

SHARED GREEN DEAL Case Study Guides



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– Introduction

he SHARED GREEN DEAL (Social sciences & Humanities for Achieving a Responsible, Equitable and Desirable GREEN DEAL) project aims at driving progress towards the European Green Deal targets. It runs from 2022 to 2027, bringing together 22 partners, and is funded by a €5m investment through the EU Horizon 2020 programme.

At the heart of SHARED GREEN DEAL are six streams of innovative, participatory social experiments, focused on six Green Deal priority areas: Clean Energy, Circular Economy, Efficient Renovations, Sustainable Mobility, Sustainable Food, and Preserving Biodiversity. These social experiments follow principles of transdisciplinary action research, which includes practice-based knowledge and research from multiple disciplines. This approach actively seeks to create change through learning-by-doing and experimentation, which involves pilots, interventions, and grassroots innovations.

Each of the six streams were implemented in four locations across Europe over April 2023 to June 2024 and, together, they covered 17 countries in total. The experiments focus on two-way dialogue and participatory mechanisms to ensure local change by bringing together stakeholders and citizens in new forms of engagement. Local partners – composed of NGOs and local, regional or national authorities – were chosen to lead these experiments on the ground, ensuring they were well-suited to local contexts and connected to established networks.

These case study guides are intended for practitioners working in the six focus areas. They provide a concise and accessible overview of key insights from the social experiments, with a strong emphasis on practical takeaways.

Each case study guide not only highlights the unique approaches and outcomes of the experiments, but also contributes to a broader understanding of how participatory methods and local engagement can drive sustainability and innovation across various sectors.

The case study guides are organised as follows:

- Clean Energy: This case study guide outlines participatory energy planning via the co-creation of energy visions and action plans involving residents, policymakers, and businesses, enhancing community capacity and exploring how meaningful participation across society is essential for transitioning to clean and just energy systems. The experiment was implemented in *Ærø* (Denmark), Granada (Spain), Bełchatów (Poland), and Jaywick (UK).
- Circular Economy: This case study guide highlights how local accelerator hubs strengthened the innovation ecosystem in textiles, fashion, and construction by developing local circular business models, supporting local businesses through rapid prototyping, and generating policy recommendations to advance the on the ground implementation of the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan. The experiment was implemented in Santo Tirso (Portugal), Val-de-Marne (France), Cyprus, and Ljubljana (Slovenia).
- Efficient Renovations: This case study guide shares lessons from setting up Renovation Knowledge Networks addressing the building sector's role in Europe's climate goals, bringing residents and building professionals together to explore practical energy renovation strate-gies, to share knowledge on energy renovation, and explore gender dynamics in renovation decision-making. The experiment was implemented in Nógrád County (Hungary), Mayo County (Ireland), Zaragoza (Spain), and Vilnius (Lithuania).



- Sustainable Mobility: This case study guide investigates school mobility through Urban Mobility Labs focused on co-creating interventions to improve school travel, formulating policy recommendations, and supporting sustainable and smart mobility as outlined in the EU Green Deal. The experiment was implemented in Braga (Portugal), Galway (Ireland), Panevezys (Lithuania), and Sofia (Bulgaria).
- Sustainable Food: This case study guide highlights how Food Assemblies helped identify local narratives and pathways for food system transformation and policy changes aligned with the EU's Farm to Fork strategy. The experiment was implemented in Stockholm (Sweden), Cella Monte (Italy), Košice (Slovakia), and Wageningen (The Netherlands).
- Preserving Biodiversity: This case study guide explores how community learning through Study Circles helped enhance engagement and understanding of biodiversity conservation, supporting local initiatives and raising awareness to address biodiversity loss in line with the EU Green Deal agenda. The experiment was implemented in Tolmin (Slovenia), Amaroussion (Greece), Stockholm (Sweden), and Ballyhoura (Ireland).

We invite you to delve into these case study guides to explore the innovative approaches and valuable lessons learned from each experiment. We hope you find inspiration in the diverse methodologies and outcomes presented, and that these insights contribute to advancing sustainability and transformative change in your own contexts. If you have further questions or require more details, we encourage you to reach out to us directly.





Clean Energy

Community visioning for a clean energy future across Europe

Implementing a participatory tool to create locally-appropriate strategies



...[S]ome of the people participating in the workshops felt "alone", not understood about their worries about energy, and this experience have "empowered" them finding some other equals that think as themselves.

Gonzalo Esteban Lopez, Granada

I believe that Community Energy Jaywick will deliver community-owned solar / wind power generating cheaper, green energy for at least part of the community in the medium-long term. Their first goal is to get solar panels installed on the roof of the Sunspot Business Centre. The district council has recently announced that part of over £20 million secured from the UK Levelling Up Fund will be used to deliver this over the next 12-18 months. This would not have happened had the community not had the chance to articulate its needs/wants through the experiment workshops.

Louise Tennekoon, Essex





Community visioning workshop with residents of Jaywick, Essex County, United Kingdom. Credits: Essex County Council









Community visioning workshop with residents of the village of Alicún de Ortega, Granada County, Spain. Credits: Diputación de Granada

Clean Energy Study Tour organised by the SHARED GREEN DEAL project in Jaywick, Essex County, United Kingdom. Credits: SHARED GREEN DEAL



Summary

A successful transition to clean and just energy systems needs the participation of all levels of society in meaningful planning and implementation. We undertook community visioning with residents, policymakers and businesses in Granada (Spain), Bełchatów (Poland), and Jaywick (UK) to imagine energy futures, as well as planning these in Ærø (Denmark). These visions advance energy transition through participatory ways of working, capacity and network building, and action plans.

Objectives

- Co-create energy visions, including recommendations which may benefit other communities seeking inclusive energy planning.
- Enhance communities' knowledge, capacity and tools to implement participatory visioning processes and meaningful engagement.
- Support capacity-building and the formation of new networks.
- Produce a community visioning guide.

Background

Energy accounted for over 75% of EU greenhouse gases in 2021. Decarbonising the EU's energy system is critical to achieve 2030 climate objectives and climate neutrality by 2050. However, a successful transition to renewables must meaningfully include all levels of society to be just. Community visioning brings people together to explore how clean energy can shape a socially just future while learning about energy and inspiring change.

