

Name: Youth Employment Network for Energy Sustainability in Islands (YENESIS)

Award category: Youth

Organisation: Cyprus Energy Agency

Location: Nicosia, Cyprus

Other countries involved: Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Portugal, Spain, Italy

Duration: 2018 - 2022

Website: yenesi.eu

Factsheet:

YENESIS - Creating sustainable work opportunities on Europe's islands

Green jobs for young islanders

Many islands face specific challenges that can make sustainable employment prospects for young people difficult. These include limited possibilities for career advancement, a lack of natural resources and specific vulnerabilities to climate change. Work can often be seasonal, with a heavy dependency on fuel imports. Many young people who grow up on islands are therefore faced with a stark choice – stay and try to find work, or move away to where employment opportunities are better.

The YENESIS project was inspired by the experience of project manager Myrto Skouroupathi, who graduated abroad in 2016 and returned to her native Cyprus with a desire to find productive and fulfilling sustainable work. After being unemployed for a year, Skouroupathi found work with the Cyprus Energy Agency.

“One of my first jobs was to write a proposal for a European Economic Area (EEA) and Norway Grants funding call for sustainable employment,” she explains. “This is how the YENESIS project was born. I wanted to use my experiences to create something for young people interested in building a sustainable future.”

Learning from experience

YENESIS was launched in 2018 after securing a €2.3 million grant from Iceland, Lichtenstein, and Norway through EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment. The project aims to equip young professionals (25-29 years old) who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) with the skills and experiences they need to enter the green jobs market, or even launch their own green business. Ultimately, the initiative hopes to encourage participants to think about how they might contribute towards sustainable solutions and energy transitions on their islands.

12 NEETs were selected from islands from each of the 7 beneficiary countries: Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Portugal, Spain, and Italy. Participants were given a week-long training course in their own countries focusing on business innovation as well as on 4 key areas: energy efficiency,

renewables, sustainable tourism and mobility. A forthcoming trip to see some successful sustainable green business ideas in Norway will provide participants with inspiration, and new opportunities to take up apprenticeships abroad will be opened up.

These experiences and lessons – from both the classroom and first-hand experiences abroad – will be taken back by participants to their native islands. Each young person will take part in a six-month sustainability placement, enabling them to use their knowledge to benefit their local community. Participants will also continue to be trained on how to launch a start-up, and be put in touch with local sustainable businesses.

Helping island communities

It is hoped that the 84 young NEETs taking part in the project will be able to secure employment in energy efficiency and other sustainable occupations or start their own green businesses on their islands. “Entrepreneurial spirit is really important because as we see, island locations often do not have established industries,” says Skouroupathi. “Graduates will often have to create something of their own.”

Skouroupathi continues: “This sort of project has potential, not just for islands but for other regions as well.” A guide on sustainability competences for green jobs has been published and disseminated in secondary schools and is expected to reach over 7,000 students in the 7 target countries. E-training courses covering the 4 environmental topics – as well as business innovation – are being developed. This means that the success of the scheme can be replicated elsewhere.

The project has already received international recognition, with the lead partner invited to the United Nations Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Committee to present YENESIS as a good practice to be adopted by Member States. The consortium has also been invited to offer its expertise in the creation of the UN’s 2030 Strategy for Education in Sustainable Development.