

# Stories of European cooperation

## Greece and its neighbours



# Introduction

It is my pleasure to present this very interesting publication, which is based on cross-border cooperation around Greece, written by young activists from Interreg Volunteer Youth, who are keeping the flame of cross-border cooperation alive during these challenging times.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic was a rude awakening for Europeans, who were accustomed to life without borders. Cooperation across borders has seen the biggest setback in decades as Member States closed borders without consulting their neighbours on the impacts of such actions and without looking into the possibility of jointly managing the crisis.

This instantly put citizens and businesses located in border regions in a very difficult position, suffering severe consequences in economic and social terms and with many companies even facing potential collapse. The pandemic brought back old fears and emphasised the existing obstacles to cross-border cooperation, cross-border life and doing business in cross-border regions.

Nevertheless, against all odds, Europeans have shown incredible resourcefulness and kept the momentum of cooperation alive, as this publication will show. What is even more important, we are seeing more involvement from young people in such projects thanks to the Interreg Volunteer Youth programme.

This is particularly important, as the older generation's wish for cross-border cooperation was based on their personal experiences of a Europe with closed borders, of the Iron Curtain and of two world wars, as well as other local wars, which the younger generation has luckily not had to experience.

In today's Europe, despite the current crisis we are living through, much of our younger population might not see the need for cross-border cooperation. However, we are still far from that Europe where we no longer have to push for more cross-border cooperation.

The truth is that many obstacles still exist, much needs to be done and the fact that young people are still interested raises our hopes that one day - hopefully soon - we will build a Europe that is so integrated and so intertwined that many of our efforts today will no longer be necessary



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# From 'me' to 'we': the power of collective action

**Greece and Bulgaria are working in the cross-border areas to eliminate unemployment. Educating and motivating active professionals into something innovative is the first step to achieve this important goal**

*By Kelly Kiakou*

The Greece-Bulgaria cross-border area includes some of the most deprived and isolated communities of both countries, as manifested by high poverty and unemployment rates; as a consequence of this labour market breakdown, this area exhibits depopulation trends. In these provincial regions, business mobility is low and social entrepreneurship is still premature. And here is where the contribution of the Greece-Bulgaria cooperation programme is of the utmost importance.

Through the project 'Social forces', this European programme is trying to foster employment and the creation of new jobs. The first step to eliminate unemployment is to educate and motivate active professionals into something innovative. That is why the main deliverable of the project is the

expansion of educational seminars for comprehending the conditions under which social entrepreneurship starts up, develops, and how it can effectively contribute to the sustainable confrontation of social challenges.

My name is Kelly Kiakou and I worked in the tourism industry for five years, but I have always been interested in the business area. Thanks to volunteering with IVY, I have been able to participate actively in this European project for almost two months. Also, it has given me the chance to expand my knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship and at the same time make real changes in my country. The cooperation among regions, which I now know as Interreg, is great and allowed me to work in my hometown of Drama, and contribute to its economic and entrepreneurial evolution.



### Individualism or solidarity?

Individualism is defined as a belief system that privileges the individual over the group, and the society. In fact, the ideology of individualism emerged historically due to the rise of a capitalist economy. Capitalism is our present economic system, characterized by the profit motive, and while it is certainly capable of creating enormous wealth, it's also suppressing the development of some population groups and is prone to economic crises.

Our capitalist economic system has become so dominant that it is difficult for most people to imagine any alternative. But the European cooperation believes this is possible! As history changes, it's required the emergence of a different way of producing and managing the exchange of goods; the emergence of socially innovative entrepreneurship and cooperative work conditions that create a vital force of social change.

### Have you met social entrepreneurship?

What does this concept mean in reality? Social entrepreneurship is a distinct form of

entrepreneurship that aims to achieve a social purpose by creating social value and solving emerging social problems such as efficient environmental protection, access to education and health care, restricting poverty, access to energy, water resources, etc. Social entrepreneurship can take both for-profit and non-profit forms without changing its ultimate goal.

Social enterprises start with people, with a vision, and the perseverance to achieve the goal of social change. Creating long-lasting solutions through innovative approaches, and applying basic entrepreneurship principles in their organisations' operations. A crucial element that separates 'social' from the 'traditional' enterprises is that the main mission of the former being merely social and not aiming at a financial result. Social enterprises have a standard structure, planning, organization, administration, and management. They reinvest their profits, create jobs, aim at social reintegration and integration. The mission of these organisations is to make a profit to support the sustainability of their social purpose. Amazing, right?

## Changing people's mindsets

The 'Social forces' project is working to change the way people think so that they can create innovative businesses, make a change and, really stand out. Various training seminars have been successfully held so far.

The first educational seminar entitled 'Manager of a Social Enterprise' took place at Drama's Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 2020. At the end of the programme, the participants completed evaluation forms that provided valuable conclusions about their views on the training received. Another educational training, a very successful one, is 'Development of 5 business plans for the best business ideas of the participants.

Apart from them, a one-day trip took place in Haskovo (Bulgaria). During this journey, ten participants had the opportunity to visit two cooperative social enterprises in Bulgaria and learn about social entrepreneurship. The first one the participants visited is 'SPK "EMAUS', which provides



The participants are holding their certificates of attendance at the educational training.

travel services. The primary concern of this company is the promotion of the area through religious tourism.

The second social business is 'Niya-Milva', a cosmetic product manufacturing unit housed in a privately-owned building. It employs people with disabilities and members of the main institution helping individuals with disabilities.



Educational trip to Haskovo.

## Testimonial

The participant Tano Papadopoulos, is an artist and organises the "Comic festival" in Drama. Regarding the training he said he is very excited about the whole experience.

"I am grateful for the knowledge I received, as it helped me understand how a social enterprise operates and what preconditions it presupposes, as well as to embrace what society needs so that my work moves in parallel with the community and accomplishes an impact".

