

INSIGHTS INTO YOUTH-LED EXPERIENCES FOR LOCAL POLICY-MAKING IN MIGRATION ISSUES

This paper is part of a selection of good practices gathered from the E-LoCUM partner countries. These examples showcase successful models and mechanisms for fostering youth participation in migration-related initiatives. The initiatives described serve as practical references for youth workers, educators, and practitioners, offering real-world examples of how youth engagement can be effectively structured and implemented.

These practices are designed not only to inspire but also to encourage creative thinking about how similar models could be adapted to your own local contexts. Furthermore, the practical insights from these models will provide additional "food for thought" to deepen discussions on migration and democratic participation.

Community Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (Italy)

- **Location:** City of Contovello, Province of Trieste - Italy
- **Year of creation:** June 2022
- **Status:** Mixed initiative (public/private/no profit)

Context and background: Local level actions and projects in favour of social, working and cultural integration aimed at unaccompanied foreign minors coming from the Balkan Route have already been present in the city of Trieste for several years. In June 2022, the Duemilauno Agenzia Sociale opened a private apartment in Contovello, thus expanding the range of facilities capable of providing initial hospitality to these young people arriving. Some good practices are presented below which have the objective of inclusion and/or integration, solidarity and local sensitivity.

Youth engagement strategies During the last nearby 2 years, a collaboration between the community and a group of young university students from the boarding school of the Salesian parish of Trieste has been established. The group of university students constituted a sort of social laboratory, aimed to develop awareness, implement new activities (especially sports: volleyball and cricket and culinary), plan and share together, giving the young hosts the opportunity to improve their self-esteem, their social, relational and communication skills. The ethnic culinary-themed events significantly contribute to fostering greater integration among local youth. These occasions serve also as platforms for exchange and dialogue, where two distinct cultures, despite geographical differences, intersected. Raising awareness and facilitating exchange are essential components for successful integration. Multiculturalism embodies a crucial value for modern society. Cultural diversity, along with personal experiences, has the potential to enrich the cultural and social fabric of a community, fostering an environment of inclusivity and mutual respect.

Partnerships and collaboration: The initiative involves the boarding school of the Salesian parish of Trieste. Trieste and our region have a rich history of community-based services, stemming from a specific historical context of service provision and deinstitutionalization. Our approach emphasizes the active involvement of stakeholders within the local community. When introducing a new service, such as the one in Contovello, one of our initial steps is to map the territory and identify resources that can contribute to our shared goals. Through this analysis, we strengthen relationships and foster collaborations with other local entities, including schools, and various associations such as those dedicated to sports and culture.

Capacity building: The reception phase marks just the initial step in the extensive journey towards social and scholastic integration or interaction among persons from diverse cultures and languages. The primary objective of this process is to ensure equal opportunities for scholastic achievement, beginning with guaranteeing access to information and knowledge, thereby facilitating the development of their skills and personalities. Participation in Italian language courses offered by educational institutions plays an important role for young migrants. Engaging in professional courses not only allows them to interact with other young migrants but also provides invaluable opportunities to engage with local peers. Through these interactions, the process of comparing and learning about a new culture becomes essential.

Furthermore, training programmes have been provided by the training institutions with which we collaborate:

- Food area (workshops related to the preparation of pizzas, focaccias, and bakery);
- Relational and autonomy skills;
- Green area (gardening workshops).

Inclusivity and diversity: Two cultures of reference should not be depicted as two static and clearly separate entities, but rather as two dynamic realities that can intersect and interact to varying degrees. Engaging in culinary activities provided a valuable opportunity to foster closer bonds between young locals and migrants. Similarly, participating in sports activities offered a platform for dialogue and cooperative play, enhancing mutual understanding and exchange even in the absence of a shared language for communication.

Communication and outreach: The most effective communication channels were established through interactions with training institutions and the volunteer tutors' association. Through these connections, we were able to learn about local sporting events, providing us with opportunities to engage with young locals and introduce them to the culture of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Minors. These interactions enabled us to share another cultural perspective and foster mutual understanding between the young migrants and local youth.

Feedback mechanisms: The feedback from both local young people and migrants was positive as it was possible to build a network of good practices through which initiatives for the future were created. We were invited to participate, during the summer period of this year, in a festival bringing typical Asian/Kosovari dishes in order to self-finance the young migrants.

Challenges faced: The only difficulty was encountered in the initial phase as it was feared that poor participation would create a sense of frustration among the young hosts.

The simplicity of the young participants certainly contributed to facing these challenges in an authentic and true way. Adults should see beyond diversity because first of all these migrants are human people with their own history.

The initiatives are a working progress and we are evaluating what measures to adopt to make them more engaging and sustainable.