REPORT - RESEARCH

Accademia europea Firenze

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Accademia europea Firenze
15 July 2013

INTRODUCTION

Introduction and objectives of the research

This report, elaborated by Accademia europea di Firenze, presents the results of the research within Charming youth work project, which took place over a period of time between March and May 2013. The research aims to detect and analyze the attitudes and trends in terms of human rights, anti-racism and inclusion policies of youth organizations and agencies that work with young people and support their participation, supporting their growth processes, activation and raising awareness of their rights.

Specifically, the research had the following objectives:
- Explore understanding of youth organizations of the inclusion concept;
- Explore understanding of youth organizations of racism and human rights concepts;
- Identify examples of inclusion, anti-racist and anti-discrimination practices;
- Identify stereotypes and prejudices, both within the interviewed youth organizations and in the groups with which they work.

The research consists of three sections that deal with:
1) The phases and research tools;
2) Summary of results;
3) Conclusions and recommendations

Attached to the research, the model of an online questionnaire and in-depth interviews.

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<div style="border:1px solid">PART I</div>

PHASES and RESEARCH TOOLS

This research is the result of a journey that has seen the use of the following methods and tools:

✓ **Online questionnaire**

In March 2013, a questionnaire has been prepared for youth organizations and bodies working with/for young people, with the aim to investigate their knowledge and skills in terms of discrimination, inclusion/exclusion and human rights (see Annex 1).

The questionnaire was available online on the website of Accademia europea di Firenze. It has been spread through the newsletter of AeF, various Youth Portals, educational institutions, youth associations and networks of public and private entities.

AeF has received 74 online questionnaires.

➔ **Focus Group**

Accademia europea di Firenze has organized two focus groups with a total of 20 people.

The invitation to participate at the focus groups was sent by e-mail to all those who participated in the online questionnaire.

The focus groups lasted approximately two hours each and were held in the legal seat of AEF on 7th and 27th of May 2013.

The aim of the focus groups was to analyze the results emerged from the analysis of the online questionnaires and to collect more data about inclusive practices adopted by the youth organizations which took part in the online survey.

Both focus groups have seen a mixed participation of men and women aged between 25 and 45 belonging to: 1 school, 4 associations that work

with immigrants and / or dealing with intercultural learning, 2 public bodies, 1 sports association, 1 NGO, 1 training agency.

In both meetings the atmosphere was cooperative and informal, supporting the exchange of views, practices and methodology. Charm themes, such as antiracist policies, inclusive practices, human rights culture and human rights education have attracted interest and have been treated in depth by the participants.

➔ **5 in-depth interviews**

After the focus groups the researcher carried out with 5 persons who belong to 5 different organizations, online interviews to deepen the understanding both of the good practices within their organization /body in favor of social inclusion.

During the interviews the respondents could share which training needs (in relation to the main issues covered by Charm project: human rights, racism, anti-discrimination) must be taken into account to implement and foster a a change in their organisation.

The persons who participated to the interviews belong to: 1 training agency, 2 intercultural associations, 1 public body, 1 NGO.

PART II

THE RESULTS: A SYNTHESIS

✓ **The online questionnaires' results**

From the questionnaires received in April 2013, hereafter we summarize the results.
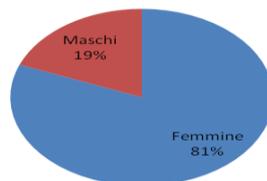
The respondents

The total number of respondents to the online questionnaire was equal to 74 people, of different backgrounds.

Gender

Respondents are 81% women and 19% men. The majority of respondents are female. This data reflects the trend that in the socio-educational field, the workers are mostly female. Data which has been confirmed by the fact that most of the organizations in which the respondents work, operate in the socio-educational field.
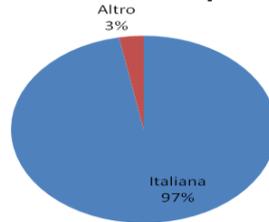

Nationality

Almost all of the respondents are Italian (97%), as shown by the graphic. There is a lack of participation of foreigners (3%).

Nazionalità dei rispondenti
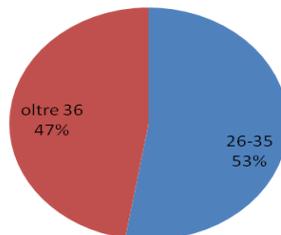
Altro
3%

Italiana
97%

Age

Respondents can be grouped as following on the basis of their age:
- 53% between 26 and 35 years old
- 47% over 36 years.

It is noted that none belongs to the age group 18-25 years old. We assume that all respondents operate in contact with young people, but they are not "really" young people themselves.

