

LAZZARELLE- SOCIAL COOPERATIVE

<https://lazzarelle.org/chi-siamo/>

The Lazzarelle Social Cooperative is a women-led enterprise founded in 2010 that produces artisanal coffee within the women's prison of Pozzuoli, Naples. Rooted in the ancient Neapolitan coffee tradition, the cooperative actively involves incarcerated women who wish to take an active role in their personal transformation.

The cooperative's primary objective is to foster social inclusion and rehabilitation by recognizing and developing the skills of individuals from economically and socially marginalized backgrounds. Over the years, more than 70 women have taken part in the cooperative's programs, gaining both job skills and awareness of their rights — essential tools for rebuilding dignity and autonomy.

The Lazzarelle Cooperative is financially independent and operates without public funding. Its innovative and socially impactful business model was recognized in 2019 when it received first prize in the "Entrepreneurs for Civil Economy" awards.

A Multiplier Effect

Experience has shown that increasing visibility and market access for prison-based products can lead to a rise in productivity within correctional facilities. This, in turn, allows for greater participation by inmates. Promoting and distributing goods made within the prison economy generates widespread social impact by raising public awareness of underrepresented social issues. This virtuous cycle also contributes to a positive business-to-business dynamic.

The Operating Context

Southern Italy faces high unemployment rates, which particularly affect women trying to enter the labor market. These challenges are even more pronounced for women who have experienced incarceration — often not due to involvement in organized crime, but as a result of poverty and marginalization.

In the specific case of the Pozzuoli Women's Prison, fewer than 5% of inmates have committed violent or socially severe crimes. Nevertheless, post-incarceration stigma acts as a second barrier to reintegration, causing many women to give up even looking for employment. Yet many of these individuals possess valuable experience and skills, particularly in food preparation and service, often rooted in family-based knowledge. These capabilities can be harnessed and integrated into the broader economy, creating bridges between prison populations and the external community, and supporting the transition from detention to freedom.

Activities and Production

The cooperative produces a high-quality blend of artisanal coffee, selecting Arabica beans in accordance with the traditional Neapolitan method. It collaborates with the Shadhilly cooperative, which sources coffee from smallholder farmers in the Global South and promotes social and environmental sustainability.

Throughout every stage of processing, no additives are used, and natural production timelines are strictly respected.

Packaging is made from aluminum-free plastic, allowing for easy recycling through standard plastic collection. In 2017, the product line was expanded to include teas and herbal infusions. Today, the cooperative produces and distributes approximately 50,000 coffee packages annually, with the potential to double production to 100,000 units without modifying the facility.

L'UOMO E IL LEGNO – SOCIAL COOPERATIVE

<https://www.luomoeillegno.com/>

Social Inclusion Through Work, Training, and Community Engagement

L'Uomo e il Legno is a social cooperative based in Naples that stands as a model of social entrepreneurship, combining professional training, community development, and inclusive employment. Founded with the mission to support individuals at risk of social exclusion, the cooperative implements a wide range of initiatives addressing educational poverty, unemployment, and marginalization.

Accredited by the Campania Region as a training provider, the cooperative delivers certified vocational pathways and practical workshops in fields such as woodworking, green maintenance, hospitality, administration, and social care.

These are targeted at NEETs, minors, individuals with disabilities, incarcerated persons, those serving alternative sentences, and vulnerable families — including Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti communities.

The cooperative manages technical training activities within the woodworking workshop of the Secondigliano prison and plays an active role in national and European employment strategies such as the *GOL* (Worker Employability Guarantee) programme and *PNRR*-funded projects. It also fosters lifelong learning through inclusive education models, engaging young people in hands-on courses like 3D printing, cooking, and digital literacy.

Beyond formal training, *L'Uomo e il Legno* plays a crucial role in community building. For over 15 years, it has led territorial education programs for children and teenagers in Scampia, providing psychosocial support, tutoring, creative labs, and recreational activities. It also promotes school integration for Roma children and strengthens inter-institutional collaboration to ensure continuity of care.

The cooperative operates entirely without public funding for core activities, sustaining itself through project-based funding and service delivery — demonstrating a viable, scalable model for sustainable social impact. Its work illustrates how entrepreneurial approaches can address systemic inequalities, foster empowerment, and create long-term value for individuals and communities.