

EVENT 11.1

LOCAL WORKSHOPS AND CITIZEN LABORATORIES IN OTHER PROJECT LOCATIONS

ITALY

Magione

The conference "Lake Trasimeno: Challenges and Prospects" on 15th June was a significant event focused on the two main environmental challenges threatening Lake Trasimeno: the effects of climate change and microplastic pollution. This meeting provided an important opportunity to bring together the region's leading experts and foster a constructive and scientific dialogue on a common and increasingly urgent problem: drought and pollution. The local community played a crucial role in participating in the conference. The community of Magione (mainly composed of fishermen, people involved in the tourism and hospitality sector, or businesses dependent on tourism) has a deep and visceral connection with Lake Trasimeno. For these people, the lake is not just a natural resource but also a central element of their cultural identity and local economy. Participation in the thematic roundtable was exceptionally high, demonstrating how aware the local population is of environmental issues and their eagerness to contribute to finding solutions. The conference saw a significant contribution from the Co-Green project, whose main objective is to promote sustainable practices and increase environmental awareness among citizens.

Lake Trasimeno, besides being a source of livelihood for many families, is a true ecosystem hotspot. This means that the lake represents an area of great importance for biodiversity, hosting numerous unique species of flora and fauna and providing crucial habitats for various forms of life. Its conservation is therefore essential not only for the economic and social well-being of local communities but also for the protection of biodiversity and the ecological balance of the region. During the conference, experts from the Co-Green project discussed the serious threats posed by climate change. Rising temperatures and decreasing rainfall are leading to prolonged periods of drought, putting the lake's ecosystem and the economic activities linked to it at risk. Simultaneously, microplastic pollution was identified as an emerging problem, with serious repercussions on water quality and the health of aquatic organisms. The active participation of the community enriched the debate with direct experiences and practical suggestions. The community of Magione, deeply connected to Lake Trasimeno, shared their observations and concerns, offering a unique and valuable perspective. Their presence and involvement highlighted how collaboration between citizens and experts is essential to effectively address these challenges. The willingness to protect Lake Trasimeno and preserve its ecosystem for future generations was evident, underscoring the importance of adopting sustainable measures and promoting greater environmental awareness among all stakeholders involved. The Co-Green project played a fundamental role in facilitating this dialogue and promoting the adoption of environmentally responsible practices through the active participation of community members. Thus, the conference represented a significant step towards more conscious and sustainable management of Lake Trasimeno, highlighting the central role of the citizenry in the decision-making process and the protection of their environment. The active participation and commitment of the Magione community were a shining example of how collaboration between science,

sustainable projects like Co-Green, and society can lead to innovative and shared solutions to address the environmental challenges of our time. Thanks to initiatives like these, it is possible to hope for a more sustainable future for Lake Trasimeno and all the communities that depend on it. Stakeholders involved: Municipality of Magione, Pro Loco San Feliciano, Pro Loco Sant'Arcangelo, University of Perugia, Umbria24, Lake Trasimeno Fishermen's Cooperative, Fishing Museum.

Cosenza

The event on 31st May took place outdoors, in the main square of the Panebianco district in Cosenza. Community activators led the participants in an intense and engaging reflection on the concept of "participation" and the many different "forms of participation." A strong desire emerged to create new activities and tools to stimulate participation in order to reach more residents of the neighborhood. Among the various proposals discussed and shared, there was a strong desire to create a mural in the center of the square with themes related to the environment, freedom, and participation. During the event, another project, Api Social, was also presented. Alongside Cogreen's activities, it will address issues related to climate change, environmental matters, and youth issues. Stakeholders involved: Cosenza Municipality, Hoplà Cooperativa Sociale, Arci Servizio Civile Cosenza, Legambiente Calabria, Opificio delle volontà, Mediaterronia Tv, Arci Cosenza, Arci Red, Arci Dolcezza, Arci Sorborosso, Aipd Cosenza, Hello music academy.

