

# Case Studies in Bioeconomy Education, Training and Skills Development

Case study sample: Link Association  
(from the Link project)

Apulia, Italy

FVA





# Link Association (from the Link Project)

## 1 Abstract

"Link" is a project financed in the context of a public call for Italian municipalities that want to develop innovative projects and actions to address the phenomenon of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) in their local communities. Over two million young people in Italy who are aged 15–29 are not engaged in study, work or training. The Link Cultural Association in the Apulia region was founded in 2003 by a group of young people who are passionate about their local area but who want to encourage openness for other cultural contexts and promote values such as solidarity, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue.

At the local level, the Link Association has carried out educational projects since its inception as part of a training offer plan in collaboration with various educational entities. It addresses the following topics: local history, environmental education and access to culture. In addition, Link has developed projects aimed at teaching foreign languages and promoting intercultural education and on-the-job training in high schools.

Under the management of the Link Association since June 2019, the Agorateca community library has acted as a cultural venue where training activities are implemented at different levels and using different forms of creativity, such as art, music and entertainment. It has a strong focus on sustainability and inclusion.

## 2 Target Groups

NEETs, younger generations to prevent the emergence of new young NEETs

## 3 Case Study Category

Art to address different learning styles and the inclusion of marginalized people

## 4 Training Provider

To implement training projects, educational activities and other initiatives for young people, NEETs and adults, the Link Association has collaborated with the Apulia Region, ARTI (Regional Agency for Technology and Innovation of the Apulia Region), the Fitzcarraldo Foundation, various urban laboratories (Bollenti Spiriti Program of the Apulia Region), volunteer services, the Eurodesk and Europe Direct networks, and some municipalities of the Apulia and Basilicata regions.

## 5 Region

Apulia, Italy

## 6 Language

Italian, English

## 7 Objectives of the Educational Format

Improving the employability of disadvantaged groups

## 8 Final Objective of the Educational Format

These informal training activities are an important way for people to exchange knowledge and experiences, thus meeting the national strategic dimension (reducing the young NEET rate is a target of the 2030 UN Agenda) and territorial needs to engage the local community. The objective is to identify, activate and bring out inactive young people to address complex and varied phenomena, such as those of NEETs in targeted and different ways

## 9 Scope and Context of the Educational Format

The Agorateca, managed by Link Association, in addition to library services, offers workshops that include a wide range of activities, graphic design courses, digital storytelling, audio-video production workshops, language workshops, music and listening education courses, concerts, exhibitions, youth exchanges and European training courses, horticultural therapy and gardening activities. In March of 2023, they organised the workshop "Do it together #OSMA - Open Source Material Archive" in partnership with local associations. It focused on the co-design and biofabrication of biomaterials from local biological residues. This helped introduce the topics of circular and sustainable bioeconomy in the training offered by the association by using a hands-on experience and an artistic approach to engage participants.

With its work, the Link Association aims to stimulate young generations and young NEETs to become engaged in non-formal educational activities that are organised in partnership with local schools and associations. Link also organizes local and international workshops to support cultural exchange among generations and facilitate the inclusion of the local community and marginalised groups, such as migrants or people that do not speak the local language.

## 10 Specific Skills and Competencies Addressed

Technical competencies: basic competencies related to the different topics of the workshops and training activities organised (e.g. knowledge in graphic design, digital storytelling, audio-video production, music and listening, and fabrication of biomaterials)

Valorisation competencies: knowledge of the local culture and system, personal training and career development, and knowledge of the local language

Transversal competencies: critical thinking and problem-solving, communication, relationship skills, entrepreneurial competencies, and development of a passion for work, patience, courage, curiosity, accuracy and time management

## 11 European Qualification Framework Level(s)

Level 4 and Level 5

## 12 Main Benefit to the Participant

These activities can serve as motivational drivers because NEETS typically do not want to take on responsibilities/become involved in any activities or jobs. Therefore, involving them in creative/artistic experiences and non-formal educational activities can help them find the motivation to take concrete action, for example, by stimulating their interest in different topics (cally art, sustainability and the bioeconomy).

## 13 Main Cost Categories Considered

The Link Association has launched projects funded by the European Commission in the context of European funding programs, such as Europe for Citizens and Erasmus+, and other entities such as the Council of Europe and the Anna Lindh Foundation.

Some investments are covered with collaboration with the actors mentioned in the section "Training providers" to cover costs related to personnel, the experts involved, the location in which the activities are implemented, and the material/tools needed for the activities.

## 14 Importance and Impact

Over almost 20 years of activity, Link has built a network of youth organisations, entities and other initiatives active in over 30 European countries, has sent approximately 3,000 young people to projects abroad and has supported approximately 2,000 local projects in partnership with numerous organizations in Apulia and Basilicata regions, engaging local communities.

## 15 Relevance (of the Format)

The format is highly relevant because it engages young NEETs in non-formal activities to support their inclusion and stimulate their engagement and motivation. Moreover, because Link Association is connected to local communities in the small cities of the Apulia and Basilicata regions, this helps reach people living in rural areas who are often difficult to engage and tend to be marginalised.

## 16 How can it Inspire BioGov.net? (Why was it designed in this specific way / what are the success factors?)

The uniqueness of the format is that the Link Association establishes its work mainly in Agorateca, a community library, which is an unexpected training provider that engages different beneficiaries in an informal environment. This can help reach target groups who usually do not want to participate in informal educational activities (such as NEETs or unemployed people).

Moreover, the success of the format is due to the strength of the collaboration with local education providers, including informal and non-formal education. Finally, all the activities are very practical and experiential, facilitating contact with art, culture and nature.

The format can be structured as a case study for use as educational material. Some specific educational packages or activities could be replicated with the same target beneficiaries (namely NEETs) but also for other marginalised groups and target beneficiaries relevant to BioGov.net. The hands-on and very pragmatic approach can be inspirational for other cases.

## 17 Data Sources

- **Online resources:** <https://www.linkyouth.org/>  
<https://www.agorateca.it/>
- **Resource persons:** Dario Sette, Giuseppe Creanza - [info@agorateca.it](mailto:info@agorateca.it)
- **Other sources, if any:** <https://www.anci.it/al-via-il-bando-link-connettiamo-i-giovani-al-futuro-interventi-locali-sui-giovani-neet/>

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