



COGreen

COMMUNITY-BASED ACTION
FOR A GREEN TRANSITION

EVENT 12: VALIDATION SEMINAR

Deliverable D



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the European Union

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Event 12

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ŽMERGO

Contributions from all partners

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Date



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Introduction

Under Event 12, on September 23 - 24 2024, UNIRIJEKA and ŽMERGO organized the 2-day transnational validation seminar in Opatija, Croatia, as an in situ event aimed at allowing exchange and discussion among all partners and trainers about what has emerged from the Event no. 11. Representatives of all project partners and the trainers joined the event to share the experiences among project partners, trainers, key stakeholders and representatives of the local communities. External experts and representatives of local stakeholders were invited to provide feedback on the conducted experiences. In total, there were 25 participants.

Day 1: Feedback on results of Event 11

- Representatives of each partner (per country) commented on the state of the (CO-GREEN) art explaining where are we now and what has been done so far.
- Representatives of CO-GREEN trainers of each partner (per country) presented trainers' reports comparing notes on methodologies, processes, and results.
- CO-GREEN trainers of each partner (per country) and Croatian CO-GREEN activators described positive changes in the communities that emerged from citizens' laboratories and local workshops.

Day 2: Representatives of local stakeholders provide feedback on the conducted experiences of Event 11

- Representatives of local citizens' initiatives / NGOs and CO-GREEN activators provided testimonies and examples of good practice
- Project partners and CO-GREEN trainers of each partner (per country) discussed the legacy of the CO-GREEN training programme and future CO-GREEN steps

Conclusions from the seminar:

The trainers and project partners played a crucial role in motivating facilitators and providing comprehensive training and support to the communities. They used various tools and organized meetings to address important topics such as community development, sustainability, and gender equality. The project methodology empowered residents to take the lead, fostering active citizenship and creating inclusive spaces for sharing. As a result, new forms of active citizenship emerged, leading to the establishment of new associations and intergenerational interactions within the communities.

The Event Description Sheet (EDS)

PROJECT	
Participant:	[1] - [Stowarzyszenie Centrum Wspierania Aktywnosci Lokalnej, CAL] [2] - [Uniwersytet Mikolaja Kopernika W Toruniu, UMK] [3] - [Sveuciliste U Rijeci, Filozofski Fakultet U Rijeci, UNIRI] [4] - [Udruga Zmergo, ZMERGO] [5] - [Forum Nazionale Terzo Settore, FNTS] [6] - [Universita degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata, UNITOV] [7] - [Euracademy Association, EURACADEMY] [8] - [Dimos Karditsas, MUNICIPALITY OF KARDITSA]
PIC number:	[946100365] [999836619] [998542057] [946199790] [924949612] [999844864] [921470707] [936282025]
Project name and acronym:	[Community-based action for a green transition] — [CO-GREEN]

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	[12]
Event name:	VALIDATION SEMINAR
Type:	[workshop]
In situ/online:	<i>[in situ]</i>
Location:	[Croatia], [Opatija,]
Date(s):	[Croatia]: 23.09. 2024; 24.09. 2024.
Website(s) (if any):	Poland: https://www.cal.org.pl/16382/ Italy: https://www.forumterzosettore.it/progetto-co-green/lavoriamo-con-le-comunita-per-co-progettare-proposte-azioni-e-o-campagne-per-realizzare-le-diverse-visioni-verdi-e-sostenibili/ Greece:

