

## D.T3.3.3

# REPORT ON PUBLIC EVENTS INVOLVING LOCAL CITIZENS

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Fabrizio Furia, Angelo Ranzenigo, Jody Marco Abate





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## 1. Context

Participation of citizens and stakeholders is commonly understood as the practice of involving them in the public policy-making process.

Stakeholder involvement also has an instrumental value, as it enhances transparency and the knowledge base on which policy-making is based, and reduces implementation costs.

Involving citizens, in a context of transparency, can be seen as an enrichment of representative democracy and can, in some cases, avoid controversy and mistrust and dissatisfaction among citizens.

In the context of the Alessandria strategy, the stakeholder engagement was implemented through:

- Public communication: public policy makers transmit information to stakeholders. The information flow is one-way: stakeholders are not actively involved, no input from them is expected or required.
- Public consultation: policy-makers receive information from stakeholders as part of a process initiated by them. The contributions collected are perceived as representative of social views on the issue.
- Public participation: citizens, stakeholders and policy-makers exchange information.

The project's preliminary selection, design and implementation phases were shared, through a joint action, with both citizens and schools.

Unquestionably, this method of proceeding generates different "added values", that favour a more correct and careful use of urban green areas by citizens.

## 2. Actions

SALUTE4CE working group decided to devote a great deal of energy to involving citizens, with diversified actions: by taking part in the Environment and Urban Green Commissions, we urged city politicians to take a stand on the effects of climate change; by presenting the project in specialist courses aimed at architects and agronomists, we tried to suggest new methods of landscape design and management.

And while the project ideas were taking shape during the meetings with the citizens, several schoolchildren were accompanied to the construction site to choose the positioning of the trees and bushes: it will be the citizens of tomorrow who will protect today's investments.

A number of high school students spontaneously created educational and informative posters in the green areas, full of information on the environment but above all of participation.

The local newspapers and television stations were not neglected: the reports reached



many people, telling them about the areas and telling them about the people.

The public was repeatedly offered the opportunity to participate in conferences and lectures on the project theme, which was complemented and enhanced by other projects proposed by local associations.

Proposals for cooperation in maintenance operations have arisen spontaneously both from private companies and from groups of parents who have formed committees and who have managed to implement the spaces.

The image of the Botanical Garden of Alessandria has been linked to the Salute4CE areas: the experts from the Service have taken part in various initiatives to promote and describe the project.

In conclusion, a joint action with the technicians of the municipal administration was proposed to the citizens.

It is through this synergy that we now believe we can change the initial paradigm: the environment belongs to no one, the environment belongs to everyone!

### **3. List of events involving stakeholder**

28/08/2019 - Citizen participation in the selection of project areas, involvement of NGO Natura e Ragazzi;

10/11/2019 - Conference at Chamber of Commerce of Alessandria;

28/11/2019 - Conference for the International Day of Trees, High School Galileo Galilei;

02/12/2020 - Seminar "Reducing the vulnerability of the territory to the effects of climate change" - Order of Architects;

08/03/2021 - March Woman - Popular scientific conference (web);

29/04/2021- Online Public conference at "Utopie Concrete" presentation of SALUTE4CE;

04/05/2021 - Lecturer during the Urban Acupuncture Course at the Botanical Garden of Alessandria;

25/05/2021 - Lecturing during the Urban Acupuncture Course at the Botanical Garden of Alessandria, Second meeting;

05/06/2021 - "Flowers and bees a synergy for the environment" Soroptimist conference;

15/08/2021 - Network of Botanical Gardens of Piedmont, meeting with the public with extraordinary opening of the structures;

07/09/2021 - Local Workshop at Botanical Garden of Alessandria;

27/10/2021 Public event and public conference in Alessandria with SALUTE4CE International delegation

10/11/2021 Lecturing at the training course "EUROPEAN FUNDING. The Third Sector in the new European programming 2021-2027"



Local Workshop, Botanical Garden of Alessandria, 07/09/2021

#### **4. Focus on events with the schools**

In agreement with the headmasters and the teachers, the pupils were involved in the project implementation phase: during these informal public events, with the assistance of the municipal technicians, the students actively participated in the field measurements and staking out phases, during which the precise positioning of all the plants in the project was decided.

These field activities, a sort of “open air meetings”, have been also the occasion to explain and discuss the main project objectives and themes.

