

THE EASE PROJECT (Empowerment Approaches and Social Enterprise)

Project Reference: 2013-I- SE-LE005-I 5266

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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Scope of the Evaluation.

This internal Evaluation was commissioned as an informal assessment of the effectiveness of the EASE project and the partnership that delivered the results. This document records activities and observes inter-action between individual partners as well as across the different levels of partnership.

Methods used to measure qualitative impact were questionnaires, face to face meetings, telephone and Skype sessions. Quantitative impact is recorded through results achieved and are based on records as well as the evaluator's active participation at seminars and meetings.

Evaluation sessions were held after each meeting. These evaluation sessions included questions relating to the quality of event management, hospitality and accommodation, general support and project specific issues. On most occasions all partners were totally happy with resources, facilities and services provided as well as pre-event communication and the work of the project's central management team. The exception to this was the final seminar, held in Grasse in June 2015 where the hotel was less than adequate, expensive and the food quality was generally poor.

Targets for Innovation Transfer.

There were three levels of beneficiaries in terms of Innovation Transfer through which the impact of the project was measured. These were:

- Target client groups with whom the Core Partners worked. This was measured by impact assessments at the start, mid-point and end of training courses delivered by the two core partners.
- Key staff in each of the two core partner organisations. This was measured by the progression of key staff and their active understanding of developing and managing social enterprises as well as their client-focussed responses after taking part in visits to good practice projects at transnational level.
- The two key partner organisations themselves. This was measured through observing and recording business development and noting increases in activity, numbers of employed staff, strength of networks and participation in local, regional, national and transnational level consortia.

This report sums up the results achieved in each of target groups.

Background.

The EASE project began in October 2013 and was funded by the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme, Transfer of Innovation strand.

The project aimed to transfer the Basta Model of Social Enterprise to two Core Partners, Ellebore Calystegia (Elia), France and the Diagrama Foundation, UK. Each core partner was challenged to import the Basta Model but each worked with a different result in mind. Both were small social enterprises directly working with marginalised or socially excluded client groups. Both faced difficult local development situations and each chose an unexpected route to achieve its success.

The project was led by Basta, Nykvarn, near Stockholm, Sweden. The project was based on a strong foundation created through a series of earlier projects, some funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme; Grundtvig Strategic Partnerships, Grundtvig Senior Volunteering and the Leonardo da Vinci, Mobility and Partnership Programmes.

The criteria used to select the partners during the project development phase included personal knowledge as well as introductions through other known and trusted local and transnational partners. The partners were keen to also include some organisations which had no prior European experience so that the partnership could be refreshed by new working practices and their raw enthusiasm. The resulting partnership was strong and built to last and throughout the life of the EASE project this partnership grew in capacity and ambition.

The EASE Partnership.

This was a large partnership comprising ten organisations recruited from six Member States. Each Core Partner was supported by one or more Support Partners in their own country and there was considerable cross-border cooperation from which several partners reported real benefits.

The Partnership consisted of:

Lead Partner:	Basta, Nykvarn,	Sweden
Core Partner:	Ellebore Calestega (Elia)	France
Core Partner:	Diagrama Foundation	United Kingdom
Support Partner:	ACRK (Rural Kent)	United Kingdom
Support Partner:	La Claie	France
Support Partner:	Jegesberg	Norway
Support Partner:	Fryshuset	Sweden
Support Partner:	Ex-Cons:	Sweden
Support Partner:	San Padrignano	Italy
Support Partner:	Fundacion Diagrama Psychosocial	Spain

Each partner was chosen for its specific strength and experience. Although not all partners were actively working directly with clients from Basta's target client group, all shared the fundamental aim of providing quality programmes to support clients excluded from mainstream provision.

Two of the support partners, Action with Communities in Rural Kent, UK and La Claie, Nice, France, provide capacity building support to the not for profit sector and to social enterprises. These two organisations cross-referenced community development techniques as well as sharing and recognising good practice in participative governance.

