

TITLE

A whole IKEA department run by persons with disabilities

Germany: Cooperation with IKEA – alsterarbeit GmbH

PROJECT SUMMARY

Alsterarbeit is a non-profit social enterprise operating in Hamburg that provides various forms of employment for people with disabilities. Through its contacts with a variety of employers, alsterarbeit offers such job opportunities as gardening, carpentry, packaging, IT, and gastronomy, among others. In June 2014, the organization entered an agreement with IKEA, the global furniture chain, to run the recovery department of IKEA, providing 30 jobs for people with disabilities in its Hamburg Altona store.

FACTS & FIGURES

- Jobs created in 2014: 17
- Jobs created in 2015: 13

PROBLEMS TARGETED

Even in large, developed cities such as Hamburg, employment opportunities outside of sheltered workshops remain hard to find for persons with disabilities. Such people need a certificate stating that they cannot perform a job without proper support; and once they have obtained the necessary permits, organizations such as alsterarbeit can provide them with employment opportunities.

SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

Alsterarbeit supports people both with and without disabilities to find employment, and cooperates with various companies to supply an inclusive workforce for production sites, offices, and stores in the Hamburg area. Several tasks are specifically designated for people with disabilities, such as the sale of articles that are slightly damaged and therefore discounted, the sale of articles that are to be discontinued, etc. Notably, the recovery department in this particular IKEA store has at times higher revenues than other comparable IKEA stores.

Alsterarbeit and IKEA have prepared fellow employees for their new colleagues and have offered courses in sign language, communication, and leadership to ease and enable inclusion. Employees with disabilities participate in courses about business processing, attend trainings, learn about client contact, and enjoy the same career possibilities as their non-disabled peers. The Hamburg team consists of 30 persons of disabilities supported by a team of eight people without disabilities. Ten

persons with disabilities receive professional training, and 20 are full-time employees. Employees with disabilities can choose how many hours per week they wish to work.

OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

The cooperation is financed by grants from the German social welfare system, compensating mainly the costs of professional rehabilitation of people with disabilities. IKEA pays a fee to alsterarbeit to cover their administration expenses.

QUOTE

“I put furniture together. I do that totally independently. Every step has a pictogram that helps me to understand the required steps in an easy manner. Should I have questions, there is always someone present I can ask.”

— Ms. Jana Bigger, a hearing-impaired worker in the IKEA recovery department

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