



Ref. No: 2022-1-HR01-KA210-YOU-000081830

Summary of Findings from the Nature-Based Actions

Prepared for the project:
Erasmus KA210 YOU – Small-scale Partnerships in Youth
Project “Green-IN: Including all persons for a greener future”

2024.

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1. Introduction

Within the framework of the ERASMUS+ KA210 YOU project “GREEN-IN,” it was foreseen that the partnership would develop and test an innovative concept regarding environmental protection, i.e. nature-based actions in Activity 4 “Organization of nature-based actions”). One action was planned in Cestica, Croatia (HR) and one in Cavriago, Italy (IT). The purpose of these actions was to activate young persons/youth (esp. persons with disabilities) and other citizens in environmental protection actions. By tailoring these actions such that they target persons with disabilities and include young persons in the community, it was foreseen that the results of these activities would ensure more inclusive approaches are taken in the community to active citizenship in environmental protection.

By preparing this document and making it readily accessible to citizens looking to enhance their approach to training youth, environmental protection and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in local actions, the partnership hopes that others with similar goals will be able to replicate and adopt this approach to their local actions.

2. Preparation

The first step that the partnership took to prepare these events was to examine the contents of the project application form which described what was originally foreseen. The description included the follows aspects:

- Nature-based actions will focus on promoting an eco-friendly mindset, promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in local environmental actions, and reinforcing sustainability;
- The events will gather the volunteers included in the training, persons with disabilities & their parents and other professionals working in the field of social care and environmental protection;
- Each action will last 2 days;
- Volunteers will participate with persons with disabilities to make the event socially inclusive and will be informed in advance how they need to prepare for the event;
- The activity in Cestica will be organized as clean-ups of surrounding parks and tree planting activities (with the support of the Cestica local government). The activity in Cavriago will focus on converting recyclables into art pieces (with support of Multiplo and la Cremeria).
- There will also be other activities included to promote the exchange of know-how between participants, such as presentations, group discussions/workshops, simulation activities (to show the challenges faced by persons w/disabilities);
- Approximately 50 persons would participate in each event;

After examining the original content of the application, the next step of the partnership was to set the dates of the events in Italy and Croatia (which happened in August 2023). The first event in Cestica, Croatia was set for the 22nd to 23rd of September 2023; and the second event in Cavriago, Italy was set for the 13th and 14th of October 2023. Furthermore, they agreed that the concept that was originally foreseen was acceptable. The event in Cestica would be set up as a tree-planting ceremony, and the event in Cavriago would focus on converting recyclables into artwork.

Once the dates were set the partnership needed to determine responsibilities regarding the organization of the event. In order to simply matters, the partnership made it clear the responsibilities of the hosting and visiting partners. The hosting partner was responsible for the following:

- Setting the agenda and inviting participants;



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- Organizing materials needed for the nature-based actions (e.g. procuring seedlings for the tree-planting ceremony in Cestica and recyclable materials for the organization of the action in Cavriago);
- Organizing the space for presentations (including equipment), inviting guest speakers, and organizing catering;
- Informing media;
- Briefing volunteers and participants for the organization of the event of their duties before the event;
- Confirming the attendance of participants;
- Taking record of the participants and gaining participant feedback from them;
- Summarizing the event;

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The visiting partner was responsible for:

- Organizing transport and accommodation for their own participants;
- Informing the participants about the event and inviting them to join;
- Briefing participants about the event and any role that they would play;
- Participating actively in the event;

Based on these parameters, the nature-based actions were prepared and implemented. The following describes the main elements and outcomes of the nature-based actions in each country.

3. The event in Cestica, Croatia (22.09. to 23.09.2023)

Based on the content of the application form, feedback from ŽIR's stakeholders (Secondary School "Arboretum Opeka" – a school focusing on agriculture and horticulture, the Municipality of Cestica, young volunteers, persons with disabilities and their parents, etc.), and agreements during the project meetings, ŽIR organized the main agenda and sent it to their stakeholders in order to ensure their participation in the nature-based action. ŽIR also participated in a radio programme (Radio Megaton) in Croatia in order to promote the project and event to the wider public. The taping of the programme is found below:



PRILOG JAMNIK
20092023(1).mp3



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The agenda for the event is found below:

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Agenda – Green Action in Cestica

Duration: 22.09.2023 – 23.09.2023

Participating organizations: Udruga “ŽIR” – život i radost, Comune di Cavriago (IT), Municipality of Cestica, High School “Arboretum Opeka” Vinica

Total number of participants: 50 participants

Schedule:

22.09.2023.