## Visions of social entrepreneurs

**White Area:** is a modern Social Cooperative Enterprise in the Drama region that will host high-quality and curated exhibitions, events, and more generally, activities with artists and academics from Greece and abroad. The business will have a profoundly social character by reaching out to local and foreign artists. The business plan concerns the establishment of a Social Cooperative Enterprise, which aims to connect Drama's artistic world with all of Northern Greece.

**Live Like a Local:** provides thematic tourism experiences within Drama and its nearby locations. Its services are spread in Drama's broader area to highlight the beauty and importance of the area's folklore and history. The northern Helladic element is an integral part of the company's corporate identity and is shown by the extensive network of associates of local producers and traders. The business is characterized by social contribution and tourist and business extroversion. It supports only small producers and traders, and suppliers of organic products. Finally, the company aims to minimize its carbon footprint and be environmentally conscious.

**Upcycling:** The business idea is the cyclical use of material. In other words, waste can become the raw material of another process through this efficient and zero-waste 'cycle' of

production. The legal form of the company will be a cooperative social enterprise with the possible name Upcycling.

**Automation:** aims to examine the viability of the social enterprise LAutomation, taking into account factors related to competition, number of suppliers, social footprint, economic data, and the level of know-how in Greece. LAutomation is based in the region of Drama and provides consulting, technical, and technological support services to the industries and food handicrafts of the area. One of the significant potential social benefits that this business idea will try to create will be the employment of people from vulnerable social groups.

**Human Resources:** is based on Drama and aims to educate people and reduce local unemployment. The business's main goal is to train, help, compile resumes, train and coach candidates on how to behave during an interview, and teach them new skills that will be useful for their life and career. Furthermore, the company will conduct seminars on various topics, help individuals find a job, and collaborate with businesses and universities. 'Human Resources' will be involved in all activities and give people opportunities who belong to vulnerable social groups.

More information:

<https://socialforces.eu/index.php/el/>



**Kelly Kiakou**

- Age: 25
- Nationality: Greek
- Region where you are doing the IVY volunteering activity: Drama (Greece)
- Write 3 words that define 'European cooperation' for you: creativity, opportunity, participation



# Aromatic herbs as alternative medicine

**The power of herbs has been sidelined for a long time due to conventional medicines. However, their valuable properties now have the opportunity to be highlighted**

*By Myrsini Dere*

I feel really grateful that I was chosen to be part of the cooperation programme Greece-Bulgaria. The concept of two countries working together on various projects with a clear impact on the cross-border area is amazing to me. One of these projects is TeaWay, which focuses on the Black Sea regions and the herbs that grow near this area.

To begin with, the main topic of the project was of great interest to me as being an agriculturist myself. Having a special bond of love with the field of aromatic- pharmaceutical plants makes it an enjoyable task for me to do.

Herbs have always been a very important medicine for humans and the abilities of herbs has been sidelined for a long time due to

conventional medicines. However, their valuable properties now have the opportunity to be highlighted. Through European cooperation among regions (Interreg) we are allowed to share information about crops, and not only, with neighboring countries with Greece, where the same climate arises. In this sense, although Greece does not pertain to the Black Sea, its climate makes it possible to be part of this.

## **Tea as an agricultural brand to be promoted**

The TeaWay project focuses on the very specific element of the Black Sea agriculture: the cultivation/production and marketing of tea. This means that the overall project objective is to promote and show the local and regional tea products and their procedures to create new





# Common borders. Common solutions.

## Promoting Tea as the Engine of Growth for the Black Sea Basin Area



market opportunities. In other words: to connect the production of herbs with a strong brand name and to promote it economically with an appropriate campaign.

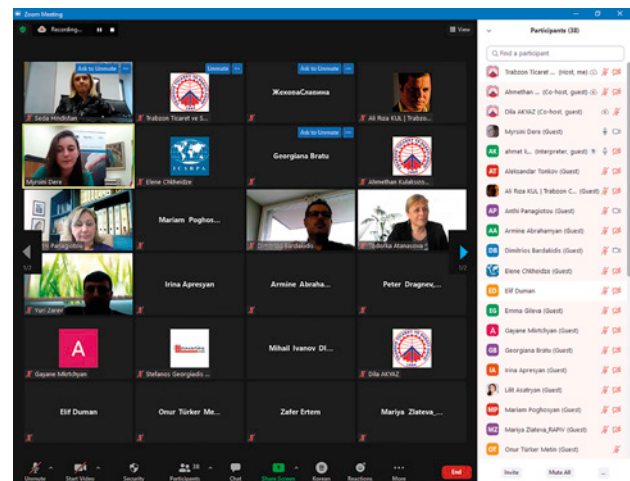
Agriculture is still a substantial or major component of the Black Sea Basin national economies. In consequence, this sector represents a significant part of export and employment. The project considers tea as an agricultural product that should be among the main goods traded between the Black Sea countries.

### The need to foster the cultivation of herbs

My activity as an IVY volunteer has been to promote this kind of cultivation, especially in our area where it is sadly disappearing. I had the opportunity to meet young farmers, the possibility of cultivating aromatic and medicinal

plants was also discussed only to discover that it is unsafe for this industry. Mainly for the

subsequent promotion of the goods. It would be helpful if we paved the way by informing people about the benefits of pharmaceutical plants to create the appropriate market for the farmers.

