In many areas of Central Europe, allergy to birch pollen causes various troubles — conjunctivitis, asthma, cold — to more than 10% of the population. The only treatment consists in subcutaneous injections that must be continued for many months: with considerable distress for the patients. A team of Italian-Austrian researches is implementing an easier, more genuine and tastier alternative: eating apples. The existing link is a cross reaction between the birch allergen and the apple one: many individuals who are allergic to birch pollen are also allergic to apples. And so here is the ingenious idea: “the patient eats a certain amount of apples. While getting accustomed to the apple allergen he also gets accustomed to the birch one: and little by little he no longer suffers from such an allergy”, explains Thomas Letschka of the Laimburg Experimentation Center in Bolzano, one of the four partners of the “AppleCare” project together with the University of Innsbruck and the hospitals of Bolzano and Innsbruck. Some analyses are carried out on 25 varieties of apples to find the most suitable ones, also thanks to clinical tests on voluntary patients. “The goal is to implement the therapy. Then, in a second project, we will take into consideration the true medical part.” The “AppleCare” project is financed by the European Fund for the Regional and Cross-regional Development V-A Italia-Austria 2014-2020.

A solution for the homeless

Can we promote the spread of the North American method named “Housing First” in Europe?

The homeless phenomenon is a very widespread and is dealt with in different ways, based on the civic sensitivity and on the political choices of every single country. Over the last few years in Canada and in the US the working model “Housing First” has begun to spread out: it aims at finding a house to homeless through an interdisciplinary work team helping them to stabilize and to reintegrate socially. Thanks to the “Home_Eu” project, a consortium of partners belonging to eight nations is trying to understand if such a method can be applied also in Europe starting from the mapping of four key elements: the homeless, the actuated policies, the citizens’ sensitivity and the activity of social workers. The only Italian partner, the Department of Development and Socialisation Psychology of the University of Padova is in charge of this last part. “We are still collecting data, but the first results highlight that the North American method could give important results also in Europe, stabilising 80% of homeless people”, professor Massimo Santinello explains. “Much will depend on policy makers: our research can provide interesting and “clean” data and, therefore, clear indications. We hope it is complemented everywhere by concrete actions.”
Una soluzione per i senza dimora
È possibile esportare in Europa il metodo nordamericano “housing first”?

Qello delle persone senza dimora è un fenomeno esteso, che viene affrontato in maniera diversa, a seconda della sensibilità civica e delle scelte politiche di ogni territorio. Negli ultimi anni, in Canada e negli USA si è diffuso il modello di lavoro “housing first”: si punta a trovare una casa agli homeless, con un gruppo di lavoro interdisciplinare che li aiuta a stabilizzarsi e a reintegrarsi socialmente. Grazie al progetto “HOME_EU.”, un consorzio di partner di otto nazioni sta cercando di capire se questa metodologia è applicabile anche in Europa, partendo da una mappatura di quattro elementi chiave: gli homeless, le politiche attivate, la sensibilità dei cittadini e l’attività degli operatori sociali. Di quest’ultima parte si occupa l’unico partner italiano, il dipartimento di Psicologia dello Sviluppo e della Socializzazione dell’Università di Padova. “Stiamo ancora raccogliendo dati, ma i primi risultati ci dicono che il metodo nordamericano potrebbe dare risultati importanti anche in Europa, stabilizzando l’80% degli homeless”, spiega il professor Massimo Santinello. “Molto dipenderà dai policy makers: la nostra ricerca potrà fornire dati interessanti e “puliti”, e quindi indicazioni nette. Speriamo che poi venga accompagnata ovunque da azioni concrete”.

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