

LAB4GE

Learn Abroad to do better at Home for Gender Equality



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KA2
Strategic
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project

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Dear Reader, we have been running the project Learning Abroad to do Better at home for Gender Equality since October 2020.

The KA2 Strategic partnership project LAB4GE (number: 2020-1-HU01-KA204-078745) is funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the EU.

LAB4GE is a 32 months long project that includes **4 participatory visits** - for the partners to share their methodologies and acquire first-hand learning that they can reproduce in their organisations - as well as **1 international training course** to train the trainers in the partners methodologies and that will act as multipliers in each country.

In this third issue of the newsletter we decided to give the floor to the voices that are too often unheard, those of women entrepreneurs so they could share with us their experience as female founders of how they did set up their enterprise in Europe. Each project partner made an interview in their country to present you these inspiring testimonies.

So far, we have hosted 2 participatory visits, one in Denmark in November 2021 and one in Italy in April 2022. In June, our Spanish partner will host the 3rd visit in Valencia.

We are also producing an online catalogue of best practices and success stories to provide broader knowledge, skills and competences that fosters social development and improves female entrepreneurial performances across Europe.

On top of that, we are inviting interested stakeholders to join force and sign our commitment paper to implement active measures to promote gender equality in their organisations

LAB4GE INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER

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ANTHROPOLIS ASSOCIATION

FARKAS IMOLA AND NÁDASDI KATALIN, ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS

Farkas Imola és Nádasdi Katalin are designers and graduated from Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design in Budapest with a specialization in knitting. They live in Budapest and run the Pipetta Knitwear, a small fashion company. They design clothes only for women and beside their special collections they provide a space for meetings and discussions for their customers in their fashion showroom. Their efforts are unique in fashion design and manufacturing: offering high quality design and at the same time empowering women customers through meaningful gatherings, conversations.

Let's talk about you...

We are artists. Designing for us is not a job, but a mission. We can say that we did not have any other choice but to establish our own business. It was a blessing and an urge. We had no early plans; it was more a spontaneous decision to open a showroom in the downtown of Budapest. Our friends who moved abroad offered us the place and we started it without questions and doubts.

From Monday to Thursday, we design clothes for women in our individual workshops and on Friday, (our Showroom is open only on Friday afternoons) we go to our Pipetta Showroom to provide the clothes to our customers, but at the same time the chance for peer support.

Who are you doing this for?

Our customers are not socially unprivileged, marginalized, they need rather emotional support and some kind of life and career guidance.

First, they come for clothes, but they realize that further to clothes they can also find an open community built on clientage. We believe that we have the ability to create special clothes and tailor them according to their requirements and we are capable of building a loving and inclusive community. They can feel that their special needs are recognized. We never say about a cloth that 'it is not for you'. We think together how it can fit the customer and we modify the details to suit them e.g. their body shape.



‘If you want to start a business, first think about your goals you want to achieve, imagine it, immerse yourself in the future situation and it will help a lot to implement your goals.’

WHAT'S YOUR SPECIAL TRICK?

Pipetta Showroom was established in 2014. Our plan is the renovation of the place. Step by step, after some revision, we need to renew the relationship with our environment and probably it will affect our community as well, we can then ‘step to the next level’.

We did not have difficulties when we set up the business, because we were fully supported by our families and friends.

The continuous challenge was for us to stay artists and concentrate more on the process of creation and later the relationship with our customers.

Business and money are subsidiary. This is our conscious decision, but we still have to take care about business profitability, paying bills, rental cost, salaries not only for us but also for our sewers. There are no other providers with same profile.

We consider our Showroom as a ‘temple’, a place where you can find peace after a long working week.

Our customers can feel harmony, find relief in their stressful life, and meet other people who look for the same honest moments and discussions. In the Showroom they can be themselves, no need for acting and wearing masks.



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‘Dream big and stick to your dreams.’

ASFAR



IOLANDA CHIRICO, FOUNDER OF THE REFUGEE CAFE

Iolanda Chirico has a BA in Communication Studies and Sociology and loves gardening, DIY and cooking. She lives in Lewisham and is the founder of the Refugee Café.

She understands that the loss of one's homeland is the greatest tragedy in anyone's life and one from which is so difficult to recover without support in the new country one finds themselves in. She has dedicated her life to provide equal opportunities, as well as sustained support and guidance. She has managed Refugee community organisations since 1995, firstly in Bromley and then in Lewisham. In 2006 she founded Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL) and in 2019 the Refugee Cafe.

Why did you start it?

