



GEN EUROPE
GLOBAL
ECOVILLAGE
NETWORK



2023

ANNUAL REPORT

**PUBLISHED IN
AUGUST 2024**

2023

IN BRIEF

2023 marked a period of great flourishing among the Network. With the largest European Ecovillage Gathering yet, opening the space for exploring the ecovillage lifestyle for the newcomers, the enthusiasm spread around in various directions, affecting every area of GEN Europe.

Our ongoing funded projects have continued to spread ecovillage tools and culture to new audiences, supported by refreshed content on our communication channels. We showcased the work of National networks in greater lengths and created new websites for transnational networks. Our network-building activities continue to bear fruit as we engage in new projects together, exchanging practices and supporting each other.

In 2022 a group of ecovillagers from across Europe and Ukraine sat down to make a plan to build an eco-house for refugees in a Ukrainian ecovillage: a place of meeting, of refuge, of safety and even of celebration. In less than a year, the Busha Toloka Winter Housing project was complete! This great efforts of the incredible Ukrainian and international team who made it possible kept us all inspired throughout the year.



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TEAM 2023

STAFF

PROJECTS, MATERNITY COVER



Dario Ferraro

Angel Matilla



IT

Carolin Waldmann



MEMBERSHIP

Fanny van Hal



PROJECTS

Fran Whitlock



COMMUNICATIONS

Armin Olunczek



FINANCES

Dicte Frost



ECOVILLAGE GATHERING

Manja Vrenko



COORDINATION, MEMBERSHIP





TEAM

2023



Alisa Sperling



Valeria Lazo



Alessia Rebeggiani



Lila Horvath



Giuseppe Lorai



GEN UKRAINE

Busha Toloka



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A project to build a community house, refugee shelter, and place for recreation, education, and regeneration in Busha/Ukraine. The community house in Busha Ukraine, was a project, initiated as a response to the start of the war to serve as a refugee shelter in the short term and as an event space and community center in the long term. The idea was born in the summer 2022 at the GEN-Europe gathering in Denmark. Despite initial challenges and unclear funding, a small group of GEN-Europe representatives, Svetoyara Katchurenko from Busha and further representatives from GEN-Ukraine decided to realize a project that shall serve as a sign of peace in times of war, created by the GEN network and a sustainable solution for a community in Ukraine and an additional place to host refugees along the Green Road project, already ongoing by GEN Ukraine. Thanks to a big network of supporters and donors, including a Swiss foundation, the common house, built as a straw panel construction was completed within 1 year.

A supporting association was founded in the fall of 2022, the site was purchased and a building application was submitted. A heatable geodetic dome was built with the first donations to GEN Europe, which was by then already serving as a meeting place for the community and as an extracurricular learning space for children since November 2022. By November 2023, the construction of the community center had already been completed to such an extent that the first refugees could be accommodated during the winter months and the building could be inaugurated in the presence of local authorities, celebrities, and media attendance. The project demonstrates not only the strength of solidarity within the GEN network, but also what a global community can do for each other in times of crisis. This project could serve as a model for future projects, whether in other conflict regions or regions affected by climate change.

Steffen Emrich, Anne Schwab

THE MAIN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WHOLE PROJECT

- SVETOYARA KACHURENKO (BUSHA TOLOKA/UKRAINE)
- ELENA KUPINA (BUSHA TOLOKA/GEN UKRAINE)
- VITALIY VLASENKO, (BUSHA TOLOKA)

THE GEN-EUROPE CORE TEAM:

- ANNE-KATHRIN SCHWAB (VILLA LOCOMUNA/ GEN GERMANY/ GEN-RESEARCH/ ECOLISE)
- STEFFEN EMRICH (GASTWERKE/ GEN GERMANY / GEN-EUROPE COUNCIL UNTIL 2023)
- MONIQUE WIJN (ECOVILLAGE LAND VAN AINE, GEN-NETHERLANDS / GEN-EUROPE COUNCIL SINCE 2023)
- MICHAEL RUH (SCHLOSS GLARISEGG/GEN SWISS)
- MILA AVERBRUCH

COOPERATION PARTNERS FROM GEN-UKRAINE:

- MAKSYM ZALEVSKI
- ANDRIY AVERIN
- ANASTASIYA VOLKOVA
- IRYNA KAZAKOVA
- TATYANA CHUB

WITH IMPORTANT SUPPORT FROM:

- CAMILLA NIELSEN-ENGLYST, PROJECT COORDINATOR FROM LOES/DANISH ECOVILLAGE NETWORK, THAT TOGETHER WITH GEN UKRAINE RECEIVED FUNDING FROM CISU TO SUPPORT THE BUSHA TOLOKA PROJECT.





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NETWORK SUPPORT & MEMBER CARE

2023 saw **GEN Europe** extending our efforts to consolidate our network support and **member care activities**, primarily through European projects which brought us closer together, to exchange good practices and create new ones in collaboration with experts from various areas. The opportunities generated through these activities highlight some of the principal benefits of membership: access to training and project resources, alongside the opportunity to co-create new projects based on needs through participating with peers in our projects working group.

