At the School of OpenCohesion: an example of civic commitment of young people

On 12th August is celebrated International Youth Day, established by the United Nations in 1999. The theme chosen for the 2020 edition is "Youth Engagement for Global Action". On the occasion of this day the OpenCoesione dedicates a DataCard to "At the School of OpenCohesion" - the innovative educational programme aimed at promoting and developing principles of active and conscious citizenship in high schools, which accompanies students in research activities and civic monitoring of European and national funds.

In Italy was launched in the school year 2013-2014 while the has just ended 2019-2020 edition included also the first European project pilot testing that saw the active involvement of Bulgarian, Croatian, Greek, Portuguese and Spanish students and teachers. During the past seven editions held up to the school year 2019-2020, over 26,000 students and 3,000 teachers have been involved in the civic monitoring of cohesion policy projects, who over the years have observed over 800 projects funded by cohesion policies in Italy for a value of approximately 8 billion euros.

The list of all the monitored projects is available on the OpenCoesione portal, while on the ASOC website there is also a geo-referenced map of the institutes involved and the projects monitored (currently referring only to the last three years, therefore starting from the school year 2017-2018). The research carried out by the European teams can also be consulted on the ASOC website, with the evidence of the civic monitoring research carried out.

"Youth Engagement for Local Action" tools

The educational programme is divided into 4 lessons which include a civic monitoring visit, active participation in the events of the Open Administration Week - Open Gov Week and a final public event. Lessons are organized according to a mixed model with online content MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) methods and project-based group work through the use of technologies, online sharing tools, blogs, social networks. The educational path also includes the compilation of a civic monitoring report on Monithon, an independent platform that provides methods and tools to verify the progress and effectiveness of interventions financed by public policies. Participation in the project is open to upper secondary school classes regardless the field of action. Students participate as a "team" (an entire class, a small group within a class or a mixed group made up of students from different classes). The team has a maximum of 25 students, with some exceptions. The classes participating in the project are supported by the referring teacher, with the possible collaboration of a supporting teacher.

The objective of each class is to carry out a thematic research to deepen the socio-economic, environmental and / or cultural characteristics of their territory starting from an intervention funded by cohesion policies on a selected topic, chosen from the information published on the OpenCoesione portal , thus verifying how public policies intervene to improve the local context. With the civic monitoring visit and the events to be organized in the area, the class team promotes an active involvement of the local community, enlarging the perspective of the research and disseminating and discussing the results. As regards the 2019-2020 school year, over sixty percent of the projects selected concern the three themes most appreciated by students: Environment (23.4%), Culture and tourism (22.7%) and Social inclusion (15 , 6%).
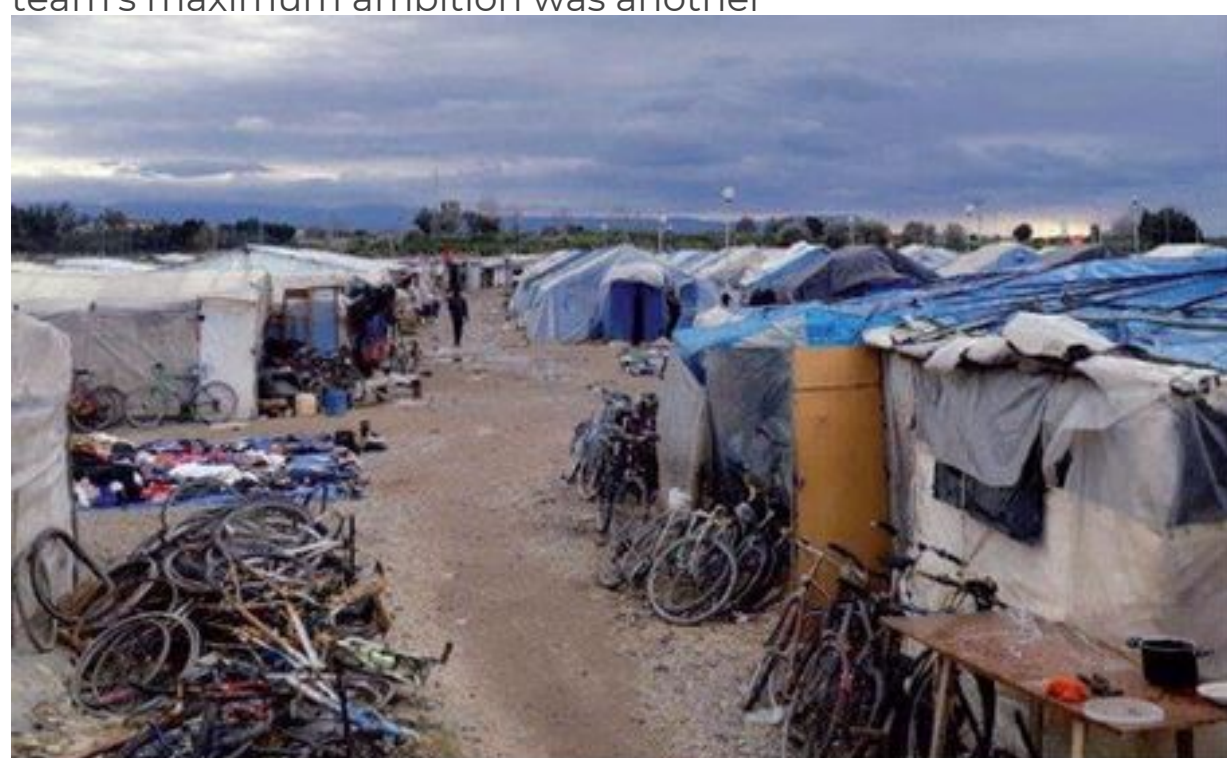
ASOC Experience