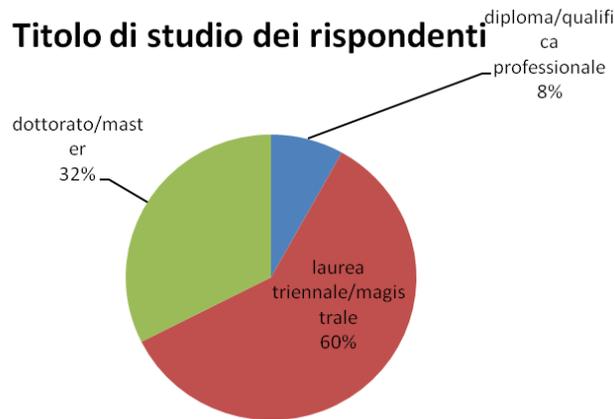**Età dei rispondenti**

oltre 36
47%

26-35
53%

Educational background

60% of the respondents have got their Bachelor degree, 32% of them a doctorate or master's degree, while 8% have a secondary school diploma or professional qualification diploma.

Titolo di studio dei rispondenti

diploma/qualifica professionale 8%

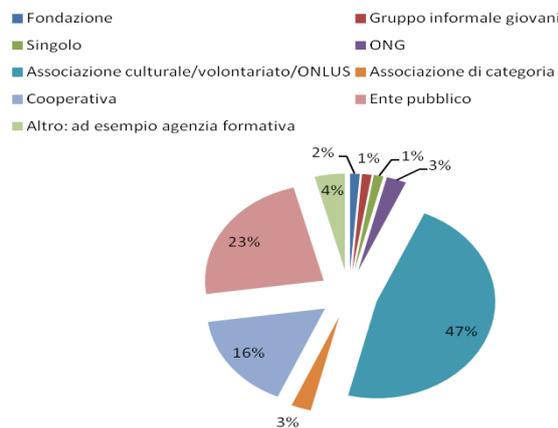dottorato/master 32%

laurea triennale/magistrale 60%

Respondents' organisations

As the graph indicates, the majority of respondents work in structures that belong to the so called "third sector" with a presence of cooperatives for the 16,2% and cultural associations/voluntary and non-profit organizations for 47,2%, NGOs for 2%, foundations as 1,3%.

The graph shows a good participation of representatives of public institutions, for a total of 23,1%.

Tipologia di enti di appartenenza

- Fondazione
- Gruppo informale giovani
- Singolo
- ONG
- Associazione culturale/volontariato/ONLUS
- Associazione di categoria
- Cooperativa
- Ente pubblico
- Altro: ad esempio agenzia formativa

2% 1% 1% 3%
4%
23%
16%
3%
47%

Working areas of the respondents

The main sectors in which respondents operate are the following:
- Educational
- Social
- Cultural
- Migration services

All areas that are in various forms related to the themes of the CHARM project: human rights, anti-discrimination, racism and inclusion.

The graphics show also that most of the organisations operate in several fields.
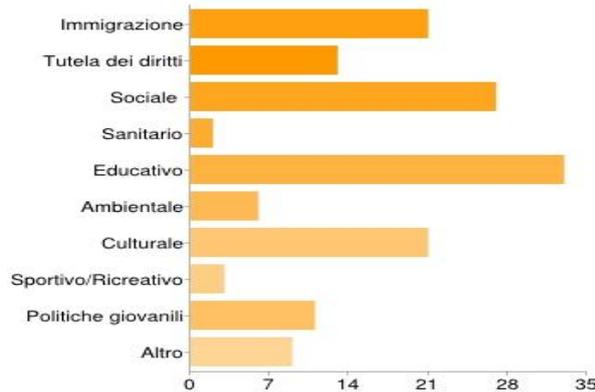
After having identified the respondents and the organisations they work with, the online questionnaire has dealt with the main topics of the Charming youth work project.

