

SPANISH ASEM INITIATIVE

Employment Workshops related to the Restoration of Cultural Heritage and the Environment

The ASEM process rests on three fundamental pillars: economic, political and cultural. Within this framework of Asia-Europe cooperation, it would be extremely positive to be able to present initiatives including some of these components.

The framework of this association, which is intended to promote a process of dialogue, addresses issues such as the environment, globalization, migration and other international questions of mutual interest. The Kingdom of Spain has developed initiatives at a national level to further economic, environmental and cultural development.

Specifically, we propose to study, for their potential transferability to Asian contexts, the employment and training programmes known as **Training Workshops** (*escuelas taller*), **Crafts Training Centres** (*casas de oficios*) and **Employment Workshops** (*talleres de empleo*). The aim of these programmes, in each of the projects undertaken, is to advance economic development, basically at the local or rural level, to improve environmental protection, in most such projects, and in every case to work for the cultural development of the target population and of the milieu in which the project is to be implemented.

The methodology of learning by working, with flexible designs, can be incorporated into diverse economies and cultures in order to develop various professional fields.

Historical background of the Programmes

In the 1980s, Spain underwent a period of profound economic and industrial crisis, and active measures were required to alleviate its effects and boost employment. The first projects in this respect, set up in 1985, combined various approaches considered essential to overcome the severe problems affecting young people in Spain during this period. On the one hand, a very large number of youngsters, over 50% of the total, were jobless, and many of these were school leavers with no qualifications. With no immediate prospects of work or training, they were at risk of social and economic marginalisation.

Secondly, Spain possesses an enormous number of catalogued buildings and protected natural areas which were at that time either neglected or in danger of deterioration.

Thirdly, many highly experienced professionals and craftspersons were in a position to pass on their knowledge and methods to younger generations.

Given these three primary situations, a programme was drawn up on the basis of pillars that are fundamental for the professional and social incorporation of young people into the labour market, as well as for local development in rural areas. Its end goal was, and continues to be, the introduction into the workforce of young people, aged between 16 - the school leaving age- and 25, the conventional upper age limit

applied for youth training and employment policies. This incorporation into a working environment was to be achieved by means of professional training in a given craft or trade. It could be said, therefore, that this kind of professional training was an intermediate goal, prior to the definitive integration of the participants into the workforce.

However, "occupational" training cannot be presented in isolation, it should always be linked to real activities aimed at historical, artistic, cultural or environmental regeneration or at providing a service.

Furthermore, and with the clear-cut intention of alleviating the educational shortfalls identified among the target population, it was essential to offer basic educational support to *complement* the initiative. This is a fundamental aspect, for two reasons: to ensure optimum use is made of the theoretical and practical training for professional activities, and to provide the possibility of obtaining a basic qualification, educational or otherwise (for example, occupational-oriented tests for elementary aptitude qualifications, as set out under Spanish legislation, or tests for professional credentials).

The programme was designed as a process of learning and professional experience, constituted of two stages: the first one, lasting six months, would be to provide the participants with an introduction to the trade and the professional world, during which they would become familiar with the tools used, workplace procedures, timetables, discipline, and all the associated characteristics of practical training. During the second stage, those who successfully completed the first would be employed, continuing their learning on a part time basis and being given an increasing degree of responsibility in their professional activities.

No less important is the element of professional guidance and training concerning self-employment and job seeking. From the outset, the corresponding rules and regulations stated that occupational guidance must be offered to students and young people with a view to their incorporation into the workplace. Moreover, specific instruction in types of self-employment and in job-search techniques has been shown to constitute an instrument that contributes a great deal of added value to the occupational training and work experience provided by a job contract.

As society progresses, in parallel with the changing demands of the labour market, these programmes seek to evolve, while maintaining their unique characteristics. Thus, the content of occupational training has been expanded to include a module providing a short course on computer literacy and one on environmental awareness.