NETWORK SUPPORT AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

National Networks working group has held regular monthly meetings since June 2023, nurturing the connections and holding space for new ideas to emerge some of them closely related to ongoing projects. Three main projects which included our members as partners were under way during the year: Launch & Thrive, REGEN4ALL, and EC2. These projects not only had the goal of engaging the project partners but also of creating resources and infrastructure that can benefit our existing and new members, networks, our longer-term network strategy as well as experts, researchers, and broader civil society.



REGEN4ALL: Regenerative Communities for All
The aim of this Erasmus+ KA2 Small-scale partnerships project has been to make the knowledge gained within and through ecovillages more accessible for researchers, practitioners, educators, and policymakers. The project aimed to facilitate research and policy decisions on sustainable lifestyles and living environments. The project bore many fruits and provided valuable insights into communities of practices and an extensive online colloquium series that investigated the topic of Ecovillages in Times of Crises, exploring their learnings, challenges, and possible contributions. The E-Community platform has been designed to connect researchers, ecovillagers, and communities of practice, enabling more possibilities for on-the-ground research into ecovillages. The project has also produced the first comprehensive library of ecovillage research, a fantastic resource for students, policymakers, ecovillagers and more, which can also be found on the platform.

<https://ecommunity.gen-europe.org/>

EC2: The EC2 project, funded by the EU's Horizon 2020 project, connected us with research institutions and networks across Europe on the subject of energy citizenship, enabling us to bring ecovillage wisdom on both energy and community engagement into academic and institutional settings. The aim of this project has been to work together with a variety of project partners to develop a clear concept of what energy citizenship is and what it can be, gather actionable insights from the fields of law, economics and psychology to create the optimal conditions for it to flourish. It placed a special focus on the role of energy communities and how their set-up can help – or hinder – the creation of energy citizens.

<https://ec2project.eu/>

NETWORK SUPPORT & MEMBER CARE



NETWORK SUPPORT AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Launch & Thrive - Awakening the Networks (L&T)

We continued our ongoing efforts of network support through the L&T project, KA220-ADU-Cooperation partnership in adult education. This project aimed to create a qualitative framework

for country-to-country assistance in Europe, in the creation of functional and prosperous national networks through the creation of a multitude of tools to support new and already established networks to thrive.

The tools include a manual to guide the process, a mentoring package for twinning schemes, as well as an abundance of digital resources – just what a European network such as GEN EU needs to establish connections among various countries.

Thus, the ICT platform was created, to systematize the provision of information on the different national networks. Short videos serve both networks and broader audiences to ecovillage networks on a national scale. An Online Learning Package (OLP) established offers different educational resources and training materials available through this project, promoting innovation in ecovillage networks.

Thanks to the efforts of the project team, the GEN Europe website now hosts the new page dedicated to Networks and a new members map with profile pages for each network. The IT Toolbox hosting tools, platforms, and resources were widely improved, with new elements such as Jitsi, Loomio, and LimeSurvey to provide open-source services to every ecovillager in need.

We even have our own **GEN EU Peertube now!**

<https://gen-europe.org/discover/networks/>

NETWORK SUPPORT & MEMBER CARE





Wider networks

ECOVILLAGE RESILIENCE COP

The Ecovillage Resilience project led by Gen International gathers all GEN Regions and 20 communities from around the world to explore resilience, adaptation and transformation in a >+2.5 degrees global warming scenario also included a fruitful IT collaboration.

<https://ecovillage.org/funded-projects/resilience/>

ECOLISE

Members from around our network, as well as allied community-led initiatives, have contributed to a new manifesto launched at ECOLISE's annual main policy event, "Making the European Green Deal Strong and Real: Harnessing the Power of community-led initiatives and Local Governments". The manifesto claims the right of EU citizens to have the choice to live sustainably, calling on policymakers

to swiftly localize an ambitious European Green Deal by tapping into the power of grassroots initiatives like ecovillages, transition towns, and many others...

<https://timeforcollectiveaction.eu/>



NETWORK SUPPORT & MEMBER CARE

GEN INTERNATIONAL

GEN International saw a big transition in 2023 during the European Ecovillage Gathering, where their full staff team met together with representation from the board and Network Stewardship Circle to strategize, connect and heal. This resulted in a new governance model & strategy focusing on two key areas; funded & self-sustaining projects & Ecovillage Fund/fundraising supported by three core areas; IT, Comms & Operations. Gen International Core Circle transformed to include Eva Goldfarb, Rodrigo Espirito Santo Braga, and Abbie Caldas - with space for the Operations Lead role to join once hired.



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

We are **grateful** to have a such youth network **dedicated** to their deliberations and striving to expand further on. Through **NextGEN** and the **Yes to Sustainability network** (a youth-led network dedicated to creating nonformal learning opportunities for youth) the youth is getting more engaged in sustainable practices and ecovillage living, while ESC volunteering opportunities offer opportunities for youth to immerse themselves deeply in the everyday life of Ecovillages, actively contributing to the network.

