

ANNOUNCEMENT
Euracademy Association in cooperation with the University of Thessaly, Department of
Forestry, Wood Sciences and Design
In the context of the CO-GREEN project

Invite you to take part in the 21st (Winter) Academy

On

“COMMUNITY-BASED ACTION FOR THE GREEN TRANSITION OF RURAL COMMUNITIES”

to be held in Karditsa, Greece from 26th to 30th November 2023

The theme: How can we train Green activators to engage citizens and communities in discussing climate and green issues and proposing solutions to decision makers?

Background and aim

The urgency of a targeted and systematic ecological transition for the future of Europe is undeniable and clearly depicted in the European Green Deal. The recognition of the relevance that local/place-based decisions have for accomplishing the ecological transition strongly supports the participation of local communities. The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the EU's Green Deal explicitly consider local implementation paths and citizens' active support as a critical factor in reaching the set goals, whilst ensuring the democratic legitimacy of policies.

The CO-GREEN project, in which Euracademy takes an active part, has undertaken to encourage and promote local community participation in ecological transition while aligning with the values, principles, and sustainable practices embodied in the Green Deal, specifically targeting rural communities. Due to their peripheral status, these communities typically play passive roles in green policy implementation. Recognizing the significance of their inclusion and active engagement, local teams of "Green Activators" are being established in Poland, Italy, Croatia, and Greece to animate, facilitate and promote the green transition of their communities. These Green Activators are expected to work closely with community members, raising awareness about critical issues affecting their well-being, such as climate change and ecological deterioration. Furthermore, they will empower their communities to take an active role in shaping and implementing green policies, stimulating their creativity and introducing them to public participation methods. The CO-GREEN action represents a vital step towards more inclusive and participatory ecological transitions in these communities.

The 21st Winter Academy explores a number of key themes referring to the prospects and challenges of the green transition of rural communities, bringing to the front a methodology for facilitating communities to undertake action towards a more sustainable future.

Questions to be addressed by the Winter Academy, are indicatively the following:

- What should a rural community do in order to achieve a green transition?
- What are the main obstacles and challenges that should be overcome?
- What is the expected profile, background and skills of a Green Activator?
- How would a Green Activator act to encourage the green transition of his/her rural community?

- What type of initiatives would he or she undertake?
- How can community development principles and practices help the green transition and give substance to the green activator's role?
- How can community participation in green decision making be encouraged and achieved

Target group

The 21st Winter Academy welcomes participants from all over Europe, who are involved or have an interest in sustainable rural development, green transition and community participation in policy-makers' decisions. For this Winter Academy, we are specifically targeting active members of NGOs, teachers at all levels of education, local development experts and staff of local/regional authorities, other managers and animators of rural development, policy makers in the fields of sustainable development and ecological transition, as well as researchers, students and experts in related fields.

The course is designed for around 30 participants, who are invited to share their experiences, to acquire new knowledge and skills and to benefit from the wide networking opportunities offered by Euracademy. Participants should have a reasonable command of English.

The format

The winter academy includes lectures; discussion groups in the form of workgroups of up to 8 participants following each lecture; study trips to the rural areas surrounding the winter academy venue, focusing on issues related to green transition of local communities and sustainable rural development; study trip reports which the participants prepare and present; panel discussions and special-topic workshops. Collective work is strongly promoted during the winter academy on the principle that all participants learn from one another, equally sharing knowledge and experiences.

We adopt a strong emphasis on "problem solving - finding solutions" and give a high profile to the study visits and great importance to meetings with the communities. Thus, following initial lectures and panel sessions with expert lecturers, the study trips will be designed as topic-specific case studies to investigate real community-based challenges. The participants will be tasked to explore these challenges and identify and present real potential solutions. In this way, we hope participants will be able to develop their skills of community-based investigation/appraisal, analysis and solution/action plan presentation.

The Programme

This winter academy will benefit from the experience of 20 previous Summer Academies held in an equal number of different locations around Europe, on different themes relating to sustainable rural development. We are using all our previous experience to organise a similar event this winter and bring you an equally strong experience.

A very important feature of the 21st Winter Academy is that it benefits from the CO-GREEN project on engaging local communities in the green transition process. This academy forms part of the CO GREEN project, benefitting from lectures, workshops and case-examples on the topic of ecological transition and its animation, with a special focus on public participation.

Following the arrival of participants in the evening of Sunday 26th November 2023, an international dinner is planned to warm up the group and give opportunities for participants to meet and discuss in a relaxed environment. The next day (Monday) is devoted to lectures and workshops. The following day (Tuesday) is dedicated to Thematic Study Trips. Each trip covers a specific area and includes practical examples on the chosen study theme. On the 3rd day (Wednesday) Study Trip reports are prepared and presented in plenary by participants, communicating their experiences and making proposals for engaging local Green Activators. After the presentation of the study trip reports, conclusions are drawn

and an evaluation of the winter academy is conducted. The participants are free to depart during the following day (Thursday).

Location and organisation

The 21st Winter Academy will take place in Karditsa, Greece and is co-organised by Euracademy Association and University of Thessaly, Department of Forestry, in the context of the CO GREEN project. The meetings of the winter academy will be held in the premises of the Department of Forestry, Wood Sciences & Design in Karditsa.

Karditsa

Karditsa, located in central Greece, serves as the capital of the Karditsa regional unit within the Thessaly region. Renowned for its scenic setting, with the Pindus Mountain range to the west and the plains of Thessaly to the east, the regional unit of Karditsa is predominantly an agricultural area, with a long tradition of crop and cotton cultivations and animal farming. Karditsa has also a potential for tourism development, offering easy access to a number of outstanding natural destinations. These include the man-made Lake Plastira, an area of outstanding natural beauty; the magnificent natural and cultural monument of Meteora, a historic place of monastic life, and the Pindus Natural Park, a protected area providing shelter to rare flora and fauna. The region of Karditsa has been badly affected by the severe floods that hit Thessaly recently, bringing home the tough consequences of climate change in a painful way. Karditsa can be reached by motorway from Athens and Thessaloniki, both of which offer access to airports. Thessaloniki is about 2,5 hours' drive away, while Athens is about 4 hours' drive away. There are frequent buses connecting Karditsa with Athens and Thessaloniki.



Lake Plastira



City of Karditsa

Course Support

Course materials are provided during and after the Winter Academy in electronic format. They include a Participants' Handbook, containing practical information and the methodology that will be used in the Winter Academy, as well as tasks for participants to prepare before joining the Winter Academy. Administrative and tutorial support will be offered by Euracademy Association. Lecturers and facilitators are recruited among Euracademy members and other experienced professionals in sustainable rural development.

A Thematic Guide on "Training the Green Activators" will be published after the event, which will draw on the lectures, the discussions and the conclusions of the winter academy, as well as on the research carried out prior to the winter academy by Euracademy members and other experts.

Participation Cost

The cost of attending the Winter Academy is kept to a minimum. There is no attendance fee, but only a charge to cover accommodation and full board for 3 days (4 nights), and travel for the study tours. The cost is **350 Euro** per participant for accommodation in Hotel Astron, Karditsa, and full board, including the annual subscription to Euracademy Association. A small number of scholarships (150 Euro each) are available, covering part of the participation cost.

Registration

In order to participate in the Winter Academy, please fill in the online Registration Form, or alternatively fill in the Registration form (text file) you will find in the website of Euracademy www.euracademy.org and return it to us.

The deadline for registration is 10th November 2023.

Please, register here (click on the link below):

[Registration Form](#)

We look forward to your participation!

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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