

EXPERIENCES OF COOPERATIVE APPROACHES TO CSR IN EUROPEAN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

1. Foreword

This document represents a short description of the research activities - developed within the first task of COOPERATE project - on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) tools used by excellent SMEs around Europe.

The main objective of this activities is to verify the existence of contexts organised in the form of industrial clusters which already experimented a co-operative territorial approach in using CSR tools in order to collect information useful to re-define the methodology proposed by COOPERATE project and/or the set of instruments to help SMEs in developing their own CSR strategy and tools.

In order to achieve this objective, we:

- developed a bibliographical analysis, based on economic, industrial, social and environmental literature about clusters;
- run a research on institutional, academic, social partners and business web sites with sessions specifically devoted to CSR topics (instruments and case studies);
- contacted local actors (representative of trade associations, local authorities, managers of firms located in clusters, etc.) of clusters which have been our partners in previous projects in order to have information about recent experiences in developing CSR strategies and tools.

In doing this research, we assumed that CSR is, as defined by European Commission: “a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.” (Commission Green Paper 2001 “Promoting a European Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility”, COM(2001)366 Final).

The existence – within CSR practices and instruments - of social and environmental issues had great importance in developing the activities of the first task of COOPERATE project since the outcomes of this research are quite different if we consider social or environmental aspects of CSR.

In fact, if we consider CSR social pillar, our research lead to the conclusion that the territorial approach is a very innovative one, since we found no previous experiences in European industrial clusters. On the contrary, as regards environmental CSR topics, the research lead us to find around Europe some experiences which can be analysed as similar to the one we will develop during COOPERATE project.

As a consequence, owing to the impossibility to find experiences of the application of a territorial approach to CSR topics in industrial clusters, we find interesting to expand the scope of the research considering also cases of CSR projects with a strong co-operative approach, which represents an important aspect of COOPERATE project. Thus, we decide to made up the present document describing not only the tools and approaches used by excellent SMEs operating in clusters (mainly represented by CSR case studies focused on the environmental aspects only) but also corporate social responsibility projects which has a strong co-operative dimension related to the relationships among SMEs operating not in the same local area but in the same sector or in the same supply chain.

So, the following sections will describe the CSR experiences developed:

- in European clusters;
- in specific sectors;
- by private-public or business-non profit partnerships.

From the perspective we assume in this document, the co-operation on CSR topics along the supply chain represents too an interesting field of analysis since the need to manage the social responsibility also beyond the organizational boundaries makes an increasing number of large companies working in partnership with SMEs of their supply chain in order to make them fulfil social, environmental and safety targets. This topic is relevant also from a theoretical point of view since it allows to enrich the current debate about the impact of CSR standards diffusion on SMEs, above all the ones operating in less developed countries. Some scholars, in fact, argues that supply chain requirements often discriminate against SMEs who perceive the compliance to CSR standards as a strong barrier because of their of adequate financial, human, technological and cultural resources (Fox, 2005). The above mentioned tendency of large corporations to co-operate along the supply chain supporting the SMEs in meeting social, environmental and safety standards is an interesting perspective to make (and make perceive) CSR not as a barrier to SMEs survival and development but, on the contrary, an instrument for their social, managerial and economic development.

Anyway, these experiences are nowadays diffused above all towards extra-European SMEs and, consequently, are not included in this report, even if we think they represent a fruitful perspective also for COOPERATE project because of the existence, within industrial clusters considered, of similar supply chain dynamics.¹

¹ An interesting European case of responsible supply chain management is represented by Progest Ltd, a Slovakian enterprise whose experience is mentioned in the Best Practices in EU Responsible Entrepreneurship work programme.

2. CSR experiences in European industrial clusters: approaches, topics and tools

The cases of ceramic, mechanical and textile industrial districts in Modena (Italy) are interesting for COOPERATE project development for different reasons:

- first of all - as the clusters involved in our project - they have already developed some CSR actions but in a non-systematic and durable way so to become an ideal place for the proposition of CSR management tools;
- local public bodies believe in CSR as an instrument to promote local innovation and social, environmental and economic development according to a model of Socially Responsible Districts;
- a research was developed in 2005 (FocusLab, 2005) in order to examine not only the state of the art of CSR in the three clusters but also to explore the perceptions of the enterprises on CSR related issues and their relevance for their future.

