

THE UNECE CONVENTION ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS (AARHUS CONVENTION)

TASK FORCE ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION

ELECTRONIC INFORMATION TOOLS: CASE STUDY BY ITALY

[GELSO - LOCAL MANAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABILITY IS A PROJECT MANAGED BY ISPRA (NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND RESEARCH) AIMING AT THE DISSEMINATION OF GOOD PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABILITY IMPLEMENTED AT LOCAL LEVEL IN ITALY.]

[\[http://www.sinanet.isprambiente.it/gelso\]](http://www.sinanet.isprambiente.it/gelso)

I. Description

- **1. Title:** GELSO - Local management for sustainability
- **2. Brief description:** GELSO - Local management for sustainability is a project managed by ISPRA (National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research) aiming at the dissemination of good practices for sustainability implemented at local level in Italy. Its database collects more than 1000 good practices promoted by local authorities, associations, research institutions, schools, universities and private entities. Good practices are related to the following key areas: Participative and integrated strategies, Agriculture, Building and city planning, Energy, Industry, Waste, Land and Landscape, Tourism. The majority of good practices concerns actions implemented in urban areas. The primary objective of GELSO is setting up a "network" for active exchange of information between all subjects involved in local implementation of sustainability measures. GELSO is also a website and offers up-to-date information about main sustainability strategic areas.
- **3. Link(s) to electronic information tool(s) (if available online) or the description:**
<http://www.sinanet.isprambiente.it/gelso>
- **4. Type:** [governmental, non-governmental, municipal, other] governmental
- **5. Scope:** [international, sub-regional, national, local] national
- **6. Working language(s):** Italian
- **7. Target users:** Public Administrations, environmental consultants, citizens
- **8. Starting year:** 2002
- **9. Budget and funding source:** the project is founded with the ordinary budget of the Institute
- **10. Contact:**
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II. Implementation

- **11. Policy, legal and institutional context:** National and European strategies for the sustainable development (VII Environmental action programme, thematic strategies for urban environment, etc.)

- **12. Partner organizations involved:** The project has no direct partners but collaborates with associations and institutional bodies with specific expertise in the various sectors of intervention.
- **13. Stakeholders involved, their expected benefits:** Municipalities, Regions and other local authorities, territorial Environmental Protection Agencies. Our main stakeholders are the public and private partners implementing the projects, since we work together for the selection and for the monitoring of good practices.
- **14. User needs and methods of their assessment:** The website provides a contact form to get feedback from users. We constantly analyze the website access statistics in order to understand user behavior and the main areas of interest.
- **15. Technology choice:** Open source CMS (Plone – Zope, Phyton)

III. Evaluation

- **16. Results:** GELSO collects selected good practices related to 8 key areas of intervention: Participative and integrated strategies (425), Agriculture (61), Building and city planning (109), Energy (139), Industry (76), Waste (107), Land and Landscape (317), Tourism (80). GELSO performs a monitoring of the good practices, in order to provide information on tools and methods used by local administrations for the implementation of sustainability policies, results achieved, threats faced and the availability to a cooperative knowledge transfer. It is a well-known information tool used by specialists and the general public. The project started as a database but in its evolution has become a website dedicated to sustainability, a tool for knowledge and dissemination of innovative and dynamic information. The strength of GELSO is the ability to adapt to the needs of different users. The site provides information on events, awards for good practice, news and thematic surveys on the following topics: Climate change mitigation and adaptation, the European Landscape Convention; Sustainable tourism; Protected natural areas, Agriculture, Green areas.
- **17. Efficiency gains:** GELSO is an easy-access tool to showcase good practices. Access to information provides the ability to start new partnerships between cities that share policies and objectives or to facilitate alliances between local actors around specific projects.
- **18. Risks:**
- **19. Challenges encountered (please indicate resolved or not):** The first challenge faced at the start of GELSO project was the setting of the criteria for selection of good practices and the identification of areas of intervention. The criteria were established by a panel of experts and are published on the site. The main challenges in the implementation of the project concern the selection and direct contact with the project promoters. Other important points are the need to provide information verified and updated on innovative topics in the field of sustainability.
- **20. Lessons learned:** Some conclusions from our practice:
 - good practices should be selected through clear and transparent criteria,
 - the collection of projects must be open and inclusive,
 - it is essential a direct contact with the promoters of projects for the collection and validation of data,
 - the selected good practices should be monitored,
 - the information should be collected through standardized forms, with multiple search keys and keywords from recognized thesauri,
 - the database must be freely accessible,
 - it is necessary a periodic updating for the tools used,
 - the continuity of the project adds value, but it must to be able to evolve and conform itself to users' needs,
 - the ultimate goal of the good practices dissemination is setting up networks and direct contacts for active exchange of information between all subjects involved in local implementation of sustainability measures
- **21. Conditions for successful replication:** The project can be replicated both at national and local scale. A database of good practices can be both sectoral and intersectoral, as GELSO. In the latter case there is a greater adherence to the values of sustainability as a multidimensional concept. The system architecture is easily replicable being based on open source software and add-ons developed by the European Agency for the Environment and freely available.

- **22. Overall assessment of the tool:** The GELSO database collects a large number of best practices validated, monitored and easy to consult. It has been online for over ten years and is a national reference for the issue, frequently consulted. It provides information on local sustainability initiatives with thematic analysis.