



M E D E U Y M

Making Empowerment Drawing
European Union Youth Model



M.E.D.E.U.Y.M.

AND THE EXTRA CHROMOSOME

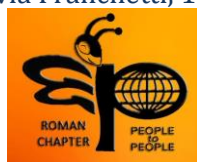
A PATH TO THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION FOR ALL

by

Gabriella Arcifa

Elisa Caldarella

Ente UniOne via Franchetti, 18/a Catania - Italy +39 8665125 www.enteunione.com



1.OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The project M.e.d.e.u.y.m. (www.medeuym.eu), funded by the National Youth Agency, under the Erasmus+ program, Key Action 3, has provided an opportunity to 70 young people from 4 European countries, Italy, Romania, Lithuania, Sweden, to come together to think about and express their ideas to the European policy makers on key issues and possible solutions regarding the future of youth in Europe, reinforcing their awareness of being European citizens and creating new channels to make their voices be heard in Europe. The topics addressed by young people, divided into three thematic groups were: 1) political participation and structured dialogue; 2) social inclusion 3) social media and IT tools;

With the intent to really include all, 5 young men with Down syndrome also participated in the activities of the project.

It is common knowledge that Down Syndrome is characterized by the presence of an extra chromosome in the cells, in particular there are three chromosomes 21 instead of two, from here originates the name of "Trisomy 21".

A person with this disease has a variable intellectual disability depending on the individual and a characteristic physical appearance, often these people also suffer from various kinds of health ailments. The quality and life expectancy of those affected by Down Syndrome have both greatly increased in recent years, but if as far as health is concerned life expectancies have improved, the same can not be said about the quality of social inclusion and participation in community life.

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This is why the role of intermediary organizations such as associations and social enterprises is fundamental to give especially young people opportunities for integration not only in the local context, but also in the European context.

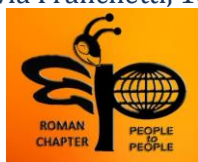
The operators of Ente Unione have partnered with the volunteers from the social cooperative "CONTROVENTO CATANIA", which deals with these subjects every day with passion and perseverance, and has worked hard offering us a valuable contribution to the success of the project "M.E.D.E.U.Y.M." not only by participating with enthusiasm and punctuality to meetings, but also by acting as a support for disabled young people who already had participated in fruitful paths to personal autonomy.

The methodology used in the project was based on a cooperative and friendly mode where the boys could confront, enter into a relationship and develop a new relational approach and new knowledge, under the supervision of tutors and of the other young people taking part to the project. To achieve the results of the project, we thought it was important to assist them during the international seminar, making them at the same time autonomous protagonists, always remaining in the second row, as to leave them both the freedom to integrate and to choose and find the mode of expression that most intrigued and represented them and that they would enjoy. In a second step, we submitted two questionnaires and created a billboard that repropounded all the knowledge they acquired during the entire journey.

We tried to create an atmosphere of trust and openness in which the boys could put into play cognitive abilities such as memory, concentration, attention and reasoning. In addition, the project began and was completed with an interview with the guys about what they had learned, the role of the authorities known through the project and the results obtained from their answers was in 100% of cases a greater

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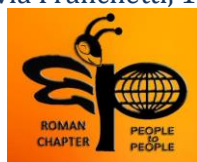
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European political and social awareness, of which in reality they had no memory, or perhaps they had never dealt with the issue, as well as an enhanced capacity of expression and autonomy.

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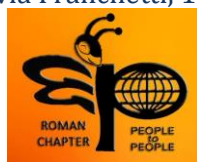
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2.CONTENT OF THE ACTIVITIES

For educational matters, in relation to the level of learning of the children it was decided to arrange an *ad hoc* preliminary meeting for them, to give some basic information about the project, the Erasmus+ program and the European Union in general, starting from basic concepts relating to the geographical boundaries of Europe, the EU Member States, the concept of national and European citizenship. Later the boys were present at the days of the conference giving their contribution to group work aimed at the common debate and the proposal of possible solutions on the three topics submitted by the conference: political participation of young people and structured dialogue; social inclusion; social media. The interaction among young people has highlighted how for teens suffering from Down Syndrome the opportunities to learn about the European Union from the territory are very scarce, if not non-existent, and that these must be developed further by associations and local youth councils, in order to allow them also to be true European citizens. This evidence has emerged in the first place from the questionnaires submitted at the beginning of the activity, which have highlighted the difficulties of children with Down syndrome in learning and memorizing complex concepts related to the European Union. Much more significant was the ability of these young people to interact in the social inclusion thematic group, because of the entrenched awareness of their need for active participation in society, not only as people in need of assistance, but as citizens who like other can give also their contribution to the development of society, with their own abilities and their work. Their ease of expression on this theme is also derived from a previous preparation on the theme of self-awareness and autonomy on which the social cooperative "Controvento" had worked; such cooperative has accompanied the young people in all phases of the project, assisted by the operators of our Association. In conclusion, this document

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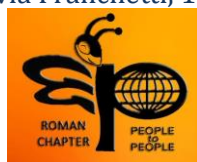
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reports the activities offered to children during the preparatory phase of the project, which can be replicated also in different projects and in different European countries on the issues of European citizenship, issues on which the learning and the interaction of the participants has reached a good degree of success.