Methodology and step-by-step implementation

The community visioning process consists of four stages:

Planning:

- Forming a team and setting strategic objectives.
- Preparing community engagement and communications plans.
- Identifying a venue for the workshops.

Recruitment:

• Using tailored communication strategies to recruit diverse participants.

Workshops:

- Organising 3-4 workshops for different stakeholder groups (policymakers, businesses, local communities), followed by a joint workshop.
- Each workshop lasts around 3 hours with around 20 participants, focusing on creating a welcoming environment, addressing the community's current situation and selecting a central visioning question (e.g. "What does our community look like without air pollution in 2050?").



In each workshop creative methods were used to help participants reflect on, imagine and represent the future.

• In the joint workshop, participants share their visions from previous workshops, agree on a shared vision or recognise multiple existing ones, and identify actions to take.

Follow-up:

• Moving the community visions forward by involving participants in follow-up actions and keeping them informed of next steps.

Each SHARED GREEN DEAL experiment adapted this approach:

- **Diputación de Granada** held 13 workshops to support energy communities across their province.
- **Polish Green Network** focused on women's role in the just transition from coal with improvisation and storytelling workshops.
- **Essex County Council** gathered stakeholders in Jaywick to discuss energy poverty and the town's near and long-term future.
- Fonden Motorfabrikken Marstal and Blue Innovators sought to engage island residents in a renewable energy future (whilst this experiment did not fully complete, stakeholder mapping and engagement work took place).

Challenges and Solutions

• Participant recruitment:

Recruiting both younger and older generations for community workshops to encourage intergenerational dialogue proved challenging with broad recruitment strategies. As a result, the workshops focused on the needs of attendees and used creative methods to attract participants, such as offering lunch. It became clear that future activities would benefit from recruitment strategies specifically targeted at youth or older generations.

• Talking about the future and energy:

Discussing topics like the future and energy can feel abstract for communities. To engage them,we framed messaging in invitations and activities around more relatable, current community concerns, such as staying warm in winter, socio-economic inequality, and energy communities.

• Working with communities and managing expectations:

To gain community buy-in and manage expectations, visioning processes were more effective when embedded in a long-term or pre-existing framework. Building relationships through informal visits, meetings, and working with trusted intermediaries helped design workshops sensitive to community needs and anticipate issues that might arise. Organisers found it essential to challenge their own assumptions, actively listen, and adjust plans to meet the actual needs of the participants. Community members were contacted after the workshop to update them on progress.

• Working with intermediaries

While intermediaries played a key role in delivering workshops, aligning expectations and receiving deliverables on time was sometimes challenging. An early introductory meeting to set clear expectations proved to be an effective solution.



Results

The experiment reached around 400 participants across 21 workshops. Visioning showed organisers how participants currently view their communities and what they imagine thriving energy futures could look like. The workshops also gave policy, business and community actors a space to network and kickstarted collaborations on new developments, such as energy hubs and solar energy communities. Community participants learned about what they can do to save energy in their daily lives.

Lessons learned and recommendations

• Addressing Energy and Future Discussions:

Engaging people in conversations about energy and the future was challenging. We recommend targeting messaging around people's current concerns, focusing visioning on social or economic challenges and how these relate to energy, and using the present to understand the future.

• Recruiting Younger Generations:

Recruiting younger participants was challenging and should be a deliberate focus. Partnering with community youth leaders, reaching out through relevant channels, and offering age-appropriate activities are key strategies. Co-designing activities with younger participants can also enhance recruitment efforts.

• Maximising Impact with Limited Resources:

Meaningful impacts can be achieved even with short timeframes and limited budgets by embedding visioning activities within existing, long-term organisational efforts. Practitioners seeking to understand community energy needs and build trust should consider integrating community visioning into their ongoing work to enhance networking and support various stakeholders.

Further information

The social experiment was implemented on the ground by local NGOs (Fonden Motorfabrikken Marstal and Blue Innovators, Alliance of Associations Polish Green Network) and local and regional public authorities (Essex County Council, Municipality of Granada), with guidance and support by University of Galway, CEE Bankwatch Network and Anglia Ruskin University.

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Website: https://sharedgreendeal.eu/clean-energy

Webinar: <u>https://sharedgreendeal.eu/events/community-visioning-clean-energy-future-across-europe</u>





Circular Economy Fostering Circular Economy Innovation in Textiles and Construction Across Europe

Establishing Local Accelerator Hubs to Spark Business Transformation through Design Thinking



The results are clear and demonstrate the great potential for circular collaboration between organisations in Santo Tirso. The Santo Tirso business community is now better prepared than ever to embrace projects based on pillars of innovation and circularity, towards a more sustainable future, with a vision in line with the European Green Deal.

Vera Araújo, Municipality of Santo Tirso

One of the main achievements was the identification of three concrete joint circular economy solutions (design and production of sustainable socks, development of joint ethical platform of Slovenian designers, collecting facility for secondary clothes) among participants of the workshops implemented within the experiment. We recognised the successful increase in awareness and engagement regarding the benefits and implementation of circular practices among local businesses and the broader community as well as increased networking and collaboration among participants.

Majda Potokar, **Technology Park Ljubljana**





Visit of the HISHKA (kidswear) workshop in Ljubljana. Credits: Stephane Dupas

Presentation of HIGE (natural Hand dyed textiles) products in Ljubljana. Credits: Stephane Dupas





Summary

Four accelerator hubs were developed across Europe, bringing together stakeholders to strengthen the innovation ecosystem in textiles, fashion, and construction. These hubs, located in Santo Tirso (Portugal), Val-de-Marne (France), Cyprus, and Ljubljana (Slovenia), used a design thinking approach to engage local networks of actors, with particular attention to involving disabled individuals. Each experiment focused on fostering collaboration and driving innovation within their respective sectors.

Objectives

- Develop Circular Business Models embedded in the local context.
- Establish Local Accelerator Hubs (LAH): Enhance the innovation ecosystem within a multilevel approach.
- Support local business by applying rapid prototyping techniques to validate circular products and services (including consumers' contribution).
- Collect lessons learned from the workshops.
- Provide an initial roadmap for local business to validate circular solutions.
- Develop policy recommendations.

