

ECOAGE
Elders' Wisdom, Youth's Future

EEA & Norway Grants 2014-2021 – Active Citizens Fund Cyprus

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Project Acronym: ECOAGE

Project title: ECOAGE: Intergenerational solidarity towards an ecological life in Cyprus

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Introduction

The ECOAGE project is a research initiative that focuses on intergenerational activities aimed at promoting eco-sustainable practices. The project brings together older adults as mentors of youth to teach them about environmental stewardship and sustainability. To ensure the long-term success and impact of the ECOAGE project, a sustainability plan was developed. This plan outlines strategies and actions that will help maintain the project's objectives and outcomes over time.

Project impact

Throughout the 18-month duration of the project, the ECOAGE initiative made significant and varied impacts on local communities, engaging more than 700 participants in physical workshops and over 15000 through online media, including:

- 1) **Strengthening intergenerational connections:** The project played a crucial role in bridging the gap between different age groups by promoting environmental education and sustainable practices. Through collaborative efforts, older adults and youth engaged in meaningful exchanges, deepening their knowledge of environmental stewardship and forming lasting bonds.
- 2) **Empowering older adults as community leaders:** Older adults were empowered to take on leadership roles within their communities by sharing their wealth of knowledge and expertise in sustainability. Their contributions positioned them as respected leaders, guiding community members towards more sustainable lifestyles and practices.
- 3) **Promoting eco-friendly behaviors among youth:** The project successfully encouraged the adoption of eco-friendly habits among younger generations. By offering educational resources and hands-on learning opportunities, it instilled a sense of environmental responsibility and motivated youth to embrace sustainable living practices in their everyday routines.
- 4) **Addressing social isolation and loneliness:** Active participation in the ECOAGE initiative served as a potent remedy for social isolation and loneliness experienced by older adults. By promoting a sense of belonging and significance, the project improved their overall well-being and quality of life, nurturing vibrant and inclusive communities.
- 5) **Bridging the bi-communal gap between Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot elderly and adults:** The project played a vital role in promoting connections between Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot elderly individuals, helping to bridge the divide between these communities. By providing a platform for interaction and collaboration through environmental education and sustainable practices, the initiative promoted mutual understanding and strengthened relationships across cultural boundaries.

- 6) Teaching Entrepreneurship and Mentorship Strategies to Older Adults: The project took a proactive approach in equipping older adults with entrepreneurship and mentorship skills, empowering them to reclaim their position in a digital society. By offering training and resources in digital literacy, business development, and mentorship strategies, the initiative enabled older adults to actively participate in and contribute to today's evolving digital era, promoting innovation and sustainable growth within their communities.

Expected impact of sustainability plan

The expected impact of the sustainability plan includes:

- 1) By involving older adults in sustainability initiatives, the plan aims to provide opportunities for them to volunteer and actively contribute to their communities, reducing feelings of loneliness and promoting a sense of purpose and engagement.
- 2) The sustainability plan seeks to empower older adults to become active citizens, contributing to decision-making processes and promoting a sense of belonging within their communities. their opinions and contributions will be valued, leading to increased engagement and participation in community activities.
- 3) Resourceful toolboxes for reusing things and applying eco-friendly practices: the plan aims to provide youth with tools and resources to promote resourcefulness and eco-friendly practices.
- 4) By encouraging creative reuse of materials and sustainable habits, youth will develop a greater understanding and appreciation for environmental stewardship.
- 5) Strengthened relationships between citizens and generations, continuity in history and common knowledge: the plan seeks to strengthen relationships between citizens and generations, promoting continuity in shared history and knowledge. by encouraging intergenerational collaboration and dialogue, communities can build on collective wisdom and create a sense of unity and cohesion.
- 6) Less waste, more resourceful reuse of materials, green jobs and entrepreneurship: the plan aims to promote a circular economy by reducing waste and encouraging the reuse of materials. this approach can lead to the creation of green jobs and opportunities for entrepreneurship, contributing to economic sustainability and environmental conservation.
- 7) Protecting the environment and contributing against climate change: the sustainability plan prioritizes environmental protection and the fight against climate change. by promoting sustainable practices and reducing carbon footprints, the plan aims to contribute to a healthier planet and a more sustainable future for all.

