



M A S T E R I N G

CONVERSATIONS

Supporting refugee entrepreneurs to extend their network and tell their business story

Annex 3. CReA ETS example



M9C Business Plan – The case of CReA Association

1. Business description

CReA (Center For Research and Activities) was founded in 2003 as a non-profit cultural association, with the aim of promoting training, cultural and research activities in the field of culture/interculture, antidiscrimination, environment and personal services. It became a non-profit organization in 2013. CReA promotes initiatives that aimed at promoting a culture of solidarity and respect, in collaboration with public and private bodies. Initially operating with planning activities in support of external bodies and with social communication initiatives on immigration, CReA has increased over the years its direct engagement with migrants in the provincial territory on the east of Rome, making its professionalism available to local services.

The association uses an approach based on the sharing of aims and projects, working for the construction of social well-being in a true intercultural way. The activities and services that we offer are characterized by a close connection with the territory, through the adoption of an open method of coordination and a bottom-up approach, in the definition and implementation of intervention strategies based on the actual needs of the recipients and deeply rooted in the local reality. We focus on:

- Intercultural mediation
- Cognitive enhancement (Feuerstein Program)
- Professional training and updating
- Workshops to contrast racial and ethnic discrimination
- Global citizenship education
- Teaching Italian as a second language (L2)

For us, **international and local cooperation** are two sides of the same coin that help to increase processes of equity, social, economic and cultural inclusion. CReA has been active for more than 10 years both locally and internationally, trying to promote the coherence of action between local and global that is one of the objectives of the agenda 2030. Our president is also the vice-president of CIPSI, a coordinator of popular international solidarity initiatives, a member of the Board of CONCORD Europe and the Italian referent for the ECG. In the last 5 years we have coordinated and participated in various local, national and international projects such as FAMI, Erasmus PLUS, AMIF, Europaid, AICS funds etc.

CReA network includes:

- **Cipsi is a national** cooperation network, which encompasses 37 associations (OSC) operating in the field of solidarity and international cooperation.
- **CONCORD ITALIA** is the Italian platform in connection with CONCORD EU, the European Confederation that represents 2600 NGOs and civil society associations that deal with development cooperation and humanitarian aid. This body has gained in recent years a credible and legitimate role in the representation of European civil society involved in development issues at the Community institutions, in particular the Parliament and the Commission and many member states.
- **AOI**, originally an Association of Italian NGOs, in 2013 was transformed into a new social representation on the initiative of all the members of the Italian NGOs, that is, the **Association of Italian organizations of international cooperation and solidarity (AOI)**. AOI has been the promoter and supporter of CONCORD ITALIA, a platform that represents the Italian NGO which fosters development, solidarity and international cooperation at the confederation of Concord Europe.

Our target is both the general public, in particular young people and students, and the refugees/immigrants. This double target is closely linked to our mission: education to interculture, research, cultural mediation, and assistance.

2. Value proposition of 9c activity

CReA wishes to propose to Refugees/immigrants the advanced version of the “9 Conversations” course that was devised to help refugees to develop their business. This is basically a study circle programme to help refugees build their professional network in a targeted manner while exploring ideas for self-employment using the 9 sectors of a visual tool, the **Business Model Canvas**, which is a diagram summarizing in 9 sectors the main components of a successful business. During the course, all parts of this diagram will be analyzed and filled. This program also aims to give to participants communication and network building skills.

At present the course allows for two levels, one **lower** and one **higher**, of competence. The level of the participants is established after the compilation of a questionnaire (Developed by M9C), the EU skill profile tool and the curriculum vitae. The higher level contains additional study material, namely some assignments and videos. The course materials both for the first and for the second level are presented in the M9C site: <https://m9c.idi.ntnu.no/index.php/course/9-conversations-en/>

3. Target market

The foreign population in Italy on 1 January 2022 is 5,193,669 residents. In 2019, it amounted to 4,996,158 and thus increased by less than 200,000 in three years.

The main reason for entry into our country, despite more encouraging data on the employment front, remains family reunification: in fact, residence permits for family reasons account for 43.2% of the total and those for work for 4.6%.

In the municipalities of the Lazio region where CReA operates, 635,569 foreign citizens live permanently, 12.3% of those residents in Italy, belonging to 194 different citizenships, of which Romanian represents one in three. While confirming an upward trend, in the last four years the demographic data have been abnormal due to several factors: the Covid-19 pandemic, the introduction of regulations against immigration and the war in Ukraine. Of the 635,569 foreign residents, 81.2% are concentrated in the metropolitan city of Rome and the remainder in the other provinces: 8.3% in Latina, 4.7% in Viterbo, 3.8% in Frosinone and 2.0% in Rieti. Overall, the presence of women exceeds that of men (51.6%), but in the four provinces without Rome the percentage of women is lower (48.1%). Although almost all the foreign communities resident in Italy are present in the region (194 out of 198), some countries play a predominant role. This is the case of Romania, which exceeds 190,000 residents, followed by the Filipinos (7.0% of foreigners) and three other Asian countries: Bangladesh (6.5%), India (5.1%) and China (4.0%).