Location: Caffe bar “Zeko”, Vinogradska ulica 4, Dubrava Križovljanska

17:00 – 19:00 – Welcoming dinner/meal - Informal gathering where participants from Cavriago and Cestica share experiences and get to know each other.

23.09.2023.

Location: Cultural Centre Cestica, (address: Dravska 1a, Cestica, HR)

09:30 – 10:00 – arrival of participants and registration

10:00 – 11:00 - Opening of the event at the cultural centre of Cestica (address: Dravska 1a, Cestica, Croatia);

- Presentation of project - ZIR will present on the progress they have made so far in implementing training in the project “GREEN-IN”
- Presentation of the Italian organizations participating in the action
- Other presentations

11:15 – 12:15 - Tree planting ceremony at the primary school (conducted by project participants accompanying persons with disabilities)

- Explanations of how to properly plant trees and conduct such actions
- Interviews with the media

12:30 – 13:30 - Lunch for participants and informal meeting between partners to discuss action outcomes

Location: Cultural Centre Cestica

13:30 – Departures

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On 22.09.2023, representatives from Italy (6 persons – 4 young volunteers, 2 representatives from Cavriago) and representatives from Croatia (18 persons – young volunteers, experts in environmental protection, representatives from ŽIR and the Municipality of Cestica) met for a networking dinner in Cestica. Through this informal setting, young persons from Croatia and Italy involved in the project were able to interact, get to know each other and learn from each other. The partnership was able to talk about how the activities would be organized for the next day, and discuss progress on project implementation. By having this part in an informal atmosphere, it was found that exchanges were more easily facilitated and participants felt welcomed.

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On 23.09.2023, the event was attended by 30 persons (young volunteers, persons with disabilities and their parents, representatives of Cavriago and the Municipality of Cestica, Middle-School Arboretum Opeka, etc.). The event began with a presentation of the project concept and the expected results (presenter, Patrick Galeski). After that, Ines van Hoek presented on the training approach used in the project and current outcomes of the training in Croatia. Francesca Begoni, the Mayor of Cavriago, presented on the situation facing youth in the community. Particular emphasis was put on how in the post-pandemic period, the town had been handling more cases of depression, substance abuse and bullying facing youth in the community. Arboretum Opeka (presenter Matija Žmegač) presented on how to plant trees and conditions are needed to make it happen properly. During the presentations, translation support was provided (from Croatian to English and vice-versa).

After the formal presentations, the participants walked together to the site where all of the participants would participate in the tree planting. With the help of Arboretum Opeka, all of the participants were able to jointly plant over a dozen trees in Cestica. During this part, there were press coverage and interviews with participants such that the wider community was aware of the project concept and event. After this part, a small lunch was organized at the cultural centre of Cestica. This last part allowed participants to further interact and exchange knowledge.

The following pictures below illustrate the main highlights from the nature-based action in Cestica:



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4. The event in Cavriago, Italy (13.10. to 14.10.2023)

Based on the content of the application form, feedback from Cavriago’s stakeholders (Progetto “Ottavo Giorno” Cavriago, Cultural Centre Multiplo, VET School La Cremeria, etc.), and agreements during the project meetings, Cavriago (the hosting partner) organized the main agenda and sent it to their stakeholders in order to ensure their participation in the nature-based action. Cavriago also took care to organize the event in line with regularly planned community events such that higher participation could be ensured. The event's dates were set for October 13th and 14th 2023: the same time as the event “Festival di Comunita.” Details about this regular community event are found below:



While organizing the agenda, Cavriago took into consideration its previous actions focusing on recycling. In Cavriago there is a Guinness World Record mural: a mural made with 53,082 recycled coffee capsules. The mural is set up on the wall of Allodi Apicoltura in Via Cavour. Cavriago considered that coffee capsules could be a great material for the nature-based action, since they are regularly collected. Cavriago organized their nature-based action with the idea to involve the author of the project, Katja Benassi, and propose the aluminium capsules recycling workshop where participants (persons with disabilities, parents, young people, etc.) would create decorative apples out of capsules.

Based on these possibilities, Cavriago drafted the following agenda found below:



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Agenda – Green Action in Cestica

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Duration: 13.10.2023 – 14.10.2023

Participating organizations: Udruga “ŽIR” – život i radost, Comune di Cavriago (IT), Municipality of Cestica, High School “Arboretum Opeka” Vinica

Total number of participants: 50 participants

Schedule:

13.10.2023.