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3. Guide to the preparatory training

European political awareness

To ensure that the participants with special needs involved were aware of participating in a dialogue between young Europeans in the EU context and ready to interact with the other participants during the international seminar, it was decided to realize an initial training with the following objectives:

- 1) Verify and form a European geographic knowledge and awareness
- 2) Form a European civic Conscience
- 3) Broaden the opportunities of participation ad the European level
- 4) Develop both verbal and communication skills
- 5) Create a new European awareness for new training and apprenticeship opportunities

METHODOLOGY

The activity began and ended with an evaluation questionnaire aimed at verifying the impact of the training meeting on learning of the young people involved, each flanked by an operator. We created a poster containing visually all their knowledge acquired during the entire path, we made them questions, waiting and respecting their times of response. We gave them the opportunity to express themselves through play,

reconstructing with them a course of geographical and political awareness at the local, national and European level.

WORKING MATERIAL:

globe - map - posters - colour pens - blackboard - computer with projector - images of the European capital cities - images of the European flags.

TRAINING

Educators and facilitators have the participants sit in a circle around a poster, starting a dialogue with them on issues of local, national and European citizenship, from a reflection on the awareness of their geographical origin and their citizenship rights, following with flexibility (based on the response of the boys) the following list of questions.

Question 1: Can you tell us the name of the city where we live? Of the region? Of the State?

The dialogue with the participants starts with questions concerning the city, the region and the State where they live:

Catania (display images that identify the city on a table. The images chosen will be placed on a poster - Same exercise for the images that identify the region and add them to the poster - Same exercise for the images identifying Italy and have them on the poster).

Question n. 2: Now is the time for a more difficult level. Ask the participants: do you know which are the components of a State?

Answer. The definition of State does not include only the territory, i.e. the physical place where we live - for example in our case Catania, Sicily, Italy, Europe - but a set of elements, namely

TERRITORY

POPULATION

Question n. 3: The population of a territory are *CITIZENS*. What does this mean?

Question n. 4: Do you know what laws are and who drafts them in your city, Region, State where you live?

A) Laws is synonymous of rules, what are rules?

What do rules represent for us?

The participants may be asked what they think rules are and write the answers on the poster (examples of answers: obligations, rights, useful for living together, begin the discussion from concrete examples that relate to the boys and their daily lives in the context in which they live).

The answers will allow us to reach a definition of

RIGHTS: the power to do something (right to medical assistance for the protection of health)

OBLIGATIONS: the duty to do something (in this case law imposes limitations: for example)

After having understood what is a right and what is an obligation a definition of the rules will be provided by the participants.

Rules are obligations or prohibitions that tell us how to behave. They forbid us some things, but they allow other things.

B) Who makes the laws?

In your City: the Major and the City Council

In the Region: the President of the Region and the Regional Parliament

In the State: the Parliament. The people we citizens elect to vote in the Parliament are called: DEPUTIES.

We citizens vote the members of these institutions, and therefore those who make the laws, whenever ELECTIONS are held.

Question 5: Do you know what Europe is? And the European Union?

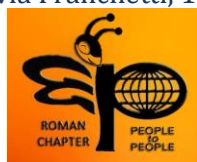
Goal: ORIENTATION AND GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION. THE CONTINENT

Well, now that we have understood where we are and who makes the rules in the territory where we live, let's go and discover Europe.

A) Europe is a continent. In the world there are 5 continents. Describe them by using the globe to spot them. We said that you live in ITALY. Can you spot the State in which you live? Ask the participants to indicate it on the globe.

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B) As the State where you live, in Europe there are other States, do you know how many and their names?

In Europe there are 50 States, you can find a map at the following link:
https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stati_dell'Europa

6) KNOWING EUROPE. WHICH EUROPEAN STATE WOULD YOU LIKE TO VISIT?

Starting with flags and images of the countries that will be shown to the participants, they will be asked to choose a state that they would like to visit and to paste images on a colourful poster, writing their name next to that of the state they chose.

7) From Europe to the European Union

Online Game. What's the European Union: http://europa.eu/participants-corner/countries/flash/index_it.htm

At the end of World War II, some of these States decided to unite in an organization that today is called European Union, with the aim of maintaining peace among their people, grow together and improve the wealth of their citizens.

In the beginning there were 6 members in such organization, later in the course of time they increased in number reaching the current 28 member States.

EUROPEAN UNION MEMBER STATES

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FLAG GAME

1957 the 6 founding States of the European Union: France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium and Holland

TOTAL: 6 Countries

1973 3 more Countries join in: Denmark, Ireland and Great Britain

TOTAL: 9 Countries

1981 One new Country becomes member: Greece

TOTAL: 10 Countries

1986 two more Countries: Spain and Portugal

TOTAL: 12 Countries

1995 3 more member States: Austria, Finland and Sweden

TOTAL: 15 Countries

2004 the most substantial enlargement with 10 more Countries: Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Cyprus, Malta and Slovenia.