As regard the first point mentioned, the *ceramic industrial district in Sassuolo (Modena)* is quite advanced as regards environmental CSR instruments since a significant number of enterprises has process certification (EMAS and ISO 14001) and/or product ones (Ecolabel and ISO 14021) and uses “cleaner technologies” even if not required by laws. The importance of environmental aspects in the ceramic district is confirmed also by the existence of an *Initial Environmental Analysis* of the district, prepared by the local public bodies of Modena and Reggio Emilia and the regional agency for prevention and environment (ARPA Emilia Romagna), using an integrated territorial approach. In this approach, local actors identified all territorial environmental issues and the pressures induced by firms of ceramic sector. So, CSR is well diffused within the enterprises of the cluster only as regards environmental aspects since other CSR issues are far less developed even if some organizations run initiatives: in favour of their workers (flexible working times, evaluation of levels of satisfaction, involvement in quality groups, etc.),² involving suppliers in decision making processes or financially supporting cultural, social and sport initiatives in the local community.

The state of the art in *mechanical industrial district in Modena* is quite different from the previous one. In fact, even if in both cases CSR practice is only at the rising stage, the two clusters put the emphasis on different issues. Environmental issues are quite less diffused in mechanical district where, on the contrary, the initiatives in favour of workers (even if usually different the one from the other) are really widespread among the enterprises: some of them focus on the training needs of workers (technical courses on accidents, English and French

² In addition some other spot initiative have been developed in special cases, for instance in two cases, an enterprise of the district donated sums of money to help two workers undergoing a surgical operation.

courses and Italian courses for strangers, etc.), others on recreational activities (creating cultural and sport centres or defining conventions with local travel agencies, gym, etc.), others on familiar needs of workers (establishing enterprise crèche or proposing flexible working time). Also mechanical district shows quite a strong link with the local community, supported by the enterprises with financial contribution to social, cultural and sport initiatives but also – in a limited set of cases – with employers volunteering.

The examples of CSR initiatives above proposed are relevant at the level of the single enterprise - which plan and run the project - but there are signs that also the mechanical district begins to approach CSR in an integrated manner. The *car-pooling project*, in fact, aiming at facilitating home-work way for workers and at reducing air pollution – was initially developed by a single enterprise – in cooperation with local municipality – and joined other three enterprises whose plants are located on the way covered by the buses.

The third interesting cluster in Modena is the *textile/clothing industrial district in Carpi* which represents one of the traditional sectors in the area. From the point of view of CSR initiatives, this cluster represents the less developed one, probably also because of the difficulties it has nowadays in facing international competition. In fact, the enterprises of textile/clothing district do not comply to international standards (neither in environmental nor in social field), propose a limited amount of initiatives for workers (flexible working times and satisfaction surveys) but are quite engaged in initiatives of corporate giving. There are, anyway, important signals of interest in CSR related topics as a matter concerning not only enterprises but also public bodies, trade unions, enterprises' associations and the community.

The signal is represented by the one-year project developed by a large partnership of business and non business local actors to investigate the need of competencies for the development of eco-friendly products in the textile/clothing sector. The relevance of the project derives both from its objective and also from the approach to it, that is the acknowledgment by enterprises and local actors that most of CSR topics can be better targeted at the level of the district and not of a single enterprise.

Generally speaking, we can say that the described industrial districts in Modena approach CSR in quite an implicit manner as many other European businesses (Matten and Moon, 2004). In fact, the most widespread initiatives (the ones concerning workers and the community) in most cases do not derive from a deliberate CSR strategy but are part of the DNA of enterprises operating in industrial clusters.

As regards COOPERATE project, this seem confirm that industrial clusters are an ideal place where to diffuse CSR culture and instruments. Also local public bodies in Modena are convinced about that and propose to use CSR as an instruments for the development of the whole territory.

