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# “MOUNTAINS FOR THE MIND”

Training Youth Workers

PROJECT DETAILS:

TRAINING PERIOD	<b>10 - 18 June 2023</b> <b>(Travel days included)</b>
TRAINING VENUE	<b>LAVARONE (TN), ITALY</b> <b>(<a href="#">Google maps location</a>)</b>

PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH ORGANISATION	5
ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED	8

## CONTEXT

In February 2022, the European Parliament has openly addressed that the EU must tackle COVID-19's impact on youth and mental health (14-17 February 2022 Strasbourg plenary session) based on the evidences pointed out by the Eurofound's "Impact of COVID-19 on young people in the EU" in 2021. This research confirmed the direct association between lockdown measures and reduced mental well-being, as well as lower satisfaction with life. Additionally, several national surveys in European countries indicated that the share of young people with mental health conditions has more than doubled compared to the pre-crisis level (Eurofound 2021).

Prevalence of symptoms of anxiety and depression has risen dramatically among young people and remains higher than pre-crisis levels, driven by issues related to the social dimension (loneliness, depression), from limited mobility and physical activity, from closure of face-to-face educational services and from the cancellation of social events (Eurofound 2021). Last but not least, young people have also reported experiencing boring routines, stress and compulsive use of smartphones, among other issues (EMPL, "Youth in EUrope: Effects of COVID-19 on their economic and social situation" committee 2021).

This has resulted in major consequences such as a general sense of insecurity, lower emotional well-being and negative feelings, in some cases leading to suicidal thoughts. Almost two-thirds of people (64%) in the age group 18–34 years were at risk of depression in spring 2021. Young people's poor mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic might also

worsen their employment and educational prospects in the longer run.

Certain factors affecting mental health like feeling isolated might vanish with the end of lockdowns but the European Youth Forum, however, fears that affects may magnify pre-existing inequalities, affecting those from marginalised backgrounds the most. In particular, young people already experiencing mental health issues before the pandemic and those from disadvantaged groups were particularly exposed to such negative consequences. For instance, those already deemed most at risk grew more disconnected from education, youth services and support, while many were forced to remain indoors almost all the time, often in overcrowded living spaces (*Eurofound, "Impact of COVID-19 on young people in the EU", 2021*).

So, there should be no surprise in finding that mental health and wellbeing has been included inside the 11 European Youth Goals which are part of the EU Youth strategy for the period 2019 - 2027.

## COUNTER THE ISSUE

On one hand, Creativi108 believes in the enormous potential of nature in psychologically equilibrating the human mind and in the positive effect that the environment can have on the human emotions and psiche such as countering symptoms of anxiety and depression. On the other end, Creativi108 is able to offer paths of outdoor education led by high-quality trainers in the field of mental health, wellbeing and outdoor education, proven by the publication of several books and years of experience.

So, the project MOUNTAINS FOR THE MIND combine the powerfulness of the nature of Lavarone mountains (where the training will be held) and the high-quality competencies of trainers Italo Bertolasi (with more than twenty years of experience in the field), Juri Bottura and Anna Albertarelli in order to tackle mental health issues throughout outdoor

methodologies and activities that support the learning, the wellbeing and the positive mental health of young people.

The choice of the outdoor education approach finds its legitimacy as the most logical reply to the strict period of closing and indoor restrictions caused by Covid-19 and the best counter to previously expressed problems (limited mobility and physical activity, from closure of face-to-face educational services, cancellation of social events, experiencing boring routine). But not only that.

Several researches indicate the importance of nature and outdoor activities/education in order to counter disorders in human mental health.

Having access to nature and activities in nature improve self-reported well-being and can contribute to improved mental health (*IEEP, "NATURE FOR HEALTH AND EQUITY", 2017*); Spending time in nature helps reduce anxiety, depression, and loneliness, while a lack of green space is associated with increased symptoms. Being outdoors makes us more aware of our senses and surroundings, more present in the moment and helps relieve stress (*IEEP & ISGLOBAL, "MENTAL HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT: Bringing nature back into people's lives", 2021*); children raised with exposure to green space are as much as 55% less likely to develop mental health problems.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

This demonstrates that COVID-19 has shown us clearly that we must educate and empower young people to take better care of their and others mental health.

