



Yes Volunteering and the evolution of the idea of volunteering

It is just ended in Verbania, on Friday 20th December, the first meeting of the "Yes Volunteering" project; a European initiative devoted to the exchange of good practices in the frame of volunteering as an inclusion tool. The project, funded by the **European Union, with the Erasmus + program, under Key Action 2, Adult Strategic Partnerships**, is led by the **Aurive social cooperative** and jointly managed with 5 European partner organizations: **Rightchallenge** (Portugal); **InterAktion** (Austria); **Yasam Boyu Egitim Dernegi** (Turkey); **Novo Mesto** (Slovenia); **Deses 3** (Spain).

"Yes volunteering" focuses on the idea of **volunteering, and its impacts to enhance social inclusion and skills empowerment**. The idea is to reflect and to enlight the different skills that can be acquired in volunteering projects, skills that for many young people can represent resources for concrete re-orientation and professionalisation.

For this proposal Aurive social cooperative was inspired by its own experience in national and then universal civil service, a volunteering program funded by the Italian government which, since 2004, has allowed to many young people between 18 and 28 years old to gain important experiences in public bodies, museums, natural parks, associations, social-welfare consortia.

In the civil service many young people, coming from disadvantaged situations or who interrupted school courses, have gained self-esteem, trust, new awareness, learning thanks to a daily commitment in social projects also gaining a working method that has guided them in rethinking their study or job career.

With "Yes volunteering" project we want to look for other positive models in Europe, to compare them and to complete the project with a reasoned collection of replicable interventions to be shared and disseminated through a website, coordinated social media management, an e-book, and other outcomes which will be the final product.

"In these days we have started to know many excellence experiences related to volunteering as a training tool" emphasizes Francesca Bellomo, project manager of Aurive and coordinator of Yes volunteering project "with a **great variety of ideas from organizations that deal with neet and young people in difficulty, migrants, disadvantaged families, people at risk of social marginality, cultural poverty**".

"We were impressed" continues Bellomo "by the professionalism and level of innovation of the proposals presented by the participants. By confronting our expertises with other European organizations **we found out common elements with our work as well as new ideas, tools, which will be immediately valued to better organize our local projects**". The meeting, hosted in Verbania, Italy, was an important chance to discuss about the project goals and actions and to set the basis for an effective two-year cooperation program, which will go on with the next meeting planned in March 2020 in Portugal, and will then continue with local activities and international meetings held each four months and joined by all the partners. The final meeting will be held in Spain in the autumn of 2021 with the presentation of the final outcomes of the project and with some confrontation activities with the stakeholders involved in the management of volunteering program which can be effective for the skills empowerment and for the social inclusion.

