

Palermo: 115 Young Italians From All Over the World to Create a Global Network

Letizia Airos Soria (April 08, 2019)



A seminary for the creation of a network of young Italians in the world will take place in Palermo (April 16-19, 2019) and i-Italy is going to be there. An event organized by the General Council of Italians Abroad (CGIE). We discuss it with the president of the committee "New Migrations and New Generations," Maria Chiara Prodi.

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They are set to meet in Palermo from the 16th to the 19th of April, all aged 18 to 35: 115 young women and men, originating from every region in Italy, and residing in cities all over the world. 60% are of second or third generation and 40% new immigrants. They speak and write in Italian.



These young Italians abroad are taking on a great commitment. After being selected by the Committee of Italians Abroad (Com.It.Es.)* and by regional councils for emigration, they will work intensely for four days in order to then return to their communities and implement the launch of the first global youth network.

“The event coincides with the ten-year anniversary of the Global Youth Conference, another initiative launched by the CGIE, which brought 400 delegates from all over the world to Rome in December 2008,” recalls General Secretary of the CGIE* Michele Schiavone.

The program consists of two days of innovative participatory techniques, to identify goals and projects; one day of formation with experts to delve deeper into various themes (networks of Italian researchers abroad, work and mobility, cultural heritage, new experiences and opportunities for expat families, soft power, representation for Italians abroad); and finally one morning dedicated to dialoguing with institutions and setting goals in terms of work and commitment for the year to come.

“Since early February, we’ve involved all the participants through preparatory video conferences on the platform Bitmeeting and through questionnaires to encourage maximum engagement and convey the potential of this initiative” explains Maria Chiara Prodi, the President of the Committee ‘New Migrations and New Generations,’ which has been working on the project for the past three years.

We discuss the participants’ profiles with her. “What’s striking is the variety, the intelligence of these students and researchers, the different jobs they hold, from fire-fighter to physical therapist, to special needs teacher, to grand professions such as judge, economist, scientist.”

And where do they come from? “We have the whole world here, even places we weren’t expecting, like Guatemala. In Australia, they have already gone through an intense preparation on the themes we will be discussing, in Norway, they have already produced significant research on the networks. All of this makes us understand that they are ahead and that it’s important to bring their energies together in a system that valorizes them. That’s the objective of the symposium. We intentionally selected people who are already socially active in their territories and able to work in a team.”

Ten years have passed since the Global Youth Conference, ten years that have transformed the world. So much has changed. One of the challenges that the CGIE has had to face is economical. “It was clear from the beginning that we would not have the resources we had in 2008. We contemplated accepting this challenge by turning it into a strength. We jumped. It’s important to work with the actual data, with the economic reality, and build with the tools at our disposal. - continues Maria Chiara Prodi - All this while respecting and sharing the values of the COM.IT.ES upon which we depend, to connect also with the regional councils and institutions that wished to participate, particularly with those of our host city.

Palermo - Italian Capital of Youth in 2017 and of Culture in 2018 - presented itself immediately, thanks also to the work of commission member Gaetano Calà. Local institutions, the municipality of Palermo, with the enthusiasm of Mayor [Leoluca Orlando](#) [3], and the Region of Sicily presided by [Nello Musumeci](#) [4], all endorsed and supported this initiative.”

It's been a real team effort, that becomes evident as Maria Chiara Prodi thanks all those who contributed alongside the CGIE and local institutions, the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation](#) [5], the Regional Councils, but also the Regions who don't have councils and who worked together with the young migrants to perfect their policies. "We wanted to get past the idea that emigration is solely the competence of Emigration Councils. Many regions don't have them, but they have departments devoted to internationalization, youth employment, startups, innovation..."

The participants received their travel reimbursements directly from their territories, the platform BitMeeting (an instrumental partner in determining the success of the symposium), will allow the work to be carried out remotely, room and board are financed by local entities, the commission was funded by the CGIE: meaning each organization and institution did their part. Maria Chiara Prodi's enthusiasm is fully justified.

"We will ensure that no idea gets overlooked or distorted. We believe deeply in participatory techniques. They enable us to get to the core of what is important and dispel the notion that young Italians abroad don't care about politics and the activities carried out by associations.

We will analyze and realize that it could very well be that their interests are hardly being heard by the existing representatives."

One of the selection criteria is motivation. "We wanted them to be formally committed to being active before and after the seminary. This isn't a vacation. We want them to become the voices of their territories, to report back there what will take place here.

We didn't intervene directly on the selection process. There have been different experiments corresponding to different situations, to heterogeneous realities across the world. We know that each COM.IT.ES has its own history.

Not all COM.IT.ES participated and neither did every region. The list is on the website. What we hope is to put in motion a positive dynamic, fueled by youthful energy. Those who weren't able to participate can join us later. I hope that institutions will become sensitized and help us to gain a more stable economic status. We plan on creating working groups, some of which will be connected to objectives such as the State Region Conference that will take place in November and where we would like to send proposals made by young people, like 'Reti, Ricerca, Innovazione' (Networks, Research, and Innovation) and more.

It's a unique opportunity, it's not easy to bring together, face-to-face, so many young Italians living abroad. That's why I enthusiastically agreed to participate.

There, I will meet, listen, and ask them if they realize how important they are in presenting the



Italian Brand to the world. I will inquire about their awareness of their role as Soft Power ambassadors. We will discuss this with Minister Queirolo Palmas from the DGSP of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I will be glad to introduce the General Director of the Youth Agency, Domenico De Maio, who will present his institution, talk about employment, knowledge, and cultural integration amongst young people in different countries.

“The idea is for the young delegates to become a resource on all levels.” says Maria Chiara Prodi.

There is much talk about the status of associations of Italians abroad. It is often said that associationism is dead. This is an opportunity to respond within a changed, glocalised, faster, “liquid” world, one that lives on social media but in which relationships built on physical presence are still needed.

Although the event will only be accessible to the delegates due to space constraints, everyone will be able to follow their work on the website www.seminariodipalermo.it

*The CGIE is an institution made up of 43 volunteers elected in the countries in which there is a community of Italians, and an additional 20 members nominated by the government. It's a consultative organism of the government and the parliament, advising on the main themes that interest the community abroad. Its representative legitimacy derives from the direct election of the components of the COM.IT.ES throughout the world.

* The COM.IT.ES are elected and represent the needs of Italian citizens residing abroad to the Consular Offices, with which they collaborate to determine social, cultural, and civil needs of the Italian community.

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