Background

The EU's transition to a circular economy aims to reduce the strain on natural resources, promote sustainable growth, and create new jobs, all while supporting the 2050 climate neutrality targets and biodiversity conservation. Circular economy is central to the EU's industrial strategy, as outlined in the Circular Economy Action Plan^{*} (CEAP) of March 2020. This experiment aligns with the goals of the European Green Deal and CEAP by helping local businesses explore circular opportunities early in the innovation process in four locations across Europe. Indeed involvement from local governments and small businesses plays a crucial role in accelerating this shift, benefiting citizens and economies across Europe.

Methodology and step-by-step implementation

The approach harnessed collective intelligence and creativity to address local challenges with sustainable, circular solutions. Each step built upon the previous one, ensuring continuity, refinement, and actionable results, ultimately promoting circular practices.

Step 1 - Recruitment of Members:

Participants in the local hubs were recruited from a diverse pool, including local businesses, academics, authorities, and NGOs. Recruitment utilised social media, professional networks, and

^{*} https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1583933814386&uri=COM:2020:98:FIN



informational sessions. Collaborating with local organisations ensured inclusivity and brought in a range of expertise.

Step 2 - Series of Local Workshops Using Design Thinking:

- Workshop 1 Defining the Circular Challenge: Participants engaged in collaborative sessions to identify and define local circular challenges. Through brainstorming and discussion, the group narrowed down key issues, resulting in clear problem statements to guide subsequent workshops.
- Workshop 2 Proposing Circular Solutions: Small groups developed viable circular business solutions for the defined challenges. Using design thinking and value proposition techniques, they refined their ideas while considering feasibility, scalability, and impact. The outcome included potential solutions with preliminary business models and implementation strategies.
- Workshop 3 Feedback and Iteration: Participants presented their solutions to consumers and stakeholders, gathering feedback through surveys, focus groups, and interactive sessions. This feedback ensured the solutions were practical, desirable, and aligned with local community needs.

Step 3 - Organisation of a local Circular Award Ceremony:

In each of the four locations, a local award ceremony was organised to celebrate success and showcase circular practices among business, policy makers and other stakeholders and citizens.

Challenges and Solutions

The implementation of the local experiments encountered various challenges, many of which were discussed among the experiment participants.

• Recruitment and Raising Awareness:

Engaging local stakeholders in the process required significant effort, as recruitment proved challenging. Networks were leveraged, and the workshop format was adapted in some cases to better align with participants' interests. Raising interest in the Design Thinking methodology also posed difficulties, which were addressed by bringing in external experts to assist with workshop design and facilitation.

• Efforts to Implement the Experiment:

Managing the workload within a limited budget of EUR 22 000 was a challenge. Collecting good practices was particularly difficult, but guidance and support were provided to help identify and report these practices effectively.

• Engaging Local Stakeholders:

Efforts to involve disabled individuals were successful in some experiments, but not all managed to engage this target group. Additionally, the design of the award process was modified in some cases to avoid fostering competition, focusing instead on celebrating collaboration and recognising the contributions of all stakeholders.



Results

The results of the local experiments yielded various innovative value propositions and solutions across different regions, highlighting diverse approaches to promoting circular practices in textiles, fashion, and construction.

- In Santo Tirso (Portugal), four value propositions have emerged: 1) Valorisation of sludge as fertilizer, 2) Energy recovery of cellulose through biomass, 3) Build a collection centre for waste, 4) Build a digital platform for the local B2B ecosystem
- In Val-de-Marne (France), a new service called "Retoucherie EF94" (tailor shop) was implemented. Knowledge has been gathered for tailor shops to design reparable garments.
- In Ljubljana (Slovenia), main results materialised in different proposals: a) using wastes of textile industry by fashion designers, b) introducing a fee on waste collection to support the textile circular economy and c) promoting a specific platform for local sustainable fashion.
- In Cyprus, three value propositions were developed: 1) Publicly available digital registry for construction and demolition waste, 2) Outsourced Market Surveillance and Compliance Assessment Process on Circular Projects and 3) Digital Circular construction tool kit for the design of circular construction projects.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- Collaborative solution development, involving all relevant stakeholders, leads to innovative and broadly accepted outcomes.
- Tailoring solutions to the local market is crucial, especially in sectors like construction, where unique needs and constraints must be addressed.
- Stakeholders need a dedicated space to interact and exchange knowledge, ensuring the application of best practices and research.
- A stronger dialogue between industry and government during public consultations is essential to create effective, feasible, and widely accepted regulations.
- Sharing good practices is vital for fostering innovation, as businesses often lack awareness of tools and methods to drive structured innovation.

Further information

Contact details:

• The social experiment was implemented on the ground by local NGOs (Val de Marne en Transition) and local and national authorities (Municipality of Santo Tirso, Technology Park Ljubljana, Cyprus Organization for Standardization), with guidance and support by Ponts Business School, Circular Economy Alliance and Energy Cities.

Consortium research and practice partners:

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Local partners:

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Website: https://sharedgreendeal.eu/circular-economy

Webinar: <u>https://sharedgreendeal.eu/events/</u> sparking-business-innovation-circular-economy-textiles-and-buildings</u>





Efficient Renovations

Using home-tours to increase inclusive energy-efficient renovations

Connecting communities and professionals through know-how



The know-how gained by our Knowledge Network members during the experiment as well as the know-how gained by some of our Eco Tour hosts while project managing their own renovations is a major asset in our community which we can use in future projects.

Richard Manion, Climate Action Louisburgh Locality (Mayo County)

This experiment was very successful not only because we had an opportunity to provide high-quality educational events and eco-tours, but also, we learned a lot as an organisation. After the experiment, it was clear to us that currently there still is a lack of information about the renovation processes overall, and these events are helping to make that gap smaller.

