



ASSOCIAZIONE LAVORO OVER 40

Category of Good Practices: Senior Entrepreneurship

Good Practice's title:

Senior Entrepreneurship: improving the recognition of mature workers' skills and human capital, and fostering the ability of mature workers expelled from the labour market to face difficult situations.

Main objective:

1. Highlight professionalism and experience of mature workers (over 40) in precarious conditions and/or without an occupation;
2. Promote their re-entry into the labour market;
3. Sustain and promote relationships between mature workers and new enterprise creation.

Key words: professionalism, mature workers, networks, enterprise creation

Type of organization:	Not-for-profit national association Registered at the Italian Board of Social Promotion Associations
Country:	Italy
Year of inception:	2003
Services and products provided:	Support to mature workers who are unemployed or in precarious situations through networking, projects and training
Portfolio (€):	N.A.
Avg loan size (€):	N.A.
# of clients:	About 6.000 members & contacts spread throughout the country territory

www.lavoro-over40.it

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Institutional profile

The organisation **Lavoro over 40** was founded in September 2003 thanks to the will of a group of people who personally experienced exclusion from the labour market in mature age. **Lavoro over 40's** objective is to foster cultural change regarding work over 40 and contribute to tackle the many problems engendered by the socio-economic crisis: unemployment among mature workers, the lack of job opportunities for mature workers, and the psychological, economic and social consequences (e.g. social exclusion, decreased self-esteem, etc.).

Mission

1. To collaborate with corporate bodies and associations having the same aims and goals;
2. To promote relationships and contacts with firms, enterprises associations, professionals, labor unions and corporate bodies, to facilitate the re-entry of mature workers;
3. Participate in projects aiming at the re-entry of "mature" workers in the labour market, both finding a new job or starting a new business.

Governance structure

Lavoro over 40 is administrated by the President and a Board of six Counselors, each of them elected by **Lavoro over 40's** members for four years. The Board of Counselors defines, during monthly meetings, strategies and actions to achieve the organisation's objectives. All six Counselors, and the additional collaborators, act on a voluntary basis bringing their own experience and skills. **Lavoro over 40** finances itself through members' annual fees and other spontaneous donations.

Good Practice :

Lavoro over 40 implemented the "MAIEUTA¹" project during 2009 and 2010: the main objective was the implementation of the VPL (Validation Prior Learning) Model. In summary, the focus was on the improvement of the recognition of qualifications and skills of mature workers, wherever acquired, both formal and informal skills, professional and non-professional (e.g. the so-called "human capital"). One of the outcomes of the project was to make mature workers become more self-confident regarding their experience and their ability to start their own business, as self-entrepreneurs.

Lavoro over 40 therefore endeavoured to collect proxies and build a framework of analysis for validation and certification of skills proficiency, taking into account a variable of 'time': the framework is indeed meant to be progressive, adaptable to the changing environment.

¹ "Socrates believed that any rational person, by which we presume he meant any person with a minimal faculty of reasoning, is latently in possession of knowledge and it is only a matter of making the person aware of it. The etymology of the word maieutic is from the Greek word meaning "midwife" the teacher acts as a midwife to help in the birth of knowledge and ideas", R.G Ayoub, *Musings of the Masters: an Anthology of Mathematical Reflections*, The Mathematical Association of America, USA, 2004, p.33

Target group and accessibility :

Lavoro over 40's target group is the mature workers who are unemployed and who were driven out of the labour market, as well as those in precarious situations, nationwide.

Innovativeness :

The VPL (Validation Prior Learning) Model is highly innovative in the sense that it is a framework specifically targeting mature workers over 40, a population segment increasingly hit by the crisis. In addition, **Lavoro over 40** is one of the few Italian organisations working directly on the field, testing models and activities with the 40+.

Relevance given the context:

In Italy, the current situation of mature workers and unemployed persons over 40 is increasingly difficult. **Lavoro over 40** estimates that between 1,5 and 2,0 million Italians over 40 are currently jobless. This situation has been exacerbated by the on-going socio-economic crisis, high unemployment and barriers to access (and re-access) the labour market. The culmination of these factors makes **Lavoro over 40**'s initiative highly relevant.

Adaptability to other contexts:

Lavoro over 40's practice is likely adaptable to similar contexts in which unemployment is also a major issue, especially regarding older population segments. The organization is very active in the promotion of its practice and organizes meetings once a week with members and other persons at their 'open desk'. Those who wish to go further in the initiative, and better understand what self-entrepreneurship implies, are supported by the organization through motivation, projects' opportunities, counseling and networking.

Efficiency :

The 'open desk', which shares the workspace with another association, is run by three to four members of **Lavoro over 40** on a voluntary basis. These volunteers were trained during a project that took place in 2008-2009 with the contribution of Lombardia Region (local entity). To date, the desk has been open once a week; however, for 2013, the 'open desk' will train additional volunteers increasing the availability of this service.

The first session of counseling to **Lavoro over 40** members is freely provided, thanks to an agreement made in 2012 with a training association: **Lavoro**'s need for counseling met the association's need for apprenticeships.

Only MAIEUTA project is at 75% funded through the European financial instrument Leonardo Da Vinci, accounting for a total amount of €400.000. Currently, **Lavoro over 40** is looking for a renewal or new financial support, in order to run a MAIEUTA #2 project.

Outcomes :

Lavoro over 40 has met an average of one to two persons over 40 almost every week at its 'open desk', equating to a total of approximately 60 to 80 persons every year from 2010, when the desk

was officially created. **Lavoro over 40** is not yet able to provide figures, e.g. how many of them decided to launch their own business, since not all candidates actually became members of **LO40**. Many did not keep in touch and the majority did not have enough experience to be able to start without further training. What is certain, however, is that about a tenth of the candidates (who mainly enrolled MAIEUTA project) started a new business in the aftermath. But **LO40** doesn't know exactly how many were successful. Reporting and assessing is still difficult to carry out.

Sustainability:

In the future, **Lavoro over 40** is planning to submit other projects, similar in the content to MAIEUTA, or create specific projects supporting self-entrepreneurship, provided that there will be an opportunity arising from European investors or local entities. Additionally, **Lavoro over 40** is planning to expand its activities of networking, counseling and self-entrepreneurship promotion further among its members.

In practice: Mr. **Sergio BARCARINI**'s success story

Sergio was expelled from the labour market in 2009. He was working in the mechanical sector. During the same year of 2009, he received access to the public social protection systems enabling him to attend a training organized by local entities. However, the training was the only help that he could get at that time.

Then **Sergio** met Lavoro over 40 through his personal contacts and was selected for the MAIEUTA project. As he was in the second stage of the project (i.e. Knowledge and Professional guidance paths), he convinced himself that his skillset could lead him to a new and successful experience of self-entrepreneurship. Along the following stages of the project with **Lavoro over 40**, his conviction and self-esteem continued to grow and he eventually took the decision to quit the project and start an enterprise on his own, thereby freeing a place in the project for another mature person like himself. He started looking for an opportunity both via his own networks and Lavoro over 40's networks.

A few months later, in early 2010, **Sergio** started running his own business, a retail shop for printers' cartridges, through a franchise. He successfully managed his business from the outset and earned on the sales whenever possible so that he could one day buy all the business' shares. Today, he owns 100% of his retail business! Only the distribution agreement is still managed in tandem with the mother company. The current turnover amounts around €150.000 per year with good forecasts for the future.

Sergio has not received any financial support from banks or other financial entities, which makes his successful experience even more remarkable.

Further readings

<http://www.lavoro-over40.it>