Using Rural Kent's effective network of community groups and social enterprise, the Basta Model has become well known in south east England. There is a strong following for the emerging client-based Basta lookalike project but the Basta Model of social enterprise is also being replicated by numerous other groups working with different marginalise clients. Spin-off social enterprises have been created by EASE trainees after attending training in Basta in April 2014.

Although Jegesberg, Norway and Ex-Cons, Sweden, were classified as Support Partners, their role also included considerable learning, importing good practice into their daily work that allowed them to further develop new projects within their own organisations as a direct result of learning achieved through the EASE project.

Similarly, Basta itself continued to learn from partners. Learning is a two-way process and the EASE project was no exception to this. Working with San Padrignano was a particular benefit and pleasure for Basta as, after visiting San Padrignano in 1994 it had been the inspiration for Basta's founders to set up a therapeutic community in Sweden.

The Lead Partner:

Basta is a well-respected social business, established in 1994 and today providing rehabilitation services to municipalities. Apart from selling services that include alternative to custody for ex-offenders, Basta also successfully runs many profitable enterprises that include a high-quality furniture production and a popular and profitable horse-riding centre.

Basta uses a series of "Cornerstones" to facilitate sustainable reintegration for its members, with peer mentoring supporting individual work programmes. Basta was founded on solidarity principles and modelled on the San Patrignano Centre in Rimini, Italy, which is a partner in the EASE project.

Basta has two main sites; Basta Nykvarn, South of Stockholm and Basta West, Gothenberg. Although both sites share the Basta principles and use the same cornerstones and close peer mentoring to underpin their programmes, each Basta uses different operational techniques to reach its impressive results. The essential zero-tolerance rule applies throughout all activities and all Basta premises, with

alcohol, drugs and other potentially addictive substances being totally banned. Anyone abusing this rule is immediately taken off the premises.

During the life of the EASE project Basta has itself grown and has redesigned its management structure with Directors in each of Basta Nykvarn and Basta West linked together through the not for profit legislation which appoints its President.

Basta works to 7% profit margins in each of its Work Units. Work units are led by members, with innovation encouraged throughout all stages of integration and employment. Using skills, ambition and ability, Basta members are encouraged to first work in established work units such as the stables, kennels, kitchen etc. After a period of stability members are encouraged to recognise self-development opportunities. This may include setting up a new mini-enterprise based on member's own inspiration or skill. This first starts through an incubation unit and if the initial results offer potential, these can be progressed into full work units through which others can be trained and employed. All work units are essentially designed to be profitable with the development/stability period funded by Basta's central funds until they become profitable. After the development phases each work unit is expected to generate its own cost, plus a surplus of at least 7%.

This employment and business development process is an essential part of the empowerment process with all Work Unit managers continually mentored by their peers. These are the essential elements of Basta's Model. But these techniques are used alongside real work, producing quality products in an environment that is both reassuring and creative, with a Senior Management Team drawn from the members (client group) that operate on sound quality business management and top class financial administration.

All profit made by all work units are reinvested back into Basta's growth to provide more and better services meet the needs of its target client/member group.

The Core Partners:

The Core Partners in the EASE project were Elia France and Diagrama Foundation, UK. Each of the Core Partners works to test the Basta Model within their local zone of activity and with their specific client groups.

Both Core Partners used social enterprise as the key to unlocking individual potential, supported by close mentoring and entrepreneurship training, featuring Basta's key principles and cornerstones within their local training and work creation programmes.

Both partners achieved significant results through the EASE project and both say that the results achieved were in fact very different to those originally anticipated. Both acknowledge significant levels of learning achieved through almost socially based informal study visits and shared seminars.

The future design of each of the core partner organisations reflects local, regional and national diversity of opportunity in terms of statutory support and available

business openings. These lessons are, in themselves, transferrable models that can be used in future project planning to benefit a wider audience.

