NEWSLETTER II

February 2025

WELCOME TO JUSTGREEN NEWSLETTER 2#

2025: NEW YEAR, MORE GREEN

We're already in the new year! After succesfully kicking off the JUSTGREEN program in 2024, 2025 is the start of getting to work on our policy changes. The first two partner meetings were focused on getting to know each other as partners and learning more about the existing greening policies in each partner city of region. Now that we have layed the groundwork we're moving on to the methodology used for our policy improvement.

This newsletter starts off with a recap of the second partner meeting in Athens on the 17th and 18th of October 2024. Then we introduce two good practices from the region of Attica and city of Rotterdam. Finishing with a follow up on our article about the JUSTGREEN Scorecard in our first newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading!

IN THIS NEWSLETTER

RECAP PARTNERMEETING 2

ATHENS OCTOBER 2024

The second partner meeting of the JUSTGREEN project took place on October 16th and 17th in Athens, marking a significant step forward for the initiative. While the first meeting in Rotterdam focused on introductions and launching the project, Athens was where the real work began. Partners arrived ready to dive deeper, share their progress, and collaborate on solutions to the challenges of urban greening and climate adaptation. This meeting set the tone for the project's hands-on approach, fostering an atmosphere of practical exchange and action-oriented discussions. The trip kicked off with a warm and informal welcome dinner, where international partners mingled, shared experiences, and strengthened connections. This relaxed setting set the tone for an inspiring and collaborative few days.

The second day was all about knowledge exchange and reflection. The morning began with a peer-review session centered around the JustGreen Scorecard, a tool designed to evaluate urban greening efforts across seven key areas. Partners shared their city's scores, drawn from discussions with local stakeholders. This open dialogue revealed both common challenges and unique opportunities, sparking valuable conversations about how to improve and innovate.

In the afternoon, the spotlight shifted to success stories. Athens showcased its creative strategies for tackling heat and drought, leaving the Rotterdam team inspired by ideas they could adapt for their own projects. One standout example was a citizen science initiative where residents measured temperatures across the city using mobile sensors on bikes and cars. This approach highlighted the temperature differences between parks and urban areas, offering insights into how greenery impacts local climates—an idea Rotterdam is considering for future projects.

RECAP PARTNERMEETING 2

On the final day, the group visited two inspiring initiatives in Athens. First, the Climate Change Observatory of the Attica Region, a hub providing real-time environmental data and fostering citizen engagement. Second, the Urban Heat Watch project, which uses participatory science to map heat stress. Residents actively contribute by identifying risk areas, with the data shared on an accessible platform. The visit also revealed surprising challenges Athens faces, like not having a clear inventory of its trees, making street maintenance tricky.

An unexpected highlight was the personal story of the founder of Athens' street newspaper. Their projects, though less "green," deeply embodied the "just" values central to the JustGreen project.
This exchange differed from the first meeting in meaningful ways. Partners knew each other better, enabling deeper discussions about their approaches and obstacles. For instance, cities with diverse populations often communicate in multiple languages—something that's not allowed in Rotterdam. Conversations also revealed varying methods for engaging stakeholders, all proving valuable in addressing the tough questions driving this project.

GOOD PRACTICES

WHAT IS IT AND WHY DO IT?

The JUSTGREEN project is focused on improving Greening policy and an important factor in the process of doing this, are the Good Practices. In the case of JUSTGREEN these are examples of initiatives related to greening policy that have proven to be succesful through tangible and measurable results and that have a potential for learning and interest to other regions/cities. On the JUSTGREEN website each partner posts their good practices so that they are shared and available to our other partners. Here we will highlight two good practices that were recently posted.

URBAN HEAT WATCH - REGION OF ATTICA

The challenge is to map heat and green inequalities in a Mediterranean metropolis and co-develop public policies for urban greenery by drafting two ReCCAP measures. This requires a multi-scale, multifunctional approach to assess, plan, and implement green infrastructure locally.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND OF ATTICA

KEY ACTIONS

Innovative technologies like sensors, thermal cameras, and GIS are used to map heatwave discomfort, vulnerability, and neighborhood inequalities. A participatory citizen science campaign engages residents in mapping heat and improving urban green planning in Athens.

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

Resilient strategies and adaptation plans depend on accurate, locally available data. Combining expert knowledge, insights from relevant authorities, and residents' perceptions through participatory actions strengthens decision-making. This good practice expands spatial and temporal coverage at the metropolitan scale while designing green infrastructure tailored to neighborhood needs.