Lina Bubulyte, Let's Renovate the City (Vilnius)



The Knowledge Network of Louisburgh on tour. Credits: Climate Action Louisburgh Locality (CALL)



Visiting homes in the process of renovation in Nográd county. Credits: Habitat for Humanity Magyarország Alapítvány

Hands on knowledge shared in Vilnius. Credits: Amiestas 🕨





Sharing experiences in Zaragoza. Credits: ECODES



Summary

The building sector plays a crucial role in the decarbonisation and climate neutrality of Europe. However, the annual renovation rate is still very low and energy savings are insufficient. The efficient renovation experiment explored the interplay between social, technical, and political aspects of housing renovation.

Renovation Knowledge Networks with residents and building professionals were created in four different European locations and contexts in Nógrád County (Hungary), Mayo County (Ireland), Zaragoza (Spain), and Vilnius (Lithuania). In this framework, various hands-on events were organised, aiming to share practical and experiential knowledge (know-how), and to gain new insights into the possibilities of energy renovation.

Objectives

- Create local knowledge networks to connect residents and building professionals.
- Facilitate practical experiences where participants can see, feel, and share renovation knowledge.
- Organise events such as eco-home tours to exchange ideas, know-how, and skills related to renovations.
- Include residents experiencing energy poverty in the renovation process.
- Explore gender dynamics in decision-making about home renovations.

Background

Buildings account for about 40% of Europe's total energy use, highlighting the urgent need for greater energy efficiency renovations. Indeed, the European Union has set ambitious targets for renovating Europe's old and energy inefficient building stock via its Renovation Wave Strategy*. In this experiment, we position renovation as a social practice which centrally requires specific skills, meaning that it is therefore essential for their competences and capacities to be enhanced if Europe is to achieve its ambitious targets. By providing a space for sharing and learning, we assert that knowledge networks can help to address the socio-cultural, political, and techno-economic challenges of renovation.

Methodology and step-by-step implementation

The methodology for building a knowledge network on energy renovation was carefully structured to ensure inclusivity, practical learning, and collaboration between diverse participants. The following steps outline the approach taken to create and implement the network.

^{*} https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1603122220757&uri=CELEX:52020DC0662



Planning for Inclusivity:

- Discussions took place to identify ways of reaching under-represented and marginalised groups.
- The goal was to bring these groups together with renovation professionals to foster collaboration.

Phase 1 - Recruiting Knowledge Network Members:

- Focused on recruiting members, aiming for 40-60% women participation.
- A Kick-off meeting introduced participants, explored their renovation experiences, and gathered expectations for the network.
- Members were invited to join the local knowledge network by completing a survey and were invited to a series of organised events.

Phase 2 - Eco-home Tours:

- Joint bus tours were organised to visit pre- and post-renovation sites in nearby neighbourhoods.
- Participants listened to personal stories and shared questions and ideas related to renovations.
- Visits provided a hands-on opportunity to explore various renovation techniques and materials.
- Some tours included factory visits for in-depth discussions on technical approaches.
- An environment of respect and shared learning was cultivated, encouraging open dialogue and practical knowledge exchange.

Phase 3 - Final Event and Recommendations:

- A final event allowed network members to share feedback, impressions, and advice on building similar networks.
- Recommendations were published, covering four key areas: designing the network, recruiting participants and designing activities, running the network activities and sharing knowledge and dissemination.
- Emphasis was placed on considering the local context, participants' practical experiences, and integrating vulnerable individuals to connect with other stakeholders, including policymakers.

Challenges and Solutions

Recruitment Challenges:

Recruiting citizens and renovation professionals posed difficulties, with challenges varying by local context.

• Socially Excluded Citizens:

Engaging socially excluded citizens, especially those at risk of energy poverty, was particularly challenging. Collaborating with trusted social intermediaries often helped build trust and increase participation.

• Professionals and Organisations:

Attracting professionals and professional organisations required demonstrating how their interests could align with the network's goals and showing the benefits of participation. In Mayo (Ireland) the recruitment of retired professionals who had more time proved successful.



• Caring Responsibilities:

Many participants, especially professional women, faced time constraints due to caregiving duties. Asking for preferred meeting times was a partial solution, but making events more family-friendly, such as allowing participants to bring their children, could be also beneficial.

Engagement and Active Participation:

• Sustaining Interest:

Keeping participants engaged in network activities proved difficult. Strategies included involving neighbourhood association leaders who could pass on their enthusiasm and motivate members to attend events.

• Incentives:

Combining network events with non-monetary incentives, such as providing food or hosting events in pleasant venues, helped increase participation. Allowing room for personal connections through informal conversations also contributed to maintaining interest.

• Rural Area Challenges:

In rural regions, long travel distances and associated time and costs made it harder to bring participants together. These additional barriers required more consideration when organising events in such areas.

Results

The local networks succeeded in bringing together actors with common interests while having different backgrounds and motivations to talk about what is needed for more energy efficient renovations. Besides meeting engagement targets (at least 40% professional members, between 50-60% of citizens, and 40% to 60% women), the local partners fostered a participatory environment that allowed them to identify challenges, opportunities, and information gaps.

The four local networks established proved to be a successful and attractive tool that are planned to continue and expand.

Lessons learned and recommendations

• Reaching Underrepresented Groups:

Engaging people living in homes in need of renovation, especially social housing tenants, was a major challenge. Intermediaries are crucial for reaching structurally excluded groups, as existing institutional mechanisms alone are insufficient.

• Building Trust and Transparency:

Establishing trust takes time, and it is essential to ensure transparency about the motivations and goals of the network for all participants from the outset.

• Addressing Local Community Needs:

When launching a renovation knowledge network, it is important to consider the specific needs and issues of the local community, such as housing typologies and climate conditions.



• Enhancing Participation:

Clearly communicating the purpose, scope, and benefits of the network is vital. Additionally, meeting times should be accessible, taking into account care and work commitments, including offering evening and weekend options. Avoid scheduling conflicts with other community events and holiday periods to maximise participation.

Further information

Contact details:

The social experiment was implemented on the ground by local NGOs (ECODES Zaragoza, Habitat for Humanity Hungary) and local and regional public authorities (Let's Renovate the City Vilnius, Mayo County Council Louisburgh), with guidance and support by Women Engage in a Common Future, Anglia Ruskin University and Aalborg University.