Results

During the 18 month duration the project resulted in the following concrete outcomes which will be utilised for the sustainability plan:

- 1) A protocol to evaluate older adults' needs as mentors of eco-sustainable practices, methodological tools and questionnaires (D2.1)
- 2) The results of user requirements mapped through focus groups (D2.2)
- 3) The project has successfully created a standardized protocol aimed at training older adults in coaching and instructional leadership skills. Drawing expertise from professionals in mental health, teaching, neuropsychology, and the third age sector, this protocol equips older adults with both soft and hard skills necessary for effective mentorship and guidance (D2.2).
In 2023, we accredited this training protocol with the Cyprus HRDA.
- 4) A guide to facilitate optimal intergenerational knowledge sharing, through blended learning activities. These activities combine traditional learning methods with experiential learning approaches, such as hands-on workshops and educational field trips in natural settings. By integrating diverse learning modalities, the project ensures engaging and effective knowledge transfer between generations (WP2).
- 5) An informative booklet including a variety of eco-friendly and sustainable practices to reduce waste spanning from food to crafts was created and translated in EN, GR and TR (D2.3).
- 6) A small-scale, pre-post, quasi study has been conducted to assess the qualitative and quantitative impact of the ECOAGE program on older adults, children, and youth. Utilising standardized and unstandardized scales, this study evaluated various dimensions of the program's impact, including changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours related to environmental sustainability (D2.4).
- 7) A Network Database available on ecoage.eu

Sustainability plan & strategies

The ECOAGE project aims to seamlessly integrate into ongoing programs in Cyprus post-completion by upscaling and expanding on the assets developed during the project duration. The partners involved have outlined a comprehensive plan to achieve this objective, incorporating various strategies and actions that will drive the project's sustainability and impact.

A) One of the key actions identified is applying for a second round of funding to further expand and transfer the project to additional countries, while also considering the incorporation of digital tools, potentially through platforms like Erasmus+. This expansion will enable the project to reach a broader audience and have a more significant impact on addressing sustainability issues related to aging populations.

B) Additionally, creating synergies with other projects, initiatives, and consortia that focus on similar topics will help to leverage resources and expertise, promoting collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the sector. By working together with other stakeholders, the project can maximise its reach and effectiveness in addressing key challenges faced by older adults in Cyprus and beyond.

C) Continuing to inform and engage with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) through collaborative workshops and participation in local events like the Wellelderly week, researchers' night, NGO fairs, diversity fairs, and conferences will help raise awareness and generate support for the project's initiatives. These events provide valuable platforms for sharing knowledge, exchanging ideas, and promoting partnerships with key stakeholders in the community.

D) Moreover, efforts to empower older adults by encouraging their participation in workshops and supporting them in selling their products will not only enhance their sense of social engagement but also contribute to their economic well-being. Providing assistance in navigating any legal requirements and facilitating access to markets will enable older adults to showcase their skills and talents, promoting intergenerational learning and economic empowerment.

E) Furthermore, developing workshops for older adults and youth in collaboration with policymakers, such as the KEEAED program at the Nicosia Multifunctional Center, will ensure the sustainability and relevance of the project's activities.

F) In line with its commitment to open access and knowledge-sharing, the project aims to provide researchers with access to databases for replication studies and promote research in the field of aging and sustainability.

G) Additionally, the project plans to increase its visibility and impact through social media dissemination, utilising various platforms to share updates, success stories, and relevant information with a wider audience.

H) Lastly, the project aims to continue promoting the support and contribution of donors through appropriate branding and acknowledgment, recognising the importance of this funding in sustaining its activities.

The strategies outlined above will be maintained to varying degrees based on the contacts and resources available to all partners, including the Youth Employment Training Foundation of Cyprus, Yaşlı Hakları ve Ruh Sağlığı Derneği - Association of Elderly Rights & Mental Health, and Høgskulen for grøen utvikling – HGUt University College for Green Development.

Conclusion

In today's rapidly changing world, sustainability has never been more critical. As we face pressing environmental challenges, such as high levels of waste production and depletion of natural resources, embracing sustainable practices is essential for ensuring a liveable planet for future generations. The ECOAGE project, with its focus on addressing sustainability issues and empowering both young and ageing populations, plays a crucial role in promoting environmentally friendly and socially responsible solutions. By prioritising sustainability of our project even post completion of its funded period, not only can we contribute to the adverse impacts of waste and pollution, but we can also create a more resilient and sustainable society.