This is a second element of interest in the experience of industrial districts in Modena: the idea for the future of CSR at local level is quite similar to the one proposed by COOPERATE since it goes beyond the “traditional” objective of a district made up of socially responsible businesses to embrace more an innovative one: the socially responsible district.

If deeper analysed the approach proposed for Modena districts is quite different from the one we will adopt in Tuscany since the objective of a socially responsible district has to be reached not through a process involving different local actors but through three different processes: CSR (for enterprises), Institutional-Territorial Social Responsibility (for public bodies) and Citizenship Social Responsibility (for the community). Anyway, this experience will represent for COOPERATE an important benchmark during the development of the activities.

Finally, the described experience in Modena is relevant for our project since it gives us some important indications on the attitude of enterprises towards CSR related issues, helping the project team to better define the instruments and the approaches to be used to reach the objective of COOPERATE.

The enterprises of the three districts were in fact asked to answer some questions about social responsibility during a research by FocusLab (FocusLab, 2005). The answers shows that, even if there is quite a diffused interest around the topic – considered important for the future - there are still some barriers to the diffusion of effective CSR policies and instruments. Some difficulties are cultural and cognitive since enterprises do not know about all the innovations that CSR initiatives can bring (responsible finance, socially responsible selection of suppliers, accountability, etc.); others are related to the lack of technical and organizational resources. These findings seem to confirm that the approach and the operational methodology chosen for COOPERATE project can be effective in dealing industrial districts in Tuscany.

If we consider particularly the European experiences oriented to the diffusion of environmental tools (EMAS) among SMEs, we have many countries and regions in which a territorial approach has been promoted, with different methodologies and different levels of involvement of local actors.

In these experiences the networking between organisations emerges as one of the most important fostering factor for EMAS diffusion and the working by group of companies emerges as an useful and efficient way of adopting EMAS in SMEs. This happens to be particularly effective between organisations operating both between organisations operating in the same region (or territorial area) and in the same sector (industrial branch, but even service sectors like tourism or public institutions operating at different levels). In these cases enterprises collaborated by identifying and assessing similar environmental aspects and by finding technological and operational solutions to be applied to similar production

processes and products, as well as by defining organisational structures suitable for the “local production cycle”, co-operating in improving the environmental impact on the same local eco-system and in interacting and communicating with the same stakeholders (such as local population, authorities, ...).

The first experimentations of territorial approaches related to the possibility of applying Emas were, in Italy, the case of the Bayer Production Pole in Filago, where companies with numerous diversified productive activities signed an agreement to appoint an Intercompany Environmental Committee, and the case regarding the registration of the tourism area of Bibione. Cases in the EU include, for example, the Gendorf Chemical Pole in Bayern, where the firms worked closely together for Emas implementation. All these experiences, though, were based on a broad interpretation of the concept of “industrial site” taken to mean an “extended site” (comprising the total number of industrial sites located in the area), and therefore are not applicable as such to a wider cluster.

In the last 3-4 years Italian and EU experimentations involved other territorial contexts, with approaches similar to COOPERATE’s one. In Italy nowadays many territorial clusters adopted an integrated approach to the management of local environmental issues caused by productive systems characterizing the area. After analysing documents produced in the different experiences and after direct contacts, we can assert that the most interesting experimentations (for their level of maturity and the characterizing methodology) are the following ones:

<i>Id</i>	<i>Characterizing production</i>	<i>Location</i>
1	Furniture sector	Pordenone
2	Production and manufacturing of metals	Brescia
3	Mechanical industry	Jesi and Fabriano
4	Textile sector	Prato
5	Chemical industry	Ravenna
6	Municipalities	North Milan
7	Ceramic cluster	Sassuolo and Modena
8	Paper industry	Lucca Province
9	Tanning production	Santa Croce s/Arno
10	Pharmaceutical and chemical	Latina

All these experiences drew inspiration from the Italian methodology for *EMAS Network* proposed by national Competent Body; three of the named clusters obtained a national certificate by Competent Body for their full implementation of steps described in the national methodology (they are the IDs 1, 5 and 7).