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Sustainable Mobility

Schools act for mobility futures

Accelerating sustainable mobility with future generations



...actually kids realised what sustainable mobility is. (...) And, also, now they have options to provide to their parents (...). So, they have the tools to ask: "Can I go with my bike to school?" (...) and they have the arguments in favour of that. Which was not the case when we started

Antonia Shalamanova, **Sofia**

...after discussions with some teachers, we realised that already some of the teachers, some of the students changed their habits. They started to walk, they started to go by public transportation

Lina Gelažienė, Panevèzys

(...) the best impact is providing the young people with a space to develop their own ideas and to then move forward with their own engagements.
(...) And hopefully the groundwork laid through the project will help them to get the infrastructure change that they want sooner than would otherwise have been.

Paul O'Donnell, Galway









Road closure in Galway (Ireland). Credits: Am Meitheal Rothar







Preparing postboxes for "my dream of going to school" in Sofia (Bulgaria). Credits: Sofia Development Association







Building periscopes in Braga (Portugal). Credits: Municipality of Braga



Summary

The social experiment focused on current mobility habits, understood as institutionalised mobility behaviour and norms around travel to school in cities. It was an opportunity to co-create knowl-edge and interventions through local mobility labs that were created within schools, together with young people and other relevant stakeholders, to support the transition towards sustainable school mobility. The experiment took place in four different locations: Braga (Portugal), Galway (Ireland), Panevezys (Lithuania), and Sofia (Bulgaria). Each experiment was specific to the local context and addressed the local challenges and needs of school mobility.

Objectives

- Develop future mobility strategies through local experiments in urban schools.
- Co-create context-specific interventions (e.g., games, exhibitions, educational material, small physical interventions) to disrupt and evolve institutionalised norms and raise awareness on sustainable school mobility.
- Formulate city-level policy recommendations for school travel strategies, and thereby foster the representation of young people in policy making and planning processes.
- Support the EU Green Deal's goal on sustainable and smart mobility.

Background

The mobility transition is playing a key role in shaping numerous current challenges in climate change adaptation, especially in cities. The European Green Deal includes a target to reduce transport-related greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2050. In this context, the European Commission points out that also public and private organisations, such as schools, should be encouraged to develop mobility actions that promote low- and zero-emission transportation means.

Therefore, the social experiments focused on established mobility behaviours related to school travel, aiming to explore and reshape these norms within school settings. The initiative sought to support broader sustainability objectives, aligning with EU policies for smart and sustainable mobility under the Green Deal framework^{*}.

Methodology and step-by-step implementation

The following methodology outlines the step-by-step implementation of Urban Mobility Labs in schools, promoting sustainable school mobility.

Lab Setup and Participants:

Each Urban Mobility Lab involved 30 young people (aged 10-16) from three schools, along with 5 to 10 stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and school administrators, who supported the

^{* &}lt;u>https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12438-Sustainable-and-Smart-Mobili-ty-Strategy_en</u>



co-creative process. The labs facilitated eight co-creative forums in each location to address sustainable school mobility.

The co-creative participation process of the experiment comprised three phases.

Phase 1 - Co-Identification:

In the initial phase, local mobility problems and needs related to school travel were identified. Both young participants and stakeholders contributed ideas, focusing on the issues affecting their communities.

Phase 2 - Co-Selection and Co-Preparation:

During this phase, the identified solutions were prioritised and tailored to the specific context of each location. An initial list of policy recommendations was also formulated, reflecting the collective input from participants.

Phase 3 - Co-Development and Co-Implementation:

The final phase focused on developing and implementing the selected solutions. Additionally, policy recommendations were validated and finalised based on feedback from participants.

Special emphasis was placed on involving young people in all planning processes. Throughout the experiment, young participants' voices were integral to shaping local policy recommendations, ensuring their perspectives were included in addressing school mobility challenges. Ageappropriate, playful methods such as field trips, games, online tools, and workshops were used to educate them on sustainable mobility and enable them to co-create context-specific solutions to meet their identified needs.

Challenges and Solutions

The implementation of the Urban Mobility Labs faced various challenges, as outlined below:

Stakeholder and Student Engagement:

- Initial difficulties arose in engaging stakeholders and aligning their diverse interests and priorities.
- Engaging older students and young people outside of class proved challenging, requiring creative methods to sustain their interest.

Logistical Issues:

Coordinating schedules and resources across multiple schools, stakeholders, and managing disruptions from school holidays caused delays in the experiment's implementation.

The following solutions were found:

• Clarification of Roles:

Clear roles and responsibilities were defined for teachers and stakeholders, with allowances provided to facilitate their involvement.

• Innovative Engagement:

School-based events were held to effectively engage hard-to-reach young people. In the case of after-school forums, interest was maintained by offering catering, prizes, certificates, and other incentives to recognise the efforts of the young participants.

• Regular Communication:

Consistent communication channels and regular meetings were established to ensure smooth coordination among all participants and stakeholders.



• Flexible Adjustments:

A flexible approach was adopted, with some forums adjusted by combining sessions, modifying formats, rescheduling, or shortening them to meet deadlines and address logistical challenges.

Results

The following results were achieved in the framework of the social experiments:

Policy Recommendations:

Each lab formulated policy recommendations for school travel strategies at the city level, fostering youth representation in policy making and planning processes. Key issues addressed included:

- Bike and pedestrian infrastructure
- Public transport
- School travel safety and dangerous parking
- Gender and cycling considerations

In addition, each Mobility Lab co-created context-specific solutions.

Panevezys Lab:

- Tested a sustainable mobility game for schools.
- Developed school travel plans for each school.
- Created guidelines for other schools to develop travel plans.

Braga Lab:

- Created periscopes for adults to experience the impact of cars from children's height and perspective.
- Increased the number of guardians using public transport.
- Reduced parking spaces in front of the school.

Sofia Lab:

- Developed a "My Dream to Go to School" mailbox system to gather students' mobility habits, needs, and ideas to propose and implement new alternatives for children to get to school.
- Created a communication channel between students, teachers, and school principals for sustainable mobility ideas.