Location: ex Parco Pertini, (address: Via Cantonazzo 1, Cavriago, IT)

19:30 – 22:00 – Welcoming dinner/meal in the context of the annual Community Festival organised by Educare project, with dinner and a talk by the Putèca Celidònia Association. The evening's proceeds will be used to raise funds to be dedicated to educational projects for Cavriago and beyond. Participants from Cavriago and Cestica will share experiences and get to know each other and the project “GREEN-IN” progress will be shared with all the participants.

14.10.2023.

Location: “Progetto Ottavo Giorno” Association, (address: via Tornara 1, Cavriago, IT)

09:30 – 10:00 – arrival of participants and registration

10:00 - Opening of the event;

- Presentation of project - the Mayor of Cavriago, Francesca Bedogni, and ZIR will shortly present the progress of the project “GREEN-IN” and its importance in promoting social inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- Presentation of the Croatian organizations participating in the action

10:30 – 13:00 - “From capsule to apple. Creative coffee capsule recycling workshop” (conducted by Gommapane lab, attended by project participants accompanying persons with disabilities)

13:00 – 14:00 - Lunch for participants and informal meeting between partners to discuss action outcomes.

Location: “Progetto Ottavo Giorno” Association, (address: via Tornara 1, Cavriago, IT)

14:30 – Departures

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ŽIR was able to organize 18 participants for the event (young volunteers, persons with disabilities and their parents, professionals working with persons with disabilities, etc.) for the event. In total there were 89 participants over the two days.

The event started with a welcoming dinner held for the participants during the event “Festival di Comunita” on Friday, October 13th 2023. At this event, the partnership had the opportunity to interact and discuss the workshop on the following day. Participants from Croatia and Italy could exchange knowledge, interact and get to know each other.

The workshop On October 14th followed the schedule as planned and included a wide diversity of participants. At the beginning, the Mayor of Cavriago presented briefly about how the town strives to enhance social inclusion in the community. After that, the Association “Progetto Ottavo Giorno2 briefly described its activities as an organization, i.e the way in which they provide support to persons with disabilities. During the “hand-on” portion of the workshop, each participant with the help of experts in art and the contribution of young volunteers was able to create a decorative apple that could be used on a Christmas or as a nice piece art for a window.

The following pictures highlight the main elements of the workshop:



5. Participant feedback

In order to determine whether or not the event had an impact on enhancing social inclusion in the community, the partnership collected feedback from participants after each nature-based action. This was done via Google Forms. The following provides a breakdown of participant responses regarding the organization and impact of the events.

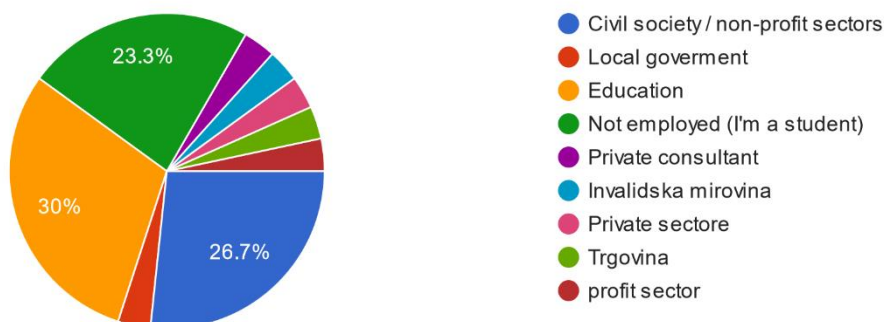
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Feedback on the nature-based action in Cestica

After the nature-based action was held in Cestica in September 2023, the partnership was able to collect 30 responses from participants (24 Croatian participants and 6 Italian participants). The persons came from various backgrounds including education, unemployed, and forced retirement as shown in the graph below:

Could you please specify what sector you work in?