Three of these experimentations (IDs 4, 8 and 9) inspired the *Tuscanian approach for the adoption of EMAS in industrial clusters*, that is a coherent specification of the national methodology. Among these experimentations the most important can be considered the 8th, concerning the EMAS approach to Paper Industrial Cluster. In this territorial context, within the scope of a LIFE-funded project (PIONEER –

Paper Industry Operating in Network: an Experiment for Emas Revision), a number of industrial and non-industrial organisations (local authorities, service providers) have implemented an environmental management system in compliance with Emas by relying on some co-operative and collective actions (such as common procedures, shared resources, collaborative training initiatives, etc.). This enabled all the local “actors” that meet difficulties in participating in Emas (the SMEs and the organisations operating in sectors where Emas is not diffused, such as the local authorities and the service providers) to overcome the barriers in adopting an EMS and, simultaneously, to improve their capability to co-operate in a better co-ordinated and integrated management for local sustainability. The project, ended on February 2006, permitted to 18 organizations (SMEs operating in paper industry, environmental service enterprises and local authorities) to obtain EMAS registration, by using managerial instruments proposed by a local Promotion Comitee composed by private and public local actors.

In other European countries the territorial approach to environmental management is going to develop, and we had some information from different local actors describing these initiatives. The most important ones are the following:

<i>Id</i>	<i>Characterizing production</i>	<i>Location (country)</i>
1	Paper industry	Lubjana (SLO)
2	Multisectorial (manufacturing wood and metal)	La Rioja (SPA)
3	Tanning industry	Catalunia (Spa)
4	Paper industry	Britain (FRA)
5	Multisectorial (for details: <i>Konvoi</i> project)	Baden-Württemberg (Ger)

All these experiences present a common approach to the environmental territorial management, showing the importance of the involvement of both public and private local actors in the processes of identification of main critical environmental effects produced by industrial pressures (Initial territorial analysis) and in planning the consequential actions. This kind of approach will be adopted in the Cooperate project, too.

3. CSR experiences in Europe: the sectorial approach

The cases of CSR initiatives at the sector level are relevant for COOPERATE project since, in general, they show the importance of intermediary associations’ role in promoting sustainability actions with an integrated approach, that is considering the sector as a set of enterprises whose social and environmental effects on communities and territories has strong similarities and so can be managed with common instruments.

The experiences described in the following pages are sometimes cases of social/environmental sectorial accountability, sometimes cases of

sectorial codes of conduct or, finally, guidelines proposing standards for environmental management.

In the field of accountability, the *Environmental Report of Italian tanneries industry*³ is interesting for the objective it pursues: acknowledgment, accountability and setting off what has been done in the sector to improve environmental performances of productive processes. It is to notice that most of the actions described in the report are characterized by a strong collaborative dimension due to, in particular, the existence of many projects in partnership with local or national public bodies interested in stimulating and supporting the achievement of sustainability objective in the tanneries industry.

From the point of view of the businesses, the environmental initiatives (both the technical-managerial ones and their communication, for instance through the Report) aim at sustainability objectives but also at competitive ones: the environmental friendliness - as confirmed by latest researches on the theme - is an effective instrument for international competition since customers perceive that Italian products are better than other ones because of their quality but also of the high environmental performances of the related productive processes.

As regards COOPERATE project, this last aspect is significant since it offers a concrete example of how CSR initiatives can be presented to industrial districts in Tuscany so to make them recognize in the project not only the opportunity to contribute to sustainability but also the positive effects it can bring in terms of competition.

The experiences in paper industry are quite interesting both in Italy and in Europe.

The *Environmental Report of the Italian paper industry* is the first interesting experience. It is prepared yearly by Assocarta – the national organisation of paper enterprises – as an instrument to enlighten the principal challenges for the industry in terms of sustainable supplying, optimisation of the use of water resources, improvement of energy efficiency, environmental management systems, etc.