	General webpage: https://www.euracademy.org/co-green/ Webpage of the outputs of the Event: https://dimoskarditsas.gov.gr/event-11-enarxi-diadikasion-energopoiisis-tis-koinotitas/ Croatia: General webpage: https://zmergo.hr/co-green/ Webpage of the outputs of the Event: https://zmergo.hr/2024/09/medunarodni-validacijski-co-green-seminar-u-opatiji/	
Participants		
Female:	(Italy: 2, Greece: 0, Croatia: 24, Poland:1)	
Male:	(Italy: 1, Greece: 2, Croatia: 7, Poland:0)	
Non-binary:		
From country 1 [POLAND]:	1 (3)	
From country 2 [ITALY]:	3 (3)	
From country 3 [CROATIA]:	31	
From country 4 [GREECE]:	2	
Total number of participants:	37	From total number of countries: 4
Description		
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>		
<p>During Representatives of each partner (per country) commented on the state of the (CO-GREEN) art explaining where are we now and what has been done so far.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Representatives of CO-GREEN trainers of each partner (per country) presented trainers' reports comparing notes on methodologies, processes, and results. - CO-GREEN trainers of each partner (per country) and Croatian CO-GREEN activators described positive changes in the communities that emerged from citizens' laboratories and local workshops. <p>● ITALY</p> <p>The three communities, Cavalese, Magione, and Cosenza-Panebianco, have completed the training program for community facilitators, and four facilitators have been activated in each of them.</p> <p>The community facilitators have started creating workshops with the inhabitants and citizens of the community, working extensively on networking and participation; numerous events and initiatives have been organized.</p> <p>A group of citizens and residents has been created and activated, mobilizing for the well-being of the community. Networks and relationships have been established with schools, universities, businesses, other associations, and municipalities. Manuals on "community" and "green community" have been created and distributed in schools and communities. The three communities are working together on the production of a video and interviews.</p> <p>Cavalese is the youngest community.They started from an association focused on culture, and through culture, they created moments of social interaction, during which they promoted all the Co-Green initiatives, encouraging the local</p>		

inhabitants to participate and to foster community development by combining culture, environment, and journalism. Through the website <https://afroditelo.com/>, they encountered some difficulties at the beginning of the project, but the training sessions were very useful and effective for both the trainers and the community facilitators.

The activities took place over a wide area of the Umbria region and were led by a group of young people engaged in activism within the Legambiente clubs (a well-known Italian association focused on environmental issues).

Magione: in this case, they immediately became effective green facilitators, basing their community development entirely on green issues: waste collection, protection of green spaces, plastic-free initiatives, cleaning of public areas, and promoting healthy food. Panebianco is a neighborhood on the outskirts of the city of Cosenza, characterized by many vulnerabilities. No difficulties were encountered in Cosenza either. In this case, the trainers and facilitators worked extensively on engaging the residents (belonging to various cultures and nationalities).

Cosenza-Panebianco: the facilitators built a very broad and multi-identity network, which includes associations, cooperatives, schools, the municipality, bakeries, pharmacies, shops, churches, and citizens. In this community, they have also initiated other projects. Two communities have worked extensively on communication and have created online participation spaces, offering community members virtual magazines where they can write and share their stories.

The community of Magione focused many of its activities on green topics and managed to ensure high participation during events for cleaning green areas. They were also able to revitalize the entire area around Lake Trasimeno.

Meanwhile, in the community of Cosenza, they succeeded in revitalizing a square that was in a very poor state. Today, it has become a place where people gather, and new murals and street art pathways have also been created. In the communities of Magione and Cosenza, the intergenerational paths worked extremely well, where young and elderly people together built dynamic and useful activities and relationships for the territory, fully respecting all the principles of the green transition. The Cosenza-Panebianco community, thanks to the activities of the Co-Green project, managed to create a provincial network of associations and institutions that enabled the purchase of ten thousand trees to be planted throughout the province of Cosenza.

- **CROATIA**

Trainers and activators from Croatia explained the twofold goal of the Croatian team's activities as follows:

- 1) Encouraging stakeholders (organizations and individuals) to actively participate in the process of social innovation in their communities, and strengthening partnership relations between individuals and organizations that collaborate on common environmental issues.
- 2) Enhancing community development methodologies by improving existing approaches in ways of communicating with local leaders and citizens.

- 1) Strengthening partnership relations between individuals and organizations

The "Green" network of the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County was established.