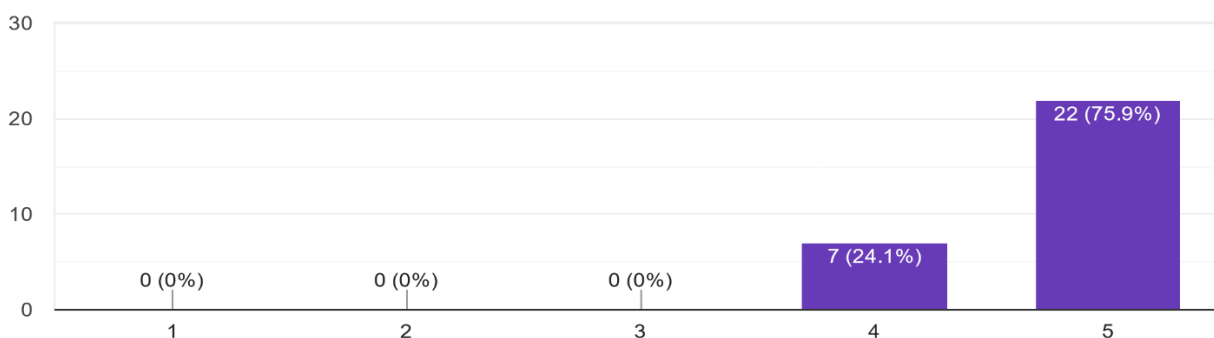
30 responses



The first set of questions referred to the suitability of the schedule, the quality of the content of the activities and the facilities (space, materials, catering, etc.), and the suitability of the accommodation and transport. For all of the related questions participants gave “4” or “5” ratings, which indicates high levels of satisfaction. The graphs per question are shown below:

Was the schedule suitable for you?

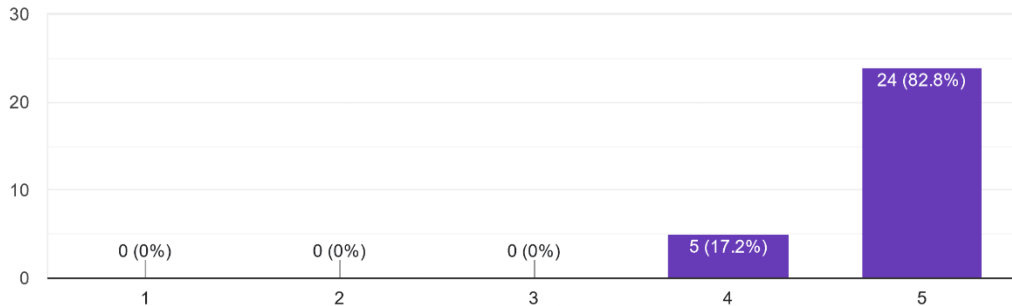
29 responses



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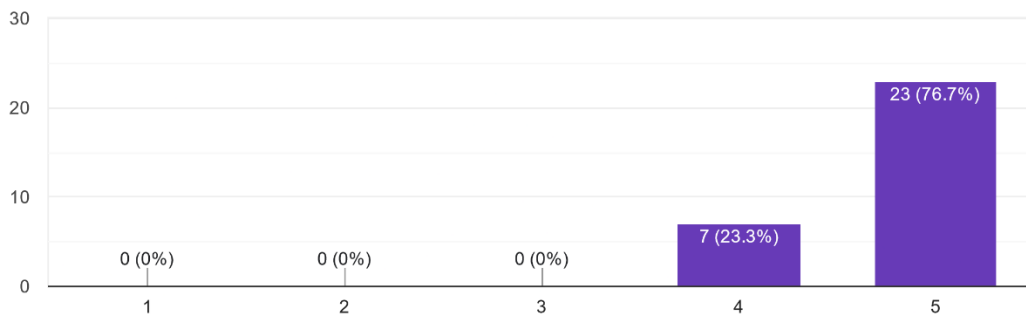
Were the transportation and accommodation arrangements suitable for you?

29 responses



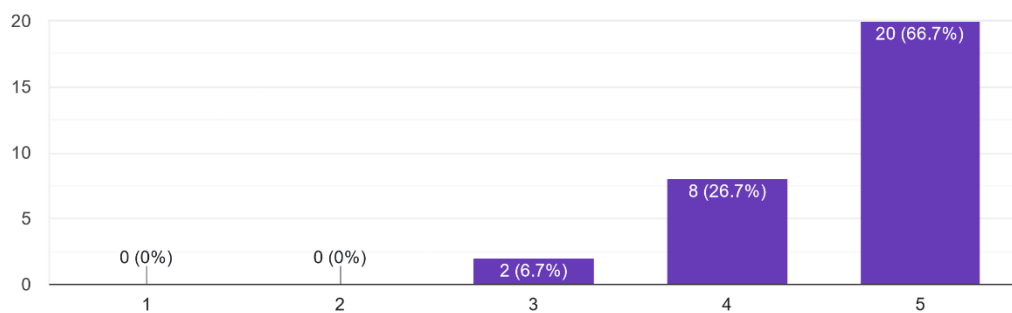
Were the activities interactive, interesting, important and of benefit to you ?