The important features of this experience is, in our opinion, that the report aims at presenting the environmental results of the industry but also at stimulating the debate about the above mentioned topics among all relevant stakeholders so to plan in a collaborative way the improvement of the industry towards sustainability.

The same co-operative approach is present in the European experience of the industry. The *Sustainability Report of the European paper industry*, in fact, is prepared by CEPI – the Confederation of European Industries – in order to enhance the dialogue among stakeholders so to find out how best the industry can contribute towards stakeholders expectations and, more generally, to society's needs.

³ The last edition of the report (2005) is the third produced by UNIC, the national association of enterprises in the tanneries sector.

The preparation of the report is the starting point of this process of stakeholder engagement which will continue furthering the commitment of CEPI on sustainability and continuous improvement, pursued by the report setting targets, following up with indicators and adopting an inclusive approach capable of taking into adequate consideration the objectives of financial health and competitiveness of the industry.

Another reporting interesting experience, matured in Italy since 1998, is that of *Leghorn Petrolchemical Cluster Social Report*; it's a territorial and sectorial report describing ten petrolchemical enterprises located in the Leghorn Province and the social relationships between them and all stakeholders (institutional, economic, environmental, and so on) with which they interact. The relationships are showed both by physical and economic point of views.

Other interesting experiences in Europe are represented by the cases of codes of conduct used in a specific sector to manage social responsibility of the enterprises.

At Italian level, the case of the *Italian mobile telephone industry code of conduct* is an interesting experience of a code signed by all the enterprises of the market in order to better manage the safeguard of children with respect to extra-price services.

The remarkable aspect of this experience is that the code is not restricted to the indication of principles to be respected by enterprises but creates a warranty board responsible for the update of the code and the management of its application, in particular with reference to the cases of violation.

At the European level, many sectors have at the time a code of conduct focused on the specific topics which are considered the most relevant ones for the industry as a whole. Some examples are (European Commission, 2004):

- In *commerce sector*: EuroCommerce and Uni-Europa Commerce joint statement on Corporate Social Responsibility (2004); Joint statement on combating racism & xenophobia in commerce (2000); EuroCommerce and Euro-Fiet Agreement on Fundamental Rights and Principles at Work (1999) and EuroCommerce and Euro-FIET Joint statement on combating child labour (1996).
- In the *footwear industry*: Child labour - A charter by European social partners in the footwear sector (1996) and charter on the employment of children (1995).
- In the *leather sector*: Code of Conduct in the Leather and Tanning sector (2000).
- *In the textiles and clothing sector*: a charter by the social partners in the European textile and clothing sector (1997).
- *In the Sugar industry*: Code of conduct on CSR in the European Sugar Industry (2003); Brochure "Corporate Social Responsibility

and social dialogue in the European Sugar Industry"; First report on the Code of Conduct on Corporate Social Responsibility (2004) and Second report on the Code of Conduct on Corporate Social Responsibility (2005) and Examples of best practices.

- In the *woodworking sector*: A Charter for the Social Partners in the European Woodworking Industry.
- In *postal Services sector*: Joint statement of the EU social partners in the postal sector on Corporate Social Responsibility (2005).
- In *banking sector*: EU Bank Social Partners Joint Statement "Employment & Social Affairs in the European Banking Sector: Some Aspects Related to CSR" (2005)
- In *chemical industry*: Memorandum of Understanding on Responsible Care (2003).
- In *electricity sector*: Corporate Social Responsibility and the European Electricity Sector (2004).
- In the *private security sector*: Code of conduct and ethics for the private security sector (2003).

Among these, the most relevant code of conduct are the ones in the sectors we will operate in during COOPERATE project, in particular *textile and clothing sector* and *leather and tanning one*.

They both are characterized by the focus on the respect of human rights in the workplaces, following ILO principles referring to forced labour, freedom of association among workers, child labour and non-discrimination.⁴

The relevant aspect in both experiences is the strong involvement of intermediary institutions (trade union federations and enterprises confederations) which prepared and signed the code of conduct but are also responsible for its implementation to be pursued through training and awareness programmes or other initiatives towards the enterprises of the sector.

