1970’: After the death of Vincenzo Agnesi (grandson of Paolo Battista), internal divisions within the family and an economic crisis began a period of financial difficulty.

1995: Agnesi was acquired by Danone Group.

1997: Agnesi was acquired by Paribas.

1999: Agnesi become a member of the Colussi Group



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The crisis

2014: The crisis occurred in Agnesi pasta factory led to the decision to close permanently the production unit in Imperia.

The production had been reduced from the 90,000 tons of pasta of the 1990's to 36,000 and the mill had been dismissed in February 2014.

The plant employed 103 workers.



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The unions

2014: protest actions

2015: negotiations at MISE, solidarity contract and CIGS

2016: collective redundancies

“Impossibility to adapt and develop the manufacturing site to the necessary requirements of the international and national market” (company’s official press release, December 2016).



The call for tender

Liguria Region: “Invito a presentare operazioni relative ad azioni finalizzate all’inserimento nel mondo del lavoro a valere sull’asse I e III del PO FSE 2014/2020”

linea di intervento 2: percorsi integrati che prevedano più di una delle seguenti attività: orientamento, bilancio delle competenze, formazione permanente ed eventualmente outplacement, svolte in un ottica di salvaguardia dell’occupazione o di ricollocamento.

Call for tender: Cescot Confesercenti (leading partner), Conform Srl (employment agency), Parasio Srl, Centro Giulio Pastore, Scuola Edile Imperia, Aesseffe Scpa, Cnos (local vocational training agencies).



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The project

Riqualfichiamo il lavoro (May 2016-May 2017)

1. Guidance and orientation activities (68 workers)
2. Competence assessment (55 workers – 6 months)
3. Training (31 workers – 100 hours logistic/200 hours tourism)
4. Placement (31 workers)
5. Tutorship



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Goals

On 31 participants who have been through all its steps, 18 found a job in another company, 2 started their own activity in the tourist sector and 11 are still interviewing for a job.

“The focus has to be changed from reacting to company closure and job losses towards longer-term planning and the anticipation of change. Regional and local authorities, trade unions, employment services and companies of all sizes have to get involved in implementing active employment measures”



Objectives

1. Promoting employment and social inclusion
2. Improving education
3. Supporting job creation
4. Adapting to change

“Orientation and assessment phases were really important. The majority of workers never attended any vocational training courses while they was at work”

“We support them, but we cannot replace them. What has to be clear is that the individual must be responsible for his research”

“Companies complained about the lack of financial resources, but it is not totally true. There should be the clear-mindedness and the courage to invest in people”



Lessons learned

1. Fulfilled European recommendations about implementing active labor policies, investing in vocational training and reactivate workers
2. Importance of formal, informal and non formal competences
3. Importance of social capital
4. Customized training



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Mantuan hosiery industrial district

1925: NO.E.MI. stocking factory was founded in Castel Goffredo. It became a European leader in its field till its closure at the end of the 1950'.

The locally available know how led to the emergence of a stocking industrial district.

The industrial district until a few years ago was considered the biggest in Europe (and the second in the world) with 400 companies and almost 18.000 workers.



The crisis

1) With the entry into the euro area an increasing number of companies began to relocate some production cycles.

Mostly, the “labor intensive” and the “energy intensive” ones, taking advantage of the lower labor and electricity costs in other countries, mainly in the Eastern Europe.

2) Many small Chinese laboratories started in the area.

Some companies, unable to relocate their plants, used these laboratories in order to cut production costs.

In last decade the workforce has fallen from 18.000 to 8.000 units (mostly female labor); the number of companies has fallen by 10% (mostly replaced by Chinese ones); the use of social shock absorbers has exponentially increased



2015

- The mayor of Castel Goffredo decided to set up a forum with all stakeholders.
- Femca-Cisl and UST Cisl (at local level) sponsored a meeting at the headquarters of Lombardy Region in order to involve local authorities.
- Institutional forum.
- Local conference.
- Negotiations at MISE.



The project

Promoting the setting up of cooperatives managed by unemployed workers. The idea is that of recreate the industrial district as it was preventing the unfair competitions of Chinese laboratories.

2016: the project were submitted to the citizenship during a convention.

Almost 30 companies expressed their interest and the municipality opened an e-mail address to collect workers availabilities.

In November 2016, the cooperative “La Nuova Futura Società Cooperativa” was founded (8 partners and 2 fixed-term workers, all women specialized in the sewing processes for tights).



Femca-Cisl promptly committed to the project:

- 1) Looked for potential associates between its contacts and by monitoring companies crisis in the area.
- 2) Once the partners were found, helped looking for a production site.
- 3) Helped with the bureaucracy (together with Confcooperative).
- 4) Worked for increasing awareness in the local business world.

“The headquarter is that of a former company who dismissed 22 workers. We tried to convince those workers to launch a cooperative. But we could not. The cultural leap from being an employee to become an entrepreneur is complex. This is not a typical case of Workers’ Buy Out. Workers do not know each others before being involved in the project and this was a problem. We tried to help but they had to face their internal balances independently”.



- 1) Relaunch the industrial district
- 2) Boost employment, by fostering self-employment and entrepreneurship
- 3) Create “healthy” jobs
- 4) Create an ethical chain

“Companies get used to cheap labor which sometimes contain requirement to be called ‘slavery’. But very few demonstrate sensitivity to this problem”.



Lessons learned

- 1) The reality of an industrial district is not transferable by definition.
- 2) The idea of setting up new cooperatives is risky. It required a business idea, a governance plan and above all financial resources.
- 3) This was not a WBO experience: some unemployed workers who do not know each other decide to launch a start-up.
- 4) Political institutions was interested into the project, and evaluate the opportunity of dedicated funds (that never arrived).
- 5) Cooperatives should have been founded in disused companies, for a nominal change. But this did not happen.