

Report on the activity in the framework of the European Inventor Network



Name of the alumnus who implemented the activity

Marco Donolato

Short description of the activity

The goal of the activity was to engage students from the last year of scientific/ technical high school in Italy about the invention process, patents and in general translation of scientific creativity into impactful products. I went to two schools in Milano area, Liceo Natta and Liceo Volta, each having more than 1000 students.

In both cases the presentation was held in the main school auditorium, and it was widely advertised.

The presentation began with a brief overview of my journey from high school to the creation of an innovative startup passing through filing a patent. Subsequently, I introduced some reflections and key insights into the meaning of inventing, being inventors, and developing technical-scientific creativity. I addressed some fundamental concepts related to the idea of a patent, explaining what it is, how it works, and what can and cannot be patented. Around 30min of discussion and questions followed by a common discussion. The goal of that presentation has been to inspire young students to find sources of inspiration in their daily lives and to use their technical skills to contribute to the improvement of our society.

Date and place of the activity

Milano, Liceo Natta 26 January

Milano, Liceo Volta 29 January

Audience (number and age of the participants)

Milano, Liceo Natta, 40-50 students around 15 to 18 years old

Milano, Liceo Volta, 120 students around 17 years old.

Outcomes and achievement

Students were really engaged in learning the possibilities of translational sciences. The seminar became very relevant for last year students, which are close to decide which university career to begin. In general, there was a lot of interest about patenting, “how to do in case I invent something” and how a company can be created around a patent.

An interesting point is around the concept of failure. The focus of the presentation was on my story, which somehow is not a success story – I created a cool company, launched a product, sold it in several countries...but then the company closed. I felt students were really intrigued by the open disclosure of a “failure” and understanding that failure is part of the inventing process.

Recommendations

I believe the outcome was very positive, both schools would like to repeat the experience next year. I think to improve the activity I could envision:

- Targeting the final year students regarding the university choice and retailoring the activity to make it more significant for them. This may not be the best target for EPO but it was the

way to get schools interested in the concept and notions of patents in relation to a choice toward applied science/ engineering/biotech career.

- Develop a better “patenting section” where I can better explain the concept of patents in a more interactive way. I believe with some EPO training and material it could become a very relevant activity and a lot many more high schools could be interested.
- The concept of “failure” attracted a lot of interest. I believe a whole talk regarding failure in inventing and in general in translational science would be very relevant for young students. I feel they are so full of social media/success anxiety and disclosing that even failure can be a positive outcome can motivate them even more to try to invent.

Overall, the main challenge was for me to get schools interested and find a suitable date – as described above I’d be very engaged to repeat the experience, but I’d need to brand the activity in a more specific way according to what described above.