Despite the end of the EASE project, the work inspired by the Basta Model will continue and will grow to touch wider networks through solid transnational relationships that have flourished through EASE.

Core Partner (I)

Ellebore Calystegia (Elia)

Elia was a small, community level organisation founded on the need to empower excluded women to overcome their obstacles to employment. Elia's clients included a large mix of ethnicity and special needs, many coming from North Africa in search of a better life.

This Core Partner organisation worked on the theme of work preparation and employment support, particularly for disadvantaged women, using the medium of recycling, re-use and sustainable/environmental good practice.

Elia first met Basta in 2008 when they were part of a Mobility visit with La Claie, who are now Elia's support partner.

Elia had a very small staff team, funding by contributions from local authorities and supported by local businesses through recycling and upcycling activities. The Project Manager created a strong network of local support but was continually challenged by the lack of regular, accessible and affordable working space. Throughout the life of the project the daily activity took part in several different locations, creating disruption and lack of security that affected the clients' ability to achieve maximum performance.

Lack of cash resources continued to create tensions that were difficult to overcome, though Elia's network of sister organisations did their best to share facilities and to join forces so that clients could be helped towards the ultimate goal of employability. Developing confidence and self-esteem was the key to this.

The project successfully set up a recycling unit in a municipal waste centre. The public could deposit items intended for land-fill into a special container where it could be safely stored in dry conditions until Elia's collection service took it away to their workshop to restore, upcycle or break into useable components for reuse. Creativity levels were high with a distinct artistic flair applied to the refurbishment of second-hand furniture and fabrics.

Approximately six months before the end of the EASE project Elia realised that continuation funding was unlikely so set about securing a good future for Elia by looking at how it could merge with larger, more sustainable social enterprise through which its activities could continue to grow.

The Basta Model of social enterprise had, by this time, become well established and much respected by Elia's staff and the network of local support organisations, many

of which had shared the techniques of empowerment and applied them to their own particular setting. Elia's Project Manager successfully negotiated with Soli-Cities, a Nice-based not for profit organisation who agreed to absorb Elia into its structure at the end of the EASE project.

In June 2015 the final seminar of the EASE project witnessed the hand-over of Elia's recycling activities to Soli-Cities, a merger of its core activities into the daily life of the sister organisation. The Project Manager continued to work with Soli-Cities until all operations were safely adapted and Elia's future protected.

Elia's aim was achieved; setting up recycling and upcycling activities that offered scope for training, employment and deliver empowerment to disadvantaged women. Unfortunately Elia's Project Manager became redundant at the end of the project, but she continues to support Elia through her ongoing activities within other organisations that are part of the network. Elia's Project Manager was very satisfied with the support given by partners, especially Basta, saying that the achievements and support throughout the project have exceeded all expectations.

In the life of the project many women were trained by Elia. Some progressed to volunteering work or found jobs. All reported feeling more confident and gaining new skills as a direct result of the Elia project. Many tons of materials were recycled or upcycled. The creation of one new social enterprise was achieved and the merger of Elia with Soli-Cities has created 3 new jobs for women to work in a recycling shop set up as part of the ongoing project.

EASE project learning has influenced many local community groups, social enterprises and standard businesses within the Grasse and Nice areas of the Alpes Maritime region of southern France. Without the EASE project none of this would have been possible.

Core Partner (2)

Diagrama Foundation UK.

This Core Partner organisation was established by registration in the UK's Charity Commission in 2008. It also trades as a not for profit company, selling services to a range of statutory authorities and government agencies. It is an independent organisation located in Rochester Kent, south east England.

Diagrama UK is part of the international family of Fundacion Diagrama Psychosocial organisations which started in Murcia, Spain in 1992. In Spain Diagrama is a main supplier of innovative and much respected re-education services for young ex-offenders. It has an impressive record of successfully reintegrating young people who were in the juvenile justice system, most of whom had high levels of past offending and a multitude of social and family problems. Diagrama's wide range of socio-integration programmes follow a methodology that is delivered throughout all Diagrama centres.

