
VENICE
CALLS
REPORT
2026

VENICE CALLS ETS

It is a social promotion association, founded in Venice in 2018 to build community around the challenges of the city and the Lagoon.

Venice Calls promotes the care of the commons and the involvement of people in building the future of the city through environmental activities, cultural initiatives, participatory pathways, awareness-raising, and active citizenship projects.

Venice Calls operates as a network between citizens, associations, institutions, and local organizations.

Venice Calls envisions a livable, international Venice that honors its traditions while innovating to address environmental and social challenges without losing sight of its residents or lagoon. Guided by this vision, the social promotion association turns the desire to care for the city into concrete opportunities for civic engagement.

VENICE CALLS

THE FUTURE OF VENICE IS TODAY

This report recounts the work carried out by the association throughout 2026: projects, meetings, communities, and experiments born to contribute to the future of Venice.

650+ participants in community events;

2.000+ online participants in the debate;

20+ collaborations activated with associations, institutions, and citizen groups;

4 neighborhood care intiatives;

6 environmental Clean Up interventions;

70+ participants for our Clean Ups;

3 new civic and cultural formats/mechanisms launched;

100 participants engaged in the first two sessions of Venice Talks;

560+ participants in Lagoon Echoes.



LONG LIVE VENICE CALLS!

SEBASTIANO COGNOLATO
President and Co-Founder Venice Calls

2026 represented an important moment of consolidation, reorganization, and relaunch for Venice Calls. To understand its significance, however, it is necessary to look at the path built by the association over its eight and a half years of activity.

Founded in 2018, Venice Calls works to promote civic participation, care for the territory, and the enhancement of the lagoon through environmental, cultural, and social projects. In over eight years of activity, it has carried out more than 150 initiatives, involving thousands of people in protecting the lagoon and enhancing public spaces.

Among the most significant experiences is the permanent program of environmental Clean Ups, active since the association's founding, which over the years has involved hundreds of citizens in caring for the lagoon and its forgotten spaces.
Alongside this were the mobilizations during the exceptional high tide (*acqua alta*) of 2019, support for the population during the pandemic through food drives and the distribution of protective equipment, and the Open Your Art project,developed together with the International Committees and the Venetian Civic Museums to foster the inclusion of Ukrainian refugees through culture.

This steady growth led to an essential internal reorganization between late 2025 and early 2026 to sharpen our tools, processes, and vision.

From this work emerged a clear conviction: Venice Calls must not be merely an association that carries out projects, but a civic platform capable of connecting people, skills, and organizations around the city's challenges.

The activities recounted in the following pages represent much more than a succession of events: they are the first building blocks of a strategy aimed at strengthening Venice Calls' role as an actor capable of generating relationships,fostering collaborations, and creating new opportunities for participation for Venice.

For me, having had the privilege of contributing to the birth of Venice Calls and accompanying its journey from the very beginning, this semester represents a new starting point: the path of reflection and reorganization undertaken in recent months has allowed us to rediscover the association's direction with greater clarity, renewing its spirit and capacity to imagine the future.





WHERE WE COME FROM

THE TIMELINE OF VENICE CALLS



2018
The Venice Calls movement is born: a group of young men and women who want to participate and contribute to the future of the city.



2018
Environmental cleaning in the historic center: the widespread clean-up model is born. An action that will accompany Venice Calls over the years.



2018
Collaboration begins to maintain decorum in the historic center through the removal of tags/graffiti from architectural heritage.



2018
The first Venice Calls talk is organized at San Vidal. Dialogue begins with citizens, researchers, activists , and representatives.



2019
Constituent Assembly: After several initiatives, the informal group constitutes itself as an association: Venice Calls is officially born.



2019
Venice, its challenges, and grassroots action are also discussed in schools: high schools invite the association to speak with students.



2019
As the exceptional 187 cm high tide recedes, Venice Calls sets up a control room to lend a hand: matching volunteers with those requesting help.



2019
Volunteers are divided by city areas and dispatched across the territory where the high tide caused the most damage,aiming to remove waste before subsequent storm surges.