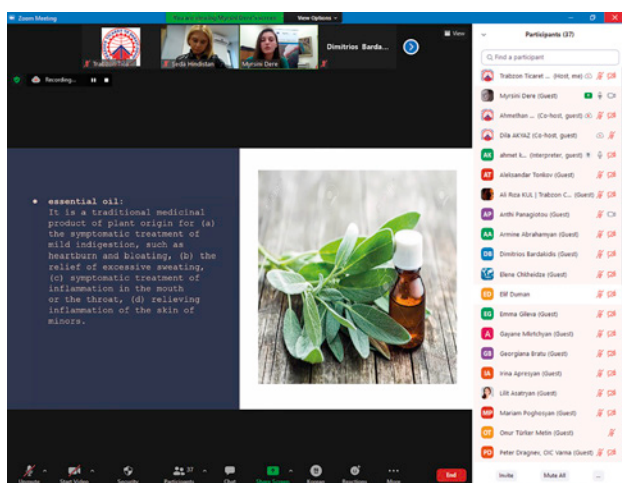


I had the chance to participate in a conference with people from Bulgaria, Armenia, and Turkey. My participation encouraged me, even more, to

be seriously involved in the cultivation of herbs. Watching people from other countries and getting vital information from each person about the importance of cultivation pushed my commitment forward. Because Greece shares the same climate with some other countries which are part of this project, we were given a great opportunity to exchange opinions and ideas about measures that should be taken to inform the farmers as well as to create an appropriate group of consumers who will use these herbs and their by-products for pharmaceutical reasons.



TeaWay at the 'Agriculture and Everything about it' Trade Fair.



## Happy ending

The conclusion that emerged is that the rural people of our area are not familiar with this crop sector. Of course, there is hope since this project is allowing young people to engage in other types of crops which are more common in our area. Happily, some young farmers are willing to begin cultivating such crops. With the right promotion and consultation, there are many chances these cultivations will be increased in the near future.



## Testimonial

*Eleftheria Michailidou*

I had the opportunity to collect opinions from farmers in the area, as well as a small questionnaire on the SWOT analysis survey, which lists several well-known companies that are directly related to aromatic plants. Eleftheria is one of these farmers and this is what she expressed:

“I got into the programme for New Farmers 2016-2021. The decision to be part of that was mainly because my whole family has been occupied with agriculture for many years. Our cultivation is based on vegetables, which we sell in local marketplaces. After my contact with the volunteer, I was informed about aromatic and medicinal plants.

On the one hand, it's really interesting as new kind of cultivation but I'm afraid it's a bit of a risk, especially for my parents. On the other hand, in our area, Drama, there is no demand for essentials oils or botanicals so the person who wants to get involved has to reach other places or areas which have the proper distilleries and machines for the final processing of products. The SWOT analysis I read was informative and hopeful for a new era in cultivation and I am eager the new generation gets along with alternatives crops”.



Tea is one of the oldest and the second most-consumed drink in the world after water. Until the end of the 19th century, the production was concentrated in Asia, however, rising global demand for tea has led other countries to cultivate their own tea. Now, it's produced in 40 countries around the world.

Today one of the main growing places is around the Black Sea. Tea arrived in this region through various routes. The Mongols and merchants along the Silk Road were those who introduced tea to the Russians, Turks, and Persians, as well as the people of Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, etc.

Around the turn of the 20th century and after numerous attempts, tea began to be grown in the mountains between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. The climate of the Black Sea coast is suitable for numerous agriculture activities and products. The mild, damp oceanic climate of the Black Sea coast makes commercial farming profitable which is also beneficial for tea plantations. These plantations, scattered on the Black Sea shores, are today an integral part of everyday life.

More information:

<https://teaway.gr/en/home/>



**Myrsini Dere**

- Age: 26
- Nationality: Greek
- Region where you are doing the IVY volunteering activity: Drama (Greece)
- Write 3 words that define 'European cooperation' for you: promotion, ideas' exchange, opportunity.



# Eco-friendly business culture? It is possible with 'EnvironmentYou'

**This project works to ensure the coexistence of human activities and natural processes in rural areas with unique ecological and environmental features**

*By Maria Ester Kalogeroudi*

Many of the rural areas of the cross-border regions of Greece and Bulgaria have a high potential for agricultural activity but are sensitive to businesses' footprints. How to utilise an area while respecting its environmental characteristics at the same time? The European cooperation project 'EnvironmentYou' is crucial in this task. It focuses on developing specially designed promotion and organisation procedures that aim to implement an Environmental Management System (EMS) in companies and enterprises.

The particularity of this system is the adoption of an eco-friendly business culture within the SMEs operated by younger people in the cross-border areas-usually, businesses focused on soil and water, and especially those who are

near or affect Natura areas. This way, the project promotes a transition process from a "profit only" business approach to an environmental resources' protection and enrichment process. The final goal? To secure the area's environmental capital and, in the long run, to create rigid foundations for a strong but, most importantly, sustainable economic growth.

## **Nice to meet you!**

Let me introduce myself. I am Maria Ester Kalogeroudi and I am currently volunteering as an IVY in the Hellenic National Youth Council (HNYC). I graduated from the American College in Thessaloniki a few years ago, and ever since I have been grabbing opportunities to work in project management and European projects.



The IVY experience has allowed me to be a part of an independent, non-government, non-profit federation of youth organisations, and to get to know the ‘EnvironmentYou’ project, whose objectives I personally share. I think it’s important to create a common Environmental Management System for cross-border environmentally significant rural areas, while also taking into account all applicable economic factors and highlighting activities and rewards that contribute to financial viability for rural communities.

In this context, a large part of the project is the design and production of training material and tools and the delivery of training seminars. I have been working on the development of online tools for the future steps of the project, in terms of the Environmental Management System (EMS) development and its pilot application to be used by the participating partner organisations, stakeholders, and beneficiaries in both countries (Greece and Bulgaria).

Lastly, the fact that ‘EnvironmentYou’ focuses on the younger generation makes me a very active

part of it! Youngsters are receptive and very committed to ecological principles; therefore, the positive effects of the project will last longer. I could not be more excited about being a part of a professional still youth-oriented environment where my skills are improved and my strengths are challenged.