URBAN HEAT WATCH - REGION OF ATTICA

POTENTIAL FOR LEARNING OR TRANSFER

URBAN HEAT WATCH introduces innovative methods to address urban heat and green space inequalities. Using advanced technologies like weather stations, drones, and thermal cameras ensures precise data for evidence-based decisions. It's focus on equity prioritizes vulnerable populations, fostering resilience. Participatory policy co-production promotes inclusive governance and trust, while digital tools for visualizing heat inequalities enhance transparency and engagement. This scalable, community-driven approach offers a replicable model for urban resilience and environmental justice.

EXPERT OPINION

"The Urban Heat Watch (UHW) project is a participatory citizen science initiative aimed at addressing urban heat and green space inequalities in Athens, Greece. Led by the Agricultural University of Athens and funded by Greece's Green Fund (€200,000), the project combines advanced technologies—including sensors, GIS, and thermal cameras—with citizen engagement to map heat vulnerability and discomfort across neighborhoods. The initiative actively involves citizens in the public policy process for urban green planning, emphasising social and environmental equity. Key outcomes include localised data to inform resilient urban strategies, enhanced participatory governance, and improved urban green infrastructure. The UHW project serves as a model for European cities, demonstrating how participatory citizen science can address urban climate challenges—such as heat vulnerability and green space inequalities—while promoting environmental justice." - Arnault Morisson

GOOD PRACTICES

OPZOOMER MEE - CITY OF ROTTERDAM

Rotterdam, the second-largest city in the Netherlands, faces challenges in social cohesion, cleanliness, and greening. Since 1994, the Opzoomer Mee Foundation has empowered residents to organize street activities, fostering better neighbor relations and creating welcoming streets. Initially a grassroots initiative, it is now an organization subsidized by the municipality.

KEY ACTIONS

Opzoomer Mee motivates residents to take collective action by providing materials, support, and small budgets for street events. Residents can organize social activities, join annual cleaning initiatives, and participate in greening projects funded by the “Rotterdam goes for Green” policy. These projects include depaving, planting greenery, and installing rain barrels, contributing to the city’s green spaces.
The foundation takes a bottom-up approach, supporting residents at the street level with simple communication and accessible funding. It provides resources such as cleaning kits, community exchange cabinets, and Christmas trees, making street-level improvements easy and inclusive.

OPZOOMER MEE - CITY OF ROTTERDAM

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

In 2023, over 2000 streets participated in Opzoomer Mee. Residents in 243 streets added 3100 m² of greenery, while 626 streets maintained green spaces using foundation support. Additionally, 210 rain barrels were installed, and residents in 184 streets joined both maintenance and greening campaigns.

POTENTIAL FOR LEARNING OR TRANSFER

Opzoomer Mee's low-barrier, bottom-up approach links street greening with social cohesion, fostering interaction among neighbors. Its simple communication, accessible funding, advice, and replicable processes make it a transferable model for other municipalities or communities.

EXPERT OPINION

The Opzoomer foundation is a great example of a low budget initiative that motivates collective action by providing support, materials, and funding for community events, street cleaning and greening actions, these efforts are funded by the "Rotterdam goes for Green" policy, which aims to increase green spaces in the city. Even these small-scale greening initiatives contribute to more climate resilient cities, lower pollution, and can act as flood prevention measures.

Green facades, flower pods or hedges in the street support biodiversity and pollinators, as well as positively impact human health and wellbeing. Green infrastructure in urban areas, is an important element in fulfilling EU legislation, especially the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 and the Climate Adaptation Strategy. Moreover, involving citizens as in this good practice creates a higher sense of ownership and care for their neighbourhoods." - Magda Michaliková

JUSTGREEN SCORECARD SUMMARY REVIEW

THE SCORECARD METHODOLOGY

In our first newsletter, we introduced the JustGreen Scorecard, a tool designed to support local and transnational collaboration within the project. The scorecard includes seven statements linked to the project's three pillars: Distribution, Procedure, and Recognition. These statements were co-designed with partners during the project's initial stages. At their first stakeholder workshops, partners scored themselves on a Likert Scale (0-10) for each statement. This subjective process emphasized sparking local debate rather than the final scores.