2019
The initiative saw the contribution of thousands of volunteers who helped lift Venice back up together with Veritas and the other institutions involved.

WHERE WE COME FROM



2020

The pandemic arrives. Venice Calls networks with other initiatives to bring aid to the city through food drives, online webinars, and fundraisers.



2021

A space is launched thanks to a municipal tender: it is the first headquarters of Venice Calls inside the Cloister of Santi Cosma e Damiano.



2022

Clean Ups are consolidated, becoming a tool for dialogue across territories with associations and for monitoring the types of waste collected.



2022

A cycle of 30 cultural exchange meetings is launched between volunteers and Ukrainian refugees through sociality and artistic heritage.



2022

Cultural events continue: Venice Talks brings together 15 associations and projects and 15 artists across 3 meetings centered on "the Venice system."



2023

Venice Calls and VERAS create Vignole Camp, three days of immersion in nature and practical work in the greenery of Le Vignole.



2024

The Venice Calls Recycling Lab is born: an educational and productive circular economy workshop that transforms bottle caps into resources for the association and the community.



2024

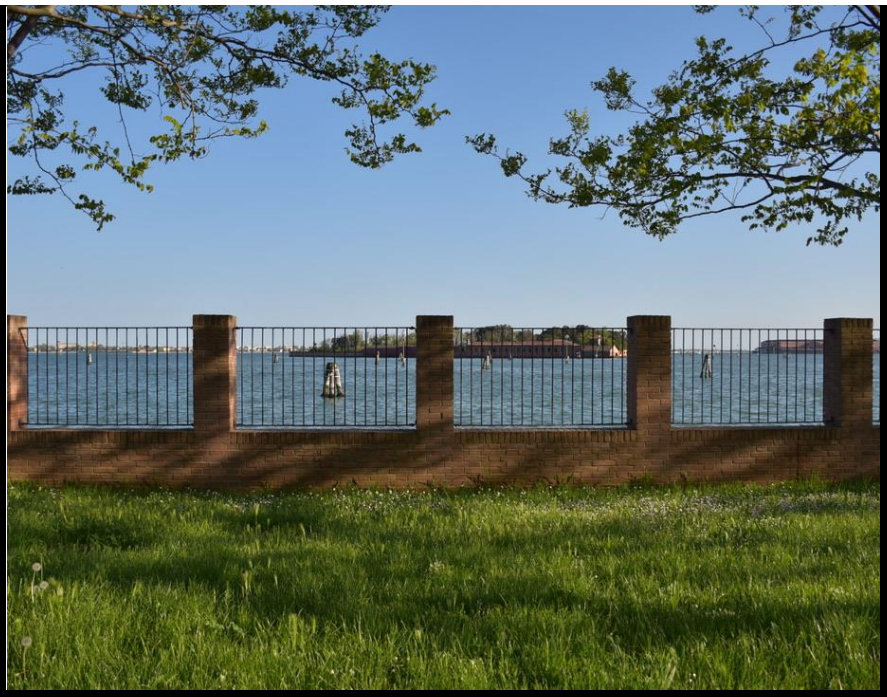
With the collaboration of DVRI, 30 active associations were called together for an active pathway on implementing new synergies among associations.



2024

The second headquarters at Le Zitelle becomes a permanent space for culture, participation, and active citizenship, opening a new phase for Venice Calls.

OVER 8 YEARS OF ACTIVITY, HUNDREDS OF INITIATIVES, THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE INVOLVED



OPENING SPACES, IMAGINING ACTIVITIES, AND CREATING EVENTS

Community spaces open up
During the first half of 2026, Venice Calls organized four Open Days to open its headquarters and plastic recycling workshop to citizens, students, volunteers, Civil Service operators, and local organizations. Around twenty participants took part in these sessions, discovering the available equipment and helping build a core community around shared spaces of encounter and participation.

Building alliances and projects
As the meetings progressed, the Open Days evolved from simple presentations into a genuine participatory process for listening and collective planning. Through open dialogue and group work, diverse participants co-designed Venice Calls' 2026 calendar—giving birth to flagship formats such as *Lagoon Echoes* and *The Venice Debate*, alongside new cultural, environmental, training, and active citizenship proposals for the coming months.