### **Human activities and natural processes put together**

The project is an example of a modern, collaborative approach to young people’s long-term cohabitation with environmentally sensitive rural border areas. Several attempts have been made to-date to ensure the coexistence of human activities and natural processes in areas with unique ecological and environmental characteristics. Naturally, when the areas are on the border, things get much more complicated. The sharing and transfer of experiences and good practices must be encouraged for the entire border region, on either side of the border, to adapt in sustainable strategies to reduce climate change effects.

## What makes 'EnvironmentYou' special?

The project encourages smart development, with effective training investments, long-term sustainability, and inclusion, with a strong focus on job creation and poverty reduction. As a result, it supports all five goals of job creation, creativity, education, poverty reduction, and climate/energy. Its specific goals are wise, sustainable, and inclusive development, as well as economic, social, and territorial cohesion. It's clever because it targets youth, the most engaged and promising demographic in Europe. It also encourages sustainability by taking a creative approach to improving and preserving natural resources by using human money-making activities as drivers.

The project's key goal is to achieve long-term growth through proper business culture. Its main aim is to conserve and improve environmental capital in a continuous manner by transforming the daily activities of youth into businesses, with a particular emphasis on eco-agriculture. The project seeks to improve the productivity of young people regardless of their background or other characteristics.

## Testimonial

*Maria Anastasiadou,  
agronomist from Thessaloniki*

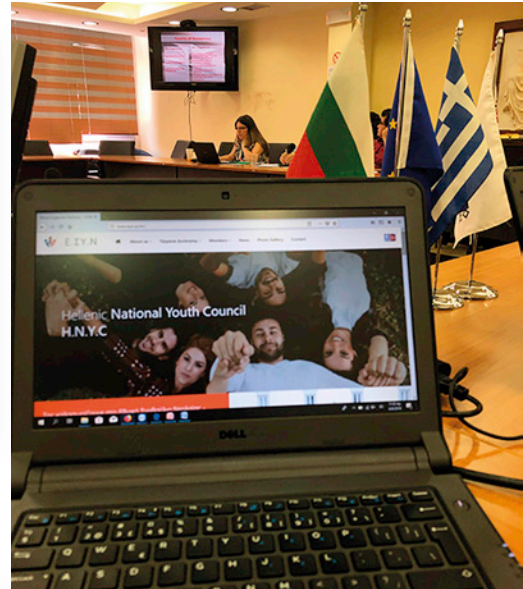
“The training that we have been participating in has improved our professional skills. The topics that were highlighted in particular were: eco-friendly business, systems of environmental management, protection of natural resources through business activities, and mountain biological agriculture.

The implementation of the Environmental Management Systems (EMS), will assist our organisation in achieving its environmental objectives by reviewing, evaluating, and improving its environmental performance regularly. The EMS does not specify a degree of environmental efficiency that must be met; instead, each organization's EMS is customised to its specific goals and objectives, thus increasing their adaptability. I think this is key”.



## Objectives of 'EnvironmentYou'

- Promoting SMEs conformation with European environmental legislation and promotion of its uniformity among the two sides of the borders.
- The establishment of environmental quality principles for cross-border youth SMEs.
- Decrease in energy consumption.
- Decrease in natural resource consumption.
- Advancement in management of soil and water deposits.
- Promotion and exchange of good practices inside Regional territory but also towards neighboring regions.



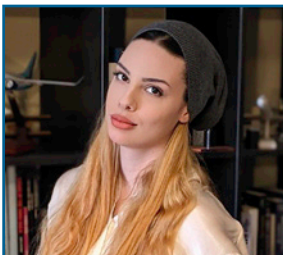
## What will this project achieve?

- 5 local pilots of EMS implementing networks.
- More than 500 participants in training seminars on eco-friendly business and Natural Resources protection.
- A common Environmental Management System for cross-border rural areas based on the European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) standard.
- A model focusing on sustainable agricultural activities in environmentally sensitive areas.
- One operational e-EMS Knowledge Resource Center, operating as a distinctive office in each partner's premises in the area of intervention.
- A total of 30.000 square Km surface area of habitats will be supported, to attain a better conservation status. The area of intervention includes the Region of Central, Blagoevgrad, Smolyan, and Haskovo Provinces.



More information:

<https://www.environmentyou.eu/en/>



### Maria 'Ester' Kalogeroudi

- Age: 27
- Nationality: Greek
- Region where you are doing the IVY volunteering activity: Athens (Greece)
- Write 3 words that define 'European cooperation' for you: work, order, opportunity



# Silver Wellbeing -the wellbeing route never ends

**Greece and Italy have designed hundreds of wellbeing routes to promote silver tourism in the cross-border area by valorising cultural and natural resources such as olive oil, wine, and cereals**

*By Christina Lazana*

The project Silver Wellbeing, funded by the cooperation programme Greece-Italy, aims at promoting silver tourism in the cross-border area by valorising cultural and natural resources such as olive oil, wine, and cereals, encouraging the adoption of healthy eating habits like the Mediterranean diet.

The project, exploiting the silver economy as an asset of growth, will implement innovative tools developed in cooperation between different sectors of the economy: tourism, healthcare, and agri-food. The choice of these sectors has been addressed by the needs of both countries. The results of the project will be promoted at international scientific and international

fairs/exhibitions of food and tourism.

My name is Christina and I am currently an IVY volunteer within the Innopolis organisation dealing with this interesting project I just mentioned.

## **A unique experience**

It is really a unique experience for me to be engaged in the activities of this project. Even from the very beginning of my volunteering period, I gained lots of experiences by visiting vineyards and cellars where the wine is kept in huge barrels and becomes mature, year after year before it goes out to commerce. We heard from wine experts the full story of wine, from ancient times till today, from the moment the grapes are being collected till the moment it is served in our





Workshop organised at Agrinio, Greece on 27/01/2020, for Silver Wellbeing project.

wine glasses, ready to taste. The whole procedure of extracting the wine out of the grapes was shown to us, step by step, until we tasted the final product. That was a real experience!