CROATIA

Workshop in Rijeka on 18th April was based on Open Space Technology during which participants were supported to come up with proposals for urgent "green" topics in local communities in order to facilitate co-prioritisation of ones to be addressed by the project in following activities. Key topics that emerged from the implemented OST method are:

Local food production - citizens shaping edible city

Local food sovereignty and biodiversity - old varieties and seed bank

Heat and sun - citizens energy, heat shelter strategy

"Green" citizens participation.

Key stakeholders and possible collaborations were discussed as well as potential joint public campaign needed to raise awareness among a larger number of citizens as possible on "burning" green topics relevant to the local community. Except on public (online and printed) media as well as social media, participants stated there is a need to develop and deliver public actions with powerful, targeted messages related to mapped issues and topics in order to address the importance and the level of priority in action toward them. Campaign should invite and gather a large network of all different stakeholders in order to send as powerful, loudest message as possible that will reach the largest possible audience among the

community empowering them to take action and embrace positive changes in everyday lifestyles towards sustainability.

The central topic of the workshop in Opatija on 7th May was the issue of active participation of citizens in shaping a sustainable community and low level of citizen participation in democratic decision-making processes. Despite various methods of involving citizens, from direct democracy through elections, city councils, local committees to the process of public consultation on various local policy documents, citizens respond poorly to these forms of participation. The key problem detected is the weak and insufficiently clear communication between decision-makers and citizens in order to understand the procedures and limitations imposed by legal and administrative regulations within the local public administration, which regularly appears as obstacles in the implementation of certain local interventions that are in contradiction to the interests of citizens and private capital. Participants highlighted several local issues that cause citizens' dissatisfaction with participation - concretization of the coast, destruction of the environment and nature for the sake of investors (construction of residential buildings), decline in the quality of citizens caused by numerous construction sites and the destruction of local infrastructure (roads, reduction of green areas, etc.). Also, the low level of decision-makers concern and understanding of the consequences of climate change as well as the absence of short-term and long-term policies, i.e. action plans aimed at mitigating and reducing the consequences of climate change at the local level as a community that depends on natural resources related to the primary economic branch, was highlighted - tourism - the problems of increasing and sudden changes in extreme temperatures, raising the level and acidity of the sea, lack of locally grown food, non-use of the sun for the production of electrical energy and the potential of sustainable local applications (electric bicycles and scooters) were especially mapped.

In a dynamic conversation on 17th May in Njivice in order to be able to respond to climate related challenges, the meeting emphasized the importance of quickly abandoning fossil fuels and switching to sustainable alternatives. How sustainable renewable energy actually is and how it is disposed of was a key aspect of the discussion. It is necessary to pay particular attention to today's marketing tricks of industries and politicians about "sustainable" options, which according to all research and practical examples are just as harmful as the current "creators" of the problems we are in. Disposing of old and defective solar panels, propellers of windmills (not to mention the danger to birds), batteries for electric cars, as well as their questionable power supply from classic sources of electricity are just some of the issues when discussing alternative and sustainable ways of producing electricity and dependence on fossil fuels. Pandemics and wars, although they dominate the media space, must not distract us from the essential problems that surround us, and on the one hand, greater responsibility of the media in reporting on environmental policies and issues, as well as a greater level of information literacy, is needed. The largest percentage of people who listen and read new information and news are young people up to 25 years of age. But the fact that they do not watch the main media and information channels but use social networks and private servers is a call for reform. Their skepticism towards the honesty of the media has been something that has been investigated for 10 years and the political authorities should take this into account in order to be as close as possible to the ideas and goals of young people. Scientific facts warn that the survival of young people is threatened. In order to be resistant to changes, the question was asked how and how much, and the answer is that we need to reduce energy consumption by 4/5 at the level of each individual. As the main strategies, consumption reduction and localization were highlighted as key steps towards achieving this goal. The conclusion is that we should actively work to create a

sustainable future for all of us. In order for "politics" to accept all this and start working meaningfully in the direction of the green transition, the key lies precisely in young people and their engagement. It is necessary to educate, encourage and support more young people to enter situations and spaces where decisions are made and ideas are developed.