I founded the Refugee café in November 2019 intending to bridge the divide between refugees, asylum seekers and the wider community. We also hope to relieve poverty and isolation amongst refugees, asylum seekers and ethnic minorities in Lewisham. I personally think food is a great way to remove barriers for people. Food brings people together and breaks many barriers.

So, our initiative is trying to empower local female refugees to gain skills, knowledge and open a pathway to employment. We were able to run a series of events and markets, bringing the whole community together to celebrate the amazing culinary cultures in Lewisham – where 12 languages are spoken every square mile!

The Refugee Café is trying to reach the most vulnerable people in our community. At the moment, we are working with 5 cooks from Syria and all the cooks are refugee women. They have benefited from workshops, training skills and knowledge relevant to the catering industry.

Working for the Refugee Café has had an impact on the way they engage, consume and interact on a day-to-day basis. They always mention to me how the work has empowered them to go out to the local community, be part of it, as well as improve their English skills, but as well improve their mental health.

Many of them have told me that they welcome the opportunity to get out of their house, meet new people, talk and just socialize.

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Everyone should think about the opportunities to do something, rather than the barriers. Because at the end of the day, there are always people who are willing to help and lend you a hand when you have a good idea.”

HOW DID YOU START THE REFUGEE CAFE?

We launched the Refugee Café in November 2019, and we are going since then. Of course, our activities were limited during the COVID period and the lock-down. But I can say we are going now for 2 years.

The long-term plan is to open a commercial café, which will give direct employment to local refugees because they would be the ones running the café. We launched as well as a hospitality and employability training programme for local refugees.

Participants will gain skills, knowledge and experience in catering in the UK through a series of workshops and individual coaching for their long-term employment.

They have been lots of ups and downs in the past two years, but the main was the lack of venue at the beginning which meant that for over 2 years, we have been doing the cooking from my house,

as well as preparing all the products for the market, and the online shops etc.

We have now moved our activities to a local church, St. Andrews. But it is still very difficult, as we have lack of storage in the church.

Besides the venue, our main barrier is in involving the local refugees in the decision-making process to join our board of trustees and make the decisions for themselves and their local community.

Since the beginning, the Refugee Café has been working in partnership with other local businesses which have similar aims and objectives.

We have been working with local churches, the Syrian Resettlement Programme (VPRS), Lewisham Refugee & Migrant Network (LRMN), local restaurants as well as local businesses, who are selling our products.

When I started, I did market research, to try to find something similar in London or around. And to be honest, I couldn't find anything similar. I couldn't find an organisation that is running a café.

So, we are in some way unique as we will have a commercial café, which will be run by refugees. But also in the range of products we are making and selling in the local markets, nobody else, as far as I know, is making those products.



ASSOCIAZIONE SUD

LE COSTANTINE FOUNDATION

Founded in 1982 by sisters Giulia and Lucia Starace, together with their cousin, Lucia De Viti de Marco – prolonging the spirit and convictions of their mothers – “Le Costantine Foundation” aims to promote and dynamize the Puglia region by preserving its living heritage through the teaching of traditional crafts and responsible culture.

Set in an enchanting Mediterranean location, this institution celebrates a sense of hospitality and respect for nature through the transmission for the beauty of the gesture and artistic handicraft.

”Amando e Cantando - Loving and Singing” - “Le Costantine” atelier pays tribute through its name to the traditional songs still sung today by women weavers perpetuating these textile arts, for generations, like an ode to the joie de vivre and creative passion that drives them.

The site houses the precious looms on which these fabrics come to life using ancestral techniques. (<https://www.formazionelecostantine.eu>)

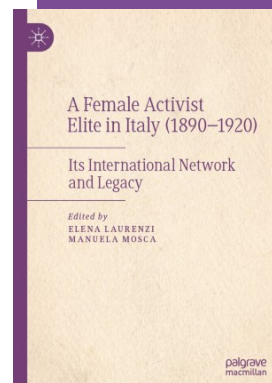


We met Maria Cristina RIZZO, president of the Foundation, and Elena LAURENZI, professor at the University of Salento, author of a book dedicated to these visionary women and their activities. They told us the fascinating story of “Le Costantine” started more than a century ago in the Southern Italy and active now all around the world.

The history of “Le Constantine” - *as Maria Cristina tells us*, - has its origins in the cultural, social and political action carried out by five excellent women who lived and worked in the first half of the last century. They are Carolina de Viti de Marco, her two daughters Lucia and Giulia Starace, Harriett Lathrop Dunham, wife of the economist Antonio de Viti de Marco and sister-in-law of Carolina, and Lucia de Viti de Marco, her daughter.