A home for the community
More than mere operational headquarters, these spaces proved to be community hubs where ideas, skills, and energies turn into concrete collaborations. This reflects how Venice Calls chose to restart in 2026: not with a pre-established program, but by listening to its volunteers, partners, and supporters to respond to the territory's real needs.

The future of the spaces granted to Venice Calls
The goal is to continue developing these associative spaces as a true civic infrastructure serving the city—open places where relationships grow, shared projects are born, and long-term programs for care and social innovation take shape.





FROM CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT TO BUILDING COMMUNITY

What are environmental clean ups?
Since Venice Calls' founding, environmental Clean Ups have been one of its most defining actions—transforming environmental awareness into collective action. Over eight years, hundreds of citizens, students, residents, visitors, and volunteers have joined waste collection interventions across the lagoon and public spaces, fostering a culture of participation and shared responsibility.

Where we intervened in 2026
From January to December 2026, interventions took place in Sant'Alvise, Murazzi Lido, Secca San Pietro, Secca di Sant'Alvise, Murazzi Pellestrina, and Torcello Lato Nord, continuing a path spanning salt marshes (*barene*), mudflats (*secche*), urban embankments, and fragile natural areas—maintaining an active presence and public focus on Venice's environmental challenges.

Why collecting waste is not enough
Beyond waste collection, each Clean Up is an opportunity to observe the territory's fragilities and reflect on individual and collective behaviors.

By sharing knowledge about the lagoon, telling local stories, and sparking dialogue across generations and backgrounds, Clean Ups serve as an educational tool for collective awareness.

Clean ups as a gateway to participation
Requiring no special skills or prior experience, only a few hours of willingness, Clean Ups lower the barriers to civic engagement. For many volunteers, picking up litter is the first step toward deeper involvement in city life and other Venice Calls projects.

What we have learned and what the future holds
Eight years in the field have shown that environmental protection relies on the sum of daily actions and direct knowledge of fragile ecosystems. In the coming months, Venice Calls will continue promoting Clean Ups and environmental monitoring across the lagoon.





A DEBATE BUILT FOR THE FUTURE OF THE CITY AND THE LAGOON

What is The Venice Debate 2026?
On May 3, 2026, at the Procuratie Vecchie (The Human Safety Net), Venice Calls hosted *The Venice Debate*, moderated by journalist Marta De Vivo. Designed as a non-partisan civic forum rather than a political rally, it brought mayoral candidates Andrea Martella and Simone Venturini together to debate Venice's future directly before citizens.

Key themes & diverging visions
The discussion focused on residency and depopulation, tourism governance, environmental fragility, the port, mainland–historic center ties, youth opportunities, and daily livability. The sharpest divide centered on the access fee (*contributo d'accesso*): Martella criticized it as structurally ineffective, while Venturini defended it and proposed higher peak-day rates. Candidates also differed on reversing demographic decline, public investments, and mechanisms for civic participation.

Civic response & outlook
Strong turnout and post-debate discussion confirmed a deep appetite for substantive, non-partisan dialogue. Following the elections—in which Simone Venturini was elected Mayor—*The Venice Debate* stands as a first milestone in establishing an independent civic space where open dialogue shapes Venice's future.





CARING, ACTIVATING, GIVING BACK, EXPRESSING. GIVING VOICE TO THE COMMUNITY'S NEEDS, IDEAS, AND ENERGIES

Activating shared care processes
Developed in the first half of 2026, *Cura Quartieri* (Neighborhood Care) listens to, enhances, and reactivates urban spaces through the direct involvement of the people who experience them daily. Rather than merely maintaining physical spaces, the project builds active citizenship pathways connecting residents, associations, and institutions across four distinct areas: Santa Margherita, Santa Marta, Sant'Anna, and Le Zitelle—proving that urban care requires tailored dialogue rather than standardized solutions.

Santa Margherita – Dorsoduro
Together with the *Poorters* association, Venice Calls is consolidating partnerships for the shared maintenance of local flowerbeds and green spaces. In an area shaped by intense university and social life, the pathway aims to evolve through public initiatives, fundraisers, and awareness campaigns—turning a transit hub into a space for dialogue among residents, students, and local businesses.