Roles in the organisations

The majority of the respondents work as coordinator (30%), some others are involved more in the project design and planning (18%), other persons work as educator (15%) and some others as trainer/teacher (11%).
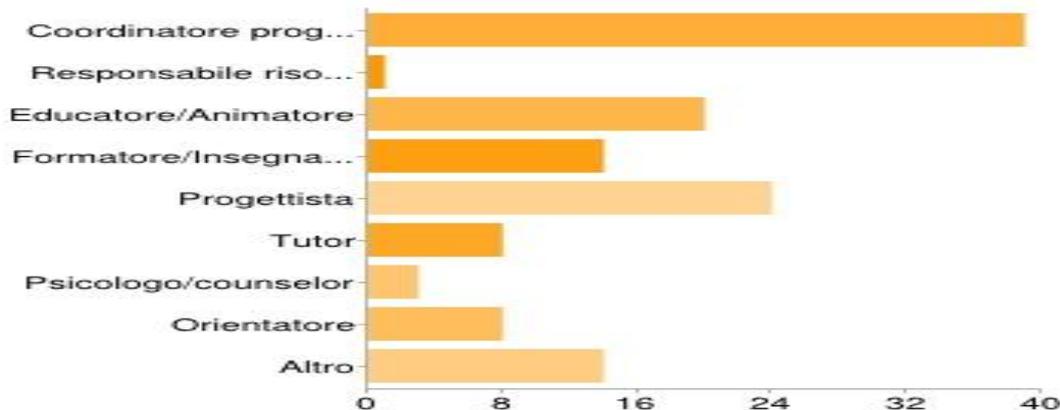
Discrimination: types as perceived by the respondents

Respondents thought that the most widespread discrimination is that of ethnic type, followed by social discrimination, gender and finally the religious one.

	Social	Ethnic background	Religious	Gender based
1		**38,00%**		
2	34,00%			
3				36,00%
4			42,00%	

Number one of the grid stands for the discrimination which respondents identified as the most widespread, number 2,3,4 follow in order of importance.

Discrimination: causes

The main reason to discriminate – as perceived by the respondents- is **ignorance**, seen as lack of cultural competence, followed by fear, power, opportunity, arrogance and superficiality.

	Arroganza	Ignoranza	Opportunità	Paura	Potere	Superficialità
1		**42,00%**				
2				25,00%		
3					21,00%	
4			21,00%			
5	19,00%					
6						18,00%

Number one of the grid stands for the discrimination which respondents identified as the most widespread, number 2,3,4,5,6 follow in order of importance.

Discrimination: discrimination cases witnessed by the respondents

Tipologia delle discriminazioni a cui si assiste
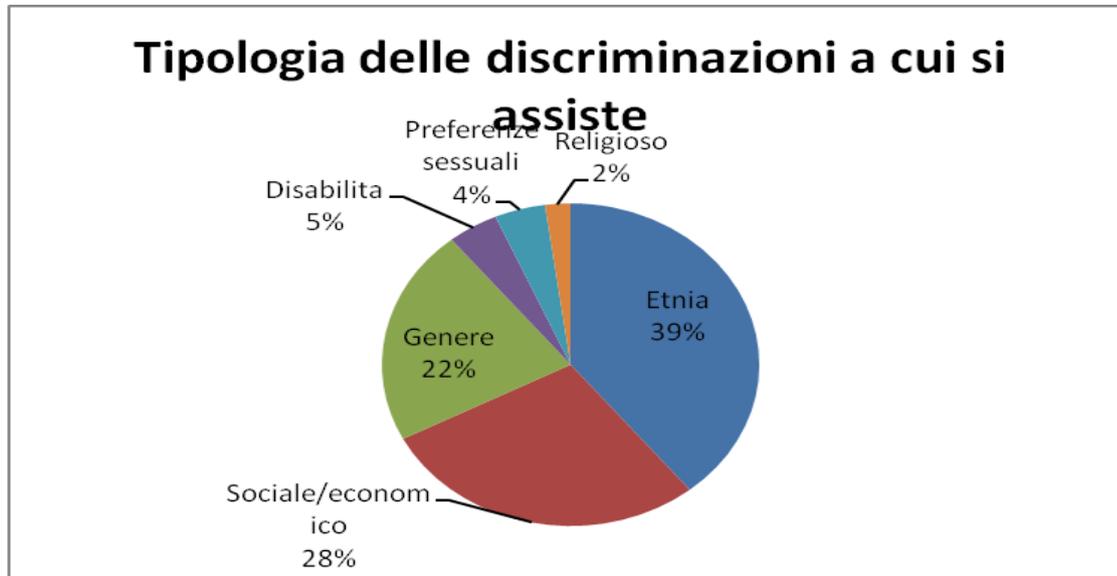
45% of the respondents declared that they never witnessed a discrimination fact.

55% of respondents declared to have witnessed discriminations facts/cases. To confirm the data previously mentioned, the respondents declared that the main kind of discrimination they have witnessed in their work environment is based on ethnical differences.

Such discrimination occurs in various aspects of people daily life and in particular of foreign immigrants, such as:

- little chance of finding work;
- lack of adequate safeguards and rights at work;
- discrimination in access to housing (eg by tenants/landlords);
- discrimination due to some rules for membership of sport federations that hinder the participation of children / young foreigners;
- difficulties in accessing services / public counters (especially for linguistic reasons);
- exclusion of students from moments of socialization (parties, birthdays, group study) because they belong to a family of different ethnical origins.