The experience of *FORGE* – "*Guidelines on environmental management and reporting for the financial services sector*" (<http://www.abi.org.uk/forge>) represents a British case of cooperation among intermediary institutions towards the promotion of environmental responsibility in the financial services sector through the adjustment of management and reporting principles proposed by ISO 14000 and EMAS.

⁴ The code of conduct of the leather and tanning sectors goes beyond the principles stated by ILO conventions considering also the rights to reasonable working hours, decent working conditions, payment of decent remuneration.

The process to the definition of the final version of the guidelines has been developed by the members of FORGE group⁵ with the cooperation of other relevant stakeholders (pressures groups, regulatory organizations and specialist trade associations) consulted in the drafting.

The same group FORGE launched the initiative “*Guidelines on corporate social responsibility management and reporting for the financial services sector*” achieving – with a methodology similar to the one above presented – the result of a Guidelines manual considered by the business men of the sector as an instrument helping to provide a structured and systematic approach to CSR.

4. CSR experiences in Europe: cases of public-private and business-non profit partnerships

The following experiences are all characterized by the presence of a strong cooperation between different subjects (public or private ones and non profit or business ones) aiming at promoting the achievement or gaining sustainability objectives. This is why we find them interesting for COOPERATE project whose activities will be developed relying on the cooperation among the different actors in the industrial districts involved: local public bodies, enterprises, business associations, trade unions and other intermediary institutions.

First of all we find interesting to consider two British experiences strongly based on the principle of integration of CSR practices in SMEs’ business models and organizational processes and thus strictly coherent with European Community approach (Commission Green Paper 2001 “Promoting a European Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility”, COM(2001)366 Final).

The first one is the *UK SME consortium*, promoted in 2002 by a large partnership of business and non business organizations⁶ in order to offer SMEs a concrete support to raise their competitiveness and profitability experimenting effective corporate social, environmental and community management.

In order to achieve this, SMEs have various instruments at their disposal, among the others: business cases and case study library - to show examples of responsible business practice and demonstrating successful adoption; a contact database providing a comprehensive database of relevant contacts, services and links; “How-to” guides/Toolkits/SME Initiatives - providing information, links and explanations to relevant and existing SME toolkits/initiatives; mapping the

⁵ Among the others: Abbey National, Barclays, CGNU, Lloyds TSB, Prudential Plc, Royal Bank of Scotland and Royal & Sun Alliance.

⁶ Accountability, Arts & Business, British Chambers of Commerce, Business in the Community, CSR Europe, Federation of Small Businesses, Forum of Private Business, Institute of Directors, Lloyds TSB, Scottish Business in the Community with the encouragement of the UK’s Department of Trade and Industry.

commonalities between each one and their context, audience and time-scales, such as Benchmarking Indexes, AA1000, and EFQM Excellence Model; tool development and evaluation – look at working with research organisations e.g. business schools to research the impact and effectiveness of existing SME tools/initiatives.

What is really relevant in this experience is that all these activities and instruments are proposed and used with a clear integration objective: CSR management initiatives have to be carried out not as activities others than the core business of the SME but as an integral part of it.

The second British experience is the *Community Mark*, a national standard designed by a partnership of various actors: Business in the Community, Active Community Unit of the Home Office and DTI Small Business Service.

The aim of the standard is to recognize the involvement of SMEs in their local community providing a model to enable organizations to: maximize their impact on community while drawing out commercial benefits from this community involvement and effectively integrate their community programme into their business planning. In other terms, we can say that it is a partnership initiative that promotes quality local partnerships as a requirement to obtain the mark and creates a partnership among all the Community Mark organizations (business and non business).

Even if connected to one only aspect of CSR (the involvement with community), this is an important experience since it shows that the commitment of SMEs on CSR related topics can be obtained mixing some specific ingredients: integration with SMEs business planning, partnership and commercial benefits.

Another set of interesting partnership experiences in Europe (Kjar, 2003) are characterized by being less advanced than the above described ones since the integration of CSR practices in organization's business strategies and activities is not always pursued by the partnerships which simply aspire to it as a medium term outcome.