Santa Marta – Dorsoduro Discussions brought to light the fate of the neighborhood's historic soccer field—long cared for by community cornerstone Tranquillino Mazzocchi and currently used as a depot and parking area for university campus redevelopment works. Residents and regulars are preparing a petition to reclaim the field for the community and name it after Mazzocchi, highlighting the vital need to preserve spaces for sports and daily sociality amid urban transformations.

Le Zitelle – Giudecca Launched with a collective care day involving residents, associations, and local sports groups, the pathway identified shared priorities: redeveloping the portico leading to the Zitelle complex, improving the basketball court, and upgrading spaces for children. An open citizens' assembly will follow to define concrete actions for the coming months.

Sant'Anna – Castello In collaboration with *Venice Urban Lab* under the *"Abitare il Vuoto"* initiative, a cleaning day of the Sant'Anna cloister and an urban observation walk sparked vital dialogue within a community facing complex transformation prospects. Residents proposed concrete improvements to daily quality of life, including a community dinner, stronger social opportunities, and additional trash bins.





A growing network *Cura Quartieri* thrives on local alliances: with *Venice Streetball*, activating public basketball courts as hubs of inclusion; with *Venice Urban Lab*, turning urban walks into shared project planning; and with *L'Altana* and *Caigo*, promoting narratives of Venice beyond the postcard image. Functioning as a permanent laboratory of active citizenship, the project will continue in the second half of the year with new assemblies and shared care actions.





A NEW FORMAT FOR VENETIAN CREATIVITY

Giving space to the new voices of the Lagoon Launched in 2026 at Venezia 936 (Le Zitelle), co-managed by Venice Calls, *Lagoon Echoes* is a new cultural format bringing emerging artists, musicians, creatives, and citizens together in an informal, inclusive setting. Through concerts, exhibitions, and dialogue, it highlights Venice's contemporary creative energy and celebrates those who live and interpret the city daily—going beyond major mainstream events to foster community and cultural vitality.

The first edition

The inaugural edition brought together independent artists from diverse backgrounds, featuring live performances by Mathias Mari, Estella, Lilac, The Tiubs, and Doli's, alongside exhibitions by Lucrezia Ceselin, Emi Biolab, and Francesco Coccolo. With over 650 registered participants, the enthusiastic public response confirmed a strong demand for gatherings that connect music, art, community, and the local territory.

Building community through culture

Made possible by the curation of Matteo Nardin (Live Music) and Elisa Panisson (Visual Arts) and Aizenev, *Lagoon Echoes* fills a gap in Venice by offering an accessible space for cultural experimentation and independent local production. Following this debut, new summer editions—including events in August—will continue to consolidate Venezia 936 as a permanent laboratory of creativity, sociality, and civic participation.





LISTENING, CONNECTING, CREATING

Opening a space for civic dialogue

Venice is made of people, ideas, and shared challenges. *Venice Talks* brings together citizens, associations, professionals, researc hers, and institutions to explore the city's present and imagine its future. Built around three guiding actions—**Listening** to diverse experiences, **Gathering** local stakeholders, and **Proposing** shared responses—the format turns public dialogue into a catalyst for relationships and concrete civic action.