Other kind of discrimination cases/facts witnessed by the respondents are based on social differences (social should be understood also in terms of economic disadvantage and educational disadvantage) or gender, meaning fewer opportunities for women to make career advancements or perform leadership roles. Finally discrimination on the basis of disability - seen as the absence of the possibility of autonomy for the disabled persons - especially for the presence of architectural barriers or lack of civic sense.

Discrimination cases in the respondents' organisations

The 79.80% of respondents declared they had not been discriminated against.
The 20.20% of respondents said they had suffered themselves for gender discrimination or being a victim of episodes of exclusion / marginalization by the working group for their way of thinking. The respondents mentioned also that in their organisations there were cases of discrimination against persons with disabilities and against immigrants.

Anti-discriminatory and inclusive practices in the respondents' organisations

The 79.80% of the respondents stated that there are anti-discriminatory practices in their organization, inclusive approaches and respect for human rights.
The practices listed are mainly related to the fact that the organization has as its "mission" these values and thus promoted and implemented projects, services and initiatives aimed at encouraging the inclusion and respect for human rights (eg, after-school inter-ethnic language courses, movies, projects on the legality and social inclusion and employment projects, integration of immigrants, etc.).
Additionally some of the respondents said that in their organization there is a consistent female presence and internal rules that favor women's work (eg flexible working hours).

Other examples of practices indicated by the respondents are the following:
- to promote the idea of "the other as a resource," because there are internal rules based on the individual needs,
- the organization is not structured in a hierarchical manner, but there is a plurality and exchange of ideas that makes every person fully included in the organisation and the activities are participatory.

The 20.20% said they would not have / implement specific practices.

The results of the focus groups

The dimensions explored through the 2 focus groups were largely the same as in the on-line questionnaire, ie:
- o The main types of discrimination;
- o The reasons for the discrimination;
- o Actions that can be taken in response to the phenomena of discrimination.

All participants agreed that discrimination based on ethnic origins and gender represent the two types of discrimination which are mostly perceived or more "visible" in our context. It was assumed that such discrimination are more visible now because:

- o The majority of respondents are women (gender discrimination);
- o Most of the respondents are of Italian nationality, and therefore ethnic discrimination (ie the stranger) appears to be the most perceived;

o This result reflects a stereotype created by the media, that offered to us incorrect information about immigration and image of women. For some participants in the focus groups, the same policy has created and helps to maintain a "prejudicial" information system in order to control the thoughts and actions of its citizens.

The representative of a local organisation highlighted a phenomenon that is particularly critical and taking even greater proportions, not only locally, but nationally: there are often some Italians who claim to "suffer" ethnic discrimination as they believe that foreigners, especially immigrants from poor countries, enjoy privileges or preferential treatment in the name of a local or national legislation which provides for greater protection of the rights of migrants instead of protecting Italian citizens.

Another fact that is brought to light by a trainee of an intercultural association is the low percentage of those who claim to have witnessed discrimination directed at people with disabilities: this is a worrying statistic that reflects the ignorance of many people of this type of discrimination, then that does not seem to be conceived as a problem.

After these reflections on the data emerging from the questionnaire online, we proceeded to stimulate a discussion on possible solutions and answers to these discriminatory phenomena: in this case the position of the participants of the focus groups was unanimous in recognizing that it is needed to think about a new system and a strategy that involves the largest number of people in an integrated way.

A crucial role in this regard can be played by the third sector, the associations and educational institutions. They can intervene with actions, and educational and experiential projects that promote the "awareness about differences and diversity", and stimulate to overcome fear and resistance that often you have towards people who are different from us. Particularly important seems to be the role played by the schools, especially for children and adolescents who represent an age group particularly sensitive to intercultural learning.

The teacher from a Florentine secondary school stated that there is a need for compulsory training for teachers on intercultural and human rights education that should be provided annually by each school.

However, from the two focus groups emerge also an unanimous attitude in declaring that the school does not have tools and resources to ensure adequate training to teachers on these subjects. The lack of resources and funds represents one of the major obstacle to the cultural growth of young students to promote a culture of human rights and anti-discriminatory practices.

In brief it is hoped an improvement of strategies for anti-discriminatory policies which involve the various social actors and the beginning of a cultural change that brings personal and social change.

The results of the in-depth interviews

As for the examples of anti-discriminatory practices, inclusion and respect for human rights implemented within organizations, interviews suggested that these practices are related to the fact that the organization has as its "mission" these values and thus promotes and implements projects, services and initiatives aimed at encouraging the inclusion and respect for human rights, or refer to those values and principles while managing the human resources and the activities.