In addition, it was quite exciting discussing and exchanging ideas with Italian people -who are partners in the project-, brainstorming how it is possible to adopt healthy eating habits overall, like the Mediterranean diet. I had to do some research to find recipes and ingredients that are purely Mediterranean, and this was something very new and interesting for me. Personally, I realized that eating primarily plant-based foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and nuts is much healthier than eating ready-made snacks with colors and preservatives.

### How did the project affect my life?

Day after day, I replaced butter with healthy fats such as olive oil and canola oil and limited red meat to a few times a month. Instead, I am eating fish and poultry at least twice a week, and most importantly enjoying meals with family and friends.

In parallel, I got to realize that the Mediterranean diet is much more than a simple diet. It promotes social interaction, as the communal meals lay the foundations for social customs and festivities shared by a given community, which in turn has given space to a remarkable corpus of knowledge, songs, aphorisms, tales, and legends.



The final result of my involvement in the project was to contribute to the creation of a book of 80 pages with food recipes, most of them are traditional, from both Greek and Italian cuisine, for dips, dressings, and snacks, soups, poultry, and portable lunches.

### When the European Cohesion Fund inspires entrepreneurship

Fun fact! This experience and my involvement in the project Silver Wellbeing inspired me to come up with a business idea that I intend to put in motion. I would like to use my grandmother's little house, in the countryside, and transform it into a traditional cozy restaurant serving only Mediterranean food, for visitors and guests. When the COVID-19 pandemic is over, and fingers crossed for that, I will pursue this dream in cooperation with my IVY volunteer partner, who also got interested in the Mediterranean diet and food. How much I am taking from this volunteering time!



The premises of the workshop organised at Agrinio and the roll-up of the project.

## Impact of the project



Silver tourism has been rapidly growing in Europe, with the percentage of travelers over the age of 65 expected to increase from 15 percent in 2010 to 25 percent in 2020 and 35 percent in 2050. While many European countries have adjusted their tourism product to the needs of senior citizens, Greece and Italy are lagging behind in offering specialized services for silver tourists, while tour operators have not developed products for senior travelers. A total of 294 different wellbeing routes are now available in Italy and Greece.

Adopting the Mediterranean diet and lifestyle (an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as recognized by UNESCO), the Silver Wellbeing project is utilising silver tourism as an asset of growth for the cross-border region, and will promote the benefits of healthy and sustainable life to silver tourists. The latter will have the opportunity to experience unique moments on vacations, combining cultural and

artistic interests with those of their well-being. Thus, the Silver Wellbeing project defines and implements innovative guides and applications (web and mobile ones) developed in cooperation with different sectors such as tourism, healthcare, and agro-food. The vision is to attract tourists through a qualified proposition with the involvement of tourism agents, and the collaboration of key people from the food and healthcare sector. The Silver Wellbeing tools will provide information on nutrition, Mediterranean diet, and healthcare along with wellness travel information, tips, and itineraries (routes of olive oils, wines, cereals) in association with historical and cultural heritage.

Overall, Silver Wellbeing will increase the quantity and quality of tourism in the cross-border area, while optimising health costs and promoting food biodiversity.

More information:  
[www.silver-wellbeing.eu](http://www.silver-wellbeing.eu)



**Christina Lazana**

- Age: 19
- Nationality: Greek
- Region where you are doing the IVY volunteering activity: Dytiki Ellada (Greece)
- Write 3 words that define 'European cooperation' for you: solidarity, inclusion, gender equality.





# The ‘Organic Ecosystem’: the organic way of life

**Various Mediterranean countries participate in a European project to make SMEs operating in organic agriculture more competitive and better integrated**

*Article by Tina Grigorakou  
Pictures by John Balasis*

Agriculture puts a lot of pressure on the environment. Soil fertility and biodiversity are all negatively impacted by intensive and extensive farming. There is no doubt that organic agriculture is a great solution to achieve food safety and security as well as environmental sustainability. However, organic agriculture is still relatively underdeveloped in Mediterranean countries. The main shared challenges are inconsistent or lacking support policies, low innovation capacities, and limited knowledge of sustainable farming practices.

The project ‘Organic Ecosystem’ aims at reducing these obstacles and make the Mediterranean SMEs operating in organic agriculture more competitive

and better integrated. We are two young professionals, Tina and John, who are working on this project within the IVY volunteering programme. Our experience is amazing so far, but one of the biggest advantages of being involved in this is the possibility to be in contact with diverse Mediterranean cultures such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia.

## **What is ‘Organic Ecosystem’?**

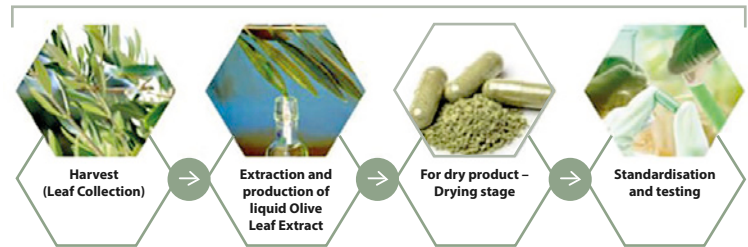
This project, financed by the cooperation programme ENI CBC MED, aims at establishing a cross-border agro-food ecosystem (in collaboration with public authorities and private actors) which will set the ground for the development of the



Mediterranean whole organic sector. This will be encouraged through new business alliances, the creation of innovative value chains, and specialised support provided to SMEs to increase the quality and the commercialisation of products and their capacities to access new markets.

In other words, 'Organic Ecosystem' will offer consultancy services for business development to facilitate SMEs in innovative value chain creation. It also, will create local labs to share knowledge and support new business alliances and will organise international business events to facilitate the companies' market access. A total of 150 Mediterranean SMEs (production, processing, supply, trade, etc.) are involved in

#### PRODUCTION OF OLIVE LEAF EXTRACT



this initiative and at least 24 organic SMEs are directly supported.