These data give an idea of the migratory flow in our region and the target with which CReA measures itself every day by providing reception, training and inclusion services.

Strategies

CReA in cooperation with the regions and local authorities foster the integration of foreign citizens through programs that: provide information on their rights and opportunities for integration or reintegration in their countries of origin; promote language, civic and vocational training; and encourage entry into the world of work. CReA operates through **a combination of public funding**. Public funding is usually allocated through participation in public tenders and/or other competitive procedures (call for proposals, tenders, contracts, etc.). European public funds that finance training for labour insertion, with which CReA works, include: Erasmus+ programs, AMIF programs for the promotion of an integrated management of migration flows by supporting all aspects of the phenomenon: asylum, integration and return, The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) program, The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR, fits within the Next Generation EU program), the 750-billion-euro package, about half of which consists of grants, agreed by the European Union in response to the pandemic crisis.

One aspect to keep in mind is that in Italy, support for NGOs depends very much on the type of government in charge. For example, in Italy with the election of Giorgia Meloni of Fratelli d'Italia party, some political structures have changed that limit the work of NGOs. These kinds of restrictions will not only affect NGOs involved in sea rescues but also all organisations involved in the reception, training and inclusion of migrants such as CReA.

4. The business model

Based on the above, thinking about the delivery of a training course such as 9 Conversations, the final recipients will be third-country nationals who are on Italian territory for reasons of family reunification, employment or political asylum, and who are interested in starting a business in Italy. The 9 Conversations course material is divided into two different levels: a basic level and an advanced level with the integration of some materials. Access to the more or less advanced level depends on the type of profile of the participant. In order to profile the participants and thus understand their motivation, knowledge in the entrepreneurial sector, aptitudes and skills (digital, linguistic, soft skills and hard skills etc.) it would be necessary to take stock before the course starts, also to understand how to better target the person interested in the course. During

its experience CReA has used the following tools to understand in general the level of competence of the target group reached and these could be also used to understand how to divide course participants into levels 9 conversations. These tools are:

- *Eu skill profile* tool: use of this tool available online and created by the European Commission, useful for the emergence not only of formal and certified competences and experiences, but also of transversal, informal ones that often tend to remain hidden.
- *Curriculum Vitae*: compiling the personal Curriculum Vitae according to the Europass model. Useful for summarizing studies, work and other personal experiences.
- M9C Questionnaire for a self-evaluation: To identify entrepreneurial knowledge and skills addressed to refugees and migrants willing to start a small business. Here the link:

<https://m9c.idi.ntnu.no/index.php/self-evaluation-of-candidate-entrepreneur/>

All of these tools can be a support in getting to know the students who will participate in the course better, they do not all have to be used, it is at the discretion of the NGO workers who will do the profiling. However, a fundamental aspect to take into account when coming into contact with people from different cultures is the use of intercultural communication, which often seems obvious but is not. It is therefore necessary to be open to understanding without judgement and prejudice, trying to identify with the interlocutor and understand his or her problems.

5. Operations Segment

The training and delivery of the 9C course can be delivered in different places, depending on the type of contact NGOs have with local public bodies and services. In general, the training courses of CReA take place:

- In the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA). They constitute a type of autonomous educational institution with its own staff and a specific teaching and organisational set-up
- On the premises of the associations providing the course
- In the halls of the municipalities
- In accommodation centers
- In public schools
- Online, on free platforms (e.g. Google classroom)

The trainers, who will be responsible for the delivery of the course and materials, need not necessarily be people with experience in the business sector, but they must have a network of acquaintances in the area in which they operate such that they can get the information they need. In addition, they must participate in the M9C train the trainers course, which was developed specifically to prepare NGOs workers for topics concerning business terminology, which would help them in the delivery of the course. A key aspect is the use of language and terminology that takes into account the language and knowledge level of the participants. Trainers should also have a good knowledge of English. Another useful figure for this training course is the tutor who will help with the use of the materials and digital platforms, the documentation of the participants and their training. It may be necessary, if none of the participants know English, to involve an intercultural mediator who can help with the translation of the materials.

6. Management Support

The **administrative employee** who will be in charge of the project and course 9 Conversations will have to record and collect documentation of accounting movements and manage the accounting process by ensuring compliance with tax-tax procedures and fulfilments.