Diagrama Foundation first came to the UK in response to a request to tender for the management of a new, large-scale centre for young ex-offenders. But with the change of government, plans for this new secure unit were dropped and Diagrama decided to explore other forms of social reintegration. At this point they were introduced to Basta and became committed to the idea of starting a new residential centre to meet the needs of long-term excluded people of all ages, including those with ex-dependency on drugs and alcohol.

Diagrama and Basta had worked together on other projects prior to EASE and they shared a common philosophy of empowerment and sustainable inclusion. At the point at which the EASE project started Diagrama had begun to plan to open a Kent-based Basta lookalike centre, focussed on rehabilitation and re-education through employment and empowerment.

At that point Diagrama UK had a staff team of just three people including the CEO. Throughout the development phase of EASE, and in the early months of the project delivery, Diagrama staff made several visits to Basta Nykvarn and Basta West at Gotenberg. During these visits the CEO was inspired by methods used, particularly those applied in Basta West where Thomas Froberg (CEO of Basta West) had developed a working practice of taking over failing commercial enterprises and converting them to successful social businesses. These businesses had a capacity to employ large numbers of vulnerable workers but were failing commercially due to lack of investment and lack of management direction.

Having seen this in action, Diagrama's CEO researched similar opportunities in and around London and south east England. Diagrama soon purchased two children's homes for adolescents with multiple social and family problems. Diagrama's CEO had previously worked for Diagrama Spain in the Cordoba Re-education Centre, so with his Spanish experience he was able to retain staff and change performance throughout both children's home. The recent Ofsted inspection is testament to this. These units are now trading as social enterprises with a growing number of clients.

This success inspired further success and Diagrama has continued to absorb other failing businesses including a fostering and adoption agency, a secure escort service, residential centres for people with learning disabilities and a special education unit for school refusers. Diagrama now employs more than 250 people in the UK and continues to grow.

Diagrama's CEO has successfully linked to networks across the UK to expand opportunities for Diagrama's clients whilst keeping alert to further social business potential. Throughout the EASE project Diagrama has been researching, promoting and disseminating the Basta Model of social enterprise and this work culminated in the support of a philanthropic donor who has offered to fund a Programme Director's post for two years so that the Basta lookalike centre can come to fruition. Recruitment for this important post is underway. Without the EASE project this would not have been possible.

On a client level, through its local network and supported by Rural Kent, Diagrama was able to obtain national ESF Community Grants to run a specific training course to train ex-substance abusers to understand, set up and run social enterprises. This

was a pilot project that was designed to recruit an initial cohort of potential residents for Diagrama's Basta lookalike centre. Unfortunately no premises have yet been identified, but of the 15 trainees following the Diagrama/ESF training course, 4 have progressed into employment and 3 others have set up their own social enterprise.

Support Partners:

The role of the support partners has been vital to the success of the EASE project and the levels of cross-sector, cross-border benefits have been significant.

Individual partners were canvassed by the Evaluator and asked for their comments about how the project has influenced their daily work. All partners reported having learned about new ways of working that has some impact on the work of their organisation.

Those partners with no previous experience of working within transnational projects all reported enthusiasm and re-motivation having learned about good practice from partners in other countries.

All support partners acknowledged benefits from being part of the EASE project, both through their transnational experience and through improved local networking opportunities that had occurred through hosting visits etc. When hosting events or taking part in local meetings there had been natural cross-organisation working that would not have happened otherwise.

Support organisations such as La Claie and Action with Communities in Rural Kent increased their knowledge and achieved a wider level of understanding of the national structural funds as both organisations were involved in ESF within their local communities.

