



EURECA

European Urban Ecology Academy

www.eurecaedu.eu

Erasmus+ Project
2023-1-PL01-KA220-ADU-000153945

Report Case Studies

Transnational Meeting
Torrecuso
3-7 June 2024



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Representatives of the Eureka consortium in Torrecuso

INTRODUCTION

Between June 3rd and 7th, 2024, the second Transnational Project Meeting of the EURECA project was held in Italy. The meeting, organized by the partner Gramigna, took place in the province of Benevento in Torrecuso, a small village surrounded by mountains and hills, where the economy is sustained by significant wine production. During the meeting, work sessions were held in the morning and study visits in the afternoon.

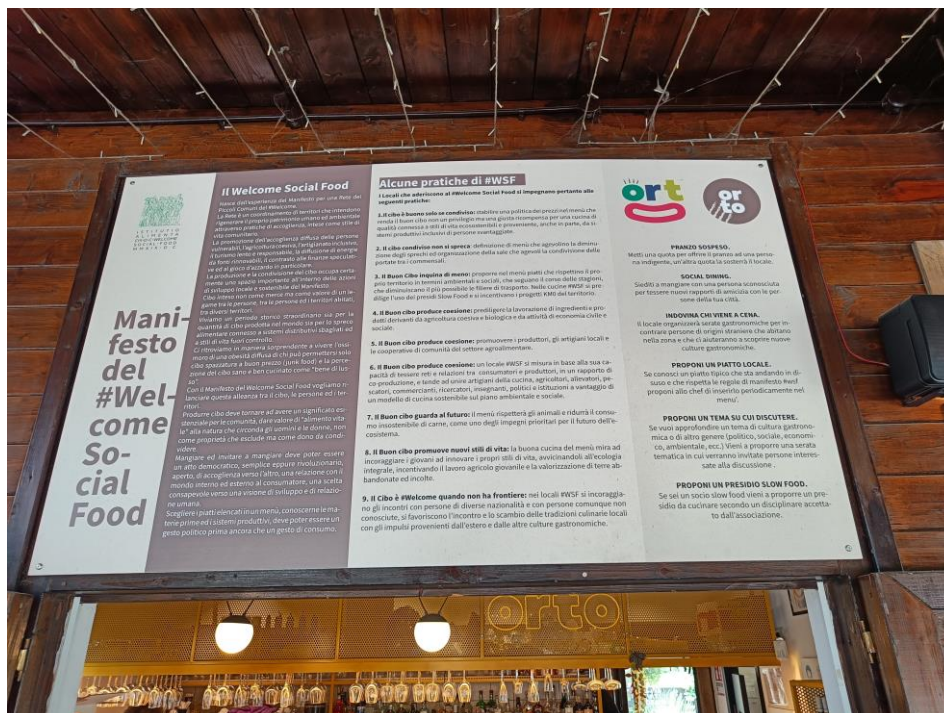
The study visits showcased remarkable examples of urban ecology, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion. The visits included "L'orto di casa Betania – Caffè dell'Orto" in Benevento, "Gioosto – Sustainable E-commerce" in Benevento, the vineyards of the "Cooperativa Lentamente" in Torrecuso, and "Villa Mancini – Social Farm" in Ponte. These activities are part of the civil economy network that forms the consortium "Sale della Terra."

1. ORTO DI CASA BETANIA – CAFFÈ’ DELL’ORTO

The first visit was to the "orto di casa Betania," which began in 2008 as a small social agricultural reality in a residential area of Benevento. In 2009, the greenhouse was built, and the sales point was launched, initiating a training and job placement project for disabled people, prisoners, and young people with pathological dependencies. The project has successfully combined the values of social integration, socio-sustainable development, and urban social agriculture.

The farm is inspired by the theory and practice of social and organic agriculture; it is equipped with a greenhouse, an outdoor garden, and a sales point, the "Caffè dell’Orto," a daytime and evening gathering space offering alternative entertainment without slot machines. It promotes an ecologist culture (organic production and strict adherence to recycling rules, as well as near-zero waste reduction) and a place for direct sales of its products to families.

Thanks to this continuous direct contact with the public who frequent the bar, the garden, cultural events, and children's parties, individuals in personalized rehabilitation programs can engage in constant interaction with the community, realizing their full participation in all aspects of life, not just work, but also the development of relational skills.



“Welcome Social Food” manifest in Caffè dell’Orto

To date, activities include vegetable cultivation, a bar, the inclusion of disadvantaged individuals (PTRI and Liberare la pena), a teaching farm, and a summer center. Since 2012, the farm has hosted the inter-institutional work platform on alternative penal execution to prison. The platform, called "Libertà Partecipate," involves the Ministry of Justice's External Penal Execution Office, the Benevento Prison, the Benevento Diocesan Caritas, the Municipality of Benevento, and various third-sector agencies.

