



Good Energies Alliance Ireland

European Solidarity Corps Information Pack

Good Energies Alliance Ireland

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Introduction

Who are GEAI?

Good Energies Alliance Ireland (GEAI) is a small environmental NGO situated in County Leitrim in Northwest of Ireland. Founded in 2011, GEAI actively campaigned against fracking and was to the forefront of that campaign until the legislation passed to ban fracking in 2017. Then, it has focused on highlighting climate action and alternative energy sources. GEAI wants a thriving and climate-resilient (rural) community, linking sustainability and well-being. It works to discuss the transition towards ecological sustainability, focusing on climate action and circular economy. The three main topics looked at by GEAI are sustainable energy, biodiversity, agriculture.

GEAI is also an European Solidarity Corps (ESC) coordinating organisation, hosting young European volunteers in Ireland and acting as a support organisation for young Irish people who would like to volunteer abroad. GEAI benefits hugely from the volunteer's expertise and technical skills.

Who are Orfeas?

Orfeas is the host organisation that runs the programme in Greece. Orfeas, began functioning in August 2000. The purpose of the organization is the utilization of free time, informing young people about international and national programs, and the encouragement of their active participation along with their European citizenship. Furthermore, their goal is to organize and support national programs of the partner municipalities, heritage protection activities of the environment and organizing summer events, festivals, concerts, theatrical performances, exhibitions in cooperation with the local municipalities.

Through their activities they try to develop solidarity and promote tolerance and understanding among young people in different countries. Our priorities are respecting cultural diversity, fighting against racism and xenophobia. By facilitating joint activities of young people from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, Orfeas aims to develop the intercultural learning of young people making Europe a friendlier place in the same time.

An important value for Orfeas Organization is to give access to all young people, especially those with fewer opportunities, to join European youth programme and other educational activities. Through formal/non-formal learning techniques and experiences, young volunteers will improve and acquire skills for their personal, educational and professional development.

Introduction to the European Solidarity Corps (ESC)

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) is more than just a volunteering opportunity—it's a platform for young people aged 18 to 30 to engage in meaningful activities that benefit local communities while fostering personal growth and development. Through voluntary service, participants not only contribute to various areas such as environment, health, inclusion, and

digital technologies but also acquire valuable skills that enhance their personal, educational, and professional journey.

- **Structured Learning Experience:** Volunteers undergo specific training tailored to their activities and agree on learning outcomes in advance, ensuring a structured and enriching experience. This personalized approach ensures that volunteers gain relevant skills and knowledge applicable to their roles, maximizing their impact and learning potential. Their efforts are formally recognized through a Youthpass, a tool that certifies and validates the learning outcomes of ESC activities, providing participants with a tangible recognition of their achievements.
- **Inclusive Participation:** Participation in ESC is accessible to all, with volunteers receiving board and lodging, insurance cover, and an allowance for the duration of the project. Special provisions are in place to support young people with fewer opportunities, ensuring inclusivity and equal access to this empowering initiative. By removing financial barriers and providing necessary support, ESC enables a diverse range of young people to participate, fostering inclusivity and diversity within the program.
- **Diverse Engagement:** ESC encompasses a diverse range of fields, each infused with a European and intercultural learning dimension. Whether working in environmental conservation, promoting health initiatives, or fostering social inclusion, participants engage in activities that address pressing societal challenges while also promoting understanding and cooperation across borders. This diverse engagement not only allows volunteers to explore their interests but also exposes them to new perspectives and cultures, enriching their overall experience and broadening their horizons.
- **Collaborative Environment:** ESC fosters a respectful and trusting environment, where both participants and hosting organizations contribute to impactful projects. It's a collaborative effort where volunteers bring their ideas and convictions, while organizations provide support and guidance, creating meaningful projects that address societal challenges and contribute to building a more inclusive society. By fostering mutual respect and understanding, ESC promotes meaningful cross-cultural exchange, leaving a lasting impact on individuals and communities alike.

Whats the project?

In this environmental project, volunteers collaborate with instructors from the municipality of Xylokastro-Evrostini to preserve the natural pine forest situated along the town's coast. The project aims to safeguard the biodiversity of the area and maintain the ecological balance of the surrounding environment.

Working Hours and Schedule

Volunteers are expected to work between 9:30 AM to 2:00 PM, with flexibility based on the daily plan and tasks at hand. The schedule allows for active engagement in various activities aimed at enhancing the natural landscape and promoting environmental sustainability.

Main Tasks

Volunteers undertake a range of tasks geared towards the protection and preservation of Xylokastro's natural resources, including:

- **Protection of the Forest and Coast:** Volunteers play a crucial role in safeguarding the integrity of the pine forest and coastline, ensuring their long-term viability and resilience against environmental threats.
- **Environmental Care:** Volunteers are involved in caring for the natural environment of the town, which may include activities such as cleaning up litter, planting trees, and maintaining hiking trails.
- **Support for Municipality's Environmental Activities:** Volunteers assist the municipality in implementing various environmental initiatives and campaigns aimed at raising awareness and promoting sustainable practices within the community.
- **Maintenance of Public Spaces:** Volunteers contribute to the upkeep of parks, the small harbor, and the playground located within the forest area, ensuring that these public spaces remain clean, safe, and accessible to residents and visitors alike.
- **Participation in Community Events:** Volunteers actively participate in community events organized by the municipality throughout the year, including summer festivals, Christmas activities, school fairs, and promotional campaigns aimed at promoting environmental awareness and engagement.