Yes to Sustainability Partnership

Yes to Sustainability Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership served to collecting best practices through the exchange of knowledge, meetings, and trainings. The project brought a communications & webpage upgrade, a mentoring scheme & application support, networking, and a Success Factors brochure to serve all.

European Solidarity Corps 2023

We continue to make use of the Erasmus+ funding through hosting ESCs volunteers in Arterra Bizimodu. We are dedicated to strengthen, reach out to, and support the European network of ecovillages by effectively engaging, inspiring, and empowering young people in our organisation by engaging them in our work, making the a part of our team, and giving the volunteers space for their own contributions. Thanks to this funding, the strengthening and capacity-building of participants continues. The support of outreach and communication of ecovillages and their networks including IT capacity developments, membership participation, and event organization keeps enriching our efforts and common experiences. Through including volunteers, we are able to lift up our actions – and therefore our mission – while breaching the limitations of our resources.



LEARN MORE:

- [YES TO SUSTAINABILITY](#)
- [YTS BROCHURE](#)



EUROPEAN ECOVILLAGE GATHERING 2023

The 2023 European Ecovillage Gathering held in Nature Community, Germany was attended by **771** participants making it the **largest Gathering ever!**

The Gathering was created by the collective efforts of the GEN Europe Staff and council, Nature Community, the on-site Dream Team, hundreds of volunteers in various roles, and more than 50 workshop holders. Truly a community co-creation and celebration!

The “Work That Reconnects” frame guided us through this year’s Gathering, exploring the reflections gratitude brought us, deep value of honoring the grief and the power of collectively going forward. The programme was expanded and brought many highlights our attendees enjoyed, such as Sharing Groups that nurtured our souls, the inclusion of children through the Children’s Programme as well as collective sessions – a space to connect and experience altogether. Meet the Ecovillages gave a well-deserved spotlight to many communities among the Network, while GEN International participation gave light on the magnitude of the movement and its presence around the world. IT support for this Gathering was indispensable, as registration forms and dashboard created supported the smooth ongoing of the registrations for both participants and the staff overview.

In order to make the Gathering more accessible to everyone, we offered the Eastern European Gathering discount – an effort we will continue practicing in future Gatherings as well. With an abundance of music and dancing, a community experience like no other was co-created once again!

“LEARNED SO SO MUCH. THE BEST WAS, THAT THERE ARE SO MANY DIFFERENT PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, WHO HAVE THE SAME DREAMS AS ME, AND WANT TO SHARE THEM AND CONNECT.”

- 2023 GATHERING PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK





STAFF, COUNCIL AND OPERATIONS

In 2023, we continued the positive trend of meeting in person, and apart from the Gathering, we met three more times to go forward with our efforts of creating a foolproof strategy to plan our further steps and to do some ever-needed team-building.

The first meeting in Torri Superiore in January was marked by the National Networks meeting which opened the space for National Networks to share their needs and aspirations.

During the meeting in Schloss Glarisegg in April we were reimagining the Ecovillage Gathering model, while in Nature Community in July we had another fruitful General Assembly. The last meeting of the year in Schloss Tempelhof in October brought in some fresh energy for the New Community and Individual Membership Scheme launching in 2024.

This year was marked by a great deal of projects weaved into our five-year strategy, based around the pillars of solidarity, education and outreach of Ecovillage lifestyle and everything it brings. Thanks to these projects and the success of the European Ecovillage Gathering, this year proved to bring financial stability, which in turn allowed the efforts to administrative excellence and network care to thrive.

On the staff side, we welcomed Carolin Waldmann as our new Membership Manager in May 2023. Fanny was back from her maternity leave while Dario Ferraro stayed with us, leading together the projects team and projects working group which continued their Capacity building program efforts.

Angel continued maintenance and support for existing tools for Staff, Council, Working Groups and Members, while also developing the new website with Fran and doing some IT consultation all through the network.

Manja juggled both membership and general coordination roles until Carolin joined us, focusing her efforts towards administrative excellence. Armin wrangled our finances and Dicte worked hard to create a one-of-a-kind community experience in Nature Community, while rethinking the Ecovillage Gathering model. Fran kept up the communications along, bringing in new content such as Ecovillage Essentials webinar series and creating a fundraising campaign.

Our project staff Alisa Sperling and Alessia Rebegianni were supporting the project team bringing in their expertise and experience to the network.

As each year, we welcomed our ESC volunteers Giuseppe, Lila and Valeria who proved to be indispensable parts of our team, supporting us with their professional and personal qualities.

This year, the Council and the Staff grew closer together through the Buddy system and created supporting mechanisms to enrich our collaboration for the greater good of the Network.

We are ever so grateful for their expertise, goodwill, and the extensive voluntary support of the staff and network. We are also deeply appreciative of the members of the Projects and National Networks working groups, who regularly and voluntarily work together to create projects and networking coordination roles and networking opportunities for our community.



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[Calle Abajo, 1, 31480
Artieda, Navarra](#)



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REPORT DESIGN
BY KEVIN JORDAN