Exchanging information about roles and responsibilities of umbrella organisations were acknowledged as being valuable as a self-development tool within both La Claie and Action with Communities in Rural Kent. The difference in each national system dictates variance in approaches to setting up and managing social enterprises was explored. Through this both organisations were able to enrich and extend their local support to community groups and social enterprises.

In the case of Swedish support partners, both Fryshuset and Ex-Cons noted benefits from working within the transnational partnership as well as increased local awareness of social business opportunities. Both are local to Basta and all organisations have worked closely over the years. Both started new projects within the life of EASE and in the case of Ex-Cons their activity is now well established in Africa. Both of these support partners are determined to develop further links and to continue working at transnational level.

Ex-Cons works at national level to influence policy as well as to open new opportunities for its clients; as the name suggests, these are ex-offenders who are

determined to create a crime-free life for themselves. Their “IOU” manufacturing label is highly regarded at national level and it enjoys recognition for quality in its production of garden furniture and other products.

Fryshuset is large organisation in Stockholm that provides education and training as well as running employment and pre-employment workshops alongside a range of alternative schooling. They hosted a visit to Fryshuset, showing excellent examples of good practice to share with partners, especially their bicycling recycling and repairing team.

Jegersberg in Norway has continued to develop and expand its work and acknowledges that the EASE project has helped them to identify other work areas through which they can set up new local activities. It was their first transnational experience. They have forged strong links, especially with Basta and San Patrignano as the work of all three organisations focusses on clients with substance abuse issues. Together they are planning future work and will use the model established by the EASE project; that of core delivery actors supported by a wider partnership that brings experience, knowledge and good practice.

Fundacion Diagrama Spain provided the services of the evaluator and supported all partners through contributing information, materials and experience. Diagrama Spain team members took part in some of the partnership meetings and seminars. They offered an excellent example of how social enterprise can grow through contracting for statutory services.

It should be noted that Diagrama Spain’s evaluator maintained a role across the partnership, providing individual support to each partner as well as required as well as assessing the development of the overall project.

San Patrignano is a large, well established, very successful social enterprises located in Rimini, Italy. It was the inspiration for Basta Sweden and although daily practice is very different, the guiding principle of empowerment through quality employment is the same. Basta’s founders visited San Patrignano in the early 1990’s and then returned to Sweden to set up Basta in 1994. Today San Patrignano has 1500 residents, each employed in a high quality work unit with contracts for manufacturing, services, wine production, farming and many other enterprises.

San Patrignano is indistinguishable from any mainstream business in that it operates professionally and effectively. It’s the workers that make it unique. The partners were part of a large conference on the Positive Economy in June 2014 and were, without exception, inspired by the work, the support, the enterprise and the overall atmosphere within the San Patrignano site.

San Patrignano was held as a vision for the future when Basta began in 1994. Basta has developed differently but the two organisations are now both acknowledged as experts in the field of rehabilitation for ex-substance abusers. They will progress to future joint working initiatives, sharing methodologies, sharing inspiration and learning from each other. Jegesberg, Norway has now joined the partnership and together they will continue to fulfil the needs of their clients, and those of emerging social enterprises working in related fields

In conclusion, the wide partnership that was created by the EASE project has been a real success with benefits enjoyed by all taking part.

Management of the Project.

The overall Project Manager who designed and developed the project went on maternity leave in June 2014 and her place was taken by Basta's Financial Director who maintained the partnership, supported by Elia's Project Manager. Both were already established with the partnership and known by all partners so this did not create any major disruption to the management of the project.

The overall management of the project was efficient, well organised and an atmosphere of constructive support was maintained throughout, at all levels within the partnership.

There was a series of meetings and seminars, some attended by all partners and others held specifically for the Core Partners. At each meeting the progress of the overall project was been measured alongside the achievements and difficulties experienced by each partner present. The only major problems experienced by core partners related to sustainable funding and the identification of suitable premises and this continued throughout the project.