Creativi108 is looking forward to contributing to the European Youth Goal of Mental Health and to addressing the needs expressed collectively by the European Youth. For this reason, the MOUNTAINS FOR THE MIND project aims to provide innovative methodologies and tools for outdoor education in the forest to youth workers in order to enable them to work with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds on the prevention and management of mental health disorders as a results of the pandemic.

The youth workers activity will have a positive impact on the participants' daily work with young people through the multiplier effect. The project is expected to amplify the work and interventions in addressing mental health at the grassroots level.

## **TRAINERS and TRAININGS**

The project **MOUNTAINS FOR THE MIND** offers the incredible chance to interact, work and be trained by:

### **JURI BOTTURA**

2 days of training will be dedicated to:

#### **“MOUNTAIN EDUCATION AND TERRITORY LEARNING”**

Training section dedicated to provide participants with information on the history, the culture and the peculiarity of the territory where the activities will be held.

Most importantly, Juri is going to train participants on the correct approach/behaviour to the mountain and important practical arrangements in order to experience the territory and the mountainous nature in safe conditions.

#### **JURI BOTTURA**

Graduated in Literature in Italy and specialised in contemporary history in the United States (M.A. and PhD). He lived for a decade between Europe and America working in the field of research and training. Moved in Trentino since 2014, he is co-founder of Dolomit - Learning Experiences



for the Curious, a company that is dedicated to enhancing the cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine region through educational programs for residents and visitors, especially international ones, and through projects to activate local communities.

## **ITALO BERTOLASI & ANNA ALBERTARELLI**

4 days of training will be dedicated to:

### **“MENTAL HEALTH AND NATURE”**

Italo Bertolaso and Anna Albertarelli are going to provide Youth Workers with outdoor activities focused on equilibrating the mind balance and countering mental health disorders, thanks to the innovative outdoor methodologies and tools in mountainous nature such as Forest bath, Sensorial hikes and Ecotherapy.

### **ITALO BERTOLASI**

Journalist, bodyworker and traveller.

In 1970 he began his “pilgrimage” to the East and for the next twenty years he studied and documented the shamanic cultures of the Himalayas, Chinese and Japanese, photographing and writing for the most important European magazines.

He is the promoter of "Nuove Terre", an association of artists, bodyworkers and travellers that has combined the passion of travel with the study of distant cultures and health projects to stimulate the growth potential of human "nature".

He is the creator of the "Forest Bath", a practice of "experiential ecology" that aims to educate man in a deep and sensitive contact with the "wild soul" of the world and wild nature as a path to self-healing.

He is the author of the books:



- "Harmony Manual" - Mondadori Editore
- "Ecotherapy" - Xenia Editore.
- "Woga and AICHI" - Xenia Editore.
- "Il canto del Bosco" - RED Editore.
- "Watsu" - Xenia Editore
- "Ambassadors of Smile" -Mondadori Editore

### ANNA ALBERTARELLI

Supporting Bertolasi's training.

Long-term expert trainer in outdoor theatre. Degree as director and choreographer at the University of Bologna, Italy. Active on the social side with intergenerational aggregation activities and inclusive methodologies for disability. She collaborates with many schools in Bologna as an expert for inclusive theatre activities. She collaborates with international artistic realities as director of urban dance theatre actions. She has been collaborating with APS Creative 108 since 2016 for her great ability and skills to promote group cohesion with very different realities and background.



## TRAINING VENUE

The project will be held in the territory of Lavarone, an Italian village of 1194 inhabitants in the autonomous province of Trento. It is part of the "Magnifica Comunità degli Altipiani Cimbri", of which it is the capital. The municipality is located on the omonymous plateau, in the Vicentine Prealps at about 1 200 metres above sea level.

In the municipal area there are not only Lavarone around which Sigmund Freud often went for a walk during the period in which he spent his holidays in Lavarone in 1904, 1906, 1907 and 1923.



Creativi108 is recently concentrating its activities in this area which offers such high-quality inputs and chances for outdoor education, thanks to the enormous natural, historical and cultural heritage of the area. In addition, Creativi108 is currently collaborating with the municipality and the Youth Council of for promoting European initiatives in the area. As it was successfully tested during the previous project, the reaching of the remote mountainous areas of Lavarone will be guaranteed by one private bus arranged by Creativi108 from the city of Verona.



In case of question regarding project and application process please feel free to write to us:

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