Thanks to the platform's operation, from 2012 to 2014, 34 people in alternative penal measures served their sentences at the Orto. The dossier "Libertà partecipate. Storie di una pena andata a buon fine," published in July 2014, shows that the recidivism of people involved in the platform, meaning the criminal relapses of individuals who have already served penal measures, was reduced by over 75%.



Part of the garden area of «Caffè dell'Orto»

Today, the farm is animated by the Consortium of Social and Agricultural Cooperatives "Sale della Terra." The Consortium aims to invest in artisanal and agricultural activities to enable the guests of various social habitats following their PTRI to realize true work activities. The agricultural activities aim to defend the land and promote social cohesion by including fragile people in the workforce and recovering areas at risk of marginalization and abandonment.



The entrance
of Caffè
dell'Orto

2. GIOOSTO – Sustainable Ecommerce

On the second day of the meeting, we visited the warehouse of the sustainable e-commerce platform "Gioosto."

Gioosto is a cooperative and sustainable platform committed to enhancing people and the environment through various integrated initiatives. The project aims to promote work and social inclusion by collaborating with entities like SPRAR and using the Health Budget for inclusion projects. Moreover, Gioosto adopts a circular economy approach, recovering materials before they become waste and using sustainable, plastic-free packaging.

The platform creates territorial and virtual networks oriented towards the common good, connecting shops, solidarity purchasing groups (GAS), and local Ho.Re.Ca channels. It respects the environment through the use of energy-efficient warehouses and calculates the emissions of shipments, evaluating their environmental impact.

Picture from GIOOSTO

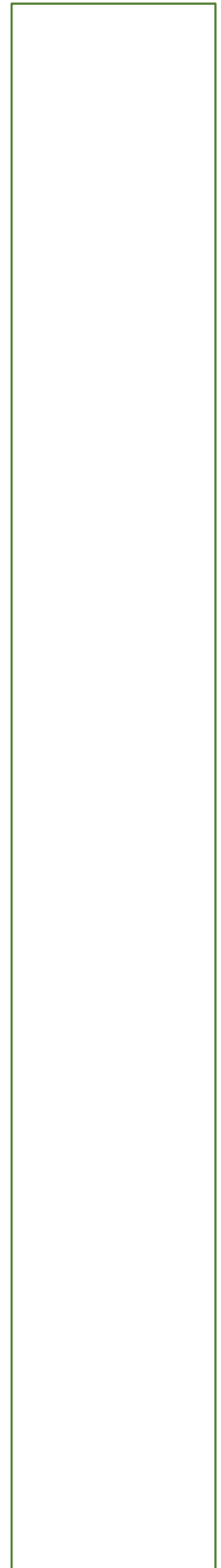




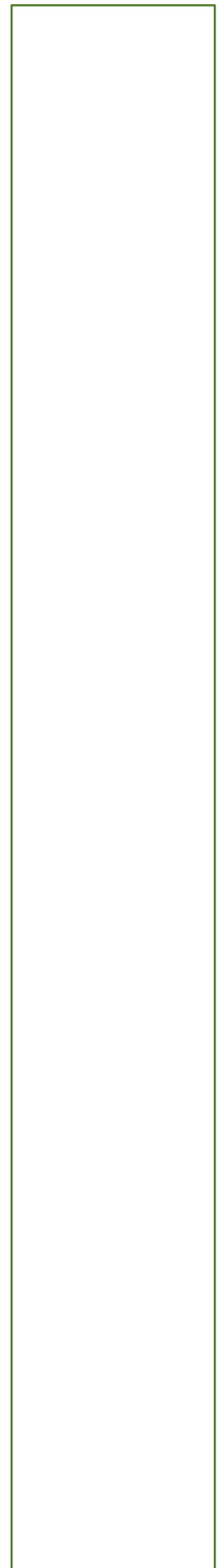
A central element of Gioosto is the use of the NeXt Index ESG®, an evaluation tool for selecting suppliers who meet social, environmental, and governance (ESG) sustainability criteria. This index is recognized and accredited by over 40 national organizations and is based on an evaluation system that includes contributions from stakeholders, experts, and end users. It is compatible with the EU green and social taxonomy, as well as European and Italian non-financial reporting regulations.

In collaboration with NeXt Economia, Gioosto offers pathways to accompany companies in improving their social and environmental sustainability. These pathways include training for entrepreneurs on sustainable development, developing non-financial reporting systems, and supporting sustainable entrepreneurship, including civic crowdfunding activities. The platform promotes sustainable best practices through communication and marketing campaigns.

