



**CALCESTRUZZI ERICINA LIBERA**



# COMPANY PROFILE



## KIND OF PROCESS

Confiscated from organised crime

## ALLOCATION

Trapani

## PREVIOUS ACTIVITY

Exclusively cement mix production

## CURRENT ACTIVITY

Production of cement mix and homogenized recovery of building waste from C&D (construction and demolition).  
Sector: construction.

## DATE OF CONSTITUTION

2008

## LEGAL FORM

Cooperative

## TURNOVER

(Dec. 2019): 1,136,000.00 Euro

## CONTACT PERSON

Giacomo Messina (cooperative president)



[www.calcestruzziericina.it](http://www.calcestruzziericina.it)



## BACKGROUND

In 1991, Calcestruzzi Ericina was purchased by the mafia boss, Vincenzo Virga, considered one of the most dangerous mafiosi of those years and the “entrepreneurial brain” of Bernardo Provenzano, one of the historical leaders of Cosa Nostra. In July 1996, the company was seized by the Judicial Authorities, which began to manage the business and so the old owner organized a heavy boycott, intimidating customers and blocking all the company’s orders. To prevent bankruptcy, the Prefect of Trapani, Fulvio Sodano, independently decided to involve the “healthy” entrepreneurial network on the territory, asking the entrepreneurs for a concrete commitment and to take a clear position against organized crime by unblocking the orders to the company seized from the mafia. The situation changed for the better in 2004, when Calcestruzzi Ericina won part of the official supply contracts for the construction of the docks of the port of Trapani, for the America’s Cup.



## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS AND EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT FORMULA

Also thanks to this large order, there was a project to relaunch the company with an investment of around 2,200,000 Euros, financed largely by IRFIS - financial intermediary with the Region of Sicily as sole shareholder - as part of the Regional Operational Programme Sicily 4.01.c, and a loan from Unipol Banca of 700,000 Euros. Local public institutions - the Prefecture of Trapani, law enforcement agencies, the Public Prosecutor’s Office, the State Property Agency, the Region of Sicily - the “Libera” Association, Anpar (an association representing companies that recycle inert waste), Legacoop and Legambiente actively collaborated in the relaunch. The company, therefore, reconverted its plants so that inert building waste could be treated. This was done by implanting the R.O.S.E. system (Recovery Homogenized Building Waste).

In the meantime, the various steps required to complete the confiscation went ahead and, at the second stage of confiscation, the company was placed under the management of the National Agency for the Administration and Destination of Seized and Confiscated Assets to Crime.

In 2008, 6 former employees set up the Calcestruzzi Ericina Libera Cooperative, with the support of the





two associations Libera and Legacoop. The initial share capital of the cooperative came from the members through the payment of part of their severance pay. The activity resumed on 1 June 2011, when the management of the company was entirely entrusted to the Cooperative, which rents the site from the above-mentioned Agency. The Cooperative will not be able to fully own the activity because the confiscated assets will remain the property of the State. It is the first confiscated company to be entrusted to a cooperative of former employees.

### **MECHANISMS USED TO IMPLEMENT THE PROCESS**

The steps of this WBO are very different from the classic procedure. In this case, the workers had to wait for the judicial process of seizure and confiscation to be completed in order to be able to manage the activity (see par. 3.2.2).

The cooperative had no financial support from the classic WBO channels (CFI, Funds of Cooperative Associations, etc.). The corporate restructuring took place before the cooperative was established, during the Judicial Administration. Therefore, the company received the funding required for the conversion of the plant when it was still under confiscation and administered by the State.

### **PRINCIPAL BARRIERS**

Organised crime represented the main barrier in this case together with the fact it is so deeply rooted in the territory, which means it was able to generate a dense network of intimidation and threats to block the company's activity.

The long judicial process, which often lasts up to ten years for the confiscation of the seized assets, represents another barrier, as does the management of the Judicial Authorities, which can put off clients, provoke a loss of competitiveness together with a gradual slowdown of production and the risk of bankruptcy due to a lack of market stability.

This aspect helps generate what could be considered the biggest barrier in this type of case, i.e. a widespread culture in areas of high mafia infiltration that makes the companies managed by the mafia perceived as the only ones that guarantee work.