The referent of a training agency indicates as good practice the following example:
- the organization of regular meetings and working groups to discuss on the progress of activities, deepen any problems that emerged in the management of services and staff, analyze training needs and develop proposals;
- the sharing of experiences, which allows to enhance the skills and attitudes of the individuals and promote participation;
- an assessment of the staff that cover not only the evaluation of the presence of competencies requirements according to the job profile, but also the level of well-being, motivation. A method used in this kind of assessment is the self-assessment.

Another interesting practice was implemented by local public Institution that have adopted internal rules for the creation of a "Committee for Equal Opportunities, the enhancement of the welfare of those who work and anti-discrimination as foreseen by the Italian law for public bodies on anti-discrimination measures".

The Committee, whose mission is to ensure the presence of a working environment characterized by respect for the principles of equal opportunities, welfare organization and the contrast of all forms of discrimination and violence towards the workers. It also promotes the culture of equal opportunity and respect for the dignity of the person in the working context, through the proposal to the competent bodies of training plans for all workers.

Another good practice that emerged from the interviews was to use specific tools and European Union funds for the realization of projects for social inclusion.

OpenCoesione (http://www.opencoesione.gov.it/) for example is the first Italian portal that gives visibility to how the funds were used to support social cohesion by the Regions and the Central Government of the Italian State.
The results of the implemented projects are published for the public to assess whether the projects met their needs and if resources were engaged in an appropriate manner.

The interviews also investigated what were the training needs of the respondents to bring an improvement in organisations' practices in order to have an anti-discriminatory and inclusive approach, that protect human rights. It was also investigated what were the training needs to implement a path of personal growth and change .

All respondents agreed on the following:
- There is a need for training courses for school teachers and staff of Public Institutions /private organizations working on human rights, racism, anti-discrimination. A training course should support the persons to translate the principles (sometimes a little 'theoretical) and values in concrete practices to be implemented within the organization and projects to be carried out with experiential methodologies.

For example it might be useful a course that will lead to make a personal and organizational self-analysis, about the existing prejudices, the way of communication that should be used in order to promote diversity and non-violent approaches.

Another important aspect for the respondents underlined was the need for a training session on anti-discrimination legislation which exists locally and nationally, but also internationally.
An important focus should be made on the legislation related to human rights and social rights at national and international level.
For many respondents it is equally important that during a training course, it is fostered a deeper understanding of the cultures that we are confronted with in our daily life, and it is promoted a language learning and intercultural dialogue in favor of an inclusive and dialogical process.

PART III

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The process that led to the creation of the research allows us to formulate the following conclusions:
- ➔ Organizations involved in the research are particularly sensitive and attentive to the issues of inclusion, discrimination and anti-racism. This is also demonstrated by the fact that, in their daily work, are committed to implement practical measures to promote inclusion and awareness on issues related to anti-discrimination, anti-racism, human rights;
- ➔ The practices implemented are considered relevant but not sufficient for a substantial cultural change both for individuals and for organizations, as there is still an economic

Project "Civic Help for Anti-Racist Measures in youth work" (JUST/2012/FRAC/AG/2723)

With financial support from the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme of the European Union.

system that has integrated social and political change strategies and make sure that there are only isolated interventions.

➔ Through training is considered important to raise awareness to the issues mentioned above using experiential methodologies so that the participants can concretely experience the situations of discrimination and racism, critically re-elaborating the experience, learning how to transform the learning into action in their daily life.

Essential in the continuation of the Charming youth work project will be the active involvement of organizations, which aim at participating in the training courses nationally. Another essential element is the dissemination of the project locally and nationally using the the network of Accademia europea di Firenze and also the networks of the respondents' organisations.

For this reason, organizations will be able to contribute to the definition of the content of national training courses, both on the basis of their specific comments and the needs of the groups with whom they work directly or indirectly.

From the results of the research, the local training courses should mainly focus on:

- ⚔ learn more about of the various types of discrimination;
- ⚔ understand in which contexts discrimination occurs and why;
- ⚔ understand to whom and in what manner discrimination occurs;
- ⚔ understand and learn about human right and human rights education;
- ⚔ learn how to plan actions, which are coherent with the principles and values promoting anti-discrimination, inclusion and a culture of human rights.

To achieve a multiplier effect of the project activities, some respondents suggested to create a specific BLOG through which participants can make contributions and reflections on both the activities in which they participated and the themes of the project.

ANNEXES

- Annex 1 – Analysis of the online questionnaire
- Annex 2 – Interview form
- Annex 3 – Online Questionnaire
- Annex 4 – Research IT Version