



# Proceedings of LIFE MONZA PROJECT FINAL EVENT

12 June 2020



**LIBERTÀ PEDIBUS | Action of active  
involvement of the school for the promotion,  
implementation and monitoring of the Pedibus  
initiative**

***Cristian Zanelli***  
***ABCittà Società Cooperativa Sociale***

# **LIBERTÀ PEDIBUS | Action of active involvement of the school for the promotion, implementation and monitoring of the Pedibus initiative**

Cristian Zanelli

ABCittà società cooperativa sociale

## **Abstract**

The Libertà Pedibus initiative is defined within the Life Monza project as a "bottom-up intervention" aimed at the active involvement of the school. The Pedibus, from "Regulations of the Pedibus of Monza-Libertà", is presented as a school bus on foot. It is a participatory action that promotes mobility on foot in the home-school journey. Children enrolled in the Pedibus, are organized in small groups and accompanied by parents and/or grandparents volunteers. They go from home to school following precise itineraries. The Pedibus, therefore, does not correspond exclusively to the logic of a "service" proposed to the school community, but as a participatory educational experience to be carried out with the support of the school and the local community.

The reference model, proposed by ABCittà, and endorsed by the Administration - Ufficio Mobilità del Comune di Monza - recognizes the Pedibus as a real "common good for the city". From this point of view, the experience realized in the period November 2018 - June 2020, has allowed the definition of a "Neighborhood Pedibus" where, to take care of the accompaniment of children are not only the parents directly interested, but volunteers engaged in local associations that have recognized, in this simple weekly practice, a concrete commitment to improve the quality of life in the neighbourhood.

### Introduction: the first year of Pedibus

During the promotion and the subsequent start-up of the initiative, the Consulta of Libertà District (a formal group of citizens who collaborate with the Public Administration) has been reached and recognized as the main link with associations and informal groups of citizens who have found in the Pedibus a new and simple opportunity to relaunch social relations. The school is one of the centres of such relations. Families, children, parents and grandparents meet and actions, such as the Pedibus, allow the school institution to collaborate with the Administration, families, associations and local initiatives in order to define a wider educational context.

In the first months of 2019, the Pedibus was presented in school and during the Consulta of Libertà District. The results of a survey on school mobility, promoted by the "Rodari" School, were shown in order to view the home-school trip habits and introduce the Pedibus as an alternative daily route (see "box" section below). In January 2019, 312 questionnaires were distributed to all pupils of the school and then 229 completed questionnaires were collected and analyzed (73% of the distributed).

**BOX | Survey on school mobility in the Libertà District** | The survey described home-school trips as follows: **(1)** the number of children who go to school by car is always higher than the number of those who walk to school, both during the summer season (116 by car versus 114 on foot) and during the winter months (134 versus 94). Few children use bicycles (5-2) or public transport (5); **(2)** mothers mainly accompany their children (49%), followed by fathers (32%) and grandparents (11%); **(3)** the reason why you take the car is "because then you need it to go to work" (35%), due to the home-school distance (24%), because you are in a hurry (15%), reasons related to the weather (8%); **(4)** the "distance" is the reason why you do not walk (23%) followed by "dangerousness of the journey" (18%), "weight of the backpack" (17%), "traffic" (11%) and "weather" (8%). In terms of promoting the Pedibus: **(1)** 27% of those interviewed said they were interested in enrolling their child in the Pedibus (a total of 63 families); **(2)** only 3% were willing to become an accompanying person (7 parents).

It emerged that school mobility in the Libertà district does not have a good level of sustainability and children's autonomy is very limited. A good number of those interested in the "Pedibus service" do not correspond to an equally substantial number of parents who are available as "accompanying adults" and immediately ready to devote time and effort accompanying groups of pupils.

The Consulta has therefore considered the local context, determined on the basis of the survey, and has defined the starting point of a new model of Pedibus for the neighbourhood. It has not been possible to create an action that starts from the school to reach a wider local community, but it has been preferred to define a community of volunteers willing to activate the action with the aim to consolidate the collaboration with parents and the school itself. The informal and recognized groups such as the "Gruppo del Controllo del Vicinato" and the "Gruppi di Cammino" have immediately understood and adopted the values of the Pedibus as an action capable of supporting the idea of sustainable school mobility. They recognize the strong impact of the action on the social relationships that are established between children of different ages (children enrolled in the Pedibus are divided into groups not according to ages, but to housing positions), parents, grandparents and volunteers (who do not necessarily have children and/or grandchildren enrolled in school).

In April-June 2019, a group of about ten volunteers formed the "Pedibus del quartiere Libertà". The initiative served the school community and was largely appreciated by parents. At the same time, the school recognized the educational and social value of the action by **including the Pedibus in the Three-Year Plan of the Educational Offering**.

After the first year of the Pedibus, the traffic in front of the school during the hours of entry and exit was interpreted as a "sign of a need" which the local community itself took charge of. The number of cars in front of the school can be reduced, thanks to the Pedibus, as it is not strictly necessary to accompany children to school. It is possible to reach any of the "pick-up points" or "Pedibus stops" and then rely on the helpers. In this way, three objectives are achieved: guaranteeing more autonomy to children and teenagers, reducing the number of cars in front of the school and reaching the workplace in advance.

### **The ongoing experience**

The collaboration between School, Local Administration, Volunteers and Parents Association has allowed improving the model, during the summer break between the first and the second year of experimentation. Two aspects have been considered above all: the realization and positioning of Pedibus signs, along the routes tested in the first year, and the attention paid to **safety and insurance of children and adults involved**. Safety and insurance have immediately been pointed out by the school as possible critical areas. In fact, in addition to the certification of the routes, guaranteed by the Administration and carried out with the support of the Local Police, the insurance cover has been guaranteed to children on the home-school route (already provided for by the school insurance), but also to the volunteers, recognizing their commitment in the realization of a project included in the PTOF – Italian acronym for Three-Year Plan of the Educational Offering - and their strong collaboration between school and community institutions. In the first year of start-up, a collaboration with the Parents' Association (to whom we would like to express our heartfelt thanks) has been activated. The association has extended the insurance policy also to Pedibus volunteers, whereas, from the second year, it has been possible to insert the Pedibus in the municipal insurance that covers volunteers involved in the care of common goods.

Another crucial aspect of the Pedibus action was the contribution of **awareness-raising and education to sustainability**. Not only the children enrolled in the Pedibus, but also all the others had the opportunity to reflect on increasingly topical environmental issues, thanks to the inclusion of the Pedibus in the PTOF. The proximity of environmental issues to everyday life has been underlined during the informative and formative meeting organized and carried out for the entire teaching staff of the two schools, on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2019. The theme was "School mobility, Pedibus and environment": the educational value of the project was presented to the teachers and the realization of workshops in classes was proposed. In this regard, a development programme of the action for the period January-June 2020 was shared and the "Kit di Schede didattiche Pedibus" (Pedibus Teaching Card Kit) was presented for the autonomous implementation of exercises and activities. The teachers will receive the kit and carry out 14 workshops in the classes participating in the project. The work will be conducted independently, but with the constant support of ABCittà. The results of the activities will be presented to the school community in a **Pedibus event scheduled for spring 2020**.

In conclusion, the objectives of sustainability of Pedibus Libertà will be the continuation **beyond the support offered by the LIFE project** and the configuration of the new Pedibus of the city as a reference model, which, thanks to this two-year experience, will be able to propose new forms of activation in other districts.