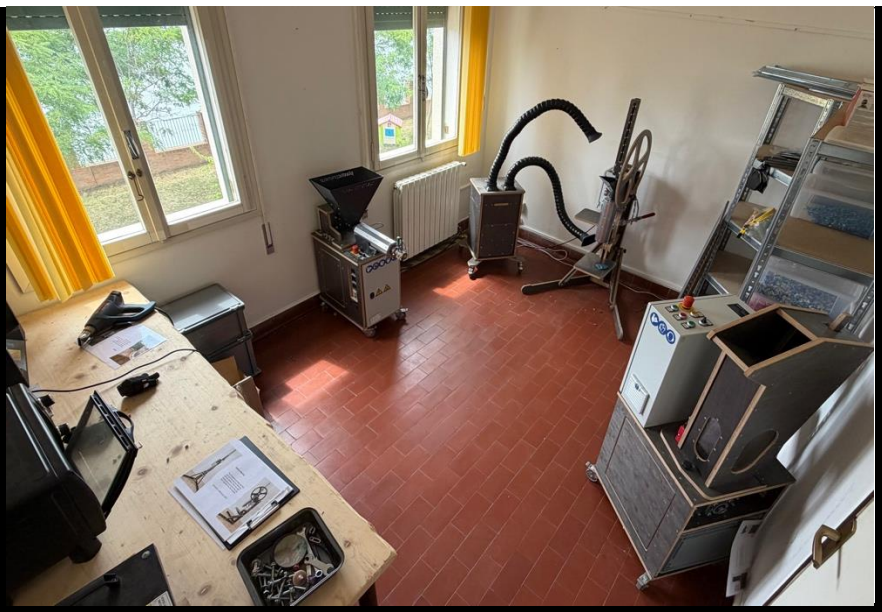
How each encounter works

Hosted at the *Scuola dei Laneri* in Santa Croce with free admission, each meeting alternates brief expert and community interventions with an open conversation with the audience. Living, working, growing up,creating culture, and caring for the lagoon: *Venice Talks* provides an informal, accessible forum to address the transformations affecting the entire Venetian community.

Seven themes for Venice's future

Spanning 2026 and 2027, the seven-part series explores key pillars of urban life: youth spaces and vitality (*Venice, a Living City*), climate and lagoon ecosystems (*Lagoon Climate Lab*), housing and mainland–island connections (*Living in Venice–Mestre*), economic diversification beyond tourism (*What Sustains Venice?*), governance of public commons (*Shared Spaces and Decisions*), social inclusion and solidarity (*The Art of Building Bridges*), and youth-led urban visions (*The City of the Future*).

The first two *Venice Talks* highlighted the need to move beyond isolated initiatives toward lasting collaboration between citizens, associations, researchers, and institutions. Participants emphasized strengthening daily community ties, while shifting from emergency response to proactive, everyday stewardship of the lagoon through scientific research, sustainable navigation, and civic participation.



HOW A BOTTLE CAP CAN LEAD TO VALUE CREATION FOR VENICE

A workshop built by a community
Born from the conviction that the ecological transition requires broad alliances, the Recycling Lab was made possible through a civic crowdfunding campaign promoted by the Municipality of Venice. Hundreds of volunteers, supporters, businesses, associations, and professionals contributed funds, skills, materials, and time—proving how a community can build concrete tools together to tackle local environmental challenges.

Turning waste into opportunity
Conceived as a civic device, the lab transforms plastic recovered during environmental activities into educational tools, products, and fundraising rewards for citizens, schools, and companies. Part of the value generated is reinvested into new clean-up, neighborhood care, and active citizenship projects, creating a circular model where waste becomes an environmental, social, and economic resource.

Building a local plastic supply chain
Venice Calls is expanding a local network of citizens, schools, businesses, and institutions to recover, sort, and transform plastic directly in Venice. Chess sets, coasters, frisbees, spinning tops, flowerpots, and keychains show how discarded materials gain new life.

With unique colors and textures shaped by recovered blends, each piece tells a story of reuse, creativity, and shared responsibility.

Plastics that can have a new life
The lab works primarily with easily recyclable PP (Polypropylene) and HDPE (High-Density Polyethylene), such as bottle and container caps (PP/HDPE) and fruit and vegetable crates (HDPE). In the coming years, Venice Calls aims to grow its contributor network to strengthen this local circular economy supply chain.



VENICE CALLS

The work of Venice Calls is possible thanks to the contribution of citizens, volunteers, companies, foundatio ns,associations, and institutions that choose to invest in building a more sustainable, inclusive, and participatory Venice.

You can support the association by becoming a member, participating in volunteering activities, donating bottle caps to the Recycling Lab, promoting an educational pathway in your school, developing a project together with your company,making a donation, or allocating your 5×1000.

Every person who chooses to participate helps transform the community's ideas, needs, and energies into concrete actions for the territory.

SUPPORT OUR WORK FOR VENICE



VENICE
CALLS
YOU