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YOU PRO CLIMA - YOUlt in PeRipheries fOr CLImate engageMent Actions

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WP2 - Research and develop community engagement skills toolkits addressed to youth leaders and youth organizations

Fiësca Verd, an ongoing project in Turin. Research conducted by YEPP Italy.

Introduzione:

Fiësca Verd is a project of urban requalification and enhancement of the city green areas in Turin, led since 2020 by a group of four young people with skills in the fields of agrotechnics, food technology, education and communication, who started their journey thanks to a call for proposals for the development of youth empowerment and active participation in community life, the “Bando GxG” of the Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation. Today it is moving forward thanks to the partnership with various organisations, including Fondazione Albero Gemello, established in 2012 with the aim of fostering the development of public green areas in Piedmont; APS Orti Generali, an organisation with the objective of building a social enterprise model for the transformation and management of residual agricultural areas in the city, and the Associazione di Promozione Sociale “Si può fare”, which aims to promote the integration and wellbeing of people with vulnerabilities, encouraging the development of personal, working and living autonomy.

It currently manages three urban gardens within the municipality of Turin, one in the San Donato district, one in the area of the Case Popolari di via Arquata in Circoscrizione I, and one in the Barriera di Milano district. The latter is the only one that in terms of location, presence of services in the area and residents' standard of living can be defined as peripheral. This strongly cosmopolitan neighbourhood covers a very large area and is a former industrial and working-class area where degradation and redevelopment of former factories and part of the buildings are dotted around, with various areas of both physical and social decay, counterbalanced by a remarkable liveliness of the many associations present and their initiatives.

In this neighbourhood, the project has taken charge of transforming an area owned by the cultural and sports association Variante Bunker, located at Via Niccolò Paganini 0/200, into an urban vegetable garden. Since March 2021, Fiësca Verd has been in charge of the vegetable gardens, coordinating physical and social interventions to make it a place of aggregation and sharing centred on the themes of sustainability and urban regeneration. There are a few concession plots, the community garden and several other thematic areas, aimed at encouraging a practical, dynamic and experimental approach to agriculture in the city. On Tuesday mornings the collective vegetable garden is held, a moment of aggregation in which we take care of the common parts of the area.

Among the initiatives offered in this garden were a course to learn green maintenance with the traditional tool of the scythe and one on sustainable art, made from kitchen scraps and collected natural elements. The space is also used for educational experiences aimed at schools, apprenticeships and probationary experiences. The users of the communal garden are varied and consist of pensioners who appreciate the value of self-produced food and the opportunity to relate with young people, young people aged 25 - 35 interested in green and a sense of community, and unemployed people in the 40 - 50 age bracket looking for structured time. Participation is predominantly Italian but with 20% foreigners, and 70% are women.



Source: [project website](#)

The research was carried out by YEPP Italy between 31 January and 7 January 2024 using digital sources and telephone interviews with project leaders.

Adherence to three main areas of participation:

On an I-P-I-E (information, participation, involvement, engagement) scale of participation, among the community of residents of the Barriera di Milano neighbourhood, all levels towards the Fiësca Verd project are noted: the community is in fact reached by continuous information on project activities and space availability via the project's social media (Instagram, Facebook) and the website. Among the residents, the participation of at least a dozen people who have not been continuously involved in initiatives in the space over the past year has been noted; mostly young people under 35 who have a temporary presence in the neighbourhood due to work reasons, coming both from other parts of Italy and from abroad. Twenty people

are involved on a long-term basis: 15 "ortolani" (gardeners), i.e. personal space managers - this is the most heterogeneous group in terms of age group and background - and 5 who participate in the collective garden. Engagement is conditional on becoming managers of a personal space: there was only one person who remained among the volunteers for a few weeks after a trial run, for the rest, those 15 who were granted a personal space can be considered involved to the level of being promoters and repeaters of the initiative.

As far as institutional participation is concerned, so far, the Fiësca Verd project has not been able to interact directly with the circumscription authorities of the Barriera di Milano area, largely also because they use a space granted by another private Third Sector organisation.

Worthy of note is the fact that, as far as the two gardens located in central urban areas are concerned, circumscriptions 4 and 1 are direct interlocutors of the project and invite the young people in charge to participatory planning tables, always aimed at the use and management of the spaces, which so far have not produced new policies on sustainability.

Best practices:

The redevelopment of an underutilised urban area to turn it into a community garden is already a highly valuable sustainability action in itself, but the most interesting aspect of Fiësca Verd's experience on the creation of best practices is the spread of the habit of growing one's own food, an alternative to the use of large-scale distribution, which causes a large CO2 emission due to the transport of food and the use of machinery, eliminates the practice of packaging food in plastic, and offers an alternative to industrialised agriculture which often uses pesticides, plant protection products and synthetic fertilisers that end up in the water table.

Added value of practices:

In the experience of Fiësca Verd, one immediately notices the different relationship with the social garden of the different age groups: pensioners participate bringing previous experience in keeping a vegetable garden and are happy to find, in a common space, opportunities to socialise with younger age groups; young people choose community cultivation to learn from scratch healthy and sustainable food practices. The added value in their experience for the activation of young people can be seen in three aspects: that of disseminating personal skills among them, that translate into daily sustainability practices that can be easily replicated elsewhere; that of offering a good example of how a youth-led initiative can reach out to institutions and improve the appearance and quality of life in the community; and that of offering a space for young people to meet and dialogue with other members of the community who share their values and goals.