From the standpoint of economic development, this programme is highly influential in rural areas, promoting crafts and trades that have a potential market in each village or reflect its historical tradition. It comprises a suitable instrument, and one of proven effectiveness for exploiting new sources of employment, noteworthy among which are activities related to culture, the environment and community services.

Another plus point of this programme is that it can be implemented with great flexibility.

Finally, let us remark on the existence of cooperation and institutional interrelations at various levels, involving various types of public administration:

- State-wide Administration, with legislative functions, applying financial control and management to supra-regional projects.
- Administration within the Autonomous Communities, concerning the performance of their responsibilities in applying policy decisions.
- Town and city councils, as bodies that promote and initiate the projects.

The Workshop Schools Programme has been termed “good practice” by the European Union.

During the 1990s, although the number of young unemployed persons fell, other social groups, such as women and the long-term jobless, were observed to be increasingly vulnerable. For this reason, employment initiatives aimed at such people were considered.

In 1999, the Employment Workshops Programme was created, and since then it has expanded in terms of projects and participants (though always aged 25 years and over), on the basis of similar methodologies and under the same legislative framework. This initiative is intended to prioritise adults facing greatest difficulties in entering the labour market, i.e. women, those aged over 45 years and the disabled, although it is not limited to these groups.

Each project has a duration of two years, and begins with a training contract which, from the outset, offers a higher salary than is paid to young people, as the beneficiaries of this programme have previous professional experience.

The programme is exported to Ibero-America

Five years after the Programme was introduced, it was considered appropriate to create an equivalent in Ibero-America. In 1990, thus, thanks to the cooperation between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (via the National Institute of Employment, INEM, and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, AECI, respectively), projects began to be implemented in numerous Spanish-speaking countries in this continent. On 21 November 1990, the first Interministerial Agreement was signed between AECI and INEM to apply the formula of workshop schools to the Ibero-American Cultural Heritage programme. There was a notable overlap of interests between the two programmes.

In 1992, a Senate Report on the Workshop Schools Programme stated in its Conclusions and Recommendations that it was necessary to consolidate the experience gained in Ibero-America, in this respect, by means of a permanent programme established within the framework of international agreements and to study the possibility of extending its application to other countries, in the East and in the Third World. The countries of the Maghreb, too, were closely involved, as a result of international seminars and meetings held for this purpose.

The Programme has met the training needs of a great many young people and has restored innumerable buildings and surroundings that form part of the cultural, historical and artistic heritage. However, the formula has also been used in response

to natural disasters as a means of converting an adverse experience, such as a hurricane, into something positive, by reconstructing or by providing local people with the means and abilities to construct both housing and purpose-designed workshop schools.

These projects have enjoyed widespread social acceptance and make an outstanding impact on the community in Ibero-American countries.

Transferability to Asia and the countries of the EU

After 20 years' experience in Spain and 15 in Ibero-America, it is understood that the Programme can be adapted in all the EU and countries and, overall, in the Asian continent where there are needs to be met in the fields of the employment and training of young workers and the retraining of older workers.

Many countries have sectors of population with little or no training, who are unemployed or have very precarious jobs. Moreover, these countries frequently have a cultural, historical and artistic heritage which is deteriorating due to neglect. Each country and region, with its peculiarities, can use its natural and cultural resources as an employment-generating tool.

At the same time, the recovered heritage may be exploited, from the economic point of view, by other sectors such as tourism or the hotel and catering industry, for example, by profiting from the finished works.

The model is applicable to any trade or milieu. It is only necessary to know the needs on a local scale, such as unemployed people who need training, a heritage or environment restoration project and institutional support for its regulation, support for the management of each project, guidance to public or private organizations, and the monitoring and supervision of the correct use of the funds supplied.

Although the model in Spain is based on institutional cooperation between public administrations or between non-profit-making private organizations, the projects can be implemented with private funding.

