



Unione Europea / Regione Marche  
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## Workshop 5: Meeting of the SOCIAL INNOVATION Working Group

# Social Innovation: agriculture welcomes the autism – a transferable best practice from Marche Region

*The project: socio-working inclusion and building collaborative networks*

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# Summery

- The project
- The aims
- The actions
- The eco-social approach
- The methodological model
- The evaluation

## **The project**

*Call for competition of ideas - project for the implementation of the experiment in "Social and work inclusion initiatives for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in rural areas"*

**The project**, promoted by the Agri-Environment Service of Marche Region, **originates from the integration of the different policy areas** (agriculture, social, health) and provides for the involvement and training of various professionals (agricultural workers, social workers, psychologists, educators).

Beneficiaries of the call:

- Eight farms /cooperatives, located in the 5 provinces of the Marche Region

Duration of the project:

- 18 months - until December 2023

## **The partners of the project: contributions**

### **Agri-Environment Sector - The Marche Region**

- Promotion, financing and administrative management of the project
- Activation of collaboration with other partners
- Assisting the farm in the planning phase

### **Social Policy Service – The Marche Region**

- Activation of social support for the socio-working inclusion of people with ASD
- Promotion of the participation of local social services (Territorial Social Areas)

## **The partners of the project: contributions (2)**

### **Adult Autism Regional Center - Regional Health Company**

- Activation of local health services for disabilities and specifically in relation to people with Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Multidimensional bio-psycho-social assessment and life projects for people with ASD included in the path of socio-working inclusion in farms

### **Polytechnic University of Marche (Department of Economic and Social Sciences and Department of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences)**

- Definition of the implementation phases of the project, through a participatory planning approach shared with the partners
- Creation of the project impact assessment plan (Research Center and Service on Social and Health Integration -UNIVPM)

## Aims of the project

- **To promote the diversification of agricultural activity** as an element of strategic and qualifying value for the development of the sector
- **To integrate and diversify the offer of services** for people with ASD and their families in the local area
- **To build an integrated socio-health-community path** aimed at improving the quality of life of people with ASD through the launch of socio-working inclusion initiatives.

**Definition of a model of socio-working inclusion of subjects affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in rural areas**

## **Actions carried out**

- Definition of the criteria for the participation in the selection
- Evaluation of the farms which applied
- Assisting the farm in the planning phase in the definition of operational projects of farms, in collaboration with the health services and Social Territorial Areas
- Identification of farm representatives and external tutors (educators)
- Identification of the coordinator of personalized projects
- Agreement with the Polytechnic University of Marche for the evaluation of the project and establishment of the Scientific Technical Committee

## **Actions in progress**

- Training course, aimed at farm representatives, external tutors (educators), social services and health services (social workers, psychologists, educators)
- Definition of the methodological approach and analytical tools provided for in the evaluation plan
- Creation of customized projects for people with ASD



## **Actions to be carried out**

### *Building collaborative networks*

*Analysis of the territory, in relation to the presence of:*

- farms / cooperatives
- social and health services of the territory
- local associations (cultural, social ...)
- family associations
- individual citizens

*Implement actions of:*

- raising awareness of the aims and opportunities of the project
- involvement of the people in the community

## **The project: an eco-social approach**

The actions of the various participants are oriented:

- to improve the living conditions of frail people
- a broad vision that considers the individual in relation to the social context
- to produce an ecological added value

**The participants constantly develop their activities also from an ecological point of view**, taking care of native species, variety of products and cultural heritages, etc., all for the benefit of society as a whole

# Paradigm shift in social work

Eco-social work involves a paradigm shift in understanding the place humans have in the natural world

The characteristics conducive to a change:

- **adopt a holistic world view:** every aspect of life is interconnected within a much larger system
- **promote global citizenship** within social work, which values cultural diversity
- **the adoption of fundamental ecological values** relating to sustainability
- **broaden the perspective of social work,** work linked to the environment in terms of individual, community and political practice (Matthies and Närhi, 2016; Boetto, 2017).

## The challenges

Particular importance is placed on community practice, which includes:

- **promoting** the development of social farming projects that combine the opportunities of the agricultural world with the needs of people
- **facilitating** participatory processes for an active role of the people of the territory in the construction of a network for the promotion and support of social farming initiatives
- **contributing** to enhancing the resources and specific characteristics of the communities, increasing the capacity to offer local services
- **promoting** a vision of community development for inclusive and sustainable growth

# Training

A training approach in which various peculiarities can be identified:

- **interdisciplinary approaches** that broaden the ways in which we can co-construct thinking related to local knowledge and ecological justice
- **critical perspective** that questions modern social structures, values, beliefs and lifestyles
- **approaches aimed at fostering awareness of one's vision of the world and promoting eco-social objectives**

# The methodological model of the project

## Participatory planning

- **Implementation of a co-construction process** of the path to be followed in relation to the objectives of the project. Shared with the participants involved (farms, social and health services, third sector ...)
- **It is a challenge to specialist professionalism** conceived in terms of rigid separation between those who design and those who are the object of the intervention
- **Favors innovation** through the interaction between different skills and experiences allows the participants to build original and creative responses to needs, rather than replicating standardized models

# Evaluation

## *The participatory-constructivist approach*

- A negotiation process between the various parties involved
- Each expresses their own evaluation of the project, which actions have worked

## objectives

- To evaluate the results of the actions activated in the individual projects
- To evaluate the impact of the project on farms
- To evaluate the impact for the territory and the community: the transformations perceived following the application of the project.



*Thanks for your attention*  
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