

## **Fundación Cepsa and AFES Mental Health promote "Round-trip Exchanges"**

- **The project, which was awarded a 2022 Social Value Award, enables the exchange of experiences and awareness of mental health issues**

Fundación Cepsa has approached one of the six occupational centers of AFES Mental Health, beneficiary of the "Round-trip Exchanges" project, winner of an award for Social Value in 2022, which is aimed at favoring the process of recovery and social integration of people with mental health problems, achieved through engaging in the art of artisan crafts.

The main focus of the project is specialized training in artisanal innovation. Throughout the year, 90 individuals with mental health challenges and 20 NGO professionals will participate. Additionally, exchange trips will be organized to share artisanal practices with industry professionals, aiming to raise awareness about mental health.

Already, 36 users and 18 professionals from the company's six occupational centers have embarked on trips to other islands, fostering the sharing of creativity, best practices, and experiences with artisans from various regions. These three trips occurred last June, with destinations including Fuerteventura, La Palma, and Lanzarote. There they became familiar with reference resources on artisan crafts created on the islands, as well as other artisans.

All this has given them the opportunity to socialize in different contexts, weave new networks, move towards the elimination of the stigmas associated with mental health, and improve, thanks to the exchange of knowledge, their chances of employment and social integration.

The head of Fundación Cepsa in the Canary Islands, Belén Machado, visited the ceramics occupational center that the entity has in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, accompanied by Nuzet González, a Cepsa professional who is a solidarity sponsor of the project. "We could confirm, by sharing with the participants, that for them it has been unforgettable, a motivating challenge and an opportunity to travel and experience other places, which many of them had not had the chance to do yet. Not only did they learn techniques and share ways of working, but they also experienced unique moments with the group," said Belén Machado. "Undoubtedly, 'Round-trip Exchanges' has contributed to improving their welfare," she said.

For Jennifer Alegría, director of programs at AFES Salud Mental, receiving a Social Value Award 2022 from Fundación Cepsa, in addition to recognizing the important work carried out at the Round-trip (Ida y Vuelta) centers, is "a very powerful motivational springboard for our users." In her opinion, the people who make this project possible

are making progress in several ways: "They develop their talent and creativity with the aim of creating artisanal products with their own identity; they advance towards their recovery and social and occupational integration and strengthen their sense of inclusion in a team and in a Canary Islands network of craft innovation."

### **Round-trip**

As part of the artisanal creation brand 'Round-trip', 150 people with mental health problems participate throughout the year in the artisanal craftsmanship of products created in the six of the organization's occupational centers, focused on bookbinding, ceramics, laser cutting and engraving, textile and handmade printing.

People who have experienced a mental health problem are the agents of change, as they are involved in every step of production: design, development, quality control, inventory, stock management, content creation for social networks, and sales. The activities are also aimed at improving their digital skills, which contributes to reducing the digital divide faced by people with severe mental disorders.

Artisanal craftsmanship not only provides beneficial cognitive stimulation and a reduction in stress and anxiety in people with severe mental disorders, but it also improves their mood, fosters their attention, increases their self-esteem and self-confidence, and gives them a sense of accomplishment and personal satisfaction. Participating in group craft activities also facilitates their socialization and connection with others.

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