#### **A start-up enterprise for the promotion of olive oil**

During our volunteering days, we are having direct contact with SMEs dealing with the production and selling of biological agricultural products, and we are involved with the whole process from planting a tree to packaging and selling. We are informed about the benefits of biological products in human health.

The idea behind this is to create a new start-up enterprise that will promote the benefits of olive



oil and all its products and will open the export possibilities of five Greek producers (SMEs) in the southern Mediterranean Countries.

One of the Greek agricultural organic producers stated: “I am an organic producer of olive oil and I am looking forward to registering in the web-based platform of the project ‘Organic Ecosystem’ which offers the possibility of matching my olive oil offer with the Arab countries demand. This is more than great!”. And we think it really is, indeed.

### **Twenty grams of olive oil per day: the recipe of youth**

Olives and olive oil are the main sources of healthy fat, with additional powerful bioactive compounds which is central to the Mediterranean diet. There is increasing evidence describing the unique and powerful role of olive oil in the heart of the numerous regional variations of this type of diet. This is why the Mediterranean style diet is now recommended by governments, scientists,

and health professionals as an example of a nutritional gold standard with a considerable body of evidence to support very significant beneficial effects on health and wellness.

Olive leaf tea is one of the most common, traditional herbal teas used among Mediterranean people to treat disease. It has been used for centuries for the treatment of conditions and diseases such as the common cold, malaria, and tropical illnesses. The European Food Authority mentions in its regulation that daily consumption of 20 grams of olive oil is sufficient to protect against the oxidation of blood lipids and this oil can be labeled ‘Health Claim’.



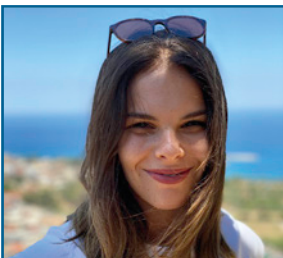


## What will the project achieve?

- Creation of an organic cross-border network established for cooperation, dialogue, knowledge transfer among stakeholders of the organic sector.
- 40 training days to provide Mediterranean SMEs with tools and methods aimed at boosting organic production, processing, and marketing.
- 25 SMEs receiving consultancy services to facilitate their entry in innovative organic value chains and participating in international agro-food fairs.
- A cross-border lab to facilitate networking among organic producers, researchers, business angels, public authorities, and stakeholders.

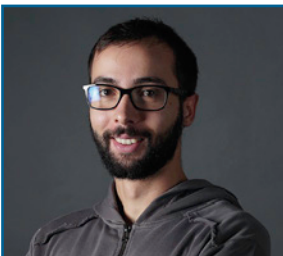
More information:

<http://www.enicbcmed.eu/projects/organic-ecosystem>



**Tina Grigorakou**

- Age: 24
- Nationality: Greek
- Region where you are doing the IVY volunteering activity: Region of Western Greece.
- Write 3 words that define 'European cooperation' for you: civic participatory approach



**John Balasis**

- Age: 29
- Nationality: Greek
- Region where you are doing the IVY volunteering activity: Region of Western Greece.
- Write 3 words that define 'European cooperation' for you: EU enthusiastic civilians



# A 'Mare Nostrum' for everyone

**The financial crisis in Europe, as well as the unstable financial and political situation in many Mediterranean countries have brought increased attention to the so-called Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) actors. And here is where the project MoreThanAJob plays a very active role**

*By Sokratis Vekris*

The financial crisis in Europe, as well as the unstable financial and political situation in many Mediterranean Partner Countries, sadly tested the applied economic model. Around 15 million persons (migrants and refugees) born in a third world country currently live in the region and need to find a job or enter the education system. It has become clear that new and credible alternatives to the mainstream economy are needed.

These transformations in the economy and the society have brought increased attention to the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) actors that

have been capable of helping to turn the challenges into opportunities. Nevertheless, for the SSE initiatives to be efficient and effective collaboration with the public authorities is fundamental.

The project MoreThanAJob will deliver and demonstrate a framework of best practices, previously identified and studied for the inclusion of the unemployed (including refugees and the uneducated) in the work and educational system. And this will be done through pilot sub-projects aiming to ensure a long-term impact and the creation of jobs.



## Quick introduction!

Let me introduce myself briefly. My name is Sokratis and I am an IVY volunteer of the project MoreThanAJob, which is funded by the cooperation programme ENI CBC MED and takes place in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Italy, and Athens. I became part of the volunteering community through one of the partner organisations participating in the project, named EUROTraining Educational Organisation, located in Athens (Greece).

Being part of this project aiming to reinforce and develop economic and social opportunities for vulnerable groups in the Mediterranean basin was a special opportunity for me to evolve both personally and professionally. It offered me the chance to contribute in a substantial way to the public sphere, and to thus combine an amazing experience with my long-lasting passion to help people in need.

Only two months have passed since I started as an IVY volunteer, yet I have already learned and gained a lot, while I also had the opportunity to contribute in my own, small way. As already stated, MoreThanAJob's central objective is to support the social inclusion of vulnerable groups in the Mediterranean basin. In doing so, it takes advantage of the new opportunities created by

the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) initiatives. Apart from learning all kinds of information about MoreThanAJob, I also had the opportunity to participate in train-the-trainer workshops, online events for promoting synergies within the programme ENI CBC MED, and to become part of the communications team.

## Training seminar on Social and Solidarity Economy

More specifically, my duties involve the communication and networking activities with various stakeholders that collaborate with MoreThanAJob. I communicate with them on a daily basis and attempt to build fruitful collaborative relationships, which are going to prove to be crucial for the success of our project. Regarding the latter, I had the chance to be involved in the delivery of a training seminar focusing on Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) actors.

