

Study Visit in Molise, Italy

21 September 2023



From 11th to 13th September 2023, Down to Earth partners were in the Italian region of Molise for the first **Study Visit** of the project. The visit was organised by project partner **Municipality of Campobasso** and explored how the Municipality and its partners address the challenges related to the topic of Year 1: “Environmental risks related with depopulation and ageing population in rural areas”, notably with European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). Projects in the area are notably supported by the policy instrument: “[Let's build the future together: new connections for the Campobasso Vast Area Strategy - Strategic Plan for the Campobasso Vast Area](#)”, which will be improved thanks to the exchange of experiences permitted by Down to Earth.



First Day

On the first day, project partners met on the premises of GAL Molise to discuss progress and next steps as part of the Management Committee. Indeed, as Down to Earth enters its second Semester, project partners are finalising the regional reports on the topic of Year 1, and will start working on the first Thematic Report.



Management Meeting

To set up the scene of the Study Visit in Molise, Antonio Perdillo, from the **Civil Protection of Molise**, introduced project partners with the challenges posed by climate change in the region and how they are addressed.



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After the discussion, the partnership was treated to a visit of Campobasso Old Town.



Campobasso Old Town

Second day

On 12th September, project partners travelled around Campobasso Urban Area to learn from initiatives and good practices implemented to combat depopulation and climate change. In the morning, the partnership attended a conference in Campodipietra on the project “**Tourist Development Along the Tratturi - Recovery and Valorisation of the Tratturi Path**”, co-funded by ESIF. The project focuses on the restoration of sheep

tracks in Molise for **slow tourism** and strengthening accommodation businesses in the villages in order to create a tourist network connecting villages along these tracks, similar to the Santiago de Compostela route.

Back at GAL Molise, the partnership had the chance to meet with Annalisa Griguolo, SIBaTer Molise regional contact, and Prof. Letizia Bindi from the **University of Molise (BIOCULT Centre)**. The **SIBaTer project**, funded by ESIF, provides free technical support to municipalities in Southern Italy, including in Molise, for identifying and valorizing abandoned and uncultivated lands and thus establish a “Land Bank”. By strengthening administrative capacity and encouraging the participation of young entrepreneurs, the project aims to revitalize these lands, create employment opportunities, and promote sustainable land use in the region. Prof. Bindi presented her on-going **research on pastoralism, soil water sediment issues and territorial conservation** which are key to the sustainable development of rural areas.



Ms Griguolo presents SIBaTer

In the afternoon, the partnership first went to San Giovanni in Galdo, where mayor Mario Piunno explained the “**Regalati il Molise**” initiative: to promote tourism, free one-week stays in the charming village were offered to promote tourism in the region and revitalize small, depopulated villages by introducing visitors to its beauty, history, and culture. Project partners then had the opportunity to meet with two stakeholders: the **Terra Madre** and **Tenute Fierro** farms. They are actively involved in various activities supporting the sustainable development of the region. Partners had the chance to taste some of their products!



Mayor Piunno presents "Regalati il Molise"



Hydroponic strawberry farm at Tenute Fierro

Finally, the GAL Molise director Robert D'Amico presented the **ADRIA_Alliance** project (supported by Interreg - IPA CBC Italy - Albania – Montenegro). The project focuses on promoting energy efficiency and climate change adaptation and contributes to greater environmental sustainability and safety in Molise by implementing innovative energy-efficient building models, renewable energy production, and sustainable urban development practices at the local scale through local energy communities.

Third day

On the last day, project partners notably visited the Social Workshop “La Faglia” in Oratino which serves as a cultural and artisanal hub, with a small museum dedicated to traditional customs and a "virtual room" where visitors can experience the historic rite of “La Faglia” virtually (annual lighting of a 13-meter-long torch on Christmas Eve). This initiative supports rural development and revitalizes villages by preserving cultural heritage, promoting local craftsmanship, and fostering community engagement, thereby contributing to the overall enhancement of the region's cultural and economic identity.

Through this first **Study visit**, Down to Earth partners discovered how the challenges of depopulation and ageing population are addressed in Campobasso, illustrating possibilities and activities to manage, maintain and improve natural capital, reduce the risk and impact of environmental disasters, while generating economic and social opportunities to attract people to rural areas.

Stay tuned for updates from the project on our webpage and be sure to give us a follow on our social media accounts!

Webpage: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/down-to-earth>

LinkedIn: [https:// www.linkedin.com/company/down-to-earth-eu](https://www.linkedin.com/company/down-to-earth-eu)

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About Down To Earth Project

Down to Earth brings together a group of organizations from diverse European regions, each contributing their expertise in disaster risk reduction and rural development. Collectively, we firmly believe that retaining population and encouraging sustainable practices in key sectors are paramount to halting environmental deterioration and effectively mitigating risks.

Funded by **Interreg Europe**, our partnership will work in unison to identify and promote **win-win solutions**. Our primary focus lies in managing, maintaining, and enhancing practices, tools, instruments and strategies to reduce the risk and impact of environmental disasters. In doing so, we seek to create economic and social opportunities that will attract populations to rural areas.

Central to our approach is **mutual learning** through interregional exchange of experiences. By facilitating knowledge sharing among regional and local authorities, as well as relevant stakeholders from participating rural areas, we can enhance their capacity to address the challenges linked with **climate change** and **sustainable rural development!**

Down to Earth partners