- **POLAND**
- **Górno**

In Starachowice and Elbląg local workshops and citizen laboratories were joined into one-day meeting described in the section devoted to citizen laboratories.

CITIZEN LABORATORIES

- **ITALY**
- **Magione**

On the morning of May 25th, together with the citizens of Magione and the young people from ESN Perugia, a special cleanup operation took place along the roads and shores of Lake Trasimeno, in the picturesque town of San Feliciano (Magione). This initiative is part of the Legambiente campaign "Clean Beaches and Seabeds", an important mobilization aimed at raising public awareness about the protection of coastal and lake environments and promoting concrete actions to combat poor waste management and littering. The "Clean Beaches and Seabeds" campaign aims to collect abandoned waste on marine and lake beaches, raising public awareness about the importance of caring for and safeguarding ecosystems. Every year, thousands of volunteers across Italy mobilize to clean beaches, rivers, and lakes, helping to increase awareness of preserving the natural beauty of our territory and the environment. This campaign not only promotes practical cleanup actions but also environmental education and awareness through the active involvement of local communities. The care and protection of the territory and the surrounding environment are widely encompassed in the goals of the Co-Green project, which aims to involve local communities in the co-design and implementation of sustainable practices, in line with the values of the European Green Deal. With the Co-Green project, active in the Magione community, we aim to transform environmental issues into opportunities for participation and to adopt virtuous practices that can be replicated elsewhere. Many key objectives of the Co-Green project were highlighted by the cleanup and monitoring activities:

1. Community Involvement: Encouraging active citizen participation in environmental protection activities, leveraging the sense of shared responsibility and collaboration among different segments of the population.
2. Environmental Education and Awareness: Promoting awareness about the importance of environmental protection, educating participants on good waste management practices and the impact of pollution.
3. Implementation of Sustainable Practices: Encouraging the adoption of sustainable practices at the local level, such as waste reduction, recycling, proper waste disposal, and the enhancement of natural resources, in line with the Green Deal objectives.

4. Environmental Monitoring and Data Collection: Developing a monitoring system to collect data on environmental quality and the types of waste (what we find most frequently near the lake's shores, waste found near bars, etc.).
5. Promotion of Citizen Science: Involving citizens is the main added value of the activities, as well as a valuable tool for more informed and participatory management of natural resources. The cleanup on May 25th was a crucial moment of awareness and citizen involvement, elements that have always been at the heart of our activities throughout the entire regional territory. Through environmental monitoring and cleanup campaigns, we have created an intervention model that responds to territorial needs but also promotes citizen science, an approach that contributes to more informed and participatory management of natural resources.

Stakeholders involved: Municipality of Magione and ESN Perugia.

On Saturday, June 15th, together with Arci Magione, there was a significant cleanup operation lunched along the shores and in the green areas of San Feliciano. This initiative, organized just three weeks after a previous cleanup event, demonstrates the constant and growing attention of associations and the community of Magione towards the protection of the Lake Trasimeno ecosystem. The active participation of the community was remarkable: men, women, young people, and children joined forces for a common goal, creating an atmosphere of collaboration and sharing. Saturday's action was not just a cleanup event but a true moment of environmental awareness and education. Volunteers collected 13 bags of abandoned waste, found among the rocks, close to the lake, and in accumulation areas along the lakeside, such as benches and tables. The commitment shown by the participants was evident not only in the amount of waste collected but also in the enthusiasm and dedication with which they faced this challenge. Every filled bag was a small but significant step towards a cleaner and healthier environment, highlighting the importance of individual and collective responsibility in protecting our natural heritage. The activities of Co-Green are a concrete example of how cooperation between associations and the community can lead to tangible and positive results. The project is distinguished by its ability to actively involve citizens, making them protagonists of change and promoters of a culture of sustainability. This inclusive approach not only increases environmental awareness but also strengthens the sense of belonging and social cohesion. Saturday's event represented an important moment of sharing and reflection on good environmental practices, demonstrating that through collective effort, it is possible to make a difference. Initiatives like this not only contribute to the cleaning and conservation of natural spaces but also foster a sense of community and shared responsibility, which is crucial for addressing current environmental challenges. In terms of specific objectives of the Co-Green project, Saturday's event achieved the following goals:

1. Environmental Awareness and Education: Through direct participation, volunteers gained a greater awareness of local environmental issues and best practices to address them.
2. Community Involvement: The presence of citizens of all ages strengthened the sense of community and promoted a culture of active participation.
3. Reduction of Local Pollution: The collection of 13 bags of waste had an immediate and tangible impact on the cleanliness of the areas involved, improving the environmental quality of the lake.
4. Promotion of Sustainability: The event encouraged the adoption of sustainable behaviors, both during the initiative and in the daily lives of the participants. The activities organized within the Co-Green project continue to be a beacon of hope and concrete action for environmental

protection. Thanks to the active participation and involvement of an increasingly aware and committed citizenry, the project is succeeding in achieving its goals, promoting a culture of sustainability and shared responsibility. Future initiatives will continue along this path, aiming to further expand participation and positive impact on the territory.

Stakeholders involved: ARCI Magione, Municipality of Magione, AVIS Magione.

- **Cosenza**

The event on June 1st marks the beginning of a series of scheduled events taking place in June, July, and September. Many initiatives have been proposed: a flea market, recycling workshops, and active and global citizenship workshops. Community activators manage all the promotion processes for the initiatives and aim to foster participation within the entire community. On June 1st, two other communities from different neighborhoods in Cosenza also participated, led by activists who have followed Cogreen's participation processes.

On June 8th, the second Cogreen event for the Panebianco community took place. Participation increased, and many people showed interest in Cogreen's activities. During the June 8th event, a box was placed in the square to collect ideas, thoughts, and proposals to be implemented within the community, aiming to ensure continuity of the project activities. On June 8th, several workshops began, including read-aloud sessions, writing workshops, photography workshops, and the creation of an illustrated book contest on green themes.

• **CROATIA**

Most important conclusion on 14th May in Opatija is that there is an importance to create opportunities for active, meaningful and joyful experiences that motivate and empower youth for active contribution to shaping their local community in a sustainable manner. Youth in the local community needs to restore trust through interactive, intragenerational, experiential and joyful activities that give them a sense of true influence on the life of the surroundings. Therefore it is important to have professional youth workers working systematically with local youth on "green" topics, offering them opportunities to suggest ideas and afterwards supporting them in planning, developing and implementing those ideas so they have a direct and meaningful impact on shaping a resilient community.

On 28th May in Opatija using open space technology, participants mapped 6 potential roadmaps that could be implemented in the local community as a citizen's contribution to transition:

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. Installation of solar collectors on public institutions and spaces owned by the city.
5. Neighborhood composting bin in order to reduce waste and the production of greenhouse gasses.
6. Community garden. Public city gardens can contribute to food sovereignty - one of the goals of sustainable development. Besides the fresh organic produce, gardening has both a psychological and social effect and contributes to reducing depression and isolation in seniors. Interested citizens will request that the City earmark free arable land for this purpose. Possible roadmap for implementation - after preparatory work including gathering of interested parties and lobbying, followed by the fencing of the plot, bringing in water, regulations on the use of the garden and others as needed. The users of that garden could work closely with the school garden, creating a seed bank and demonstration beds.

In Drenova on 15th May, 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.