The Danish project "*Ry - a community where everyone is needed*", funded in 2001 by the Danish central government enterprise fund, aimed at integrating refugees in the labour market and in social and cultural life in the small community of Ry (Denmark). The project was carried out by a large partnership made up of all the local actors with experience and/or the needed competencies to reach the objective.⁷ From the point of view of the enterprises, it is significant to notice that the partnership included both organizations already employing refugees and others positive towards their integration in the future so to make the experience of the former at the disposal of the latter.

⁷ The municipality of Ry, a network of enterprises interested in working with social responsibility (the Mid-Jutlandish Network), local sport and culture organizations.

The project reached important outputs in terms of job opportunities for the refugees involved and of the commitment of local enterprises who signed document of intent declaring they were open to receive refugees.

The success of the partnership itself is considered by the participants an outcome of the project since, after the end of the project, it can be an affective way to make enterprises involved in the project integrate socially responsible practices in their business strategies.

A second interesting project, is the one developed in Estonia, "*Protected jobs for disabled young persons in Hiiu County*", with an objective similar to the Danish one: the integration of disabled people into the labour market.

In this case too the partnership carrying out the project was ample and the results reached quite significant: industrial enterprises, municipal institutions, third sector organizations active in the field of disability and local authorities.

The outputs of the project were important: 17 persons working under protected conditions, 4 persons ready to be employed, 3 persons employed without subsidies and protected conditions. The outcomes of the project are probably more relevant for COOPERATE project than concrete results: first of all, the staff and the administrators of the enterprises involved as well as local citizens develop a new culture of integration of disabled persons into workplaces and society as a whole, secondly the partnership had such a success to make emerge the idea to stimulate the formation of similar ones in other counties, using the Hiiumaa team as "partnership consultant".

The last experience we selected is "*Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership*" (LEDP), established as a Charitable Trust Company in order to turn an abandoned plant in the city into a multi-purpose site for the benefit of the adjacent communities, for example creating job opportunities in the area. The members of LEDP are from public, non profit and business sector and reached in three years the objective creating above 500 job opportunities in the area and two training structures for a total of 350 students per year.

The important outcome of the project, apart from the stability given to the partnership through its constitution in Charity, was the establishment of a "Southside forum" to discuss with citizens about the future of the area and their view about on then activities on the area.

Among the best practices of the EU Responsible Entrepreneurship work programme, there are some interesting experiences. The one we want to mention is a Norwegian case of a public-private network in the municipality of *Båtsfjord* in the northern coast of Finnmark county. The network was born in order to manage the common problems felt by fishing industries of the area which are partially connected with responsible entrepreneurship in particular as regard the training needs of workers.

In this network, the case of the SME Båtsfjordbruket AS is particularly interesting since it represents an experience of integrated responsible entrepreneurship which goes beyond the above mentioned training activities, paying special attention also the topics of health and safety in workplaces, workers participation in the enterprise, etc.

Main references

Matten D. and Moon J., 2004, "'Implicit' and 'explicit' CSR. A conceptual framework for understanding CSR in Europe" *ICCSR research paper series*, n. 29.

European Commission, 2001, Green Paper "Promoting a European Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility", COM(2001)366 Final.

European Commission, 2004, *ABC of the main instruments of corporate social responsibility*, European Communities, Brussels, Belgium.

European Commission, 2006, *Results of EVER project* <http://ec.europa.eu/environment>

Fox T., 2005, "Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and Corporate Social Responsibility. A discussion paper".

Provincia di Lucca, 2006, *Results of PIONEER project* www.life-pioneer.info

Kjar L., 2003, *Local partnerships in Europe. An action research project*, Copenhagen Centre, Copenhagen

Comitato per l'Ecolabel – Ecoaudit – Sezione EMAS, 2005 *Posizione del Comitato Ecolabel Ecoaudit sugli Ambiti Produttivi Omogenei*, www.apat.it

Regione Toscana, *Emas per i distretti industriali – il modello toscano e le linee guida applicative*, www.regione.toscana.it