

Micropol

Good Practice Description

Sphere: Rural Programmes, Social Impact

Good Practice Title: Kolga (formerly Kõnnu) Smart Work Centre

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Brief Description of Good Practice:

Kõnnu SWC was established by the NGO Lahemaa Telework and Training Centres, which is a regional NGO actively developing a network of community work and training centres in rural areas of Northern Estonia in order to improve the local quality of life. In summer 2010 the NGO renovated Kõnnu (70 inhab) village hall to launch the Kõnnu SWC. The Kuusalu Parish owned the building and covered the administrative costs of the SWC. The cost of Internet ja VoIP telephones was covered by workers themselves. In February 2013, SWC was moved ca 10 km, from village Kõnnu to village Kolga. The building of Kolga SWC belongs also to Kuusalu Parish (local government), which has given the building to NGO on the basis of rental agreement for free (no payment for rent). Kuusalu Parish is covering the administrative costs (communal). Kolga SWC is managed jointly with another organisation, which is working in the field of real estate development. Renovation of building has been done by these 2 organisations, which are managing the SWC. Investment for renovation was covered from LEADER Programme, also partly from an ESF project. The 2 organisations themselves are paying for internet connection and cleaning of SWC. NGO Lahemaa Telework and Training Centres gets its income from membership fees of its members and from allocations of EU funds.

Why the good practice was used: The employment opportunities in the region of Kõnnu and Kolga were poor. At the same time, there were several active community members who decided to create work opportunities there.

What are the benefits of the good practice: Women share their knowledge, jobs and childcare duties with each other, develop their competences as a team and compete as a unit for work in the labour market. Women with more extensive educational background, work experiences and social networks act as mentors bringing work to the centre, organise training courses and launch projects. The women who have worked in the centre longest also consult new recruits and help them integrate. Some of the members of the NGO Lahemaa Telework and Training Centres are responsible for the ICT equipment and solutions at SWC; they offer ICT support not only to the members but also to the wider public. Employers and companies appreciate the centre's ability to arrange its own work, to take responsibility and its high preparedness for complicated ICT solutions.

In addition, SWC is implementing additional projects (professional training for youth, etc) that helps to cover the operational costs of the centre. In March-May 2013, Kolga SWC organised training courses on internet use for more than 20 participants; the training was financed from the EU LEADER Programme. Also, SWC organized the Get-Online event (see more at <http://www.getonlineweek.eu/>) and an information day to introduce the opportunities of ICT to local population in Spring 2013.

What problems/issues were associated with the good practice: The main obstacle for recruitment is the insufficient educational background of local people to work at the SWC (mostly upper secondary school/ gymnasium level or lower)

How the success of the Good Practice was measured: the effectiveness of the SWC is measured by the number of persons who have found a job through the SWC. The Kõnnu SWC started with 5 women as employees in 2010. By the end of 2012, 3 persons were working at the Kõnnu SWC, 2 persons have found the job at new employer and work outside SWC. The 3 workers worked at the following fields: translation, entering information in the database, telemarketing. With the movement

of SWC from Kõnnu to Kolga in February 2013, the list of represented professions changed. If initially in Kõnnu SWC there were persons working in rather "simpler" fields (e.g. entering information in the database, telemarketing), then now in average 6-8 workers of Kolga SWC are more working in the field of smart work, incl. design, translation, project management, public service.

Effect from using the Good Practice: In addition to offering training and self-development the centre is also an important place for communication and social life. For example, their members have organised environmental awareness courses for children, carried out heritage research projects and consulted local villages on their development plans.

Lessons learned: Working for the centre helps women achieve the desired work and family life balance as their crucial job requirements – working close to home with flexible hours – are met. NGO Lahemaa Telework and Training Centres also offers its members organisational support like administrative assistance, book-keeping and e-identity (e-mail address and status) for carrying out their dream projects.

The SWC in a small rural area like Kõnnu or Kolga can function effectively if the smart workers are also members of its managing organisation – this unites people and creates a good working environment. Thus, members of NGO Lahemaa Telework and Training Centres are also the smart workers of Kolga SWC.

Main idea that you want to stand: SWC can be effectively initiated at grass roots level, if there are motivated local people available in the community

Other relevant facts: -

For more information: -