By actively engaging in these tasks, volunteers not only contribute to the conservation efforts in Xylokastro but also immerse themselves in the local community, forging meaningful connections and making a tangible difference in the lives of residents. This project offers a unique opportunity for volunteers to experience firsthand the beauty of Greece's natural landscapes while actively participating in efforts to preserve them for future generations.

Logistics:

Xylócastro Overview:

Located in the north of the Peloponnese peninsula, Xylócastro is a charming town with approximately 6,000 citizens. Situated about one hour to the west of Corinth, it boasts a picturesque setting and is renowned for its production of raisins. Xylócastro is a popular destination for holidays, attracting visitors with its scenic landscapes, sandy beaches, and vibrant atmosphere.

Food:

Volunteers will enjoy three meals per day at the "Touristiko" restaurant, including breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The restaurant caters to volunteers' dietary needs, accommodating allergies or special food requirements such as vegetarian or halal preferences. Meals are prepared accordingly to ensure volunteers' comfort and satisfaction.

Accommodation:

Volunteers will reside in comfortable accommodation provided by the hosting organization. The accommodation includes:

- One living room equipped with a TV and Wi-Fi access.
- A fully equipped kitchen with a refrigerator.
- One bathroom featuring a washing machine for convenience.
- Three bedrooms accommodating a total of 10 volunteers, complete with blankets, pillows, and bed linen.
- A spacious balcony offering a pleasant outdoor space for relaxation.

Cleaning materials are supplied by the hosting organization, and volunteers are responsible for maintaining cleanliness. They will establish a cleaning schedule and adhere to it to ensure the shared living space remains tidy and welcoming.

Travel:

Travel arrangements are organized by GEAI, ensuring smooth and hassle-free transportation to and from Xylókastro for volunteers participating in the project.

What are you offered

As a volunteer, we offer you a comprehensive support system to ensure a rewarding and fulfilling experience in the European Solidarity Corps project in Xylókastro, Greece.

- **Mentorship:** Each volunteer will be assigned a mentor from the local community of Xylókastro. Your mentor's role is to provide assistance and support throughout your project duration. Whether you need help scheduling a doctor's appointment, navigating local services like banking, or simply seeking a friendly chat over coffee, your mentor is there to lend a helping hand.
- **Language Support:** Volunteers will have the opportunity to participate in Greek language courses led by a qualified Greek teacher. These weekly sessions offer a chance to enhance your language skills and immerse yourself in the local culture.
- **Engaging Activities:** Get ready to participate in a variety of activities organized by the office team. From workshops in arts and crafts to cooking and dance lessons, as well as themed nights, there's something for everyone. Volunteers are also encouraged to propose their own activities, fostering creativity and community engagement.

- **Insurance:** Your health and safety are our priority. Complete health insurance coverage is provided by CIGNA insurance company, in accordance with the European Commission's agreement. You will be enrolled in CIGNA's database by the sending organization, ensuring peace of mind throughout your project.
- **Youthpass Certificate:** At the conclusion of the project, each volunteer will receive a Youthpass certificate as part of the Erasmus Plus program. This certificate serves as a valuable addition to your CV, highlighting your participation in the ESC project and showcasing your skills and experiences to potential employers.

How to Apply

To apply for the European Solidarity Corps project in Xylókastro, Greece, please submit your application to Adam at adam@geai.ie. Your application should include a CV detailing your relevant skills, experiences, and achievements, as well as a cover letter expressing your interest in the project. In the cover letter, we encourage you to elaborate on why you are interested in participating in the ESC initiative, how your skills and experiences align with the project objectives, and what unique contributions you can bring to the team. Be sure to clearly articulate your enthusiasm for environmental conservation, your willingness to explore a new country, and your commitment to actively engaging with the local community. Once your application is submitted, please await confirmation of receipt from Adam or the Good Energies Alliance Ireland (GEAI) team. We look forward to receiving your application and considering you for this enriching opportunity to make a positive impact while gaining valuable experiences and skills.

Testimonials from Past Participants:

McGovern, Dowra:

"It's a once in a lifetime opportunity where I made friends for life and memories I'll never forget, as well as getting to see the world from a new perspective."

Louis, Drumsna:

"My trip to Greece was a great learning experience. I enjoyed myself thoroughly while facing a number of challenges in an unfamiliar country. The people I engaged with were friendly and welcoming, and the experience as a whole has definitely helped me to grow as a person."

Christian, Drumshanbo:

"The work we done in Greece involved planting trees, painting a school fence and collecting rubbish around Xylókastro. What surprised me most about Greece was the people and how friendly they were, even though most didn't speak fluent English they still made you feel very comfortable and at home. The project overall made me a better and more confident person. Although there were slight challenges with language and different opinions, I learned to overcome them and communicate together to discuss it. I have no regrets going to Greece, and would recommend it to anyone. It's been a memorable experience and I won't forget it."

Shane, Carrick-on-Shannon:

“The work I did in Xylokastro was very rewarding and it was great to work as a team helping to paint the local school. It was great to learn about other people’s culture. The project was sometimes challenging and other times fun, but it was great to see everyone motivated and helped each other to finish work. I feel I have grown as a person and have made new friends and created special memories during my stay in Xylokastro”.

Huck, Drumkeeran:

“I had an amazing time as a volunteer in Greece. I had many new experiences and opportunities to learn Greek and about life there ‘Σιγά σιγά’ (siga siga) which means “slowly slowly”.

Tanisha, Newtowngore:

“I’d honestly recommend this experience to everyone. Especially those who want to make a difference in their lives. You need to have the mindset that when you are required to work, you work, but apart from that, it’s like a holiday! People need to realise that there’s more to life than school – college – work – 2 week holiday once a year. It was and is a privilege to be a part of this programme.”