At the School of OpenCohesion is an "activating" tool that promotes forms of "civic engagement" going beyon the school year. The ASOC Experience contest responds to this need, created precisely to tell, through videos and new Monithon reports, the return of students to the places of civic monitoring one or more years after the conclusion of their educational programme. All the students of the previous editions of At the School of OpenCohesion can participate, who get back to continue monitoring the developments and effectiveness of the project monitored previously, thus supporting the debate on the territory, with the community and with local institutions. Over 40 videos related to the contest are published on the ASOC YouTube channel.

The civic impact of monitoring by the ASOC team

Il percorso di A Scuola di OpenCoesione è di per sé un esempio di "youth engagement", di impegno civico dei giovani. Il team ASOC ha però potuto constatare come alcuni casi in particolare dimostrino come il lavoro degli studenti possa avere un impatto civico rilevante. Questo ha anche portato, per quanto riguarda l'anno scolastico 2019-20, ad istituire tra le menzioni speciali assegnate anche un Premio Follow up, per la capacità di delineare nuove proposte per continuare il percorso di monitoraggio civico e il coinvolgimento delle istituzioni e della comunità locale.

La menzione è stata assegnata al team HumanITIS dell'ITI "M. M. Milano" di Polistena, in provincia di Reggio Calabria, che è il primo progetto che raccontiamo in questa Data Card.

WELCOME MISSION

IThe HumanITIS team of the ITI "M. M. Milano "of Polistena (RC) monitored an intervention aimed at the construction of a reception center for migrants in the municipality of Rizziconi (RC), a project falling within the 2007-2013 programming period and co-financed by NOP CONV ERDF SECURITY and Cohesion Action Plan 2007-2013. The project, which involved the renovation of a building, was closed in March 2013. Once the investment of available funds was certified, the team set out the objective to understand "how the funds were invested and whether the work carried out achieved the mission that was described in the project preparation stage". However, the team's maximum ambition was another "

starting from the analysis of the project, creating a dialogue with local communities and the migrant community". A dialogue made up of proposals with the aim of harmonizing these two worlds, without even keeping aside the associations who on this issue have always been present. The actors to whom the research is addressed - explain the children - are: communities of the Piana di Gioia Tauro, migrant communities, institutions (municipalities and the Calabria Region), trade union associations, the world of volunteering, individual citizens, school communities, Istat for data and numbers on migratory flows and their local impact. At the end of the research and civic monitoring activities, the team delivered a robust and feasible proposal to the mayors of the Municipalities of the Piana di Gioia Tauro. The voices of the students reached the rooms of the European Parliament, with MEP Laura Ferrara who promised to make the memorandum of the humanITIS group her own. Find out more at this ASOC link.
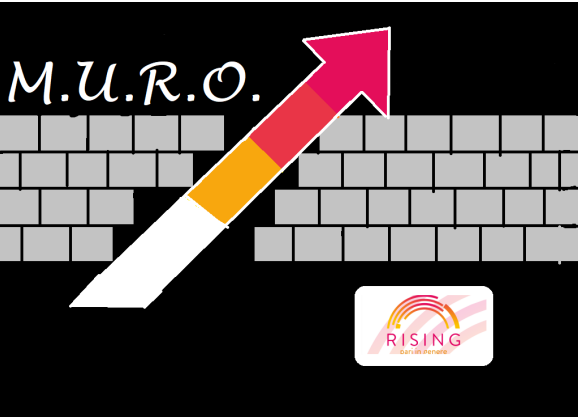
MUNICIPALITY OF PALMA DI MONTECHIARO - NATURALIZATION AND LANDSCAPE RECOVERY OF THE SLOPES OF THE URBAN CENTER

