

National Final Report

Greece



WP5 Activity 6: Reporting



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Introduction

This report outlines the national implementation of the Co-Bio Project in Greece. Led by the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute, the Greek pilot distinguished itself by operating across two contrasting environments: the dense metropolitan landscape of Athens and the community-centric setting of Plataies. By merging institutional partnerships—such as the collaboration with the Municipality of Athens—with grassroots mobilization, the project aimed to test and validate a co-creation methodology that transforms citizens from passive observers into active co-stewards of their local ecosystems. The following sections detail the stakeholder coalitions, the structured implementation of pilot activities, and the tangible and intangible solutions developed to foster a sustainable culture of environmental responsibility.

Co-Creation process

a) Stakeholders

The co-creation process in Greece was driven by a multi-tiered coalition coordinated by the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute, which acted as the central developer and facilitator for local initiatives. In the rural context of Plataies, the stakeholder ecosystem was deeply community-oriented, mobilizing 44 students as the primary agents of change alongside eight adults, a group comprising both teachers and parents.

Conversely, the initiative in the capital city required a robust institutional framework to navigate the complexities of metropolitan infrastructure. This partnership relied on high-level cooperation with the Municipality of Athens, specifically engaging Mr. Nikos Chrisogelos, the Deputy Mayor responsible for Green Spaces and the Department of Parks. Additionally, Organization Earth joined as a key strategic partner to support the upgrading of urban spaces, ensuring the project aligned with broader environmental goals.

Finally, in expanding the stakeholders, the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute, also engaged the 5th primary school of Megara and the Municipality of Pylos Nestoros, and actions are set to take place. (Megara is set to take place before Christmas 2025)

b) Implementation

The project's implementation strategy in Greece was characterized by two distinct tracks: the structural planning of a "pocket park" in Athens and the active, hands-on pilot execution in Plataies. While the Athens track focused on site selection and institutional alignment through a Memorandum of Understanding, the Plataies case serves as the primary example of the project's co-creation methodology in action.

The intervention in Plataies followed a structured "5-Act" narrative designed to move participants from passive listeners to active co-creators. The process began with Act 1, an introductory session where the community gathered to discuss the realities of urban biodiversity. Together, they addressed critical local threats such as construction, climate change, and water scarcity, establishing a shared foundation of knowledge. This transitioned into Act 2, a phase of creative engagement where the abstract concept of "biodiversity" was personalized. Students used post-it notes to express why nature was important to them individually, identifying local species they loved and reinforcing their emotional connection to the environment.

To maintain high energy and deepen engagement, Act 3 utilized gamification. Through an ecological version of "Hangman," the group worked together to solve riddles and identify rare endemic species, such as the Cephalonian Fir and the Black Redstart bird, blending learning with play. The co-creation process reached its physical peak in Act 4, where the community moved outdoors. In a demonstration of collective responsibility, students, teachers, and parents worked side-by-side to plant native species, physically transforming their schoolyard into a shared green habitat.

Finally, the implementation concluded with Act 5, a ceremony of commitment that solidified the concept of co-stewardship. Rather than leaving the maintenance to others, the participants made personal pledges. By writing specific promises on post-its—such as "I will take on watering them every Tuesday"—the stakeholders formally accepted ownership of the result, ensuring the sustainability of the co-created solution.

c) Developed Solutions

The Greek pilot successfully generated a set of complementary solutions that bridged physical infrastructure with social innovation. On a tangible level, the project delivered immediate environmental impact through the creation of micro-ecosystems, physically transforming a corner of a schoolyard into a vibrant green habitat using native flora. This effort was paralleled by the adoption of the "Pocket Park" model in Athens, establishing a replicable urban regeneration strategy for congested cities that serves not merely as aesthetic improvement but as a critical haven for local ecosystems.

Beyond these physical changes, the pilot developed profound intangible and methodological solutions centered on a "Co-Stewardship Framework." This approach facilitated a vital shift from simple participation to active co-ownership, where the community explicitly accepted responsibility for the ongoing care of their new green spaces. This framework was supported by innovative educational tools, such as a replicable "Hangman" activity that moved beyond traditional lectures to teach local natural heritage and endemic species through interactive riddles. To ensure the longevity of these interventions, the project implemented a specific "Pledge" mechanism, a behavioral tool utilizing post-it notes to formalize personal responsibility—such as watering or cleaning—thereby securing the sustainability of the project long after the initial event concluded.

Key outcomes and lessons learned

Environmental Impact

Environmental Impact The environmental footprint of the project is visible in the physical transformation of neglected spaces into vibrant micro-ecosystems that support local biodiversity. In Plataies, the intervention successfully converted a schoolyard into a sanctuary for endemic flora, such as the Cephalonian Fir, providing a vital new habitat for species like the Black Redstart. Simultaneously, the strategic planning for the Athens pocket park addresses the capital's critical shortage of green space, establishing a scalable model for urban cooling and ecological resilience against specific threats like heatwaves and water scarcity.

Social Impact

Beyond ecological restoration, the project fostered a profound social shift by transforming passive residents into active community stewards. Through the specific methodology of "co-stewardship," participants—ranging from primary school students to parents and teachers—forged a stronger sense of belonging and collective responsibility for their shared environment. This social cohesion was solidified through symbolic public pledges and intergenerational collaboration, proving that environmental action effectively serves as a powerful catalyst for strengthening community bonds and democratic values.

Challenges

Implementing nature-based solutions in high-density areas presented significant hurdles, primarily stemming from the intense pressure on available land and the complexities of urban planning. In Athens, the scarcity of free public space, compounded by the legacy of relentless construction and migration trends, made the identification of suitable sites a demanding process. Furthermore, navigating the necessary bureaucratic channels to secure permits and formalize institutional partnerships, such as the Memorandum of Understanding with the Municipality, highlighted the administrative rigidity that often challenges the speed of grassroots environmental innovation.

Strengths and Lessons Learned

The primary strength observed was the effectiveness of gamification and symbolic commitment in bridging the gap between abstract environmental concepts and daily action. The success of the "Hangman" activity and the pledge ceremony demonstrated that engagement tools must be personal and interactive to trigger genuine behavioral change. A crucial lesson learned is that physical infrastructure alone is insufficient; true sustainability relies on the "soft power" of co-creation, where early community involvement ensures that local residents view these green spaces not as municipal property, but as their own legacy to protect.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Co-Bio implementation in Greece successfully demonstrated that urban biodiversity is best preserved not through isolated infrastructure projects, but through the cultivation of deep community ownership. The pilot proved that combining physical interventions, like the creation of micro-ecosystems and pocket parks, with psychological tools like gamification and pledge ceremonies creates a lasting "co-stewardship" mindset. While the project faced the inevitable challenges of navigating complex urban planning bureaucracies, the resilience of the stakeholder coalition paved the way for scalable solutions. As the initiative expands to new locations, including the 5th Primary School of Megara and the Municipality of Pylos Nestoros, the lessons learned from Plataies and Athens will serve as a blueprint for fostering democratic, green, and resilient cities across the region.