The base of the discussion in Rijeka on 17th May is the fact that renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, water or geothermal energy are available to everyone as common goods, and their use through energy community projects, in order to meet basic energy needs, guarantees that the energy produced and thus the benefit achieved will be retained in our local communities. Energy communities enable citizens, entrepreneurs and the public sector to invest in renewable energy projects and take an active role in the energy market. They represent an alternative to commercial energy companies and are characterized by open and voluntary participation (membership), direct ownership of citizens, cooperation with local small and medium-sized enterprises and with local self-government units and democratic governance. An important difference between commercial energy companies and energy communities is a commitment to socio-economic and environmental benefits for the community – and the benefits for the energy community are more important than making a profit. The energy transition can only succeed in the cooperation of all actors having citizens at its center. In order to achieve the development of energy communities and citizen energy in Croatia, these roadmap must be undertaken:

1. Make the process of registering energy communities simple and affordable for groups of citizens who are not (energy) experts and establish a support system in this process.
2. Provide financial support to energy communities from available funds with the application of state aid rules in order to mitigate the risk of energy community projects and encourage their development and stable growth.
3. Ensure that energy communities can easily reduce their electricity bills to their members through energy production, share energy directly with members and conclude energy purchase agreements directly with other actors on the market.

To make cities and municipalities at the forefront of the development of civic energy by ensuring the involvement of citizens and energy communities in renewable energy projects in public areas and roofs.

The meeting in Rijeka on 6th June discussed the rise in temperature as one of the consequences of climate change and the direct consequences it has on tourism and all related industries, which we primarily rely on in our county. The year 2023 was the warmest year on Earth since measurements have been taken. The first four months of this year are also the hottest ever. Croatia belongs to the most climatically vulnerable areas of Europe. Despite this, there are not many discussions in Croatia (neither nationally nor locally) about how to behave during heat strokes, how to adapt work processes to it, how to act if there are overloads /outages / infrastructural systems, what kind of planning activities to reduce the tragic consequences. The conclusion is that it is necessary to network all local initiatives and relevant networks into joint efforts in order to encourage fellow citizens to act in order to strengthen resistance to heatstroke. It is extremely important to publicly talk about the fatal consequences of working in conditions of exposure to extreme heat (in tourism, in construction, in agriculture and horticulture, in communal and emergency services... outdoors), especially in the case of existing chronic health problems, and especially in the purpose of preventive action and behavior aimed at mitigating the consequences of climate change. Some of the key conclusions that bring concrete measures and plans with the aim of prevention and protection are:

□ *Shelters from the heat*

1. For people - open spaces where a large number of people move or stay should be protected from direct sunlight with natural or artificial shade. For age- and/or health-impaired groups who live in rooms that are not cooled, provide publicly accessible places where they could cool down.
2. For domestic and wild animals - provide enough watering holes in shady places.

□ *Infrastructure*

1. Communal - Since thermal shocks are accompanied by a strong increase in electricity consumption due to cooling devices followed by often experiencing interruptions in supply due to overloading the electric networks, electricity distributors should have a plan to disconnect certain groups of consumers in order to prevent the total breakdown of the network.
2. Social - when extreme heat is announced it is important to have a plan of action in homes for the elderly, in schools and kindergartens, in hospitals, when organizing events for a lot of people in open and closed spaces.
3. Intervention services - since in extreme heat a need for intervention services increases it is necessary to have the rules of conduct of each service in such circumstances.

There is a high priority of development documents to become the basis for activities that will prevent further deterioration of the environment and to enable its regeneration and the creation of structures that can protect the population from disturbances that have already been done, and about which we know that it will work for decades to come.

- **POLAND**
- **Górno**

In Górno local workshop and citizen laboratory was joint in one all day meetings on 19th and 16th June. Local workshops and Citizens took place in the municipality of Górno. They were aimed at all the residents of the municipality, so they were scheduled in various village hamlets. The workshops consisted of several parts. A lecture was given on the state of the environment, the need to separate waste, the recovery of raw materials and recycling followed by open discussion in the form of the OST. During a quiz entitled "Guess how long I decompose?", participants drew cards with questions and tried to guess the

decomposition period of different rubbish. The next part was a workshop on separating waste into boxes marked with the colours black, brown, blue, green and yellow. Participants were divided into teams and had to determine what from the collection of waste they would put into which container. They had to justify their choice. Each correct choice was awarded a point. The team with the most points received a set of seeds to sow as a prize. The meetings ended with a joint discussion under the theme "What can I give up and new things not to buy?".