Access to this professional position requires experience in accounting and/or management control functions, as well as in-depth knowledge of business economics, business administration, and a good knowledge of accounting, tax and bookkeeping regulations. Educational backgrounds generally involve university studies (typically economics and business or law, but also) and/or business administration schools/masters. The ability to use office automation devices, the Internet and application software dedicated to accounting management and ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) systems is also generally required. Knowledge of platforms such as MEPA (the public administration electronic marketplace), RUNTS (the Single National Register of the Third Sector) and others is also required. A good knowledge of English or at least one foreign language is also often required.

7. Financial Segment

The feasibility and effectiveness of the project and the connected activities depend on the ability to draw up a realistic and adequate budget forecast, which will enable the organisation to have a clear overview of its expenditure and income situation.

Here are some basic rules for budgeting:

- must be consistent with the activities described in the project and easy to understand, i.e. one must understand the calculations that led to its estimation;
- must be consistent with the association's annual accounts and may not include unrealistic or disproportionate co-financing;
- the cost forecast must be constantly compared with the association's accounting situation in order to avoid budget holes or liquidity crises;
- Constant monitoring will allow minor variations and deviations within the budget, if necessary, to be made during project implementation.

Clearly, the budget and salaries of the operators depend on what kind of projects and funds will be used to finance the 9 Conversations course. As far as CReA is concerned, the European funds to be accessed for the realisation of the course are: Erasmus+ programs, AMIF programs for the promotion of an integrated management of migratory flows by supporting all aspects of the phenomenon: asylum, integration and return, The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) program, The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR, fits within the Next Generation EU program), the 750 billion euro package, about half of which is made up of grants, agreed by the European Union in response to the pandemic crisis.

Taking into account the realisation of the course, the budget should include expenses for:

- course trainers (1 per course)
- mediators (if there are language difficulties)
- Tutors (to help managing the activities)
- an administrator (for all documentation needed)

- possible costs for renting the course venue
- materials for trainers and participants

To give an example, in the case of AMIF funds, the budget must be presented complete with the following parts:

COST	REVENUE
+ Direct costs	+ Community contribution
A. Employee costs	+ National public contribution
B. Travel and subsistence costs	+ Contributions of the final beneficiary and project partners
C. Property	
D. Consumables	
E. Equipment	
F. Contracts	
G. Auditors	
H. Expenditure by target groups	
I. Other costs	
J. Standard costs	
+Indirect costs (fixed percentage of Direct Costs)	
= Total of Eligible Costs	= Total Revenue

8. Critical risk segment

These are some aspects that could put at risk the realization of 9C activities:

- **Negative trends for entrepreneurship**, which could discourage perspective participants, due to the current economical international situation: rising prices due to shortages due to Covid pandemics, prospective European recession, unrest and uncertainties due to the ongoing Ukraine war, etc.
- **Political leadership change in Italy**, which has involved: a change in immigration policy (e.g. the so-called “anti NGO” decree, which provides for the prohibition of multiple bailouts, and the consequent practice of assigning distant ports for the disembarkation of people rescued at sea); and also a worsening sentiment trend towards NGOs and refugees/immigrants. Moreover, this change in policy will probably cause the national fundings to NGOs to be lower (and surely not higher) than in the past.
- **Rising energy bills, rents and consumables prices**, due to sanctions and the following change of providers of gas and electricity in consequence of Ukraine war, entailing increasing costs for courses.

9. Milestones schedule

- Recruit perspective facilitator(s) and tutor(s)
- Administer the TTF course to facilitators
- Take care of the logistics: location, size and characteristics of the meeting place, course material etc.
- Organize a preliminary survey (e.g. among the participants of Italian L2 courses), to get a rough idea of the number and (possibly) “skill level” of some of the perspective participants
- “Advertisement”: Post on local group of social media, leaflets, posters, etc. to attract other participants
- Contact local refugee-run businesses and local institutions for local success stories and contacts
- Held one or more “Information meeting” to meet perspective participants and form the group(s)
- Run the M9C program
- Award certificate
- Follow-up meeting(s) with participants

SWOT Analysis

This analysis helps us to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of our organization, keeping in mind the target of the present project and its practical realization. This allows us to do a better job, keeping in mind the particular characteristics of the work at hand.

- **Strengths**
 - Social recognition in the local community and by local authorities
 - Wide recognition at national and international level: our president is also the vice-president of CIPSI, a coordinator of popular international solidarity initiatives, a member of the Board of CONCORD Europe and the Italian referent for the ECG.
 - Great flexibility in management
 - Eligibility for national and EU funding
- **Weaknesses**
 - A high degree of sensibility to central policies, whether governmental or European
 - More problematic social sentiment due to the new political climate and to the change of government in Italy
 - The organization is understaffed though the staff is highly skilled
- **Opportunities**
 - Access to a number of donors and funding resources

- Support from EU policies
- Support from the advocacy organizations
- **Threats**
 - Subject to strict governmental control on fiscal and financial aspects
 - Possible governmental funds cut on cooperation activities