

## **„The Artist Within – Storytelling and cartoons“ workshop**

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Potenza, a charming mountain city in South Italy was the perfect location for the Cartoons and Storytelling workshop, providing just enough inspiration and not too much distraction for the multicultural group. The Euro-Net facilities, where the course took place, were a bit cosy for over twenty people, but otherwise well-equipped. During the first two days the participants focused on the storytelling part – the workshop opened with a talk by a local writer Gianluca Caporaso on the basics of narration and composing a story, which gave us a solid theoretical basis to our later works. Later during the first days we were introduced to the trainers and the region of Basilicata. Then the exercises grew more and more visual, for example consisting of composing a storyboard in a group, until the participants were ready to take on the challenge of learning animation in Adobe Flash in a quite limited timeframe.

The method that was employed consisted of being shown the basic commands and functions of Flash projected on a wall, then as the exercises became increasingly complicated, the two trainers, Andrea d'Andrea and Gianluca Lagrotta took their time to assist the students personally. At times there were minor communication issues, as the trainers didn't speak perfect English, but the visual aspect of the course made it pretty easy to understand the principles even despite the slight language barrier. Personally I found the course well-paced and feel that I have learnt very much, but some of the participants seemed overwhelmed and somewhat discouraged by the amount of the content. Perhaps it would have been useful to group the students according to their skills. In the end we divided into teams in order to work on an animation together and every group managed to come up with a final production, all of which we watched on our last day in Potenza.

During the course we also took time to brainstorm in groups on how we can use the freshly acquired skills in our helping professions and found a multitude of ways. Animation is a versatile tool which can help explain complicated ideas in a fun and simple way, especially where there is a language barrier. Another, a more active and perhaps inclusive example could be teaching socially disadvantaged children animation in order to help them find a way to break out of their difficult backgrounds.

The surroundings were perfect for intercultural contact within our own group as well as with the locals – the people of Potenza were very welcoming to us, as tourists are quite uncommon there. The groups found a common language despite coming from different countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Germany and spent a lot of their free time together. The accommodation and common meals were of very good quality and organised very professionally and certainly provided another insight into the cultural wealth of Italy. If I had to choose again, I would definitely take part once more.