These seminars and events took place in most partner countries; Italy, UK, France, Norway and Sweden. There was no partnership meeting held in Spain although some individuals from within the partnership visited Diagrama Spain's projects.

Many of the partners came together in January 2014 at the Strasbourg event, "Social Entrepreneurs Have your Say". This was attended by more than 1000 people who debated the role and future of social enterprise. It culminated in The Strasbourg Convention to pave the way for economic equality within the social economy. San Patrignano was also part of this, presenting to the assembly and hosting a workshop. The Strasbourg Convention recognises that the social economy is an essential part of achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the ET2020 goals.

This was followed in June 2014 by a major Social Enterprise and Micro Finance event, "The Positive Economy" hosted by San Patrignano in Italy, attended by all partners.

The final event was held in Grasse in June 2015 and it was attended by all partners. The partnership examined the work of the EASE project, agreed it had achieved its results and recognised that these results are in a different format to those foreseen at the beginning of the project. Nevertheless the EASE project had met its objectives in full and everyone was happy.

In-between meetings contact was maintained through regular Skype and telephone meetings. Sharing successes, dissemination at local level and celebrating the birth of the Basta's Project manager's baby gave good opportunities for the partners to maintain strong links, cementing relationships on a personal and professional level.

This is the life-blood of a strong partnership. It goes beyond the work of the project itself and forges ties that span the years.

Core Partner staff changes:

In October 2014 Diagrama UK's Project Coordinator had left to go to the USA to be married. Although a replacement was soon identified, the change of staff did create a disruption in the UK management which in turn put pressure on Basta as the lead partner. However, through team-working and goodwill, the situation was resolved through a further change of Diagrama UK's staff in June 2015.

Elia's staff team remained unchanged throughout the life of the EASE project. Additional volunteer Directors supported Elia's Project Manager and assisted her to grow the organisation.

There were no other significant staff changes in any of the wider partner organisations.

Conclusions.

The main points can be summarised as follows:

- The EASE project has been successful in meeting its targets and achieving anticipated results.
- The individual goals of the core partners have been achieved. Although the methods used to achieve these results were different to those foreseen, all objectives have been met.
- The support partners have all benefitted from the EASE project, each acknowledging growth within their own organisation, influenced by their experiences working at transnational level.
- The two foreseen new social enterprises have been established and are now operating within the social economy, providing training, employment and integration opportunities for target client groups.
- More than 45 people from the target group have been helped through bespoke training courses and pre-employment training delivered by the core partners.
- 6 key staff in core partner organisations experienced social business mentoring and enterprise support to grow their organisation and this has been through direct links with transnational partners.
- 12 staff from support partner organisations achieved new understanding and experiences through participation in the transnational seminars and visits.

- In the case of Diagrama UK, the organisation has transferred innovation contained within the Basta Model and has grown from 3 staff to more than 250 staff within the life of the EASE project. It has successfully set up 6 new social enterprises whilst developing the Basta Model in the UK. It is currently working to create a further supported employment, Basta lookalike project in the UK specifically for the reintegration of people with long term exclusion issues including ex-offenders and people with a history of substance abuse.
- In the case of Elia, the organisation traded as a social enterprise, provided training and pre-employment work for excluded women whilst setting up new recycling and upcycling activities within the designated. Its sustainability was guaranteed through it being absorbed by Soli-Cities and now trades within a larger social enterprise, continuing to give work opportunities to marginalised clients.
- There were a series of meetings and public seminars in each country, disseminating the work of the project and raising the profile of the social economy as a key player to create jobs for disadvantaged people.
- An extensive Network of like-minded organisations and social enterprises continues to drive the social economy forward and the partners will work together in future projects to ensure that the momentum continues.
- The project contributed towards positive policy change by partners attending and facilitating workshops at the European level event in Strasbourg in January 2014, culminating in the formulation of the Strasbourg Convention.
- The Transfer of Innovation foreseen in the original application has been successfully achieved.

Maureen Walby. October 2015.