



Title

Cümelén

An employment integration workshop for the disabled of Malargüe (Argentina)

Basic data

City: Malargüe

Country: Argentina

Number of inhabitants: 27,000

Topics: Social welfare, social inclusion, professional integration, civics and coexistence, personal development, socioeconomic development, lifelong learning.

Principles of the Charter of Educating Cities: 2, 4, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17

Summary

The purpose of the project **Cümelén: an employment integration workshop for the disabled** is to provide an employment alternative for people whose disability does not allow them to be integrated socially and in employment terms into the community on their own. In order to carry this out, a study was first made on personal autonomy, regardless of the severity of their disability, which gave rise to integration work based on a job offer applying the idea that proposal allows people to feel empowered and is a source of social recognition.

The population of Malargüe currently has 27,000 inhabitants. 2.5% of the total population has some sort of officially recognised disability. Approximately 70% of these people do not have any sort of social security coverage. That is why it was necessary to have public institutions to deal with the problems of comprehensive multi-disciplinary care from the perspective of prevention, inclusion and rehabilitation.

In response to this situation, the Cümelén Productive Protected Workshop was created, where these persons can manufacture different products, such as bread crumbs, pancake batter, polyethylene bags, etc., or do silk-screening on fabric, paper or cardboard.

Due to the degree of disability of the participants, the work requires supervision, although this slowly diminishes as the disabled manage to organize themselves, divide their labour, etc., through knowledge of their own skills, which involves a major degree of personal development.

Today, the Cümelén workshop is located at the Malargüe Business Incubator, which provides the physical spaces and on-going counselling by a professional team covering different areas.

The citizens of Malargüe are very pleased with this initiative and are collaborating on the distribution, sale and consumption of the Cümelén products, as they appreciate the quality of the work.



The project Cümelén offers professional opportunities for the disabled

Objectives

- To achieve the goal of integration, through social apprenticeship in order to achieve greater quality of life, so that people with disabilities can feel useful.
- To achieve the socio-economic goal so that the disabled can contribute to the social product in two ways: by producing and by making a contribution to their families.
- To provide employment opportunities to disabled youth and adults in an environment where they are provided with protection while they carry out a productive activity.
- To organize workshops, talks and educational activities that can contribute to their personal and social development and respond to their problems.
- To organize educational and recreational trips and outings and participate in important events in Malargüe, contributing to social inclusion.
- To contribute to the development of self-esteem of both the workers and their families, showing appreciation for the role of work as a tool that gives dignity to the individual.
- To disseminate the rights of the disabled.

Methodology

The Cümelén workshop has been located in the building of the Malargüe Business Incubator since 1994. At this time it has 11 people, who have a salary based on their own production. Those joining the Programme must be at least 18 years old.

The team members are in charge of the distribution of the work and are placed in the production chain at the spots where they are the most comfortable. They support each other, help each other when problems arise, and substitute each other when necessary; they mesh and have created their own work system which produces high quality products.

The distribution of the products to private customers and supermarkets in the area is done by the disabled themselves, with the help of the workshop coordinator. The income from sales is distributed as follows: restocking of raw materials and consumables in order to continue working and paying the rent. The earnings are paid weekly to each worker.

The current production lines are: manufacture of pancake mix; making bread crumbs, making polyethylene bags, silk-screening, stationery products (envelopes, business cards, etc.).

The Programme tries to maintain the apprenticeships learned by each person in the earlier phases and foster new ones in personal, social and employment relations.

The city of Malargüe is located in the south of the province of Mendoza, on the border with Chile, east of La Pampa, bordering to the south on Neuquén and to the north with the Department of San Rafael. The closest distance to the next city is 200 km. This is the largest municipality in the province, measuring 41,317 km². The population totals 27,000 inhabitants and its population density is 0.6 inhab./km². The city is divided into 4 districts.

By age group, the population breaks down as follows: 0 to 19 years old, 41%; 20 to 49, 41%, and 50 and over, only 18%. These figures show a very young population with a high demographic growth rate.

As for the economic profile of Malargüe, oil production and mining have been hegemonic for more than 60 years in the province, accounting for 58.3% of production. Moreover, there is also some stockbreeding by small family farmers. As for agricultural production, the region produces potato seeds for the national/international market, as well as garlic and other products on a smaller scale.



Producing Pancakes

Social and urban context



Malargüe's urban center

Assessment

The Strategic Plan sees human and social development as factor for preparing its inhabitants for the challenges of the city, operating as an example of the social and productive integration of the disabled.

The proof of the success of this experience is that it has acted as a model for the creation of new workshops in the Uco Valley, in the province of Mendoza.

Strengths:

- With great effort a group has been created at the Cümelén Protected Workshop.
- The fostering of new training in personal, social and employment-related areas.
- The fostering of socio-economic integration.
- The personal and familial contribution.
- Dignifying the individual and social equalizing based on labour.

Weaknesses:

- Economic limitations.
- Lack of facilities and specific infrastructure.
- Difficulties attracting demand.
- Lack of organization of supply.

Future proposals:

- Becoming more integrated in the community.
- Generating sustainable demand of the products sold.
- Expanding and diversifying the products.
- Intensifying the training of the workshop personnel.
- Stimulating teamwork, improving team work, improving institutional management and strengthening personal growth.
- Increasing the number of participants in the Programme.
- Providing on-going training to the workers.



Some participants carry out serigraphy activities

Contact

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You can consult more than 1.000 Educating Experiences in the website of the Educating Cities International Documents Databank (BIDCE):

<http://w10.bcn.es/APPS/edubidce/pubPortadaAc.do>

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