The training lasted 20 hours and took place from the 8th until the 12th of March 2021. The event was held online and more than 200 participants attended it. The experience has been quite valuable and as I was involved in the training evaluation. I had the chance to interact with the beneficiaries and have a follow-up and feedback from them. As one of the participants stated in the evaluation:

“The training has been quite interesting and provided various new information, knowledge and skills related to the SSE. I am on my first steps in setting up a social cooperative enterprise with a



group of like-minded colleagues and friends, and thus I believe that my participation in this seminar has helped me to deal with several

practical issues. I am sure that the things that I learnt will be of great value for my future endeavor”.

## Providing opportunities for vulnerable groups

In a nutshell, I believe that MoreThanAJob has done a marvelous job in providing opportunities to people in need. It has created a solid basis containing new innovative tools and methods to tackle the challenges founded in the Mediterranean geographical area. Taking into consideration the catastrophic economic and psychological consequences that Covid-19 has had upon the populations living in the Mediterranean basin, the project was a much-needed relief for those who participated.

The support of SSE initiatives could provide a great alternative for the promotion of employment and social inclusion among the most vulnerable groups of the population. It feels great to be part of such a project, which in each way could help change people’s life and offer an alternative vision for economic and social cohesion and sustainability. One thing is for sure: I am looking forward to the next activities that will be implemented in the following months. So you just have to stay tuned!

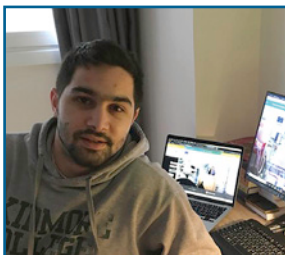
## Main achievements

- 3 train-the-trainer workshops.
- 100 participants in training sessions for Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) actors.
- 90 public officers trained in employment and education schemes for refugees.
- € 200,000 in sub-grants to support innovative SSE initiatives.
- 10 agreements between public administrations and relevant stakeholders for coordinated planning and implementation of social services.
- 6 reports containing new/improved policy recommendations.



More information:

[www.enicbcm.edu/projects/morethanajob](http://www.enicbcm.edu/projects/morethanajob)



### Sokratis Vekris

- Age: 27
- Nationality: Greek
- Region where you are doing the IVY volunteering activity: Athens (Greece)
- Write 3 words that define ‘European cooperation’ for you: unity, diversity, respect



# Palimpsest: A new type of museum experience

**The story and cultural heritage of the city of Ioannina (Greece) as you always imagined to see it. Urban legends and forgotten stories come to life in a mixed reality setting. But let's get not ahead of ourselves!**

*By Athina Pavlou Benazi and Panagiotis Kalantzis*

First of all, let's introduce ourselves! We are Athina and Panagiotis and we started our IVY experience in February 2021 for a five-month period. Specifically, we joined the research Palimpsest project, financed by the cooperation programme Greece-Italy. It focuses on how cultural heritage assets can be reinserted in the city through digital technologies, storytelling, and artistic interpretation.

## **A first glimpse of this amazing project**

Palimpsest is focused on the regions of Epirus (Greece) and Puglia (Italy). It addresses the common challenge of promoting tourism in less-developed areas by animating the public

space in urban areas and recuperating cultural heritage assets through bottom-up, participatory procedures and artistic interventions. Amazing, right? In this sense, Palimpsest will develop an in-situ, localised archive of story-telling assets, which will lead to an interactive and non-material open-air museum experience in the public space of the city.

Specifically, the project aims to develop an interactive, open-air museum experience in public spaces. To do so, it will restore layers of the city's past through the active engagement of the city's inhabitants and the collaboration of an interdisciplinary team of artists, architects, and software engineers among others. We are

currently working towards restoring those layers of the cities' past that have been lost or forgotten and, thus, preserve assets of oral cultural heritage and attract high-quality tourism, with each of us contributing within our respected field of expertise.

### The active role of the general public

The participatory approach is a key element and aim for this project both during its implementation process as well as the course of the project after the end of its funding. The public takes on the role of the activator, curator, and trustee of this personalised and immaterial museum.

In this context, a series of activities and workshops were designed and carried out by

Palimpsest's interdisciplinary team. Through these activities, the public, and especially children had the opportunity to familiarise and understand basic concepts that this initiative deals with, and at the same time develop new skills, thus becoming active agents.

More than 200 students participated in these workshops, which focused, among others, on video editing and on-screen audio, animation, dramatization, creative writing, scenography, from both a theoretical and technical aspect. A special moment for Palimpsest was the project's Info Day, with the participation of more than 300 people, a particularly encouraging sign for the development and evolution of the project, its course after the end of the funding, as well as the way it operates from the moment the public become its curator and trustee.

Young students during the Project's Info-Day.



Young students during PALIMPSEST's workshops in the University of Ioannina.



## What does Palimpsest stand for?

### **PALIM: Post-Alphabetic Interactive Museum**

In other words, the project is based on a theoretical understanding of the contemporary era, which is often described as post-alphabetic. You are neither a passive spectator nor a consumer of museum experiences. Your actions set this project in motion. Palimpsest rethinks the museum of the modern era and proposes instead an augmented and immersive experience.

### **PSEST: Participatory Space-Embedded Storytelling**

Furthermore, the project lets people engage with the project and shape the museum experience through active participation. Its exhibits are embedded in public spaces within the urban landscape of the involved cities in Epirus and Puglia. The project is not concerned with historic truths. We are intrigued by orality and aim to preserve urban legends and nearly forgotten stories.

## The impact of the project by Anastasis Floros

We sat down with a former volunteer of our project and interviewed him. This happened at the beginning of our experience to fully understand and prepare ourselves for the following months. It was a really special evening! Here is what our volunteer had to share with us:

### Why is this project important?

The project has an important impact on many different levels. Firstly, the participants, both the project's team and the public, develop a better engagement with the city's Cultural Heritage and its importance, as it provides the subject with the opportunity to relate to the urban space and reactivate its sense of historical, spatial and temporal continuity as well as the feeling of community and belonging.

