



CASE STUDY

Fair income and social rights for third country national farm hands

“Fair income and social rights for farm hands” provides cultural and linguistic mediation courses for third-country nationals who work as farm hands. The project aims to ensure labour and citizenship rights, by helping them to get fair treatment and assist their better integration into Italian society.

Furthermore, the project aims to prevent and reduce illegal and black market labour in the agricultural sector, seeking the cooperation of the farmer’s confederation.

First phase: Cultural and linguistic mediation courses of 100 hours in Alto Bradano, an area located in a region (Basilicata) in southern Italy.

Every summer the area faces a crisis caused by the arrival of thousands of third country nationals looking for work in the harvest season. They are day labourers without a stable home. They almost always camp in deserted farmhouses, with poor sanitation and living in difficult economic conditions. They also have little or no information regarding their rights and how to access to public services.





SHORT SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

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In this vulnerable situation, they are likely to fall into the black labour market, called "caporalato". This is a widespread illegal practice in Alto Bradano and in other areas of southern Italy. If farm hands want to work, they must give an intermediary, "caporale", a percentage of their daily pay. The courses are run by Auser in collaboration with CGIL FLAI www.flai.it, the largest Italian union of agricultural workers.

The lessons include:

- Importance and purpose of cultural and linguistic mediation.
- Information regarding access to public services (e.g. employment exchange).
- Legislation and legal status of third-country

nationals.

- National legislation on fundamental rights: working conditions, health, education, social security, pensions.
- The history and the role of the union.
- National collective agreement in the agricultural and food farming sector.

After the 60 hours of lessons in the classroom, each student is enrolled in a 40 hour internship at the local union's offices in order to learn how the union services operate.

Second phase: Every day, a team consisting of Auser volunteers, unionists, a lawyer and some cultural and linguistic mediators goes to the countryside to meet with farm hands to give them legal counselling and provide information on public social and health services. The task of the cultural mediators is to translate and facilitate communication between the day labourers, Auser volunteers and Flai unionists.

Third phase: Auser and Flai seek the cooperation of the local farmers confederations (CIA and Col-diretti) which have asked their members to hire exclusively workers registered in the regional job seekers list.





DESCRIPTION OF YOUR ORGANISATION

AUSER, founded in 1989, is an Italian volunteers association which aims at promoting the self-management of services and solidarity action, supporting the right of older people to continue to play an active role on a social and economic level by making the most of their specific experiences, skills and abilities. The mission of the AUSER Association is to advance social rights, solidarity, community welfare, and to facilitate access to services and promote older people's work as volunteers in several areas of activity such as social utility services, migrant support, social dialogue, training and education, and international solidarity. Auser is based on a network of 1,400 local and regional offices all over Italy and has 304,899 members and 45,263 volunteers.

PROJECT

What are the local social realities?

According to the third national report "Agromafie and caporalato" www.flai.it/osservatoriopr/, farm hands in Alto Bradano are mainly from non-EU countries notably Burkina Faso, Sudan, Nigeria, Gambia, Mali (75.5%). They are employed mainly in seasonal jobs, especially the tomato harvest (97.4%) and they are hired day by day.

During the harvest season, the majority of these day labourers (about 2,400) live in deserted farmhouses. They often do not have access to running water, electricity or sanitation services. Given these social and economic conditions, the practice of illegal hiring is quite extensive. The union estimates that over 60 "caporali" operate illegally.

The labour exchange fails to prevent undeclared work and it is not able to provide regular work to all the third-country nationals who request it. The challenges of the project are: to test innovative instruments (such as cultural and linguis-

tic mediation), to support day labourers by informing them of their labour rights, and to denounce the problem of illegal hiring among the local population and farmers.

What are the specific innovative elements in your project/service?

