

LIFELONG LEARNING - TACKLING EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

This DP is a territorial one being implemented in the regions of Bajo y Medio Vinalope in the Alicante province (Valencia). The main goal of this project is to help SMEs workers and self-employed people overcome barriers in the informal economy and help them adapt to change. A main strength is that these workers are being made aware of all the risks they are facing and that they are guided towards sustainable solutions.

The region is characterized by a declining industry and the unemployment rate is high, with female unemployment the most prevalent. The target group for the DP is mainly employed in small firms or are self-employed, the majority of these businesses being situated in the informal economy.

A high proportion of the population is working in the black economy and these workers face a raft of problems. A main issue is safety at work, which the DP is addressing. People employed at home often work in poor health and safety conditions and accidents are frequent. The risk is particularly relevant for women and children since they are mainly located in these environments without protection. Women face the problem of combining family and working life, impacting on the safety of their children.

The target group includes low-qualified people who may find a job within the informal economy but who are then cut off from receiving training or education. Use of ICTs is particularly low and they have no opportunity to engage in ICTs courses. Another consequence of being employed in the informal economy is that people are not part of a social security scheme leaving them no entitlement to social benefits (e.g. sickness, pension).

The DP activities undertaken are brought under the New Work Organisation Model that requires close collaboration between local development services. These include:

Identified "champions" within informal businesses who have the roles of: social coordinator, professional career mediator and network manager. The social coordinator creates a mentality of Corporate Social Responsibility in businesses, advising on social issues (e.g. health and safety, social benefits) as well as environmental issues (e.g. recycling, waste management). The professional career mediator is responsible for engaging workers in lifelong learning, informing them about courses and helping them to attend. The network manager focuses on the introduction of ICTs into small business, as most of them work with outdated, traditional machinery and are not aware of new technologies.

Tools have been developed to support the champions, as well as online courses to train workers. Online tools are available and the programmes and courses are specifically designed to meet the needs of this target group.

DP information

Member State: Austria

DP Identifier: AT-1A-01/137

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Link to [EQUAL database description](#)