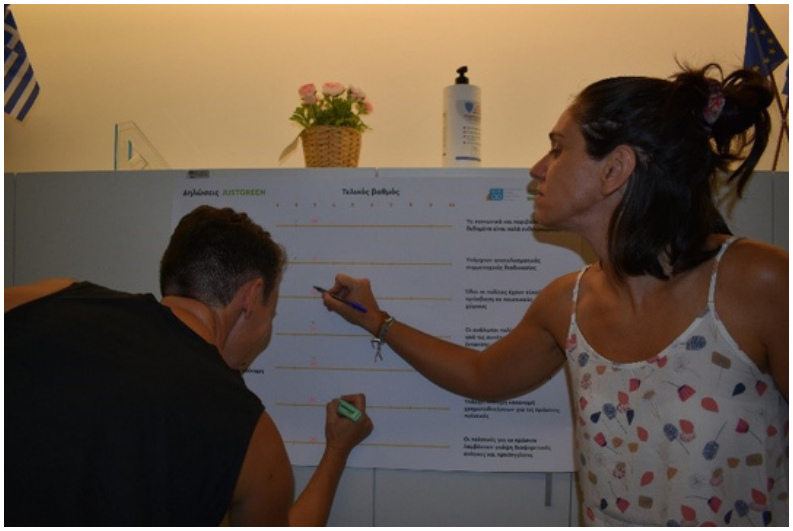
THE SCORECARD PROCESS

Partners found the scorecard valuable for engaging stakeholders, spotlighting the project's core themes, and assessing territorial strengths and weaknesses. It also fostered reflection on how the project could enhance greening and social justice policies. During the transnational meeting in Athens (October 2024), partners shared their scorecard results through a Gallery Walk, where posters displayed their scores and rationales. This activity facilitated mutual learning and highlighted diverse local perspectives. The scorecard process provided valuable lessons:

- Cultural differences among partners influenced scores, including varying levels of critique towards public authorities.
- Securing participation from all relevant stakeholders was a challenge, particularly for marginalized voices like citizens and the natural world.
- Building consensus was difficult, as discussions on the contested JustGreen themes often became tense

THE SCORECARD METHODOLOGY

AREAS OF CHALLENGE AND SATISFACTION



Some policy areas were deemed more challenging across the partnership. These included:

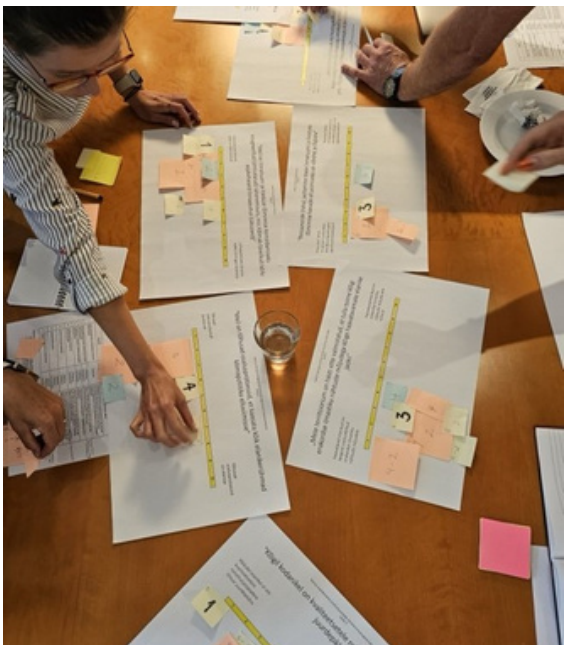
- Addressing climate impacts on the most vulnerable (average score: 3.51).
- Ensuring social data informs greening decisions equitably (3.52).
- Equitable distribution of funding for greening plans (3.67).

On the other hand, partners expressed relative satisfaction with policies ensuring citizens' access to quality green spaces (average score: 5.21). While two partners scored this as high as 7, one recorded a low of 2.7, reflecting diverse local contexts. It is crucial to interpret these scores as snapshots of each partner's starting point rather than direct comparisons.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS

Partners identified several ways to improve the scorecard process:

- Use shorter, clearer statements.
- Share scorecards in advance for better stakeholder preparation.
- Reward participation, as seen in Burgas (providing food) and Rotterdam (considering payment).
- Focus on specific neighborhoods to sharpen discussions.
- Combine the process with practical workshops or greening activities.
- Actively involve vulnerable groups.



CONCLUDING REMARKS

The scorecard process, when paired with activities like Hi5Lo5, helps partners prioritize needs and identify transferable policies within the network. It has proven to be a valuable tool for fostering collaboration and shaping policies that advance the project’s goals of greening and social equity.

THANKS FOR TUNING IN

SEE YOU IN THE NEXT EDITION OF THE NEWSLETTER

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