Abstract

Local support for wind energy installations is being discussed in many regions. Partly because of the massive presence wind turbine generators have, in terms of visual impact, partly because wind farms tend to be concentrated in the same areas, where wind resources are more reliable. This sometimes creates the so called “forest effect”. Finally, the areas with the richest wind resources are also the areas where the first wind parks were built. Engagement projects and local support allows ERG to maintains a good relationship between the Company and local communities.

Objectives

- **AWARENESS**
  To raise awareness of the benefits that wind energy brings to both the local society and to the local and global environment

- **KNOWLEDGE**
  To teach students, more generally, about energy production, renewable energy sources, energy saving and the protection of resources

- **OPPORTUNITIES**
  To stimulate interest amongst students in following a career in renewable energy

Methods

- **MULTIFACETED STAKEHOLDERS**
  The project is run in the municipalities where ERG’s wind assets are located and targets students of the third year of middle school. They are affected twice over by the wind development, as stakeholders in both “future generations” and “local communities”. Furthermore local schools and their teachers often serve as a “connective tissue” in smaller rural towns. Their engagement in the green transition is therefore invaluable.

- **VISIT AT THE WIND PARKS**
  At the end of each class we take the students for an on-site visit to one of ERG’s wind farms in the area. At the wind farm they get to talk to the technicians, which helps them get a better understanding of both the more technical aspects of the wind turbine generators and on how an installation that, in many cases, can power an entire city with clean, renewable energy is managed.

- **CARABINIERI & MINISTRY**
  From the beginning the project has had the patronage of the Italian Ministry of Environment and since 2016 a partnership with The Carabinieri, the National Gendamerie of Italy. The Carabinieri benefit from the friendly and informal contacts that the project creates with the local communities, to sensitize the school kids towards the work carried out by the police force. The project, on the other hand, benefits from the clout that such important institutions have.

Results

The project is very popular with both teachers and students and has, in the four years since it was started, increased the number of annual participants from about 900 to more than 1,500 in the Regions of Sicily, Calabria, Basilicata, Campania, Molise, Apulia and Sardinia.

The positive results of *Vai Col Vento!* has led to an extension of the project called *A Tutta Acqua*. This project targets high schools and their students in the province around the hydroelectric power plants owned by ERG at Terni, Umbria. It aims to raise awareness of the benefits of power produced from hydroelectric plants, which, like wind energy, is both clean and renewable.

Along with other projects, *Vai Col Vento!* allows ERG to carry out its Corporate Social Responsibility commitments. The commitments are defined by the Sustainability Committee, in line with the vision of the company, and include knowledge sharing, raising awareness of climate change and renewable energy and the involvement of stakeholders of different age groups, among which the next generations.