The commitment and work of these great women in the direction of women's emancipation and freedom, well-being and social cooperation, the preservation of the culture of the territory and the protection of the environment, has merged into the Foundation's project.

In particular, it was the two cousins, Giulia Starace and Lucia de Viti de Marco who, also becoming heirs of the spirit and work of the mothers, imagined, designed and made possible, through their testamentary bequests, the creation of this Center: a place of coexistence, in which work, hospitality and care are combined according to an ancient and very modern knowledge.



A NEW IDEA OF FUTURE AND EMANCIPATION

The Foundation covers over 33 hectares in the countryside of Uggiano la Chiesa, a stone's throw from the center of Casamassella, close to the Idro Valley. The park is littered with evidence of ancient agriculture, which no longer exists elsewhere. Emotions and suggestions of a past time. Silence made only by the voices of the pristine nature of the place. A sense of inner peace envelops residents and visitors alike.



Fields cultivated with cereals, vegetables and a large citrus grove that houses a masonry apiary constitute the first resource of this land which is lovingly worked according to the principles of biodynamic agriculture conceived in 1924 by Rudolf Steiner, who demonstrates in a renewed and modern way how the work of man and woman can be in full harmony with the laws of nature. All the products grown on the estate are certified by the "Demeter" quality mark.

Le Costantine Foundation is also hospitality. The "Casa di Ora" is the result of the unconditional love for others and their land of its benefactress, Lucia De Viti De Marco, for all "Ora". The estate has 12 rooms that overlook a beautiful courtyard surrounded by greenery.

The "Cantando e Amando" weaving workshop opened in 2002 at the estate, followed up the will and love of Donna Giulia Starace and, even before that, of her mother, Donna Carolina De Viti De Marco, who have always wanted to raise economically and spiritually the women of Casamassella.

By anticipating the times and with a great entrepreneurial spirit, - as *Elena tells us* - they have transformed an ancient and precious tradition, which has its roots in the past, into an organized activity capable of creating income and development of the territory.

They were real active and visionary feminist!

Very specialized women workers produce textile made on ancient wooden looms with 4 heddles, obtained with natural raw materials such as cotton, linen, wool, silk and LORO PIANA cashmere.

The ancient traditions, transmitted orally, are enriched by the use of new designs and new materials. Each product can be customized according to the customer's taste and is marked with a label, a guarantee of excellence and quality.

In addition to craftsmanship, the laboratory also carries out an educational activity, thus fulfilling the greatest desire of its founders. The courses can be activated both to meet the needs of individuals who want to approach this technique on a hobby or professional level, or at the request of public bodies or schools.



The Maison DIOR chose the textiles by "Le Costantine" for its Cruise 2021 Fashion Show.

<https://bit.ly/3vMcdyx>



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a m a n d o e c a n t a n d o
loving & singing

IBOX CREATE



ANDREA PLATERO, CO FOUNDER OF ASOCIACIÓN CON VALORES

Andrea Platero Latorre is the co-founder of Asociación Con Valores, a Spanish association promoting entrepreneurship for people at risk of social exclusion. She is a graduate in political science and has a solid international and intercultural background in project management. Also, she is working as a Global Citizenship Education Trainer for UNRWA Spain, the UN agency for Palestine Refugees, where she raises awareness and facilitates the learning of pupils in schools.

Tell us about your association...

We launched the Incubator Con Valores to bring support to people at risk of social exclusion so they can create an income for themselves and support their relatives. We noticed that even when they were receiving puntual support from social services they were kept out of the labour market. The incubator is the first one for them that is supported by companies and professionals.

Until now, we have gathered 120 volunteers from the business world to assess, mentor and train over 100 microentrepreneurs.

During the incubator's first 3 editions, 80-90% of the participants were skilled migrant women coming from Latin America, over 35, who supported their families, then followed by migrant men in their 50-60s. Most of these women were from Venezuela so they also spoke Spanish.

They generally applied because of the barriers they were facing to get a job, for example discrimination to homologate diplomas or low skilled care jobs imposed on them for being women from Latin America, which resulted in higher risks of social exclusion both because of gender and migration factors.

The incubator offers them peer support on their entrepreneur quest, especially through group chats where they can ask questions, exchange tips and recommendations regarding administrative requirements.

Another aspect is the self-help and sense of belonging they created among them as most were lacking social networks and support in Spain after migrating.

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“Take your idea and start it with zero inversion. It will take more time and effort but this way you will not risk losing anything if at the end it doesn't work out.”

