

Presentation of the Objectif Plein Emploi Network



Introduction

After 15 years of activities on the socio-economic front, the officials of the “Action Sociale pour Jeunes” (ASJ) [Social Youth Action] had, in cooperation with the OGB-L, decided to create an organisation capable of tackling the problem of unemployment with a strategy that could be applied systematically at national level, thanks to its political dimension. The non-profit association Objectif Plein Emploi asbl (OPE) [Objective Full Employment] was therefore created on 1 January 1999, to implement local, sustainable development projects in the public interest and to create new jobs.

The association achieves its objectives by setting up “Initiative and Management Centres” (CIGs). These local, regional or sectoral structures (known by the French initials CIGL, CIGR and CIGS respectively) bring together local elected officials, trade associations, social offices, trade unions and the civil society to promote a socio-economic approach based on the solidarity-based economy. The projects thus carried out are specially adapted to the territories that they cover and take account of the needs and resources of each region.

The functioning of Objectif Plein Emploi

1. The Resource Centre

2. The Network

1. The Moulin Bestgen Resource Centre – a real engine of the solidarity-based economy

The “Moulin Bestgen Resource Centre” brings together a pool of services for the operability of the member associations of the network as well as the theoretical and conceptual construction of an operating framework for the solidarity-based economy.

Its task is to provide advice and guidance to the entire network on the implementation of its missions, i.e. improving the situation of the populations and municipalities in terms of job creation, quality of life, social cohesion and equal opportunities for all.

In support of sustainable development and a continuous interchange with local structure, the Resource Centre charts the network’s strategy by:

- Developing new fields of activities;
- Guaranteeing the quality of the services offered;
- Adapting the network to the legislative frameworks for new, concrete approaches at the municipal, governmental and European level;
- Defending the interests of the network as a federating and representative organisation;
- Ensuring the interests and values in terms of solidarity-based economy with regard to governmental representatives and financial partners.

2. The OPE network

The OPE network consists of some 30 Initiative and Management Centres (CIGs), which operate at the local (CIGL), regional (CIGR) or sectoral (CIGS) level, and implement projects to improve the quality of life of the local population and to promote social cohesion. Their range of activity extends to the following areas:

- Services to individuals and to the community
- Reduction of the digital gap
- Artistic and cultural creativity
- Sustainable development
- Enhancement of the tourism assets
- Research and Development

Some 1 220 people, 820 employees and 400 volunteers, are active in the network with the same vision: making citizens aware of their responsibilities in a solidarity society. By relying on such values as tolerance, respect, democracy and mutual assistance, they endeavour to enable each person to find his or her rightful place in society.

Life-long learning and community education

Life-long learning and community and solidarity education are the core responsibility of the OPE network. The purpose of solidarity education is to get people to discuss and to make choices as responsible citizens, by offering – not teaching – them choices.

OPE encourages all employees to expand continuously their personal and professional capacities and to increase their level of autonomy and aptitude to assume responsibilities. To this end, quality partnerships have been established with numerous institutions, organisations and providers of training. Thus, in 2000 accreditation as a continuing vocational training organisation was attributed by the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training. Since 1999, close cooperation with the Department of Employment and the professional chambers has been established enabling the associations of the network to host, as employers, apprentices under the legal provisions on apprenticeship.

The purpose of community education is to promote “living together with mutual respect”. Everyone has knowledge, and everyone can learn from everybody else. Shared and exchanged, this knowledge enables each and everyone to grow and advance towards an individual positioning where free thought and choice are at the core of the approach. Community education is not part of a vertical transmission of knowledge but of a cross dissemination.

The solidarity-based economy experience and social responsibility

OPE has developed a system in which people work and learn in accordance with their needs.

The solidarity-based economy according to OPE – an experienced solidarity

The solidarity-based economy is based on four pillars:

1. Sustainable local development

Thanks to the consequential implementation of local projects, the work of the CIGs benefits the population directly by intervening at the very heart of its life. To this end, great importance is attached to the sustainability of the projects. They are carried out taking into account the quality of life today as well as that of future generations.

2. Voluntary help and partnership

The network's work is carried out thanks to the voluntary commitment of citizens and a set of partners consisting of representatives from political life, society, the private sector and national and international institutions.

3. Meeting needs neglected by society

Man and the satisfaction of his needs are at the centre of each activity in the solidarity-based economy. The issue is not economies of pecuniary profit, but more consequential satisfaction of needs while mindful of the public interest.

4. Diversification of sources of revenue

A solidarity-based undertaking such as OPE relies, to a considerable extent, on a diversification of its sources of revenue. The state, which bears prime responsibility for the protection of the public interest, contributes in large part to the financing of these projects, but revenues from private sources, donations, and European funds, as well as local resources are still being added to the list.

A society model under the sign of integration

The solidarity-based economy model put forward by the associates of OPE stresses justice, tolerance, respect, democracy and mutual assistance. It helps everyone to find his or her rightful place in society. It is therefore a model that advocates change in society, encourages everyone to assume greater responsibility for himself and those around him, and thus contributes to the growth and prosperity of society day in and day out.

The results

In 10 years of operation, 820 long-term jobs have been created. 80% of the global budget, i.e. some €70 million, have been injected to wage costs, and 5 000 people have been hired in the network during this period. The contributions of the 400 volunteer members should not be forgotten either, as the work could not get done without them.

Successes of recent years

- Efforts aimed to convince the public authorities to adopt innovative approaches to public contracts;
- Integration of economic, social and environmental activities in ordinary public contracts;
- Continuing the efforts for a status and a model for solidarity-based companies, the collective interest association

Cooperation

1. At national level

2. At European level

3. European Institute for Solidarity-based Economy

1. Au niveau national

The national partnership is important to maximise the impact of companies on a global scale. In pursuing its action, OPE is constantly looking for cooperation with the ministries, departments, federations and organisations of the pluralistic economy. The aims are to create synergies, exchange information and transmit know-how so as to contribute to the orientation of socio-economic policies and to create a more solidarity-based society.

2. At European level

OPE's European strategy includes the foundations of local development. It also takes account of the realities in Luxembourg as well as the cross-border aspect of the labour market in the Grand Duchy.

This union marks the determination of OPE to open up to the world, to discover other initiatives, exchange good practices, understand others so as to accept them better, enrich its entrepreneurial acumen as well as its joint assets with learning and social skills. The concerns of the European Commission are similar to those of OPE and many of its prerogatives and communications are consequently adopted on a day-to-day basis.

3. European Institute for Solidarity-based Economy (INEES)

INEES was created in Luxembourg in 1998, after a very fruitful European partnership in the European Group for Local Employment Initiatives (EGLEI) on matters of local development and employment, in particular within a cross-border context with Belgian, German and French partners.

Its main mission is to work, at European level, for the promotion and recognition of the solidarity-based economy, i.e. a third sector between the classic private sector and the public sector. This requires the exchange of good practices and conceptual research. The efforts of the network will be quite sizeable given the extent to which both the actors and the works of the researchers are "dispersed" today. Experiences will have to be pooled together with research and written works to that end. The public authorities will thus be able to define better their policies to support and to develop this "sector."

The OPE is also taking part in several European and international networks. It is an active member of the International Network for the Promotion of the Social- and Solidarity-based Economy, which organised the 4th International Forum – Globalisation of Solidarity in Luxembourg from 22 to 25 April 2009, a conference that brought together more than 600 participants from throughout the world on the theme "The innovations of the social- and solidarity-based economy", together with the European Institute for Solidarity-based Economy (INEES), which is likewise headquartered at the Moulin Bestgen in Schiffflange.

Objectif Plein Emploi association sans but lucratif

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