



Tavolo per le Politiche Giovanili: «Working Group for Youth Policies» in Saluzzo

This workshop will take place
at the conference venue

Target population Youth (aged 14-20) living in Saluzzo, with a special attention to the more vulnerable (from a socio-economic point of view).

Mission To foster positive development in youth through active citizenship by bringing together the various actors and organizations working with local youth.

Funding Structural public funding for the process with resources coming from the Municipality of Saluzzo and other public entities. Other activities are project-based, with public and private (foundations, associations, sponsors etc.) support.

Context

Saluzzo is a small town of 17.000 residents in a rural region of Piedmont. The Tavolo per le Politiche Giovanili (TPG) initiative started in 2009, aiming to integrate local interventions (prevention, wellbeing promotion, education, care) targeting youth. The municipality, local health authority and social services in Saluzzo, together with associations and community groups, created the TPG initiative, translated to “Working Group for Youth Policies”.

Initially, two social educators were employed to get in contact with youth in places where young people usually hang out in the community (e.g. at sports facilities, cafés, in the streets, etc). This allowed trust to be built between the youth and the street level social educators. The educators were then able to carry out preventative efforts (for example involve Serd, the public Drug Addiction Service when necessary). Today, the two projects “Attiviamoci” and a new “Spazio Giovani” are among TPG’s main activities.

About 70 vulnerable young people are in contact with the project on a regular basis. However, as many initiatives and events involving the community take place as a consequence of the TPG, the impact is broader.

Governance & management

TPG consists of three people working in the field, one local counsellor, one social educator, one representative from the local health authority (Drug Addiction Service) and different associations’ representatives (depending on the specific project).

Every third year a partnership agreement is signed with the local social services and local municipal administration.

What this initiative is about

The TPG aims to integrate diverse organizations and services targeting residents in Saluzzo between 14 and 20 years old.

Their mission is to help achieve social inclusion of youth at risk outside traditional institutional care.

Two examples of current initiatives that supports social inclusion and engagement of youth are “Attiviamoci” (Get moving) and a new “Spazio Giovani” (Youth Centre coaching service).

Attiviamoci manage volunteer networks and activities motivated by youth (aged 11-15) education.

Spazio Giovani is a youth centre where they can meet and learn how to take part in the community.

Our strategy for people-driven care

The individual person and his or her story, capabilities and resources is at the centre (not the problem/disease). The empowerment is “indirect” through involvement of vulnerable youth in “healthy activities”, such as spending time in positive contexts and exciting situations, taking part in community activities, building trusting relationships and improving self-recognition and self-esteem.

Informal education is the preferred method to establish trusting relationships between professionals and youths. In case someone needs a specific social or care intervention, the project coordinates its prompt delivery at an early stage.

Community engagement

- The TPG provides training of adults spending time with youth to help them recognize the early signs of risky behaviour and how they can respond in a way that creates a safe, supportive, empowering and preventive environment for vulnerable youth.

- Youth are empowered in becoming leaders in the development and organization of inclusive and social initiatives, e.g. a marathon for human rights where several vulnerable youth participated.

- Volunteer and peer’s support is promoted and plays a crucial role in the activities developed by local associations (as sport coaches, etc.)



Impact

- Activities developed by the TPG have been included in programmatic documents by the Local Health Authorities as examples of successful initiatives of engaging vulnerable youth.

- The TPG approach has been adopted in other projects, which promotes the wellbeing and development of communities (e.g. the Interreg Alcotra #Com.Viso in the Monviso valleys).

- So far, no formal impact evaluation exists but each activity and project is monitored. An evaluation model is being developed in partnership with the University of Turin (Savigliano).



Picture: The TPG Working Group

Insights

- “Educativa informale” (informal educational social working), where social educators engage in dialogic relationship with target youths, is a crucial component in creating and maintaining connection with local youth.

- Activities must be built on youth's premises. Dear to think in new ways when designing events to include the most vulnerable.

- Activate the youth by giving them responsibility in the development and implementation of events.

- Focus on goals and methods, not projects. When institutions are connected to collaborate to reach a specific goal with no time limit, they must learn to work in new ways.

- Identify local resources such as sport coaches already in touch with your target group and train them.

- Street level advocacy is needed to reach vulnerable youth that are not known by social- or health services.

- Serd, the public Drug Addiction Service is involved in all the initiatives with a preventive perspective.