Added to this is the sensation that when the State confiscates and manages a company, it risks going bankrupt with the consequential loss of jobs.

Furthermore, the deep-rooted nature of the organized crime, its enormous financial resources and, often, the absence of the State means that people often do not trust anything that is public and legal, and opt for the local mafia as the only interlocutor to turn to in order

to find work. Despite the fact organized crime only exploits companies to launder huge amounts of dirty money, these businesses, however, often guarantee the only source of employment in territorial areas with a high rate of unemployment and undeclared and precarious work.

A further obstacle in these cases regards the 'cost of legality', i.e. the difficulty in competing legally in a market where the widespread use of undeclared work by many companies makes it possible for them to reduce supply prices.

### **FACTORS OF SUCCESS**

The local social dialogue and the synergy between the various actors who are entrusted with the control of the territory have played a fundamental role in the success of the project. Also of great importance is the responsible involvement of the "healthy" part of entrepreneurship and, in general, of the local economic network.



## MAIN BENEFITS FOR THE COMPANY, EMPLOYEES AND ENVIRONMENT/SOCIETY

The Cooperative uses the R.O.S.E. system, which is a state-of-the-art plant in the recycling of waste materials from construction and renovation. There are only 17 such systems operating in Italy, and the Cooperative manages the only one in the South. Thanks to its commitment to environmental protection and its role in the fight against organized crime, the cooperative has become a cultural reference point for the social and productive network of the territory. For example, it hosts students and is a centre that combats the widespread illegality in the construction industry.

In 2014, the Cooperative contributed to the Workshop entitled “Recycling from Construction and Demolition: how can the market be developed for this sustainable source of aggregates?”, organized in Brussels by the Industry and Enterprise Department of the European Commission. The Cooperative also collaborated with the Central Technical Service of the Public Works Council regarding the new Guidelines for the evaluation of the characteristics of in-situ concrete.



## TRANSFERABILITY

Although this is a very particular case and very characteristic of the Italian socio-economic fabric, it is unfortunately also possible in other countries that a company could be seized from organized crime and could risk closure. In these cases, not only are there specific laws for a WBO, but there is also a legislative apparatus which regulates the seizure and confiscation of assets. This apparatus, even if very specific to some territories of Italy, with the necessary adjustments, could be transferable to other countries.

## VIDEO, DOCUMENTARIES, INFORMATION ON THE CASE STUDY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ap2JviHIYY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PILOInFdXQI>

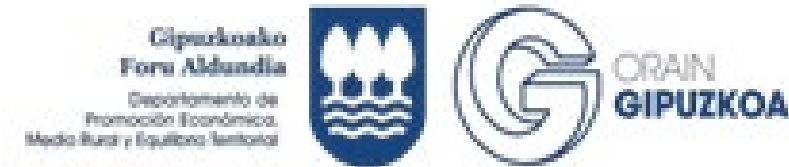
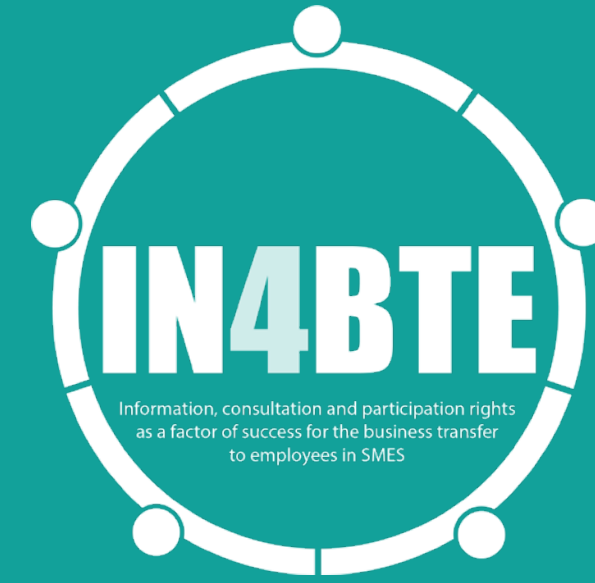
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jq3TTwFyvK4>

This case study was prepared by Vilma Rinolfi (CISL).









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