

ERASMUS+ K2 Cooperation partnership in youth

GREEN EDEN

Environment Development Education Network

Thoughts and learnings on Sustainability
through YOUTH WORK

GREEN EDEN: Thoughts and Learnings on Sustainability through YOUTH WORK

Green EDEN stands for Green Environment, Green Development Green Education and Green Network. Green EDEN was a 22 months long K2 project, coordinated by ThinkCamp from Germany, EkoFun Kamp from Serbia, and project coordinator Mojo de Caña from Canary islands-Spain, and funded by a European Commission via the ERASMUS+ program.

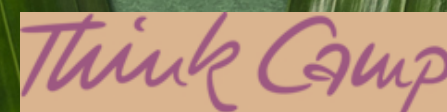
Green EDEN was creating self-learning structures for our youth and youth workers, using a nature-based intervention in an outdoor education framework. The consortium has created a learning setting supported by a non-formal education methodology, creating connections between their own experiences and nature.

K2 cooperation has provided us with the opportunity to work for 22 months, both locally and internationally. Each partner has organized more than 10 local activities promoting environmental education and development. As well, we have organized:

- Youth exchange in Tenerife (May 2022 for 33 youth) where individual ECOMonthly Challenges* were decided during 2 days long process
- Training Course (Serbia, October 2022) for 24 youth workers on outdoor education
- Youth exchange (Germany, May 2023) for 33 youths, initially involved in the project.

Evaluation of the project and experimental community leaving has been tried carried on

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ENVIRONMENT

Creating connections between their own experiences and nature



INCLUSION

Working on gender equality, civic engagement diversity and equity



SUSTAINABILITY

Obtaining new sustainable habits based on personal EcoMonthly Challenges



PARTICIPATION

Getting involved in local environmentalist policies, actions and movements



EDUCATION

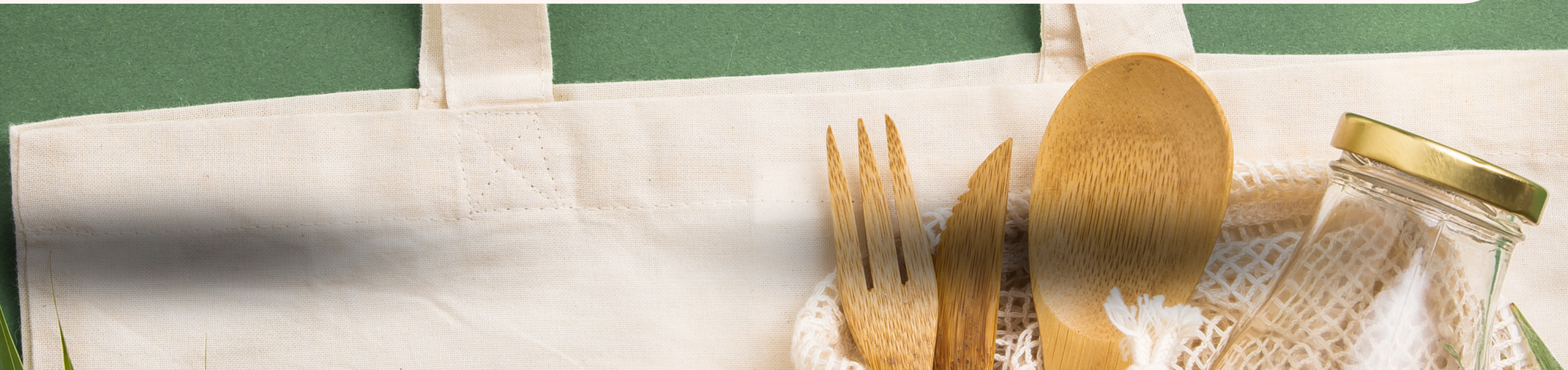
For youth to engage in future formative actions related to a green economy, permaculture, environment protection etc.