The Watershed team of the IIS "G. B. Odierna "in Palma di Montechiaro (AG) during the 2018-2019 school year monitored a project financing the restoration of the historic center of the town. This choice - they explain - "conditioned by the events that occurred a few weeks before [the start of the monitoring]: due to heavy rains the town was submerged by the waters that descended from Mount Pizzillo, causing numerous damage to roads and homes, compromising traffic, damaging cars and, above all, injuring people".
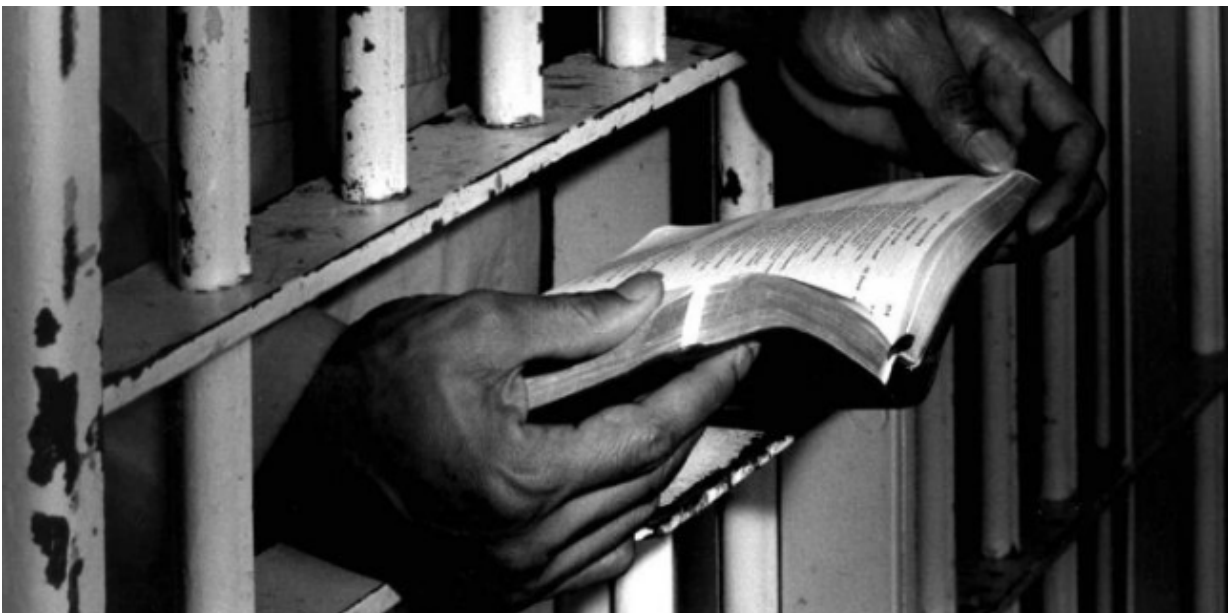

The chosen project, in fact, consists of a water trap aimed at preventing rainwater from reaching the village and causing the flooding and damage to people, buildings and road surfaces, deviating the water flow into the sea into a large canal. The monitoring and civic commitment of the team members led the municipal administration to sign a memorandum of understanding to find the funds for the maintenance of the operation. Find out more at this ASOC link.

WITH ROME CAPITAL - PRISONS

The team M.U.R.O. (Let's move United Researching Beyond) of the "Giosuè Carducci" Economic and Social High school Rome, in 2017-2018 school year monitored a project aimed at the insertion of ex-prisoners into the working productive world, the COL (Center for Work Orienting) of Rome Capital. The monitoring had its starting point in Article 27 of the Italian Constitution, and in particular the third paragraph which claims: "The penalties cannot consist of treatments contrary to the sense of humanity and must aim at the re-education of the offender". The team put a great effort to raise awareness, even after the end of the school year, on the inclusion of ex-prisoners

in the working world. "Our struggle, for 'Prisons without bars', aims to eliminate prejudices about ex-prisoners, so that they can be reintegrated into society, therefore, to raise public awareness on the condition of prisoners (both genders) and to dispel clichés about the possibility for those who made a mistake to recover to the values of civic living and respect for the rules by reintegrating themselves into community.

The struggle is aimed at supporting anyone who wants to "get back in the game" explain students. Find out more at this link ASOC

There are also two monitoring researches held related to the years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, being published on the At the School of OpenCohesion website (references to the following projects refer to the ASOC research list on the OpenCoesione website).

We Are For Legality

The team of the Liceo "A. Vallone "of Galatina (LE), in the year 2016-2017 monitored the Responsible Tourism and Enterprise project financed by the NOP CON ERDF aimed at improving the management of assets confiscated from organized crime. In particular, this involves the renovation of a property located in Noha (LE), near Galatina, confiscated from organized crime and reconversion with the active participation of social cooperatives, selected through the preparation of a public tender, in order to give it a different destination dedicated to disadvantaged people, also linked to legality, prisoners, former prisoners, drug addicts etc. The team managed to develop a public debate that was actively participated by the community and local authorities.

- Project
- Monitoring report
- Final video

Dream Warriors

IThe "Leonardo da Vinci" team of Sora (FR), in the year 2015-2016 monitored the Digitization Cinema-Theater Mangoni Isola del Liri project financed by the ROP CRO ERDFLAZIO 2007-2013 programme aimed at modernizing and adapting from the technological-structural point of view the rooms not yet digitized in the Lazio Region. Transversely to its research work, the team created the "Pact for Open Data" with the Mayors of Frosinone, to publish data on interventions and public works in an open format and therefore accessible and reusable by everyone.

- Project
- Monitoring report
- Final video