

Empowerment through non-formal education

Experiences and impacts with vulnerable individuals, groups and communities

The Italian visit (Livorno May 12nd -15th 2014)

Getting into the final part of the project, the partners met for the last scheduled exchange visit in Livorno, hosted by the S. Benedetto Onlus, with the collaboration of the NGO POLARIS.

The meeting programme was organized on the discussion about the final steps of the project activities and outputs, the guidelines manual and the organization of the final seminar, and it was the occasion to visit two Italian

experiences, based in Livorno and in the near city of Pisa, that are working using empowerment techniques as a tool of primary importance.



The experiences

The visits scheduled in the Livorno programme, focusing on different ways to implement empowerment were made to the "Women's House", based in Livorno, and to the NGO "Big Fish", base in Marina di Pisa in the seaside area of the city.

Women's House is a shelter house for women living in difficult situations (related with different problems), run by the nationwide NGO network called ARCI and active in the city from more than 15 years. It works in close relation with the institutional health and welfare system, and in the last years tried to respond in first place to the emerging housing needs of women. Empowerment techniques

here are used mainly to help clients gain back their autonomy (health, mental disorder, labour/job, legal issues, addiction, social housing, family, etc.), through self-confidence building processes based on self-help and educational relationships with the workers. The final objective is always the return to a full autonomous life, so every project is "tailored" on the specific situation and needs of each host.

Big Fish is a project run by the social promotion NGO "L'Alba" (the dawn), that works mainly on psychoso-

cial integration of people with a (present or past) diagnosis of mental disorder, considered first as persons and secondly as citizens. L'Alba does various activities, which includes cultural and recreational events, training, social promotion and art and labour workshops. In particular, Big Fish is a project of job/labour training and reinsertion, based on a restaurant and on a beach resort run, both at a very high professional level, by the "clients" of the NGO with the workers supervision.

Finalization of the project guidelines manual

The discussion on the finalization of the guidelines, starting from the systematization feedback elaborated by APDES, started from the definition of the general framework of the manual.

The participants discussed and agreed on the chapters structure, in the attempt to keep track of all the issues emerged in the discussion, and in the exchange of ideas, practice and experiences, throughout the project lifespan:

- *methodologies for the promotion of empowerment* (keeping an holistic approach; establish relations either with the "clients" and with other organizations, services and

institutions; promote participation as a tool to influence attitudes and to promote self-confidence and autonomy; stimulate self-organization and knowledge circulation as a gradual DIY strategy, etc.);

- *impact of empowerment methodologies* (evaluation as a tool to evaluate activities -identify gaps in project planning/implementation, but also as a way to improve adequacy in response to emerging needs and problems; to promote wider participation; to motivate project workers; to get fundings);
- *evaluation practice* (as an ongoing proc-

ess through the activities development, taking in account the individual, community and social levels; emphasizing external -independent- evaluation, but also including peer and volunteer workers in the process);

- *challenges and constraints to empowerment promotion* (consider historical, geo-political, religious, economical differences found in each culture – and even in the same nation/city-, fight for an equal recognition of non-formal education programs, against the rigidity of the

public services; not only empowerment but also reduce harm form dis-empowering processes; reinforce advocacy work).

The manual will be finalized in this last stretch of the project and will be produced either on hard copies and in .pdf format, for easier dissemination, after the final seminar (please refer to the partners' contacts below for further info).

The final seminar

The final seminar of the project will be held in Liverpool, on July 15th in the venues of the Women's Organization. It will be the occasion to present in detail the funding opportunities available through the EU Erasmus+ programme (which substitutes the GRUNDTVIG "line", on which the ETNE project was initially funded),

and on the Lifelong Learning Programme. Of course, it will be the occasion to assess the project course of action and outcomes, respectively through a presentation of the project overview, key findings and recommendations, and through a critical perspective, which will leave also space for debate between the audi-

ence and a panel of partners' representatives. The winner of the video contest will be presented along with the main key points and findings of the project frame work, which will be summarized in the guidelines manual (please refer to CAB contacts below for further info on the final version of the seminar programme).

The video

The winner of the video contest is a '2:08 Portuguese short movie, titled "Step up", directed by Tiago Martins and Ivan Markelov and interpreted by Joana Estrela. Step up, without the use of dialogues, gives a conceptualization of the empowerment potentialities, as a tool to negotiate problems and difficulties of life.

The video will be available for the vision after its official presentation in the project final seminar in July (please refer to the partners' contacts below for further info, starting from the second part of the month of July).



STEP-UP



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