**OUR OBJECTIVES
WERE DEFINED BY:**

PARTICIPANTS

The youth that has been involved in the activities did not count on previous experience in outdoor activities or have been involved in local environment activism and/or movements. The understanding of “ sustainability and SDG has been new to almost 35% of the participants. The majority (more than 70% of youth involved in local and international activities) is facing social exclusion, and economic difficulties. More than 60% of participants is unemployed (data summer 2023).

Therefore, working in outdoor activities, gardening, creating compost, and working with plants and animals, has created an impact on our youth due to new sensations, situations, learnings and reflections. During our local and international activities (from May 2022 to July 2023) most common benefits mentioned by our youth and youth workers, when being in contact with nature were next ones:



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1. **Reduced Stress and Anxiety:** Some participants were highlighting the distraction that nature provides from rumination and negative thoughts as well. Being present in the natural world, focusing on sensory experiences, and practicing deep breathing can promote relaxation and reduce anxiety. During most of the activities, participants were encouraged not to use their mobile phones and not to use headphones.

2. **Boosted Self-Esteem:** Engaging with nature and accomplishing outdoor activities, while socially interacting, had a positive effect on participants' self-esteem and self-confidence. Activities such as meditation outdoors, cleaning open public spaces, etc., added new layers to their sense of accomplishment and self-worth.

3. **Social Interaction:** Green EDEN activities provided opportunities for social interaction, whether through local monthly meetings, gardening, or activities that were organized on a monthly basis as well: hikes, cleaning of public spaces, etc. Added value was given to international mobilities that gathered youth from different backgrounds and experiences, that fostered new ways of social interaction and co-living

4. **Physical Activity:** Engaging in implemented activities that, quite often involved physical movement and work, has had a positive impact on almost all participants. Some of them have retaken bicycle use on a daily basis, have got to spend time outside, and physically engage in gardening, cleaning, building a dry toilet repairing furniture, etc.

5. **Connection to Something Bigger:** Participants have reported a sense of awe and connection to something larger than themselves when immersed in natural environments. This feeling of interconnectedness and a "new sense of purpose and meaning".

It's important to note that the benefits of nature on mental health can vary from person to person, and the degree of impact may depend on factors such as the individual's personal preferences, the specific natural environment, and the duration of exposure.

ECO MONTHLY CHALLENGES

ECOMonthly Challenges were one of the major actions of the project, since it engaged the youth in both local and international activities, and made a sense of belonging to green EDEN stronger and tangible.

Most importantly, it facilitated our youth to acquire new sustainable habits or improve existing ones. Each participant in the first youth exchange marked up to 12 Eco challenges, that were tried out from May 2022 until May 2023. The calendar of EcoChallenges, was individual and created on the first Youth Exchange in Tenerife.

For a year, each participant had a challenge to undertake for 30/31 days, trying to change certain habits, acquire a new one, improving and introduce more sustainability into their daily lives.

The EcoChallenges were self-directed and managed, evaluated personally by each participant, and by criteria made by the participant as well.

More than 200 challenges came out on the first Youth Exchange, and more than half were successfully completed. Examples of the most common EcoMonthly Challenges can be found on the next page

ECOMONTHLY CHALLENGES



AVOID PLASTIC

As much as possible
Avoid supermarkets



LEARN HOW TO MAKE SOAP

Hand made soap or
cleaning products



BUY LOCALLY

Support your local
producers and shops



SECOND HALF CLOTHES

Learn how to repair
and/or go minimalist

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ECOMONTHLY CHALLENGES



Have a TOTE bag with you



Participate in local cleaning



**Reduce meat-fish
Go Vegetarian
Vegan**



Unsubscribe from newsletters



Learn about local environmental policies



Use refilling water bottle

PARTICIPANTS REFLECTIONS

The Green EDEN project gave me a different perspective on many things in my life, especially in the ecological way of thinking and doing things. I was already someone who knew many things about a sustainable lifestyle, but being around people who knew more than you meant a lot and was such an inspiration. Nowadays, I am more aware of my everyday habits, and thanks to this project and things that I learned during that time I established new habits and inspired more people around me to think and act more eco and sustainable.

