

## EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Participant:	Assoutenti Aps ISES
PIC number:	949523883 948848666
Project name and acronym:	[WE-DEMOCRACY – No one left behind – Empowering citizens to participate in democratic processes]

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number:	WP9		
Event name:	Events and awareness raising in Italy		
Type:	Awareness-raising		
In situ/online:	in.situ		
Location:	Italy		
Date(s):	06.02.2025		
Website(s) (if any):	<a href="https://www.wedemocracy-project.eu">https://www.wedemocracy-project.eu</a>		
Participants			
Female:	26		
Male:	24		
Non-binary:	0		
From country 1 Italy:	51		
From country 2 :	-		
From country 3 :	-		
...	-		
Total number of participants:	51	From total number of countries:	1
Description			
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>			
The event held on February 6 in Rome focused on the key themes of the WE-Democracy platform and aimed to raise citizens' awareness of the importance of a more sustainable future by engaging experts and citizens in a constructive and inclusive dialogue. The platform is an initiative designed to promote citizen participation in decision-making processes on crucial issues such as sustainability and the environment. Through the platform, citizens had the opportunity to express their opinions on specific macro-topics.			

The event took place in two simultaneous sessions held in a spacious and modern hall located at Via Barberini 68, in the heart of Rome, and a smaller room within the same building. Indeed, the event saw the participation of a heterogeneous audience of more than 50 people, including students, volunteers, professionals, association representatives, and citizens interested in environmental issues. During the event, attendees had the opportunity to interact with the speakers, ask questions, and share their opinions, actively contributing to the discussion.

#### Speakers at the Debate:

- Avv. Gabriele Melluso - President of Assoutenti APS, legal expert on AI regulatory frameworks and promoter of projects aimed at education on recycling, reuse, recovery, and the circular economy.
- Chiara Bolognini - Head of internal communication and coordinator of national and European communication plans and campaigns for ISPRA - Institute for Environmental Protection and Research.
- Roberta Alani - Advisor and assessor of application forms for the EU Ecolabel award in Italy - ISPRA - Institute for Environmental Protection and Research.

The event revolved around several key sustainability-related topics:

1. Education Campaigns in Schools
  - This session explored the importance of integrating sustainability principles into educational programs to promote eco-conscious behaviors. Recommendations included:
    - Integrating circular economy concepts into school curricula.
    - Organizing workshops and practical sustainability projects.
    - Promoting awareness campaigns in schools through active engagement with key institutional stakeholders such as ISPRA.
2. Artificial Intelligence and Circular Economy
  - This session analyzed the potential of AI in optimizing resource management and supporting sustainability efforts. Suggested AI-based solutions included:
    - Smart bins for waste sorting.
    - Predictive waste management systems.
    - Digital platforms to monitor and reduce resource consumption.
3. Sustainability Certification
  - This session focused on defining criteria and frameworks for assessing and promoting sustainable practices at various levels. Proposals included:
    - Community-level sustainability assessments, transitioning Ecolabel activities to a unified EU-wide body.
    - Incentive programs for companies adopting circular economy practices.
    - Policies encouraging businesses to implement sustainable practices.
4. Product Selection and Labeling
  - This session addressed the importance of clear and transparent product labeling to help consumers make informed and sustainable choices. Key recommendations included:
    - Standardizing product labeling to facilitate comparison and selection.
    - Enhancing product traceability through Blockchain technology, establishing a mandatory EU-wide database.
    - Providing consumers with online tools, such as apps or websites, to compare products based on their environmental impact and make informed choices.
5. Waste Collection and Recycling
  - This session discussed ways to improve waste collection and recycling infrastructure and facilitate consumer participation. Recommendations included:
    - Investing in new technologies to enhance waste collection and recycling efficiency, such as automated collection systems and optical sorting plants.
    - Raising public awareness of recycling programs and encouraging citizen participation through educational campaigns, such as Assoutenti Campania's "Marine Litter" project.
    - Developing policies to incentivize recycling and reduce waste production, including pay-as-you-throw schemes and deposit return systems for

packaging, and funding projects aimed at achieving carbon neutrality, especially in high-impact sectors like transportation.

The event featured a lively debate among participants, who had the opportunity to discuss the various topics addressed.

Roberta Alani (ISPRA) provided a historical overview of sustainable development, highlighting the shift in European policy since 2018. Before this date, sustainability policies were often fragmented and lacked a common European vision. Since 2018, with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Green Deal, there has been a paradigm shift, placing greater emphasis on environmental, social, and economic sustainability. This shift is crucial to addressing global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. The "WE-Democracy" project fits into this context, offering citizens the opportunity to contribute to shaping a more sustainable future.

Alani also emphasized the importance of initiatives like Consip, EMAS, Ecolabel, and the EU Taxonomy in defining sustainable productive activities:

- Consip is the central purchasing body of the Italian public administration, promoting the procurement of sustainable goods and services through minimum environmental criteria (CAM) and green tenders.
- EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) is a voluntary environmental management system for organizations seeking to improve their environmental performance.
- Ecolabel is the European Union's environmental quality mark certifying products and services with a reduced environmental impact throughout their lifecycle.
- The EU Taxonomy is a classification system defining which economic activities can be considered environmentally sustainable.

These initiatives help create a common sustainability framework and promote the adoption of sustainable practices by businesses and institutions.

During the discussion, concrete examples of the circular economy emerged, such as the recovery of PET by fishermen through the "Marine Litter" project and the possibility of creating a European database for product traceability. The project, promoted by the National Consortium for the Collection, Recycling, and Recovery of Plastic Packaging (COREPLA), involves fishermen in collecting plastic waste from the sea. This initiative not only helps reduce marine pollution but also provides an additional source of income for fishermen.

The role of innovative technologies in the transition to a sustainable economy was also discussed, particularly in the production of alternative aviation fuels. Examples included:

- SUN-to-LIQUID, a project using concentrated solar energy to produce sustainable liquid fuels from water and carbon dioxide.
- Power-to-Liquid in Germany, which converts renewable electricity, water, and CO<sub>2</sub> into jet fuel.
- E-jet Fuel in the United States, which synthesizes fuels from CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from combustion engines.

These projects demonstrate how research and innovation can provide concrete solutions for reducing the environmental impact of air transportation.

Finally, the importance of AI in communication was highlighted, along with the need for a balanced approach to its use. AI can be a powerful tool for promoting sustainability through targeted awareness campaigns, the dissemination of accurate information, and digital platforms for citizen engagement. However, it is crucial to prevent AI from being used to spread false or misleading information or to create deceptive sustainability images ("greenwashing"). A responsible approach to AI in communication is necessary to ensure transparency, accuracy, and ethical dissemination of information.

During the event, participants were invited to register on the WE-Democracy platform to actively contribute to the discussion and participate in the European Union's official survey.

The project demonstrated the importance of active citizen engagement in environmental policy decision-making. The active participation of the public, constructive debate, and idea-sharing contributed to making the event a success, with the potential to generate a positive impact on sustainability promotion at local and national levels.

In particular, the project helped achieve the platform's goals by providing citizens with a space to express their opinions and participate in discussions on crucial topics such as sustainability. The recommendations emerging from the event, such as product labeling standardization, responsible AI

use in communication, and improving waste collection infrastructure, offer concrete insights for policy and initiative development at local and national levels. Finally, the event underscored the importance of an integrated approach to sustainability, involving various stakeholders, from institutions to businesses, from citizens to experts. Collaboration among these actors is essential to addressing environmental challenges and building a more sustainable future for all.