One important innovative element is the effort to prevent and tackle labour exploitation by building a new network with the help of day labourers, Auser volunteers, unions, farmers, and the regional government of Basilicata. So far, training for third-country nationals has followed a top down approach and it has been focused on Italian language courses. The most innovative element in this project is the bottom up approach and the involvement of the stakeholders throughout the implementation of the project. The day labourers are not only beneficiaries, but they play an active role in the project as cultural and linguistic mediators. They have been empowered to overcome a pre-existing situation of social and economic exclusion. Their old and new competences have contributed to helping other workers overcome social and economic exclusion.

What are the key characteristics of the project/service?

Target groups

Third-country national farm hands who are in vulnerable social and economic situations. They are day labourers with a daily pay far below the reference value of the national collective agreement for agricultural workers. They live in marginal conditions (without a fixed address, lacking information about their rights and lacking access to public service) and they need to learn to organise themselves to avoid





falling into the trap of the black economy.

Principles

Decent work, a fair income and social justice are the leading principles. The purpose of the project is to reduce the exploitation of agricultural workers and to push back the black labour market by means of: Increased awareness of labour, social and citizenship rights; Increased access to fair labour market opportunities; An increased level of autonomy and organisation; Increased access to public services (employment exchange, health, social care, education, retirement, recognition of vocational qualifications).

Drivers

The project was developed for many reasons. The role of cultural and linguistic mediator in the workplace is an innovative skill. It has been very useful to communicate with day labours and to gain their trust. Illegal hiring, under the “caporalato” system, is an extensive and old problem that causes exploitation and low income. Until now, the union’s efforts and the Department of Labour inspections have managed to contain the practice but not defeat it. The project was possible because Auser and Flai succeeded in gaining the cooperation of some farmers who decided, from then on, to hire only workers enrolled in the regional unemployment list.

Outcome

Two courses of 100 hours each, divided into 60 hours of classroom lectures and 40 hours of internships in the local union offices, followed, in the field, by many activities of cultural and linguistic mediation for farm hands. The project aimed also to develop different kinds of materials and manuals which are used during the lessons. A diploma with the certification of skills is awarded by Auser, FLAI and IRES (the union training school) to each student. Until now, 31 third-country nationals have attended the course and have obtained the diploma. The most im-

portant result is the decrease in illegal hiring in the Alto Bradano area. Since the project began, many undocumented workers have registered in the public employment exchange and 400 farm hands have been recruited from local farms on fair contracts. In fact, the Department of Labour inspections have found very few irregularities in 2015/2016, in comparison with the previous year. Only eight farm hands were found to have an unfair pay out of the 200 who were monitored. The project is funded by a mix of public and private resources from “Foundation for the South” and from the local regional government of Basilicata.

Can this project be transferred to a larger context (a bigger region, the whole country, EU-wide)? If so, what is necessary to transfer it (special structures, finances, common definition of standards...)? If not, why not?

The transferability of the model to other national and European contexts is closely related to two preconditions: building a network between public / private bodies and the ability to involve third-country nationals in its implementation. The network created by the various stakeholders: voluntary associations, unions, regional and local governments and agro-industrial entrepreneurs, aims to resolve conflicts of interest, and to find concrete solutions to the problem of undeclared work.

The project can be transferred to similar socio-economic contexts, characterised by strong immigration flow, high labour demand and extensive labour exploitation.

The key aspect of the methodology used is the constant search for cooperation among all the stakeholders and the involvement of third-country nationals in cultural and linguistic mediation.





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SOLIDAR, together with our national members and partners, has developed 17 case studies in 2016, presenting innovative, effective, sustainable and tailor made models to promote social inclusion, the social economy and quality job creation by adapting a social investment approach. In their daily work, SOLIDAR members and partners anticipate new or unmet needs of socio-economically vulnerable people and empower them to actively participate in society and to access the labour market.

These case studies gather strong evidence of the social impact of the activities undertaken by our members and partners to help Member States making progress towards the achievement of the social and employment objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the implementation of the Social Investment Package.

SOLIDAR is a European network of membership based Civil Society Organisations who gather several millions of citizens throughout Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the values of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across the three main policy sectors; social affairs, lifelong learning and international cooperation.



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