

AGARE European Project

ALTERNATIVE GREEN AREAS FOR RURAL EUROPE

Second International event: 5th-6th October, Oviedo, Spain
Conference & presentation of the circular economy Action Plan and Debate

WORKGROUP: GREEN ECONOMY AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Day: 5th October 2021

Place: Meeting room of the Asturian Federation of councils. Plaza de Riego 5-6, 4th floor. Oviedo, Spain.

Timetable: 15.30 – 17.30h



Experts:

1. Nieves Roqueñí Gutierrez. Vice-Minister for the Environment and Climate Change of the Principality of Asturias.
2. José Antonio Garmón Fidalgo. General Director for Public Governance, Transparency, Citizen Participation and Agenda 2030 in the Government of Asturias
3. Fuencisla Rubio Muriedas. Technician for citizen participation of Avilés Town Council
4. Irma García. Responsable of Volunteering and Social Participation Centre. EDE Foundation
5. José Ramón Suárez Pérez. ASTARTE Association Solidarity waste.

Guests:

- Dzhamile Kamber. Institute Perspectives. Bulgaria
- Ahmed Kuytov. Institute Perspectives. Bulgaria
- Francesca Papaleo. European Laboratory on Training Education and Citizenship. Italia
- Giorgia Papaleo. European Laboratory on Training Education and Citizenship. Italia

In addition, a total of 26 representatives of public and private organisations and project partners participated in the online group.

Objective:

Develop a participatory governance to promote the active involvement of citizens in the dynamics of regional and local development, building the green and circular economy strategy in a more efficient, participatory and consensual way.

Key ideas:



During the workgroup, all the participants concluded that it is necessary to change our lifestyle and consumption habits, and in this transformation, citizens must be the driving force for *change*.

Through *environmental education*, we need to develop critical thinking that promotes and facilitates changes in what we do and how we live and makes a sustainable way of life a reality.

In this need to transform the worldview, the panel highlighted the importance of *youth* engagement in responding to the major challenges of social change and sustainability. They have to be seen as one of the main assets of change to tackle the world's problems.

In the same way, the role of Local Bodies, especially rural councils, as leaders of change towards this just and sustainable transition was highlighted. To this end, they need to define *local agendas*, improving citizen participation and promoting public and private initiatives, placing the consumer at the centre of the system, improving the closest realities and breaking down isolation.

How can *social participation* be optimised to promote the empowerment of local communities?

- ✓ It has to be a living, non-linear process
- ✓ Small groups
- ✓ With clear rules of the process
- ✓ Stable channels of participation. People need to see that participation serves a purpose, is stable and gives results.
- ✓ Need to narrow down participation: what are we going to do it? why are we going to do it?, how are we going to do it?
- ✓ Tangible things. People can see what has been discussed there and that something of theirs remains.





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- ✓ Need to narrow down participation: What are we here to do, why are we going to do it, how are we going to do it, what are we going to do it?
- ✓ Generate spaces of trust through the adoption of achievable agreements.
- ✓ Involve people from the beginning of the process by seeing how goals are achieved step by step and help them make up for their lack of knowledge.
- ✓ Need to evaluate participatory processes and propose improvements.
- ✓ Transforming participation as society is changing.

Two initiatives were presented as examples of social participation and *volunteering* in Asturias:

Centre for Volunteering and Social Participation of the EDES Foundation

The Centre for Volunteering and Social Participation is a programme for the **promotion of volunteering and associations** developed in the region of north-western Asturias since 2001, with the collaboration of the Regional Ministry of Housing and Social Welfare and the support of many other local entities. It's objectives are:



DISSEMINATE AND RAISE AWARENESS among the general population and social agents in the area of the value of volunteering as a form of social participation and exercise of co-responsibility.

STRENGTHENING THE PARTNERSHIP through **INFORMATION** and **TRAINING** with groups and associations of women, the elderly, young people, neighbours, cultural and sports associations...

PROMOTE NETWORKING, at local, regional and state level.

ASTARTE Association Waste Solidarity



This association was set up in 2012 to collect and recycle electronic waste to help people in need. Since then, the following actions have been carried out:

- Collection of more than 200,000 Kilos of electrical and electronic waste to be disassembled into basic components and sold to waste management companies.
- Solidarity meetings and markets.
- Financial donations of more than 20,000 euros addressed to social entities and individuals.
- Installation of more than a hundred green micro-points through collaboration agreements with public and private entities for the collection of electronic waste. And giving information on the need to recycle for a sustainable world.
- Solidarity classrooms to reduce the digital divide, giving digital literacy classes to people at risk of exclusion through the use of recycled computer equipment.
- Donation of reconditioned notebooks to different groups such as the Red Cross of Avilés, the Association of Elderly People and children from families with economic problems to be able to continue receiving their classes during the confinement.

