

Greetings.

We would like to share with you the experience of our association.

Lunghi Cammini is a new born association: it was funded in november 2016, after two years of preparation. Everything started when Isabella (now president of our association), read an article on a national newspaper (Avvenire) talking about the experience of Seuil, the french association which brought in France the educational long walks of the belgian Oikoten. She found that it was a simple, wonderful idea and thought about how it could be possible to transfer that experience in Italy, having verified that there was not anything similar in our country. She shared this idea with friends and acquaintances, some of whom were social workers, and contacted Seuil, which since the beginning has helped us as a mentor. We joined the european project "between Ages", that gave us the opportunity to meet other similar european experiences, to share opinions, to know very special people who work hard and with enthusiasm and to learn a lot. It was a big help, Our european partners supported us in the first experimental walks and we want to thank all of them. So we have learnt that: 1) newspapers are useful 2) thanks Europe we have met wonderful people

As I said, we wanted to transfer in Italy the french version of the belgian model of educational walk, that is: three months abroad, without mobile phone or mp3, one teenager accompanied by one adult, who is not necessary a professional educator. The boy or the girl, presented by the social services, has to apply by writing a motivation letter, and is free to stop the walk at any moment. Before the walk, we organise a few days of training and in this period the boy or the girl meets his/her companion, the educational team and the walk director, who'll be daily in contact with them during the walk, The only different with our french and belgian models is that we don't use a tent and so we have a bit higher budget for the journey.

To do this we needed to build contact with social services and money. Some members of our association are or were social workers and thanks to them we could have the first contacts. Laura Rebesco, who worked for the juvenile trial of venetian region, let us have an agreement with her department, which have been useful for our second walk. We organised also some meetings to let people know about this educational tool.

Thanks to the effort of isabella and a private donation, we could start our first experimental educational walks. We couldn't do that without the generous help of Seuil association. We thank all of them, particularly Bernard Ollivier and Paul Dall'Acqua, who, speaks fluently italian and has mentored us in every step: in the selection of the companions, meeting the youngsters, giving us

suggestions when we had problems, training in Paris our walk director and our first companion, helping us in building the walking programmes.

We'll be always thankful!

Till today, we could organise two long walks (three months) and two short ones (one month): that was to give the possibility to all candidates we have met to have a walking experience. Three youngsters have completed the walks, one stopped after ten days. The second long walking experience was organised with the juvenile justice department of our region within a "messa alla prova", a sort of "testing programme" previewed by the juvenile law. Usually, it consists in a programme of activities (volunteer work, school, job training...) that the young offender has to do in an agreed period (generally one or two years), at the end of which, if everything has gone right, the judge decides to delete the offence. This was the first time in Italy that an educational walk on the Santiago Route was included in a "messa alla prova" and that has attracted the attention of the press.

The problems that we have to face to can be divided in two categories:

1. a cultural one. Social services resist to consider new approaches or tools, especially if they require more efforts or commitment. The only normal "breaking" experience is the inclusion in a host community. And the slowness of Italian justice: our second young adult, who was "invited" to walk by the juvenile judge, committed the offence when he was 16. Only six years later the judge proposed him the "messa alla prova", the "testing programme", which included also our long walk. There is also a resistance from families, which are considered very important interlocutors as they are often involved in the implementation of programmes and by which the young offenders are expected to live (that is due also to an economical question). For this reason, social services has proposed to us only persons of foreign origin, Italians of second generation. Foreign families are obviously considered less powerful than Italian ones....
- 2) An economical problem, due to the scarcity of economic means. To understand that, you have to consider that in Italy social services are distributed throughout the national territory. That means that the judicial services are the regional competence (around 20 regions), the social ones are the municipal competence (in Italy there are more than 6000 municipalities!). Minors are in charge of the municipalities where they live in, but Municipalities receive less and less money from the central state and have to manage more and more difficult cases.

The consequence of that is that judicial and social services tend to propose not the more suitable solutions for the youngsters, but the cheaper ones and often they resort to voluntary associations, which are not necessary professional, but have the advantage of not costing.