HOW HAS IT BEEN RUNNING THE INCUBATOR CON VALORES?

The organisation was created in 2017 and the first incubator launched in december 2019 with 9 persons. Five years later, we are about to start the 2022 edition with 51 enrolled participants.

The experience was an entrepreneur bet in itself - taking the risk of starting a project with no funding and no staff and rally actors from the business world - it could either work or fail without guarantee. We put a lot of time, energy, and faith in the idea - and used our own skills in project management, EU funding, and the business world to engage people in the project.

Also, working with volunteers for the mentoring/training sessions means dedicating time and support for them as well, to secure their participation over the time, especially during the incubator programme when they dedicate more than 3h weekly over a period of 3-4 months.

We faced the challenge of growing from no staff to a 7 member team

which brought us to create new organisational and communication processes.

In terms of funding, public grants have their own pace - which are different from ours - so we risked acting first and implemented without having received the funds to avoid delays. Eventually it also affected our logistics, we opted for no fixed costs and we operate from offices let by partners - as well as work remotely.

In the future, we could change the model if we keep growing.

We are receiving support from public employment agencies and social services who are recommending the incubator to participants. Also our solid network of entrepreneurs allows us to plan to expand at EU level, reproducing the incubator in other contexts.

In may 2022 we will pilot our first fully digital incubator to test the possibilities of opening to other countries. We are also involved in incubators in Italy, Latvia and Belgium.

Also we are considering international funding from the UN to maybe in a few years be able to work in the Philippines, who knows.

The vulnerability caused by the gender bias in the labour force suggests the incubator will keep working closely with women in general and migrant women in particular to create an economic impact for them and a gender impact in the business world.



INTERCOLLEGE

DITTE, FOUNDER OF THE CENTRE FOR MAGTANALYSE (POWER ANALYSIS)

Center for Magtanalyse (Center for Power Analysis) is a feminist volunteer-based organization, whose mission is to contribute to ending all forms of violence in Denmark.

CMA upholds the vision that talking about structural violence is the first frontier for tackling systems of oppression, and they do so through a number of different pioneer initiatives. They dismantle taboos by sharing and producing evidence-based knowledge on power dynamics impacting women and girls in the Danish society.

They offer free support groups to people who experienced violence, and they create insights on the roots of hegemonic norms through research and public education on the complexities of inequality and gender-based violence. CMA currently has two branches – one in Copenhagen and one in Aalborg.

Anna is the coordinator of CMA Aalborg and along with other volunteers she has been responsible for creating and running the Aalborg volunteer group since November 2021.

The group has quickly increased in size since and, at the moment of writing this article, they have 15 members, which is an impressive feat for a small city like Aalborg.

Ditte [who has first-hand experience of gender-violence and psychological domestic abuse] founded the organization in 2019 as a result of her master's thesis, where she did a field study of people who have been victims of violence but who aren't in need of a women shelter or acute help.

People who are mentally and maybe also financially stable but still need help after the violence they've experienced, [however they often don't seek the assistance they require] because society tells them that they're not hurting enough or they're not vulnerable enough.

As a part of her thesis, Ditte did a trial support group for that target and after she had finished her thesis and graduated, she kept on getting messages from people who were interested in that kind of support. So, she founded the organization and got grants from different municipalities.

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I want to say: be patient, but also really use your network because, as long as your name and your purpose get out there, people will reach out

WHAT IS CMA ABOUT AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

CMA is open to everyone and anyone. We have also talked a lot about starting up a support group for men and it's not that we don't want to, it's just that men are even more hesitant to seek help [than women].

We also want to create support groups for people, who are violent to others.

And to come out and say "I was violent to my ex, and I want to talk about it" [it's a difficult thing to do]...

We really want to include more [people] and to step away from just white women, but [currently] they are the main target group not necessarily by choice, but because that's who we've been able to reach.

We have applied for funds, and we are applying for funding in combination with the Copenhagen group so if we get that support then we can start new groups in both Copenhagen and Aalborg in the next two years.

Either in 2019 or 2020 they did a survey of how it has actually helped. A big part of it was [increase in] mental wellbeing - people were thriving, but also, they felt empowered to talk about the violence they had experienced, and they weren't scared to tell their friends about it or feared being judged.

Also, a lot of them were empowered to actually become volunteers in CMA and coordinators for future support groups.

We're happy people are sticking around because it also tells us that they think that what we're doing works, and they want to be a part of it.

I think the biggest up is the organization itself and what it stands for. The downs are starting up an organization and getting volunteers to be active in a body of people where you're still figuring out what to do.