### And what are the benefits of the interdisciplinary approach?

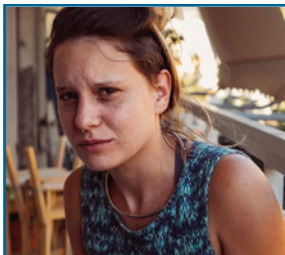
So many! To start with, it offers new opportunities to use novel methods and practices, possibilities to acquire and develop skills and competences, exchange experience and transfer knowledge, mixing scientific and artistic fields constructively and unexpectedly... Furthermore, our team created a

transdisciplinary and lasting partnership, able to develop new activities in the extensive field of Cultural Heritage. Building new cooperation opportunities across Europe, exploiting the potential and the different expertise of partners for each of them to gain a broader perspective in their own expertise.

### What feature of this project would you highlight?

Palimpsest attempts a hybridization, and thus a re-animation, of the public space of the city. This is an outstanding feature! This hybridization webs together dipoles previously understood as opposite and creates a new condition where the past and present coexist, where digital and physical coincide, where spectators and protagonists can constantly interchange roles, where fiction and reality are fused. This hybrid museum experience opens up new possibilities that are yet to be explored.

More information:  
<https://palimpsest.eu/>



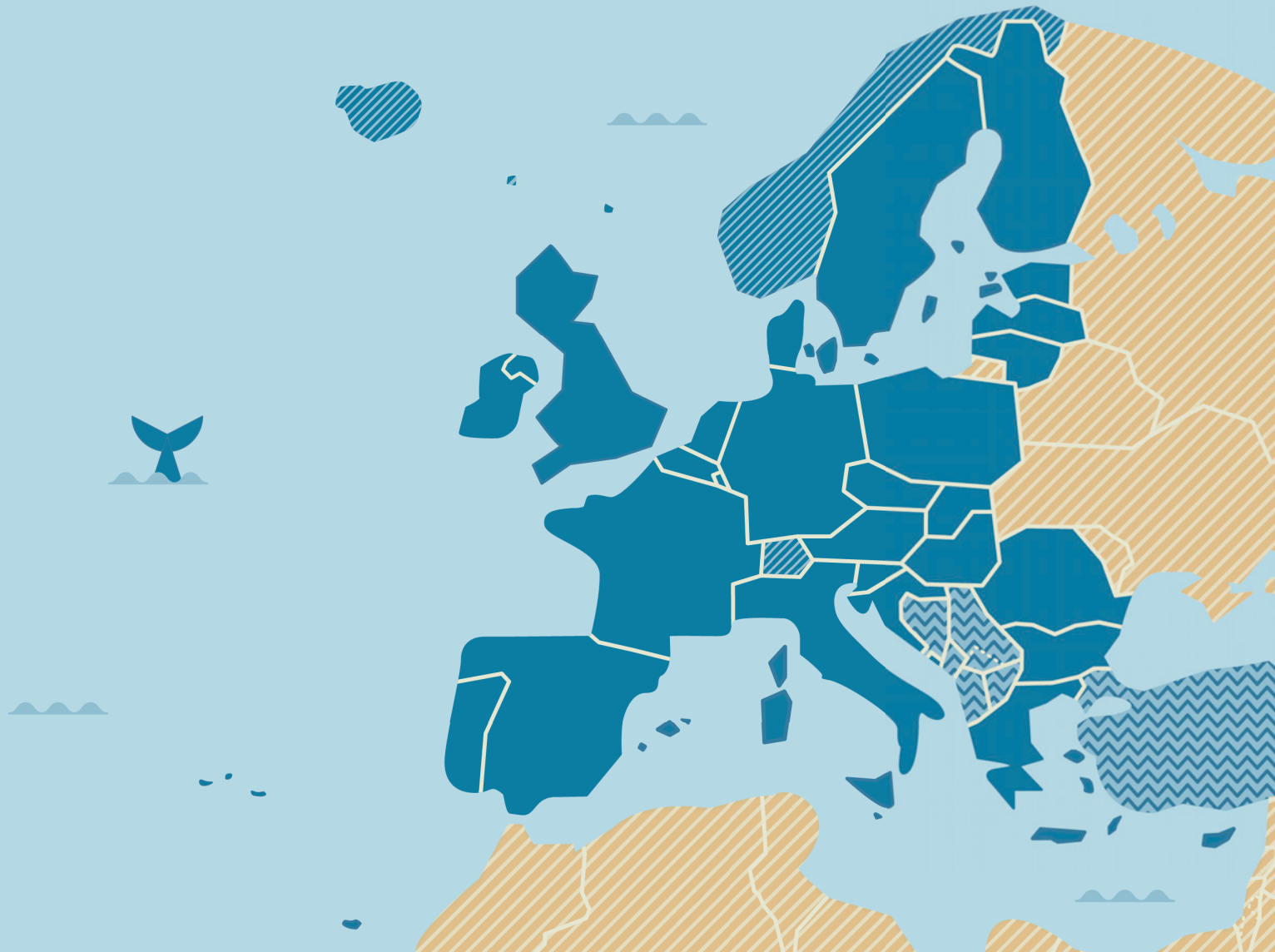
#### Athina Pavlou Benazi

- Age: 27
- Nationality: Greek
- Region where you are doing the IVY volunteering activity: Ioannina, Greece.
- Write 3 words that define 'European cooperation' for you: community, knowledge, art



#### Panagiotis Kalantzis

- Age: 28
- Nationality: Greek
- Region where you are doing the IVY volunteering activity: Region of Western Greece.
- Write 3 words that define 'European cooperation' for you: trust, cooperation, knowledges



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