My favorite new habits are using only glass bottles, and reusable cups, minimizing meat consumption (I didn't eat meat for 5 months), using a menstrual cup and having all the time tote bags with me.

I believe this is just the first step, and I am grateful for being part of this project and for the knowledge and inspiration that I got from it - *Bojana EkoFUN Kamp Serbia*

My mind has opened towards alternative lifestyles. I'm very interested in this topic now. For me, the most beneficial thing was to get to know the other participants and their way of living. I don't go to the supermarket anymore without having a list of things, I really need. And I really try hard to waste no food and plastic. Also, we are basically always cooking freshly without buying any prepared meals - *Ronja ThinkCamp Germany*

More respect and consciousness about the environment. I eat more vegetables than ever and I try to connect people that they want to do some changes in their life - *John, Mojo de Caña Spain*



JOHANNES PFISTER - THINKCAMP COORDINATOR

GREEN EDEN offered a unique environment for transformative and project-based learning. For 22 months we were co-developing a learning process on an individual, team, and GREEN EDEN network level.

During ECO MONTHLY CHALLENGES we had a single and double loop learning of continuous, incremental improvements asking the questions "Are we doing things right?" and "Are we doing the right things?". More important for us is the triple loop learning with the key questions "What are the right things to do?" a

This system represents our miniature world for which we have more influence in implementing the changes we like to see for good, sustainable living in the future! Our approach while working with youth in GREEN EDEN pretended not to conduct workshops and talk about change, but to implement and be the change we like to see!

These will support individual and team learning activities and enhance personal growth and the co-creation of eco-social enterprises. We see the importance and need of learning systems that are human-centered and not based on standard curricula and influenced by special interest groups.



ZORAN MITROVIC- EKOFUN KAMP COORDINATOR

In an ever-changing world, the importance of environmental education for young minds cannot be overstated. Equipping youth with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to address pressing environmental challenges is crucial. To achieve this, a holistic approach involving youth work, informal and nonformal education, ERASMUS+, and outdoor education is essential. By engaging young people in immersive experiences in nature, encouraging curiosity, critical thinking, and skill development, we can nurture a generation of environmentally conscious leaders prepared for personal and professional growth.

Youth work plays a vital role in connecting young people with outdoor education opportunities. Youth workers can organize nature-based activities, outdoor camps, and environmental projects that provide hands-on experiences and encourage critical thinking and active engagement with the environment.

Informal and nonformal education platforms offer flexibility in incorporating outdoor education. Through eco-clubs, workshops, and experiential learning activities, young people can immerse themselves in nature, fostering curiosity, asking questions, and developing critical thinking skills.

ERASMUS+: ERASMUS+ provides avenues for international cooperation in outdoor education. Youth exchange programs, study visits, and training courses can offer cross-cultural learning experiences, enabling young people to explore diverse natural environments and develop a global perspective on environmental issues.



JANA PAJIC -MOJO DE CAÑA COORDINATOR

Importance of Teaching Youth Environmental Education:

Creating Awareness: Youth environmental education raises awareness about the interdependence between our actions and the environment. It enables young people to understand the consequences of human activities on ecosystems, climate change, biodiversity loss, and natural resource depletion.

Empowering Agents of Change: By providing youth with environmental knowledge and skills, we empower them to become active agents of change. Through outdoor education and learning by doing, young people develop a deep connection with nature and gain practical experience in addressing environmental challenges.

Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles: Environmental education encourages young people to adopt sustainable lifestyles. By immersing them in nature through outdoor education, they develop a firsthand understanding of the importance of conservation, responsible consumption, waste reduction, and the use of renewable resources.

Nurturing Environmental Citizenship: Integrating environmental education into youth work and informal and nonformal education nurtures responsible environmental citizenship. Young people develop a sense of belonging to their local and global communities and recognize their role in preserving the planet for present and future generations.



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CONTACTS

FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US AND ASK FOR FURTHER DETAILS ON PROJECT RESULTS OR OTHER



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