The network was established to participate in decision-making regarding dissemination channels and the most suitable communication strategy among associations, organizations, and the media. As a result, internal communication channels among members, as well as external communication to the public, have been established to inform about current environmental events and to increase citizen involvement in addressing identified problems that the network chooses to tackle.

Methods of the "Green" network of the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County are as follows:

- It is necessary to be extremely proactive and approach citizens in the local community and not wait for them to come with their problems. The methods used to do this should be relevant to that local community, for example through social media and face-to-face in a local meeting spot. They should also take into consideration that different generations, and different locations (rural/urban areas) might use different means of communication, where there is not a "one size fits all approach".

- It is good to focus on the micro-level, with small groups of citizens. Such activities can always be applied in other areas, but activators/trainers should not be afraid of the very small scale in their activities. Others will most probably join in when they see that something is happening.

The focus of the "Green" network of the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County was developed through CO-GREEN citizen laboratories in Krk (May 2024), Rijeka (May-June 2024), and Opatija (May 2024). The key areas of focus included clean energy, local food production, coastal development, environmental degradation due to investor interests (such as the construction of residential buildings and reduction of green areas), and the lack of concern and understanding among decision-makers regarding the consequences of climate change, leading to a lack of action plans for mitigating and reducing these consequences at the local level. Workshops were held to address these issues, and recommendations for further action were provided.

2) Ways of communicating with local leaders and citizens

- a) Through practical exercises and presentations in Opatija the CO-GREEN activators and mentors learned effective communication techniques and explored ways of mobilizing citizens for sustainable action.

Workshops focused on improving communication skills and using digital platforms to reach citizens as potential participants in local actions. Experts provided insight into crafting persuasive messages and interacting with diverse audiences online. Participants gained practical knowledge of content creation and social media marketing, enabling them to amplify their influence in the digital age.

- b) Legal issues and advocacy were addressed with sessions in Opatija (March 2024) dedicated to understanding legal (environmental) regulations and citizen participation in decision-making processes. Activators learned how to navigate legal frameworks and effectively advocate for environmental protection, drawing inspiration from successful campaigns and case studies.

Output:

In Drenova, one of the biggest neighborhoods in the City of Rijeka, a group of citizens gathered to discuss the role of citizens in local food production and its potential for food sovereignty, one of the key issues and challenges in Primorje-Goranska county. Many households in Drenova have dogwood (local: Dren) in their gardens, and one of the priorities of the local community is to preserve this old, specific, autochthonous variety, which contributes to biodiversity and food security directly by citizens through the cultivation of food in their gardens. The meeting served for the exchange of information, education, empowerment about the methods of dogwood propagation, two types of propagation by agronomists, in order to make the entire settlement an edible city in miniature and to make all citizens aware of the importance of growing food, preserving the health of the soil and old variety.

Participants in workshops in Opatija and Rijeka identified actions for the local community:

1. Painting dark surfaces white to reflect heat, because dark color absorbs heat and on summer days in the city raises the temperature and encourages the use of air conditioners. Such places should be mapped and small groups should be organized to paint over the dark surface with white asphalt paint. A public invitation could be used to invite citizens to do the same around their homes (e.g. floors on balconies, exterior walls).
2. School mediterranean garden developed with citizens' donations of plants and the help of volunteers - parents, gardening section of the 60+ Club and members of the Green Network.
3. Picking fruit from abandoned trees in the city center that no one takes care of, the owners are not there or are unable or uninterested to pick them, could be used for the social kitchen in the Red Cross. It can be initiated with an announcement so that citizens can apply who would give their fruit trees to be cut.
4. Neighborhood composting bin in order to reduce waste and the production of greenhouse gasses.

2) *Ways of communicating with local leaders and citizens*

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b) Legal issues and advocacy were addressed. Activators learned how to navigate legal frameworks and effectively advocate for environmental protection, drawing inspiration from successful campaigns and case studies.