The events took place simultaneously in Alessandria, in 2 pilot spots of the project, as listed below and were followed by a final lesson:

06/05/2021 - Field activities in the Urban Orchard with the children of the Villaggio Europa Primary School. Building site activities;

06/05/2021 - Field activities in the Refuge Forest with the children of Morando Primary School. Worksite activities;

11/06/2021 - Introduction of urban acupuncture concepts, Villaggio Europa School.





Field activities, Villaggio Europa Primary School, Alessandria, 06/05/2021



Field activities, Morando Primary School, Alessandria 06/05/2021



Alessandria, 5/6/2022

Cara Anagio

Ai miei compagni e a me quel giardino sta molto a cuore, perciò abbiamo deciso di prendercene cura in prima persona. L'associazione che abbiamo fondato compendarsi una domenica sì e una no di pulizia del nostro amato parco. Quel giorno pranziamo insieme con il pranzo al sacco e finito ci metteremo a raccogliere la spazzatura.

Dalle 12 alle 13 pranzo  
Dalle 13 alle 14:30 pulizia.

Emma ha proposto di mettere degli apposti cestini per le mascherine.

La invitiamo a venire una volta a Patra.

I miei saluti

*Roberta Romano*

There have been also important episodes of spontaneous involvement: among these, an unexpected letter written by the children of the Villaggio Europa School and addressed to the Botanical Garden, with which the children wanted to signify their weekly commitment to the care of the Urban Orchard.

Another example concerns the Refuge Forest, which saw the creation of a "Morando School Parents Committee" that wanted to contribute, through extraordinary maintenance and permanent artistic creations, to making the area even more pleasant and significant.



A last example has been the welcoming reserved by the schoolchildren to the participants of the international delegation during the project mission held in Alessandria in October 2021.



International Project Mission, Alessandria, 27/10/2022

## 5. Focus on events with local NGOs

The SALUTE4CE project is integrated in the activities of promotion of public green areas, citizens' involvement and environmental dissemination carried out by both the Municipality of Alessandria and the Botanical Garden.

In particular two local NGOs were involved in the realisation of public events in the city: "RNA - Associazione Natura e Ragazzi" and "Soroptimist".

The main activity of the RNA Association is to organise guided tours of the Botanic Garden and educational workshops for schools, to have fun, learn and be together in a constructive way.

The association Soroptimist supports Human Rights for all, world peace and international goodwill, the potential of women, transparency and democratic decision-making, acceptance of diversity, sustainable development, volunteering and friendship. Soroptimist has financed the realisation of posters with information about the importance of bees in the SALUTE4CE Refuge Forest spot.





Field activities in the Refuge Forest with members of NGO Natura e Ragazzi, Alessandria 06/05/2021



Field activities in the City's Green Lung with members of the Soroptimist, Alessandria 06/05/2021





“Flowers and bees: a synergy for the environment”, Soroptimist conference, Alessandria, 05/06/2021



## 6. Focus on the official Public Event and Conference

On October 27, 2021 the City of Alessandria hosted the international delegation of Salute4CE, for the official project public event: the day began at the City Hall of the Municipality, with a welcome greeting from the Mayor.



The delegation then moved to the intervention sites, for a field visit of the pilot actions, at the presence of school pupils.







During the afternoon, the Municipality organised a public conference presenting the project results. The conference has been broadcasted live on YouTube, while the public was invited at the Botanical Garden.





## 7. Lessons learned

The decision to plan, design, build and maintain green infrastructures according to "sustainable management" criteria must be shared with local communities, in order to give them an overall vision of the objectives set and how to achieve them.

For public administrations, a crucial issue in the management of relations with citizens is external communication, which must be simple, correct and constantly updated, in order to avoid problems linked to citizen dissent and to make them participate in the management of public assets.

The promotion of public green policies can stimulate the development of good practices by citizens and achieve an improvement in the management of green areas.

Thanks to SALUTE4CE project different institutional activities on urban green have been integrated with citizens' involvement through:

- Educational workshops and environmental dissemination;
- In presence and online public events;
- Micro-projects by organised citizens;
- Public participation in the management of green spaces.

These good policies are fundamental values to pursue a sustainable "vision" of the city, which is important to orientate strategies of territorial development, to promote the local values, including potential and latent ones, in order to plan a future for the city and the territory in accordance with the future planning priorities.

The construction of a vision is a guiding criterion for selecting actions and priorities, fostering co-operation between local actors.



## 8. Stakeholder Involvement Matrix

