

Intervista Margot Martel - referente progetto francese

Where did the idea for the CARE project originate, and who is involved?

The CARE project stems from the necessity to integrate social agriculture with healthcare services in rural and mountainous areas, creating an innovative cross-border model of community care. While the Italian framework relies heavily on institutional networks—such as the Città Metropolitana di Torino and specific local coordinators—the French implementation operates through targeted local interventions. The partnership aims to bridge the gap between institutional support and civil society, specifically targeting the vulnerabilities of rural populations, isolated elderly citizens, and disengaged youth.

What is the specific role within the project, and what are the main day-to-day responsibilities from a practical perspective?

On a day-to-day basis, the operational role centers on executing qualitative interventions, monitoring ongoing activities, and managing outreach strategies within the territory. This involves the coordination of specialized training modules, field visits to educational institutions, and direct communication with local stakeholders to bridge the gap between social services and the community.

At the beginning of the project, what outcomes were expected, and have they been achieved?

The initial expectations focused on establishing structural continuity in community care and achieving stable, long-term civic engagement. While quantitative goals are being steadily approached—as evidenced by the growing attendance in training programs—the long-term qualitative outcomes remain a dynamic challenge. Achieving full success depends on adapting the current strategies to mitigate the high turnover and mobility of the younger demographic.

What practical measures and initiatives have been implemented in France to carry out the project, and what do the internships involve?

A cornerstone of the practical implementation in France was the design and execution of a specialized training course for volunteers, which yielded highly positive qualitative evaluations and saw a steady increase in session-by-session attendance. Additionally, to foster awareness around the professions of care, the project developed an innovative pedagogical tool: a short film documenting the daily lives and responsibilities of nurses and healthcare professionals.

Regarding the practical integration of participants, the project utilizes targeted educational and professional pathways. However, the concrete execution of long-term internships faces structural hurdles, as many young participants often relocate or secure employment in other territories within a few weeks of engagement.

In Italy, there is an established Youth Committee. Is there a similar structure in France, and how is it organized?

Unlike the Italian model, which successfully established a formal Youth Committee to empower younger generations and assign them active roles in supporting the elderly, the French side does not currently possess an equivalent institutional structure or dedicated civil

society organizations for this purpose. To address this structural divergence, the French strategy is shifting toward a promotional campaign launching in September, designed specifically to engage young citizens through structured volunteering frameworks rather than a formal committee.

What communication issues have been encountered regarding citizen outreach, and what strategies have been used to address them?

The communication challenges in rural French communities differ significantly from those in urban centers. While establishing an initial dialogue and making contact with rural citizens is relatively easy, invoking a deep, sustained commitment to a structured, cross-border project presents a major barrier. The primary difficulty lies in engaging "NEET" populations (young people not in education, employment, or training).

To overcome these outreach limitations, the strategy was adjusted to expand the target group by incorporating active students within high schools. The aforementioned short film was used as a mobile outreach tool, screened directly in local high schools to spark debate, stimulate interest in the care sector, and build a more reliable base of young participants.

What kind of feedback has been received from citizens so far?

The feedback from active participants has been highly favorable, characterized by genuine interest and an increasing rate of participation over time. The training sessions demonstrated strong motivation among those already involved. However, the overall community response highlights a clear dichotomy: while there is widespread qualitative appreciation for the finished activities, maintaining consistent, long-term engagement across the wider rural citizenship remains an ongoing process that requires continuous territorial adaptation.