30 responses



Were the catering arrangements, space and other facilities suitable towards your needs?

30 responses



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In the final part of the questionnaire, the participants were asked what they thought could be improved. Participants could provide written answers and comment on what they liked and what they thought may have been a weakness in the approach. In total, 18 participants provided comments. Some of the comments included:

- I liked that there were young people and students included in the project!
- The event was structured and planned. What can be improved is maybe the inclusion of the wider community in the project presentation (advertisement).
- I think that event was really educational and it provided great bonding experience for volunteers and participants. It was formal and educational, practical and informative. I liked the atmosphere and time we spent with the partners from Cavriago
- Good organisation, nice people, creative workshop, it included people with disabilities. The event had a clear structure. Everything was provided for the participants. Regarding the food and drinks, there was a choice, and the space was clean.

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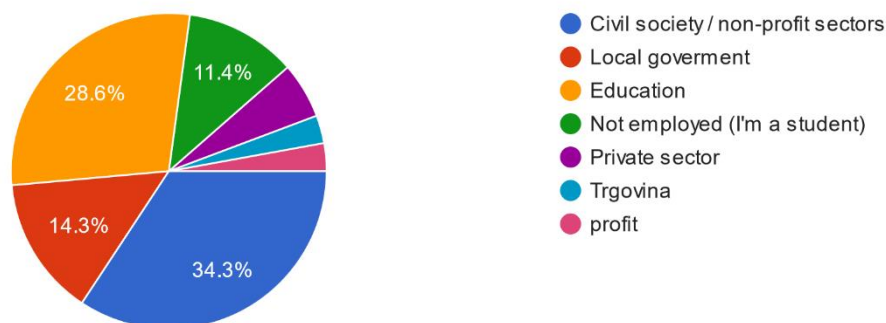
Based on the received feedback and the achieved indicators from the nature-based action in Cestica, it was concluded that the event succeeded in bringing people together (citizens from various backgrounds – young persons, persons with disabilities and their parents, professionals working with persons with disabilities and those working on environmental protection, etc.) and that this approach should be replicated and built on after the project.

Feedback on the nature-based action in Italy

After the nature-based action was held in Cavriago in October 2023, the partnership was able to collect 35 responses from participants (18 Croatian participants and 17 Italian participants). The persons came from various backgrounds including education, private sector, and civil society as shown in the graph below:

Could you please specify what sector you work in?

35 responses

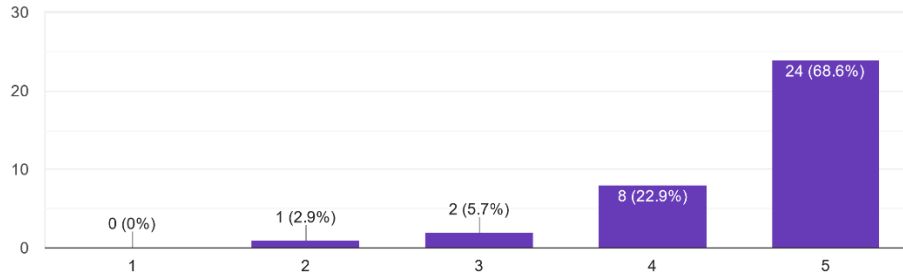


The first set of questions were in the same format as those in Cestica and focused on how the participants regarded the organization of the event overall. Unlike the event in Cestica, the ratings were lower. Although the majority of the respondents were satisfied (providing a rating of “4” or “5”) a few responses indicate that there is a need to improve facilities as well as participant engagement (ratings of “2” or “3” indicate lack of satisfaction). The main findings are presented below:

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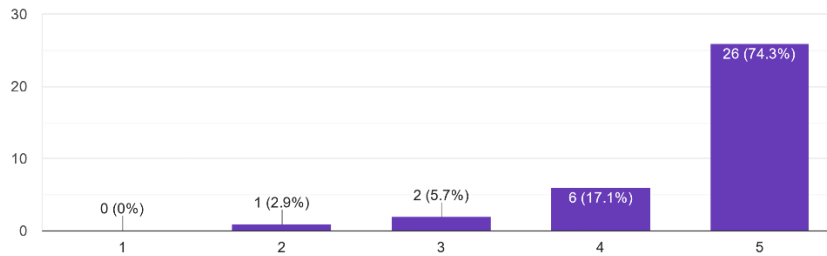
Was the schedule suitable for you?