Galway Lab:

- Conducted a large survey and walkability audits.
- Closed the road in front of the schools for half a day.
- Used a drone to document space usage by 30 students travelling by bus, bike, or car.



Lessons learned and recommendations

Young People as Change Agents:

- Youth are crucial and engaged actors in shaping the future of mobility.
- In several cases, younger children were often more motivated than older ones.
- Young people are important multipliers as they influence their parents and peers towards adopting more sustainable mobility habits.

Age-Appropriate Engagement Methods:

- Interactive, playful methods were effective in making participation enjoyable and informative (e.g. using games, videos and challenges during the workshops).
- Tailoring approaches based on age helped to ensure deeper involvement and motivation.

Tailored Solutions to Local Contexts:

- Customising solutions to fit local conditions improved the effectiveness of actions.
- Urban Mobility Labs and co-creative participation processes are effective strategies for accelerating sustainable mobility in cities.

Commitment from Schools:

- Strong commitment from school boards and motivated teachers is essential for successful implementation.
- Involving three schools in one lab proved complex, requiring coordination and collaboration across schools.

Importance of Communication and Flexibility:

- Clear communication channels were necessary to coordinate activities and ensure collaboration, especially cross-school.
- Flexibility in co-creative participatory processes was key, as unexpected challenges often arose.

Raising Awareness of Sustainable Mobility:

- One of the major successes was increasing awareness of sustainable mobility issues.
- The experiment sparked interest, with other schools in some cities, like Braga, eager to arrange similar activities in the future.

Further information

Contact details:

The social experiment was implemented on the ground by local NGOs (ECAT Lithuania, Am Meitheal Rothar Ireland, Sofia Development Association Bulgaria) and municipalities (Municipality of Braga, Portugal), with guidance and support by the Technical University Wien, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and Metropolitan Research Institute.

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Webinar: https://sharedgreendeal.eu/events/accelerating-sustainable-mobility-future-genera-tions





Sustainable Food

Co-Creating Sustainable Food Systems

Engaging Stakeholders in Local Food Assemblies for Policy and Action



Our experiment benefited from bringing together different perspectives. It allowed us to work against a common ground where various opinions would agree upon food environment interventions. This makes us confident when presenting our brief to the city and argue for the recommendations within.

Pelle Bengtsberg, Reformaten

It was important for us to have an intergenerational approach, so as to involve both youth and elderly, to combine both traditional and emerging ideas and energies. Young people have an important place in our transition agenda, as they bring energy and fresh perspectives, while elders bring wisdom and have indicated to be very willing to offer their time and their money.

Janneke Bruil, Gemeente Wageningen







Assembly in Stockholm. Credits: Hanna Lidberg



Assembly in Wageningen. Credits: Municipality of Wageningen



Summary

The Sustainable Food experiment aimed to support local food policy change towards a sustainable food system through a series of 'food assemblies.' These meetings explored transition dynamics in food systems and co-created a local action agenda with relevant food system stakeholders. At the food assemblies, the stakeholders identified a local narrative for sustainable food system change and pathways to achieve it.

The assemblies produced policy recommendations, action points and advocacy activities, contributing to the transformation of the local food systems in Stockholm (Sweden), Cella Monte (Italy), Košice (Slovakia) and Wageningen (The Netherlands); thus supporting the implementation of the EU's Farm to Fork strategy^{*}.

The identified narratives in the local contexts were: "fostering sustainable food environments" (Stockholm), "reducing the use of pesticides in agriculture" (Cella Monte), "creation of a short supply chain between local farmers and schools" (Košice) and "strengthen the relationships between place, culture, and economy in the local bioregion" (Wageningen).

Objectives

- Create a platform for connecting the multiple grassroots initiatives working on the selected local food system narrative.
- Build and connect a community of changemakers able to disseminate the principles of the Farm To Fork during and after the project.
- Strengthen the relationships between place, culture, and economy around food.
- Develop a new vision that can foster transformative change.
- Target local policies for political interventions in the food systems.

Background

The food sector plays a crucial role in ensuring food security but also has significant environmental impacts. It contributes to air, water, and soil pollution, drives biodiversity loss, and accelerates soil erosion and climate change. Additionally, it consumes large quantities of natural resources like water and energy, while a substantial portion of food (58 million tonnes annually in Europe) is wasted. Both a top-down and grassroots approach are needed to transition towards a more sustainable food system, embracing food policy, food environments, food production and consumption from farm to fork. Within these contexts, the European Commission has published its Farm to Fork Strategy^{**}, which sets out ambitious targets and aims for Europe in developing more sustainable food systems.

^{*} https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en

^{**} https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0381



Methodology and step-by-step implementation

The social experiment consisted of three crucial steps.

Step A. Stakeholder Mapping and Initial Interviews

- Begin by identifying key local stakeholders who are involved or interested in the food system. This includes community leaders, food producers, local businesses, and policymakers.
- Conduct five exploratory interviews with these stakeholders to understand the local context, challenges, and opportunities. Use this information to refine the goals of the assembly.

Step B. Recruitment and Organization of Assemblies

- Recruit a diverse group of participants who can contribute various perspectives to the discussions. Aim for a mix of community members, experts, and innovators.
- Plan and organize four assemblies, each with a specific focus.

Assembly 1: Identifying Local Dynamics

- Facilitate a workshop where participants use the X-curve toolkit, showing how new sustainable practices can replace old ones by mapping what should grow and what should phase out.
- Encourage open discussion to build a shared understanding of the current situation.

Assembly 2: Visioning the Future

- Guide participants in co-creating a vision for a sustainable local food system in a specific target year in the future. Use storytelling and group discussions to create a clear, shared vision.
- · Identify core principles that will guide the development of this future vision.

Assembly 3: Developing Pathways

- Hold this assembly in a location aligned with the goal you would like to achieve (for example in a community kitchen or school cantine). Engage participants in practical activities, such as cooking and eating together, to foster collaboration.
- Use exercises like backcasting and the World Café to brainstorm actions needed to achieve the vision. Connect these actions to the vision and start outlining practical steps.

Assembly 4: Presenting and Refining the Vision

- Present the vision, challenges, and proposed actions to local policymakers and stakeholders. Gather feedback and refine the strategy.
- · Discuss the next steps and how to implement the proposed actions in practice.

