

"European youth between skills and non-formal learning"

Anna De Caro

Consultant Ernest Young on the Calabria Region Operational Plan 2014 - 2020

Group Leader and President of the Social Promotion Association

Neverland Europe: travel - learn - explore

Working since 2011 on youth projects in action, now Erasmus +, I can confirm what Luca and Nicoletta have been saying for a while: "We Can!". In my work with, and for, young people, I have passed through many: "you can't do it", "we won't succeed".

I first savored the possibilities in this field when, almost thirty years old, I participated in my first experience of the European Youth in Action Program in Thessaloniki – Greece. On that sea-front, in a project whose theme was to make a journalistic service during a gay pride, I felt a new wind. I learned that a young person with an idea could create a mini project on the development of the non-formal skills that are needed in life at 365 °, the so-called "Learning by doing": during that week we talked about Skills, Knowledge and Competences.

After seven years of carrying out over 50 projects as an informal group in several European Union countries, on October 1st, 2018 the Neverland Europe Social Promotion Association was established. It mainly carries out the following activities: promotion of active citizenship, entrepreneurship, fight against youth unemployment; human rights; healthy lifestyles; respect for the environment and its citizens and realization of European projects.

What are the main lessons? That we learn daily from ourselves, boys and girls, from our European partners, from everybody. We design, we dream: Europe finances our dreams for a week, in small villages or little-known countries. Local development is created, closed shops are open, young and less young people confront each other's dreams and plans, and realize common paths. People break down the barriers of "we can't do it" to carry out their projects, and they succeed.

Learning by doing and the development of horizontal networks are carried out daily. We learn to learn. Petty individualism gives way to speaking in the plural: "our project". People think: "I managed to do it, my idea; now I'm a European citizen; I want to do in my village what I saw in Poddebice in Poland or what I saw in Tekirdag in Turkey".

You become aware of your knowledge and skills and learn to learn with humility and patience. You get rid of all the superstructures that this society has built for us ("I graduated, I mastered, I got my doctorate and now?").

At the last Erasmus call Neverland Europe has got a few projects approved. One training project, with the title "Boost your creativity, go digital!", written by Andreas and Emanuele, two of the members of the association, will realize their dream in Acquappesa (CS) - a small village in the South of Italy. Another project is titled "Mobility Faces Crisis" and is addressed to 20 youth NEET, the aim is to motivate young people to take mobility experience to enhance their skills and knowledge especially on behalf of those who have lost hope because they come from economically disadvantaged families or for those who reside in suburban areas or even for those could not continue their studies. Also approved was a training project, written by Anna, for people that work with families and young people with special needs with the Association: "The Lands of sea with Federico". All together eight projects have been approved in Calabria at the call of February 2019, the 37,5% come from our minds: yes we can!