Unione Nazionale Comuni Comunità Enti Montani

UNCEM

Note on the Green Communities

Foreword

Green Communities are based on local sustainable development strategies with the aim of fostering the sustainability of the economic and social progress of territories and are based on the integrated and certified management of natural resources, energy production from renewable sources, the development of sustainable tourism, the integration of low-impact mobility services, and the promotion of a 'zero waste' industry. This perspective is fully in line with the United Nations (UN) Development Goals and in particular Goal 11, which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Green Community in Italy

In Italy, there are now many rural and mountain territories committed to promoting the development of Green Communities in implementation of the national Green Communities strategy of the same name under Art. 72 of Law 221/2015. A vitality that starts from a growing awareness of their own value and centrality. Indeed, it is in these areas that the most relevant part of the natural heritage is concentrated, which is fundamental for achieving a new model of sustainable and inclusive development, based on the rational use of resources, in a relationship of subsidiarity between rural and urban areas. This awareness regarding the function of rural and mountain areas must become universal and lead to policies and interventions that curb depopulation and enhance the human presence in these areas. This is why the Law 221/2015 wanted to open in Italy the issue of payment for ecosystem services, i.e. compensation for the work and labour of managing those territories, the natural heritage they hold and the ecosystem services they generate. These are, for example, "carbon fixation of forests and wood arboriculture, water regulation in mountain basins, safeguarding the biodiversity of ecosystem services and landscape qualities, use of state and collective property for energy production". The territories are, therefore, committed to defining and implementing sustainable development plans based on:

a) integrated and certified agro-forestry management;
b) integrated and certified management of water resources;
c) the production of energy from local renewable sources, such as, but not limited to, micro-hydroelectric plants, biomass, biogas, wind, cogeneration and biomethane;
d) the development of sustainable tourism;
e) the sustainable construction and management of the building heritage and infrastructure of a modern mountain region;
f) energy efficiency and intelligent integration of plants and networks;
g) sustainable development of production activities (zero waste production);
h) the integration of mobility services;
i) the development of a sustainable farm model.

In the territories concerned, related projects are consequently carried out:

a) integrated and certified management of the agro-forestry heritage, including through the trading of credits from carbon dioxide capture in state-owned, collective and private forests and arboriculture; biodiversity management and certification of the timber supply chain;
b) water regulation in mountain basins and integrated and certified management of water resources;
c) use of state and collective property for energy production; energy production from local renewable sources, such as micro-hydroelectric plants, biomass, biogas, wind power, cogeneration and biomethane; the creation of local energy communities;
d) interventions to safeguard the biodiversity of ecosystem services and landscape qualities for the development of sustainable tourism, capable of enhancing local production;
e) climatic energy efficiency in buildings;
f) the definition of territorial energy plans aiming at energy self-sufficiency through savings, efficiency and network integration;
g) circular economy projects;
h) sustainable mobility (electric or hybrid).

Furthermore, considering the role played by agriculture and agroforestry land in relation to ecosystem services, the aim is to promote and support projects that pursue the fulfilment of agro-climatic-environmental commitments, with particular attention to the conservation status of species and habitats, as well as soil, including through soil protection.

Within the framework of the realisation of the Green Community, projects aimed at the valorisation of ecosystem services are decisive, based on the sustainable and integrated management of the natural heritage and the set of ecosystems that generate a renewable flow of goods and services. The management of Ecosystem and Environmental Services (SEA), in fact the multiple benefits that derive directly or indirectly from the functions and processes carried out by ecosystems and the environment, which are indispensable for the survival and wellbeing of humankind, divided into support, regulatory, supply and cultural services;

a) Supporting services: the ecosystem and environmental services that underpin essential functions, covering inter alia soil formation, photosynthesis and nutrient cycling;
b) Regulatory services: aimed at ensuring the functioning of ecosystems, covering inter alia climate, water and material cycles;
c) Supply services: services that provide products such as food, water, timber, energy and fibre;
d) Cultural services: services that provide recreational, aesthetic and spiritual benefits.

SE	Typologies
1. Supply Services	Crops
	Forage, pasture
	Huntable species/fish
	Raw materials (wood, fibres, …)
	Mushrooms, berries, edible plants
	Medicinal plants
	Genetic resources
	Drinking water
2. Regulatory Services	Carbon sequestration
	Local climate regulation/air purification
	Water regulation (groundwater recharge)
	Water purification
	Erosion protection and geological instability (landslides, slope instability)
	Protection against hydrological disruptions (floods)
	Pollination
	Biological control (pests)
	Habitats for Biodiversity
3. Cultural Services	Aesthetic value
	Recreational value (ecotourism, outdoor activities)
	Inspiration for culture, arts, educational and spiritual values, sense of identity

Of particular importance is the experimentation and adoption of forms of Payment for Ecosystem and Environmental Services (PES): the remuneration of a share of the economic value of the ecosystem and environmental services provided by natural capital, according to mechanisms of a negotiated nature between providers and beneficiaries This is to ensure that resources are allocated to maintaining the ecosystems that generate the SEA in such a way that their functions remain unchanged.

The global dimension

The global dissemination of the experience of Green Communities and their mutual knowledge can truly be the foundation for action against climate change.

The current historical context of the impact of climate change on a local scale makes it necessary to create international alliances to tackle these problems with a global and collaborative vision between local authorities, academia, the private sector and civil society.

Hence, the desire to activate forms of collaboration with local authorities, universities and NGOs from Latin America and other continents to generate a worldwide movement that can act collaboratively as a global alliance.