35 responses



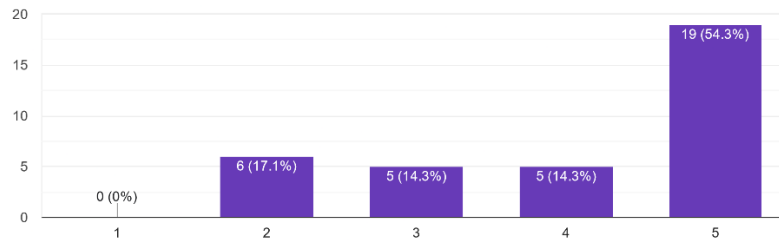
Were the activities interactive, interesting, important and of benefit to you ?

35 responses



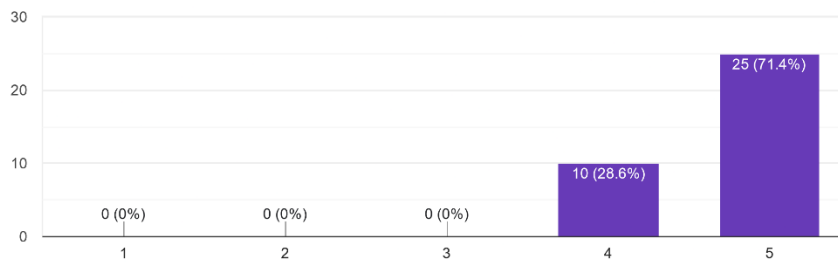
Were the catering arrangements, space and other facilities suitable towards your needs?

35 responses



Were the transportation and accommodation arrangements suitable for you?

35 responses



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In the last section, the participants were asked to provide comments on what they liked and what they thought could have been improved. The main comments that the partnership has taken note of are found below:

- The activities were fine. The schedule could have been expanded though. It would have been nice to have an extra day in Cavriago;
- The workshop was very interesting and amusing, especially because we made a souvenir we could bring home. I liked the concept of recycled coffee capsules. I only felt like could have been more volunteers included;
- The Friday Dinner was good and the Saturday workshop was a moment of sharing;
- The hospitality was nice...we got a nice tour of the facility and all the detailed information. The workshop was really interactive.
- The workshop was great and I gained valuable experienced, but I am not satisfied with the organization of the event.

Even though the event in Cavriago had a large number of participants and achieved its goal, it was mainly noted that the nature-based action in Italy has room for improvement in terms of impact. The participants noted that there could have been more activities to stimulate interactions between volunteers, better catering and facilities and a longer schedule.

6. Conclusions and final remarks

The organization of nature-based actions was successfully implemented and positively received and the expected outputs were achieved. The following below summarizes the main outcomes of the activities:

Expected outputs (in the application)	Achieved outputs
2 innovative nature-based actions that successfully include youth and persons with disabilities in environmental protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 2 innovative nature-based actions that successfully include youth and persons with disabilities in environmental protection organized ❖ 1 nature-based action in Croatia (Cestica) with 36 participants ❖ 1 nature-based action in Italy (Cavriago) with 89 participants
40 persons in the target group gain know-how, build cooperation and mutual understanding regarding effective ways in promoting social inclusion of persons with disabilities and environmental protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 113 participants of nature-based actions in Croatia and Italy gained know-how, built cooperation and mutual understanding regarding effective ways in promoting social inclusion of persons with disabilities and environmental protection

The participant feedback was mainly positive, but it is clear based on some of the comments that there is a need to upgrade the approach in future projects. One set of comments that had been taken into close consideration referred to the facilities at event, the length of the event and the level of interaction. It was clear that 2 intense days was too much for many international participants. Therefore, for the workshops in Activity 3, the timeframe was extended from 2 days to 3 days. By having 2 nights in the host's location (instead of 1), it was less intense in terms of travel.



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The comments regarding interactions and facilities were also taken into account. In the future events, more attention will be paid to these aspects in order to ensure that they are more suitable for participants.

Regarding the overall impact, it is hard to measure the impact it had to significantly improve the social inclusion of persons with disabilities and to ingrain environmental principles into local communities. Since „GREEN IN“ is a pilot project (especially concerning the nature-based actions) and this is the first EU project led by ŽIR as an applicant, the partnership can only conclude based on the overall comments that the approach has the potential to bring people together. Of course, there is room for improvement. For any similar future projects, it is suggested that more nature-based actions tailored to include persons with disabilities should be held and it is also necessary to strengthen the promotional activities, so the general public learns more about the project and takes part in its activities.