It's tough when you have 15 volunteers and they're asking you "what now?" and you have no idea, because you're waiting six months for funds to come in to see if you can do one thing or the other.

But it's wonderful to see that there are so many people actually interested in talking about violence and going about it in a different way that is more preventative [rather than reactive].

It's been great to meet all these people and get to know them in the safe space that CMA is and the ability to just pitch an idea and then go ahead and do it.

My dream has always been to work with prevention of violence. I've been doing this full-time since November and I had so many opportunities to meet politicians, and even be on TV. There's no limit for what you can do.

Other than the volunteer-based aspect, something that we recently experienced is the standpoint of influential people in the municipality.

We had a meeting with two people from the municipality and the Vice Mayor of Aalborg a few weeks ago and they were interested in our teaching work but not so much in the rest.

They told us "You need to learn how to speak the language of politicians". We were told to "calm down" when we were talking about women being killed.

Sitting in a room across from someone, who you're hoping was going to help, and being told to "calm down" because our work isn't actually going to prevent women being killed - that's really hard.

We've reached out to Aalborg Pride and Aalborg Karneval, and we've also already collaborated with Amnesty International on our solidarity marches.

There are so many small grass-root organizations, even though their focus might not be the same as ours - they overlap.

For example, creating safe spaces in the city for people in the LGBTQ+ community. That's not the same as CMA, but it's a part of it. We are also doing an event with Buens Bogcafé about healing within communities and how collective healing is a powerful approach.

think in the beginning it's hard not to collaborate because we're so many small organizations but if we stand together, then someone has to hear us.

INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIPS

SILVIA GANESCU, BABY'S ROOM FOUNDER

Silvia Ganescu is a female entrepreneur, a pre-natal educator and a single mom from Bucharest, who has finished two bachelor degrees in Business Management and Public Administration and a master degree in Management and Business Communication as well as she has been working in finance and managing a small pastry that was producing unique cakes and cookies for events.

She is a strong female character, hard worker, a multitasking person with a keen eye for small details that make huge differences. Her every day life and work is connected and mostly dedicated to women.

How did you started?

I wanted to become independent. I always wanted to be an entrepreneur, I've tried before, but I felt I lacked the courage, the willingness and the focus until now.

Being a single mom I've found the superpower to pursue this dream. All the things I used to lack suddenly came as the baby arrived.

The business started only with giftboxes for children, as a wish to ease the struggle of others in finding appropriate gifts for babies.

As a development from this idea, I also started to target a niche in mistery boxes as gifts that single women can buy for themselves to improve their mood and life quality, coming together with some inspirational messages that empower them.

Many of the materials and products sold through my company come from female entrepreneurs that are producing locally across the country products such as: crochet toys, wooden teether, swaddle muslin, muslin bibs, blankets, bedding, handmade jewelry, handmade soap, wax soy candles, sea salt bath, certified cosmetics.

This brings them a larger market distribution by reselling their products in an unique way where various female owned business products are sold together and this way also increasing their brands visibility.



HOW HAS BEEN YOUR ENTREPRENEUR JOURNEY?

I launched Baby's room during the pandemic, taking advantage of the high number of orders placed online, being able to do this from home, without needing to pay rent for a visible store. The expansion of the business came in November 2021, by opening "The little things" benefiting of the Black Friday, Christmas, New Year, Valentine's Day and multiple occasions for celebrating women in March.

In the long term, I'm considering expanding the variety of boxes which are now tailored for babies aged 0 to 36 months, to gifts for children up to 6 years.

The high number of orders is making me confident in creating a broader variety of products sold in boxes and involving even more women entrepreneurs.

The idea is to create a subscription plan where each month they will receive a box to keep their children busy and the mood up.

Occasionally we also offer free boxes to a mums association which are bidding products to raise money to renovate neonatology clinics within hospitals in Romania.

At times I have been feeling discouraged, but really I feel I need to work hard and not let myself feel bad because of the lack of orders or the difficulty in finding producers willing to let me resale their products.

Each time I get an order and whenever a customer repeats, I feel gratitude. Also I recognise I spend much more time on my business than when I was an employee.

I have learnt that customers expect quality products at an affordable price. As a business owner, you should make sure to find producers that help you match the customer needs.

The bureaucracy level is also high. Knowing well the market and identifying the customer profile is a difficult part.

To conclude my business is owned and led by a woman to collaborate with other women entrepreneurs to sell their products and offers a service to women customers.

It is a very women oriented business, is inclining the overall balance for gender equality.

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Work hard, do your best and rewards will come.

