

A School for young Shepherds

The School for Young Shepherds is an action-research project developed and executed with a place-based perspective, engaging local stakeholders in the three selected pilot areas to address local opportunities for young shepherds, particularly in terms of access to land, market opportunities, networks, and financing. It is promoted by the Association Riabitare l'Italia and CREA within the Italian National Rural Network in interaction with a wide network of public and private actors (AGENFORM, NEMO; CREA_ZA, University of Torino, Rete Appia) and with the contribution of Fondazione Cariplo. It also has involved local stakeholders from the 3 pilot areas in a variety of activities, from the design of the training to the mentoring stages of the project. Training was delivered in collaboration with local farmers adopting participatory didactics with the facilitation of CREA researcher and Agenform trainers.

The school offered mentoring and training (80 hours in presence and 40 hours in remote) linked to the needs of extensive livestock farming in marginal areas. In presence training was delivered from 25th of September 2022 to 7th of October 2022 in Valle Stura di Demonte (Cuneo Province) while mentoring and remote training (40 hours and 16 remote learning sessions with relevant actors on aspects such as circular economy, agro-ecology, eco-systemic services, etc.) were delivered from November 2022 to July 2023. In the mentoring phase the students were asked to present their farm activities and their project related to shepherding (study plans, employment project) Research and in-depth study of the three target territories selected in the project were finalized between November 2022 and April 2023. In the final stage (May – July 2023), students participated in face-to-face roundtables and focus groups held in the three pilot areas. These sessions provided them with a platform to engage with local stakeholders, fostering collaborative and supportive relationships.