Step C. Post-Assembly Feedback

- Conduct ten interviews with participants to gather feedback on their experience in the assemblies.
- Use this feedback to adjust the process and ensure that the assembly outcomes are actionable and aligned with local needs.



Challenges and Solutions

The lack of participant remuneration was a significant barrier, as many struggled to attend assemblies during working hours. This was particularly challenging for farmers and food entrepreneurs who found it hard to justify unpaid time away from their businesses.

In some cases, engaging a gendered-balanced group of participants was challenging. In Stockholm, women formed the core group and were more engaged, even in organising policy dialogues after the experiment ended. In both Cella Monte and Stockholm, young participants were involved, but sometimes felt less prone to expose their opinion, feeling less experienced compared to the middle-aged women present in the assembly. However, this was balanced by the assembly moderation.

In Košice, communication between assemblies was challenging; while participants were active and engaged during sessions, they were unresponsive when asked for feedback afterward. Some registered participants never attended, making it difficult to estimate the number of attendees.

In Wageningen, understanding the concept of a "bioregion" – a mix of ecosystem and cultural factors – proved challenging, which was crucial for reviving the local food culture.

Finally, the global food cost crisis became a significant issue during winter, being exacerbated by global recession and by the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Thus, the topic of "food preparedness" and resilience became central to discussions, ensuring the conversation remained relevant.

Results

The following are the main experiment results:

- In all locations four assemblies were carried out with local food stakeholders.
- In Stockholm: development of a vision for Stockholm future food system 2033 and outline of concrete policy recommendations to achieve it.
- In Cella Monte and Košice: creation of a new changemaker network in an area where the cooperation between farmers and citizens needed to flourish.
- In Wageningen: integration of the regional food network in a growing bioregional movement of residents from many ages, backgrounds and professions.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- Be bolder, more creative and experimental when facilitating the assembly process.
- Remunerate the participants for time spent in the assemblies.
- Learn the assembly methodology more in advance.
- Connect with other partners in different European locations to exchange information, inspiration and support.
- Put emphasis on initial mapping and use it to contact local actors and establish a relationship long before the first assembly.
- Meals in assemblies are opportunities to taste local food. Just as the gathering of local actors allows different perspectives and backgrounds so should the food shared.



• Maintain the element of co-creation between assemblies, especially towards building a common vision and action points. This was possible by co-working on shared documents remotely between the assemblies.

Further information

The social experiment was implemented on the ground by local NGOs (Reformaten, Asfodelo, Klima ta potrebuje) and municipalities (Municipality of Wageningen), with guidance and support by Slow Food Youth Network, the Dutch Research Institute For Transition and ICS (Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon).

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REFORMATEN's food environment vision and recommendations: <u>https://myaru.</u>sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/PR-100231-PRIVATEFood_N_REFORMATEN_Sweden/ Shared%20Documents/PRIVATEFood_N_REFORMATEN_Sweden/Policy%20 Dialoge%20May_2024/ENGLISH%20VERSION%20Food%20environment%20Stockholm. pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=qGYIwQ

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Website: <u>https://sharedgreendeal.eu/sustainable-food</u>

Webinar: <u>https://sharedgreendeal.eu/events/sustainable-food-tastes-best-when-shared</u>

Further reading:

- Podcast "The grassroots food movement: 4 community initiatives that are transforming food systems": <u>https://open.spotify.com/episode/00lhpAv0xyAkGuyIq5IVE2?si=bD75eN8eR_qUatCFpdEkew</u>
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Preserving Biodiversity Diversity of values for countering

biodiversity loss

Using Study Circles to Foster Transformative Values and Address Biodiversity Loss



As a result of their participation, participants have raised levels of awareness of the extent and variety of biodiversity in their living environments and have become more attuned to the challenges of maintaining and fostering biodiversity-friendly environments in a socially inclusive way.

Rhiannon Laubach, Ballyhoura Development CLG

At the start of our experiment, we couldn't predict these outcomes, but we've learned that a small impact on one person can create a ripple effect in a group, enhancing our connection to biodiversity and inspiring collective action to preserve our local environment.

Anargyros Roussos, **Municipality of Amaroussion**







Learning about the local avifauna in Slovenia. Credits: Patricija Rejec



SHARED GREEN DEAL project's Biodiversity team meets in Athens for a Lighthouse Tour, Credits: Thomais Vlachogianni



Building and installing bird nests in Stockholm. Credits: Peter Wiborn



Irish Study Circle launches a Nature Photography Contest, Credits: Ballyhoura Development CLG



Summary

This social experiment investigated the various values people place on biodiversity in both rural and urban settings. To achieve this, Study Circles were implemented - a non-formal community learning method - in four locations: Slovenia, Greece, Sweden, and Ireland. Groups of adults met monthly as part of this social experiment, with the expectation that the outcomes will lead to transformative changes in how participants value biodiversity, ultimately aiding in efforts to combat biodiversity loss as part of the broader EU Green Deal agenda.

Objectives

- Investigate the crucial link between biodiversity and cultural values in European communities through a participatory process.
- Support local initiatives in their quest to strengthen their members' knowledge and engage them to co-create more effective and inclusive community-led solutions to biodiversity loss.
- Raise awareness, foster understanding, and provide practical insights to transmit this knowledge to their networks, communities, and local decision-makers.

Background

Loss of biodiversity and habitats, and the services they provide, is an existential threat to Europe. Societal transformations are needed to deliver on the EU Green Deal ambition of making 30% of Europe protected areas, and restoring at least 20% of its land and at sea by 2030 (and all degraded ecosystems by 2050). These ambitions relate to the European Commission's recent EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030^{*}. Understanding how biodiversity is perceived and valued at the community level in different settings across Europe helps to bridge the gap between people and nature that many Europeans experience.

Methodology and step-by-step implementation

Four main steps were identified to implement the social experiment:

1. Planning and Preparation

Identification of Target Areas

- Choose a mix of urban and rural locations to ensure a broad representation of perspectives.
- · Select areas with different levels of biodiversity awareness to compare results.

