

## The “Plastic Revolution” is starting out from Lake Orta

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2020 began with an ambitious project. The “**Lake Orta Plastic Revolution**” is one of the winning bids in the Cariplo Foundation’s “**Plastic Challenge. Fighting disposable plastics**”. A total of €150,000 has been allocated for the project, of which €87,000 is being provided by the Cariplo Foundation. This great result includes a series of actions and projects that will last for a period of two years.

The leading organisation is the **Legambiente “Friends of the Lake” Association**, which presented their bid together with the towns of Ameno, Briga Novarese, Miasino, and Orta San Giulio to the Briga Volunteer Organisation and to the cultural association “Asilo Bianco”, which devised and wrote the project. A great many local supporters, both public and private, have expressed their willingness to collaborate and will follow the project in all of its stages. Local authorities, schools, local tradespeople, accommodation facilities, and sporting and cultural events will be directly involved. The aim is to respond to the real and compelling need not only to reduce the use of plastic materials and their release into the environment, but also, and above all, to change the habits of everyone, which is the real keystone of the project, to achieve increasingly aware ecological consciousness.

The operating phase of the project is starting in the next few months, and will see the towns involved providing each household with a crate with six glass bottles, a kit which will be delivered with a pamphlet and a map of local sources of safe and available water. At the heart of the project, which is one of numerous environmental protection initiatives coordinated by the **Lake Contract for Cusio**, there is a drastic reduction in disposable plastic at big sporting and cultural events. The people of Novara Province are careful about separated waste collection at home (the target of 65% has been exceeded), but are not sufficiently careful outside their homes.

Concrete measures that are part of the project include **the introduction of dishwashers and washable dishes in the canteen services of schools and summer centres**, and at food and wine, cultural and sporting events, the inclusion of reusable products in shops and accommodation facilities, the creation of a designer water bottle, the purchase of baskets for separated recycling, the replacement of disposable pens in public administrations with biodegradable stationery, and the planting of trees for the virtuous towns.

In parallel, awareness-raising meetings will be organised, with experts, on single-use plastics and environmental issues, and as part of Legambiente’s national campaigns, “Clean Beaches and lakebeds” and “Let’s Clean the World”, initiatives will be carried out locally to collect and classify waste on the banks, in the water and in the environment, with the involvement of divers, schools and volunteers. During the usual stop in the Cusio area of Legambiente’s programme “Goletta dei Laghi”, the monitoring and sampling activities will continue to detect the presence of micro and nanoplastics in the water, on the lakebed and on the beaches, on which the national scientific team of the environmental association, in collaboration with the JRC in Rome, will carry out tests. Asilo Bianco is organising the Plastic Revolution Festival, which is going to use unusual tools, such as contemporary art and culture, to reflect on plastic, beauty and reuse. The reduction in disposable plastic is one of the most immediate and important challenges that people, associations and the authorities are being called to face. And Lake Orta is a symbolic place for this important, topical and ambitious project; everyone knows and remembers the story of a dead lake that has been reborn. **All of the mayors involved in the project,**

Noemi Brambilla for Ameno, Chiara Barbieri for Briga Novarese, Giorgio Cadei for Miasino and Giorgio Angeleri for Orta San Giulio, say they are extremely **satisfied with the success of the call for bids**, which is supporting the work to raise awareness of environmental issues that started long ago in their communities, with various projects and initiatives.

di Translated by Carenzo & Di Pietro (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)