Founded in 2019 with contributions from Fondazione Cariplo, Compagnia San Paolo, and Fondazione Con il Sud, Gioosto collaborates with these foundations to assess the ESG sustainability of funded companies and include them on the e-commerce platform. Gioosto creates dedicated landing pages for the values of the foundations and offers fringe benefit and flexible benefit solutions for their employees. The platform also initiates social communication campaigns with media partners like Rainews24, Corriere della Sera, and ADNKronos.



Gioosto's mission is to create an e-commerce platform that not only offers sustainable products but also promotes a positive impact on local communities and the environment. The products seen in the warehouse showcase their strong background: preserves of food grown on land confiscated from the mafia, natural wines whose plants followed a sustainable and non-invasive life cycle, coffee roasted and ground in prison by female inmates.



2. Vineyards of “Lentamente” Cooperative

On the last day, we visited one of the vineyards where the Lentamente agricultural cooperative grows grapes for its natural wine production. The cooperative practices organic farming opposed to large industrial productions and is committed to respecting natural balances and ensuring dignified working conditions for members and workers. Lentamente aims to use agriculture as a tool for social inclusion, promoting community cohesion and creating opportunities for people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

One of Lentamente's most significant developments was the foundation of the Consorzio Sale della Terra, which deals with civil economy, cohesive agriculture, and social initiatives. The consortium has allowed the cooperative to diversify its activities by integrating training and job placement projects for migrants and disadvantaged people, such as olive tree pruning courses.



Vineyards of
Lentamente
Cooperative in
Torrecuso

Another notable initiative is "Buon Orto fa Buon Sangue," which created urban gardens in Benevento, promoting sociability and sharing good practices among citizens. These urban gardens were established on land provided by the local ASL and assigned to citizens and associations, encouraging a return to the land and personal cultivation.

The name "Lentamente" fully reflects the cooperative's philosophy, valuing natural times and the slow but lasting processes of change. Despite challenges and difficulties, cooperative members find motivation in direct contact with the land and the fight against economic and political contradictions related to agricultural production. This constant commitment and long-term vision drive them to continue their work, creating life and hope for a better and more sustainable future.



Vineyards of
Lentamente
Cooperative in
Torrecuso

4 – Social Farm “Villa Mancini”

The final visit was to the Social Farm Villa Mancini, located in Ponte in the province of Benevento. Villa Mancini is a social and agricultural inclusion project. Started with the donation of a ruin and land to the Diocese of Benevento, it was renovated in 2012 thanks to funds from the Rural Development Plan and the social cooperative "La Solidarietà." The farm produces organic vegetables and eggs and offers creative workshops for the production of solidarity favours and wooden artifacts. Currently, it hosts 11 young people under PTRI with the aim of promoting inclusion and psychiatric rehabilitation. The young people under PTRI (Individual Therapeutic Rehabilitation Projects) are individuals with psychiatric disorders who participate in specific rehabilitation programs. These projects are personalized and aim to promote the recovery and social integration of participants through therapeutic, educational, and work activities. The farm is managed by the Social Cooperative Delfini di Terra, which strives to provide a working and therapeutic environment for young guests.



Chicken farm
in «Villa
Mancini»

The farm is not only a place of agricultural production but also a center of hospitality and training where young people can learn new skills and actively participate in community life. The farm's activities are designed to promote the autonomy and personal growth of participants, contributing to their psycho-physical well-being and social integration.

Villa Mancini represents a concrete example of how collaboration between local authorities, foundations, and social cooperatives can transform a project into a model of sustainable and inclusive development capable of offering growth and recovery opportunities to people in difficulty.

During the visit, we stopped for lunch with all the guests of the facility, creating a pleasant social moment among everyone, thanks also to the questions the young people asked us about the Eureka project and why we were visiting.



Lunch at «Villa Mancini»

CONCLUSION

Through the visits and activities hosted in the Torrecuso area, it was possible to have a clear vision of the actual difficulties present in a rural area and to see how they are being addressed. Inclusivity, social farming, urban gardens, and cooperation networks are currently the best strategies adopted to sustain rural areas and instill a sense of community and "restanza" (remaining).

Persistent and sometimes recurring problems undoubtedly occur in implementing such best practices. The depopulation of inner and rural areas has not only resulted in a growing lack of human resources but has also created demoralization and distrust among part of the remaining population. Especially among the youth, these consequences manifest as a lack of participation and low levels of active citizenship.

Fortunately, the work done so far is enormous and has allowed solid concrete foundations to be laid, making it easier for the younger part of the territory to get involved and co-develop.

Acknowledgments

The visits and the colloquium were made possible with the collaboration of the following entities and people, to whom Gramigna is very grateful: «Casa di Orto Betania – Caffè dell’Orto», Gabriele Vignati from «Gioosto», «Fattoria Sociale Villa Mancini», «Cooperativa Lentamente», «Cantine Iannella».



Between the streets of Benevento



Visit to Cantine Iannella vineyard and laboratory