Output:

Participants in workshops in Opatija and Rijeka identified actions for the local community:

1. Provide cooling spaces for vulnerable groups during heat waves.
2. Ensure watering holes for animals in shady areas.
3. Paint dark surfaces with white paint to reduce heat absorption.
4. Develop the school's garden with citizen donations and volunteer help.
5. Install solar collectors on public institutions.
6. Establish communal composters to reduce waste.
7. Create urban gardens for food sovereignty.
8. Simplify the process for citizen energy communities.

The CO-GREEN activators, collaborated to host a thought-provoking cultural event in the Kantrida neighborhood of Rijeka. This event was strategically designed to shed light on the pressing issue of environmental degradation stemming from the vested interests of investors who were pushing for the construction of a new football stadium flanked by three towering skyscrapers and a waterfront hotel. The event featured an exhibition that showcased historical photographs of the neighborhood's beach, offered traditional culinary delights, and hosted an open-air cinema screening. These activities were carefully curated to educate and engage the local community about the proposed development plans spearheaded by the investors and the city administration. The primary goal of the event was to spark awareness and action. The activators also took the opportunity to underscore the project's notable achievements, which encompassed promoting intergenerational integration, fostering cohesion within local communities, empowering grassroots leaders, and fostering collaboration across various institutions.

In the same neighbourhood, citizens cleared the local beach of garbage and planted perennial Mediterranean plants adapted to the local climate on neglected land near the municipal building.

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- **GREECE**

Trainers from Greece provided the following report on Event 11:

The training of green activators was based on two main pillars:

1. Theoretical framework and acquaintance with good practices.
2. Participation in planned and ongoing actions.

This framework enabled two things:

- A) Training aimed to increase the knowledge of the trainees about the major environmental issues affecting the region and to enhance their communication and research skills.
- B) Trainees volunteered to participate in activities that have a social and environmental impact, such as school gardens and the circular economy project involving the collection of coffee residues from coffee machines.

- **POLAND**

The Polish team presented a summary of the project activities to date, focusing on two of the four locations: Elbląg and Starachowice (taking advantage of the presence of activators from these locations). The NCU representative recalled welfare reform assumptions and Social Service Centres' emergence as an important context for the project in Poland. The activators presented the objectives of the local projects (revitalisation of a degraded area of Stawidłowa Street in Elbląg as well as fairy tales book and community garden expansion in Starachowice), their original methods of working with communities, together with comments on their development. Activators highlighted the results achieved through the project's initiatives: intergenerational integration, integration of the local communities, activation of local leaders and strengthening inter-institutional cooperation. Participants in the seminar studied photographic documentation of the activities in Elbląg and a book published by the partners in Starachowice, which was one of the project results.

Project partners and CO-GREEN trainers of each partner (per country) discussed the legacy of the CO-GREEN training and future CO-GREEN programme steps

The trainers and project partners agreed that the trainers played a crucial role in the unfolding of the project. They had to motivate the facilitators when the community was not responding, as this also happened. The trainers dedicated themselves to providing comprehensive training and unwavering support to the facilitators at every stage of community engagement. They applied a range of tools such as open space and World Café, demonstrating a deep commitment to listening closely to the diverse voices within the communities. Furthermore, they took the initiative to organize meetings covering a wide array of crucial topics, including community development, environmental sustainability, green initiatives, gender equality, and long-term sustainability. Subsequently, the citizens and residents were empowered to take charge, guiding participatory processes and creating inclusive spaces for sharing, both in virtual forums and physical environments.

The methodology used in the project allowed the residents of the communities to take the lead in every activity, request, and initiative, which increased their sense of responsibility, active citizenship, and global citizenship. This approach fostered mutual support, neighborhood dynamics, community observation, and processes of raising awareness, consciousness, and protection of places, spaces, and services.

Out of these events, the project collaborators witnessed the emergence of new forms of active citizenship, as well as the formation of new associations and a renewed sense of motivation within the communities. This has provided opportunities for young people, very young individuals, and adults to engage in intergenerational interactions, leading to the establishment of fresh associations and the pursuit of new goals.