TOTAL: 25 Countries

2007 the most recent members: Bulgaria and Romania

2013 Croazia

TOTAL 28 Countries

METHODOLOGY: Drawing on the Poster and online computer game:

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"The flag Game": http://europa.eu/participants-corner/memory/index_en.htm#/game

The European Union Member States: http://europa.eu/participants-corner/explore_it.html

Question n. 8: In Italy laws are made by the Parliament. But who approves the laws, who makes the rules in Europe? The European citizenship.

In the European Union it is the European Parliament who makes the laws, along with another institution called the European Union Council. These Bodies regulate the life of the Member States, providing common laws for the improvement of progress, wealth (happiness) of all of us European citizens.

Here you can see some useful videos to see how things work:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNik64E4Fco>

We are both Italian and European Citizens, for this reason we have certain rights both in Italy and in Europe.

Question n. 9. Who makes the laws in Europe and how to vote?

A) As in Italy where there is an institution that makes the laws, the Parliament, also in the European Union there is a similar institution. It's the European Parliament together with the European Union Council and the European Commission.

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The European Parliament is elected by the citizens and is the Institution for democratic expression and control of the European Union; it represents more than 500 million citizens of its 28 Member States. The Parliament meets in Strasbourg and in Brussels, while the General Secretariat is based in Luxembourg.

A) Each Member State of the European Union has its representatives who are elected by the citizens. They are called MEPs (Members of the European Parliament) or European Deputies.

Let's discover the MEPs through the following link:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/it/map.html>

The Italian MEPs are 73.

Let's see who they are:

http://www.europarl.it/resource/static/files/Documenti/meps_italia_upd_31-8-2016.pdf

Even young people with Down syndrome have the right to vote.

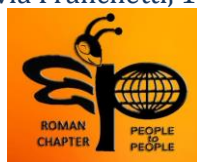
What is the Right to Vote? The right to vote is a right that grants an individual the chance to express his will during an election of members of the political bodies (for example the election of deputies).

All we citizens can ask the MPs the Right to express our opinion in Europe. We can do this in many ways, through direct contact, social media, but also through projects financed by the Erasmus+ program of the Youth Agency.

An important project: MY OPINION MY VOTE: <http://myopinionmyvote.eu/>

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Other projects can be found at the following link: <http://bit.ly/2kJLPBv>

10) What are the rights of young people in the European Union?

Young people have many rights in the European Union, for example the right to travel and move freely from State to State without boundaries. In addition the European Union offers them many educational opportunities by means of the Erasmus+ Program funds.

That's how through the present project we have the opportunity to know other young people coming from other European States, to travel, learn new languages, know and influence the European politicians and express our opinion.

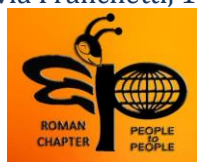
Other aims are:

- to promote the participation to the democratic life in Europe and to the labor market, the active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, solidarity;
- to favour the improvement of quality in the field of social-educational animation;
- to integrate political reforms at the local, regional and national level and support the development of a youth policy based on knowledge and concrete data and to acknowledge both non formal and informal learning, in particular by means of a reinforced political cooperation;
 - to enhance the international dimension of the activities involving young people and the role of social-educational animators (Youth Workers) as well as of the youth organizations, recognized as support structures for young people.

METHODOLOGY: To gain the attention of the participants we used the video-animated shorts on the European Union that can be found on the "EUTUBE" channel and other videos such as, for example, that on the Role of the Youth Agency in Italy explained here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SVeBINvP7Y>

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4. EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

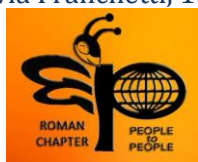
RESULTS

At the end of the project, the 100% of the participants declared that they have never heard about the Erasmus+ Programme and European Union, before the beginning of the project. Therefore, the project M.E.D.E.U.Y.M. has been the first and unique opportunities for the participants with special needs involved to hear about youth participation at EU level, but also to know friends from other countries never visited before. It has been also the first opportunity to express their opinion on EU topics. This happened during the international seminar. On the other side the other participants have discovered the unique skills and the communication ability of the youngsters affected by the down syndrome which are perfectly able to interact and express their opinion as the other young people. The special needs participants have been flanked by specialists and by translators in a way to understand immediately the ongoing debate within the round table and to overcome some difficulties of expression or understanding. In this way, during the working groups on social inclusion, the participants were perfectly able to express their voice in a topic which touches their life every day, stimulating fruitful reflections of the other youngsters. All the youngsters have been interact equally and finally they all contribute to this final joint recommendation:
http://www.medeuym.eu/images/reccomendation_2016_medeuym.pdf !

For further information we invite all the organisations interested to this kind of project to contact ASSOCIAZIONE ENTE UNIONE: info@enteunione.com We will

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be glad to establish new partnerships and give all our support and experience to similar youth project and activities inclusive for all.

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