Some examples of actions are:

- National parks or protected natural spaces
- Historical cities, historical-artistic monumental areas, individual monuments
- Within urban areas: gardens, buildings dedicated to public uses, infrastructures (former railway stations, cultural centres...)
- Traditional trades which promote and develop the local culture

These programmes, aimed both at younger and older workers, as well as at underprivileged groups, can be adapted to any geographic situation, participants' previous training and activity to be carried out, but always taking into account that learning and assessment should be as individualized as possible, with a teacher/student ratio of between 1:8 and 1:10 and that it should serve as an incentive and reinforcement

for the students' own assessment of their capacities, which can be severely damaged in situations of lengthy unemployment or precarious economies.

Taking into account each country's economic and legislative peculiarities, professional guidance, occupational training and local action projects can be implemented in the fields of the environment, services, or restoration or preservation of the artistic, historical and cultural heritage.

KEY POINTS

Training Workshops in Asia are a form of economic development through employment, culture and the environment.

- It is necessary to gradually introduce a productive vision of cultural activities. In other words, the economic aspect of culture, activities that generate employment and wealth: gastronomy, crafts, local history, popular festivals, local architecture, etc.
- The environment has been a major employment generator in Europe in recent years, especially in the Mediterranean countries, where levels of protection were historically low. Some examples of the convergence of objectives between job creation and environmental policies are: building infrastructures aimed at protecting the environment, creating natural spaces and recreational areas, cleaning and restoring contaminated or deteriorated areas, and promoting energy efficiency.
- In European Union countries, services have been consolidated as a major employment sector, one that can also be implemented in Asian countries, and which includes help for disabled or elderly persons, child care, assistance for young people with difficulties, and the provision of security services in buildings.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the fundamental aspects of these programmes that can be transferred:

- Linking the promotion of employment with ***locally-focused activities***: the neighbourhoods, villages or regions that originated exclusion are at the same time the ideal space to implement job creation initiatives that are best suited to the specific needs in each case.
- Training Workshops, understood as a ***progressive process*** of social inclusion of young people, through measurable objectives, gradually increasing to achieve incorporation into the workforce.
- Activities that serve as a learning framework for young people and adults are ***closely linked to the vital and economic framework*** of the beneficiaries, and in most cases adding environmental quality.
- They ***provide a solution to various situations of deprivation*** related to employment: lack of professional skills, lack of work experience, lack of knowledge about new work markets for those who wish to reorientate their working life.
- ***Dual methodology***, widely proven not only in Spain but in other European countries, especially Germany. They start from specifics as a way to stimulate

and make training available, and provide self-confidence to those who failed to complete their schooling or who have a low educational level.

- They **allow flexibility** in identifying areas that can provide learning and economic development at the same time. They not only promote activities or sectors that are traditional in the area, but they also seek to implement **projects in new employment sources** linked to the same area and changing with time. Some examples in Europe are culture, services and the environment.

In order to make the above known in greater detail and depth, concerning its possible implementation in Asian countries, the work proposal is presented over two days, with the following content:

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**Employment Workshops related to the Restoration
of Cultural Heritage and the Environment**

Objective of these working days: Make a presentation to the European and Asian partners of a successful Spanish experience, acknowledged in the European and Ibero-American context, within the framework of employment, culture and the environment.

Venue: Madrid

Dates: 14 – 15 June 2007

Agenda

14th June

Morning session

- Presentation of the Spanish institutional representatives who are responsible for the programmes. Public National Employment Service
Duration: 30 minutes
- Historical overview of the programme
(Participation of an external adviser linked to the programme)
Duration: 30 minutes
- Current management of programmes
(Participation of a representative from an Autonomous Community)
Duration: 30 minutes

Break: 20 minutes

- Experience in Ibero-America
(representative from the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation)
Duration: 30 minutes
- Presentation of a specific example of a Training Workshop
(participation of a Director of a Training Workshop with lengthy experience in the programme)
Duration: 30 minutes

Luncheon

Afternoon session

- Round table with the Spanish representatives present in the morning, a European representative and an Asian representative.

15th June

Morning

Visit to one or two specific projects, probably in the province of Madrid.

Luncheon

Afternoon

Conclusions and closing ceremony