The objectives of these workshops/meetings were:

- raising environmental awareness,
- community working.

The results are:

- increased knowledge of ecology,
- increased ability to separate rubbish properly,
- improved relationships,
- increasing cooperation skills,
- acquiring the ability to consciously buy things and products that are necessary in order not to waste them.

- **Starachowice**

In Starachowice local workshop and citizen laboratory was joint in one all day meeting on 27th June. The meeting was aimed at summarising and collecting the activities so far, identifying problems and challenges before the implementation stage of the main activities, i.e. the publication of a book on environmental issues, planting in the community garden of the University of the Third Age and the herb garden in the community on Ostrowicka Street.

The following steps in project activities in the Starachowice community have taken place in recent weeks:

- the competition for ecological fairy tales and illustrations for the book entitled. "Starachowice Eco-fables for the youngest". Thirteen works written by 8 seniors and 15 children's artworks were submitted, which will be illustrations for the book. The authors of the works received vouchers as prizes - vouchers for tickets to the Helios cinema. In July, we will request selected publishing houses to prepare an offer to publish the book in an edition of min. 150 copies. The book should be ready by the end of September.
- in consultation with the Eco Section of the Third Age University (TAU) in Starachowice, it was determined which plants should be planted in the TAU Community Garden. The plants will be planted on 28.06.2024. The garden will be enriched with approximately 25 new shrubs and ornamental trees.
- after obtaining permission from Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, it is also planned to install in the TAU garden an educational board about ecology and green energy, measuring 1 x 1.2 m

- the installation of a herb garden in the community on Ostrowiecka Street will take place once the cost of publishing the book has been determined, in order to estimate how much money can be allocated for this garden.

- **Elbląg**

In Elbląg local workshop and citizen laboratory was joint in one all-day meeting on 23th May. The meeting in the first part was aimed at 1) summarising the project work to date; 2) identifying the main objectives and potential risks at the current stage of the project; 3) preparing for the citizen laboratory. As part of the citizen laboratory in Elbląg, a public consultation was planned with the residents of the area of Stawidłowa Street, where the project plans to revitalise the green belt at the branch of the city canal. The participants of the project discussed and agreed on the consultation plan, as well as its objective in question (in the form of research questions). The consultation is planned based on two tools: 1) a questionnaire survey distributed to residents (concerning, among other things, the quality of life in the local community, its needs, its opinions regarding the proposed project) and 2) a scenario for individual interviews with residents. In addition, promotional materials were prepared (for the participants of the consultation and to promote the event itself). Logistical issues related to the organisation of the consultation were also agreed. The current course of the project was also discussed, with emphasis on activities related to its finalisation (development of the area around the canal, i.e. coordination of cooperation with partners, design of the area, purchase of necessary materials).

The second part of the meeting was based on public consultation around the project's activities. On 23 May, a meeting of green activators was held with residents of the Stawidłowa Street area, where the project plans to revitalise the green belt at the canal branch. The area is to be landscaped with trees, decorative shrubs or benches for relaxation. The consultation was aimed at 1) obtaining the residents' opinion on the idea itself and the technical specifications of the project; 2) promoting the project, also in the context of broader European policies; 3) promoting the idea of sustainable and green development and civic activity on a local scale. In order to achieve the first objective, a number of interviews with residents were carried out on the basis of prepared interview schedules. Residents participating in the consultation also completed questionnaires prepared during the workshops. The second objective was achieved through interviews with residents and the presentation of materials containing the main objectives of the project. The promotional dimension was also served by materials informing about the consultations. The third objective was achieved through the distribution of materials. Conversations in a informal and friendly atmosphere about the quality of life in the neighbourhood and the memories recalled by some residents helped to build or strengthen both the social roots of the participating institutions and the relationships within the local community itself. Extensive documentation of the event in the form of photographs and video footage was prepared. A further consultation meeting is planned for July.