^{* &}lt;u>https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52020DC0380</u>



Appointment of Facilitators

- Select facilitators with experience in group dynamics and familiarity with the target area.
- Provide training on nature and cultural values and the Study Circle's focus topic.

Recruitment of Participants

- Design a recruitment process, aiming for a diverse group of 10-15 adults per Study Circle.
- Utilise local networks, community organisations, and social media to reach out to potential participants.
- Ensure diversity in age, gender, occupation and social vulnerability.

2. Designing the Study Circles

Structure and Schedule

- Plan regular meetings (usually once per month) over 9 months.
- Each meeting should last 1-2 hours, with flexibility to accommodate participants' schedules.

Content and Activities

- Co-develop a learning programme directly with the participants; the programme should include interactive activities to enhance rethinking of existing values on biodiversity and field visits in local cultural/biodiversity significant areas.
- Select with participants the topics to be covered such as the importance of biodiversity, what ecosystem services are, local challenges and solutions, etc.
- Ensure access to scientific data and local biodiversity information.
- Invite stakeholders who are, directly or indirectly, linked to the local biodiversity and culture as per the interest of the Study Circle participants.

3. Implementation

Facilitation of Meetings

- Begin with an introductory session to build rapport and set common expectations.
- Use icebreakers and group activities to foster a collaborative environment.
- · Encourage open dialogue and respect for different viewpoints.

Set Learning and Actions Goals

- Set 1-3 learning objectives, jointly with participants (what they would like to learn as individuals and as a group).
- Co-create the action goals (how the Study Circle plans to disseminate the acquired knowledge to the wider community).

Documentation of Progress

- Keep detailed notes and records of each meeting and share material with the group.
- Use pre- and post-study surveys, and observations to gather feedback and monitor changes in participants' knowledge on biodiversity as well as the evolution of group dynamics.
- \cdot Conduct follow-up interviews to assess long-term impacts.

4. Sharing of Findings

• Empower participants to co-create a final action that encapsulates their overall experience (a brochure on local biodiversity, a nature photography contest, creating a new nature trail, etc.).



- Co-organise a public event to share outcomes with local communities, policymakers, and other key stakeholders.
- Use the results to advocate for biodiversity-friendly policies and initiatives.

Challenges and Solutions

Running a successful Study Circle experiment presents several challenges, from maintaining participation and ensuring inclusivity, to accessing resources and anticipating risks. However, with strategic planning and thoughtful solutions, these challenges can be addressed effectively.

Consistent Participation

- **Challenge:** Maintaining the group's number of participants and commitment throughout the experiment; avoiding drop-offs.
- **Solution**: Offer flexible scheduling; create an engaging and friendly environment, use social media or other ways of inclusive communication to build trust among the group and keep them active in between meetings; align the learning objectives with the participants' aspirations to enhance their motivation; assist, if needed, with the distribution of different tasks to ensure consistent engagement of all members.

Inclusivity and Cultural Sensitivity

- Challenge: Adequately addressing diverse cultural perspectives.
- **Solution:** Be sure to include demographically diverse and socially vulnerable groups in your Study Circle; seek to achieve gender-balance; create safe and accessible spaces for meetings; prevent hierarchical structures and unbalanced group dynamics; make sure all members are given a voice in the group.

Resources Availability

- **Challenge:** Accessing and providing relevant material and knowledge on a complex concept such as biodiversity.
- **Solution:** Collaborate with local environmental organisations and research institutions; build synergies with similar initiatives and networks.

Risks and Adaptability

- Challenge: Anticipating risks throughout the experiment's implementation.
- **Solution**: Allocate time to discuss with the participants their thoughts about the experiment to improve its next steps; provide constant support to the facilitators throughout the process; continuously report on progress; anticipate potential budget deviations as the learning goals and objectives of the Study Circle may be redefined over time.

Outreach and Impact

- **Challenge:** Engaging support and visibility of the experiment to ensure long-term sustainability.
- **Solution:** Inform key local actors such as media and policymakers about the Study Circle and the experiment from the beginning of the process; apply tailor-made engagement methods for the outreach component of the experiment and communicate its results.



Results

Overall, the results of the experiment show how learning together boosts awareness and understanding of values around nature and biodiversity.

- Enhancing Collective Learning: Participants' understanding, reflections and cognitive development on how nature is valued will be strengthened. Through these social exchanges, a co-learning space is created to discuss a topic of mutual interest.
- **Raising Local Awareness**: By transmitting the knowledge gained to the participants' networks of family, colleagues, friends, local decision-makers, and the wider community, a critical mass of individuals is engaged.
- **Understanding how values are formed and changed:** The results of this adult education experiment yield valuable insights into the cultural dimensions of biodiversity and foster a community-driven approach to its conservation and restoration.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- The concept of biodiversity is not always easy to grasp. Non-formal community learning can help deep-dive into the importance of biodiversity in everyday life and the cruciality of thriving ecosystems for prosperous communities.
- Implementing Study Circles focusing on the biodiversity crisis not only enriches the participants' understanding and skills, but it can also be a practical and impactful approach leading to effective community-led solutions to biodiversity loss.
- Such initiatives, once concluded, have the potential for continued learning, dialogue, and exploration for innovative solutions concerning conservation and enhancement of local biodiversity.
- Bringing together diverse members of the community from different contexts and ensuring feedback from socially vulnerable and underrepresented groups, can shift dominant perceptions on how we value nature, being in rural or urban settings.
- Engaging in these kinds of initiatives has the potential to motivate and spur the local population to have greater involvement in political procedures and decision-making processes.
- Study Circles results can inform and shape municipal services planning.
- These participatory experiences help close knowledge gaps in social science and inform nature-positive policy development.

Further information

Contact details:

The social experiment was implemented on the ground by a local NGO (Ballyhoura Development), a public institution (Posoški razvojni center), and municipalities (Municipality of Stockholm Environment and Health Department, Municipality of Amaroussion), with guidance and support by the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development, Carinthia University of Applied Sciences and the Anton Melik Geographical Institute of the Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts.



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Further reading:

More information about the Study Circles approach: <u>https://www.acs.si/en/projects/national/</u><u>study-circles/</u>



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