

# CoP Compact – Session Summary

## Ellinogermaniki Agogi (EA): Schools as Living Labs

### Perspectives for increasing

stakeholder engagement, opening funding opportunities and  
new policy-regulatory frameworks



17 April 2024

## Case description

- EA is an educational institution in Athens offering a school, teachers training and a R&D department.
- During 26 years, they have run about 280 projects, focusing on school innovation and local community impact.
- With the use of the **Open Schooling method** and **STEAM education**, local communities and stakeholders become agents in shaping and implementing innovative teaching and learning processes at schools.
- The open schooling activities are inspired from local needs and problems and address societal challenges contributing to the EU Green Deal.
- Following the European Commission's **Education for Climate Coalition**, aiming to build a participatory community in support of the green transition and sustainable development, EA is developing national scenario contents with the support of the National Institute for educational policy under the auspices of Ministry of Education.
- The current focus of EA is on the development and implementation of JRC's **Green Competence Framework** within schools used for the professional development and training of teachers for environmental (food) education

## Take-home lessons

- The Living Lab is a *center-piece of the institutional organization* which spans from kindergarten to Gymnasium and has a tradition in international cooperation.
- Setting up and guiding the EA *Living Lab* was inspired by knowledge sharing on community engagement from Living Labs in Cyprus and Serbia.
- The early and continuous involvement of key important stakeholders such as the *Greek ministry backing the concept of the whole school* approach activities at the socio-political level has been of utmost importance.
- Aware of the fact that changes in the stakeholder interests, expectations, participation levels or priorities can impact the Living Lab, EA managed to *be ahead and manage these changes* in their favour. This also meant paying attention and *pro-actively address* the community dynamics, parental engagement from the school side, student demographics, motivation and preferences; for this purpose, EA created close ties between the LL and the wider community members.
- Since policy frameworks/regulations and standards put forward by education or food policies have a profound impact on lectures, teaching and curriculum development, *EA is extremely well linked up with key activities* such as the Urban Agenda for Food, the Food Waste Alliance and coordination of large-scale projects like the Schools as Living Lab, the SAL project.

## Take-home lessons

- EA is pro-actively *linking strategic with practical actions* such as in European research projects, hubs for knowledge generation such as the Development Education Research Centre (DERC) *with a clear holistic vision, namely the Whole School Approach*.
- EA also create a *great deal of visibility through social media presence* and the yearly organization of attractive events such as the Athens Summer School *offering community and network opportunities* for national and international players in food system education.
- On the privilege of having the ministry endorsing the whole school approach as a living lab, Thalia comments that the National Institute of National Policy (2022???) is in the process of changing the national curriculum about the sustainability issues and is including the food sector. This is something very important for EA, since **the policy sector has the vision and has the willingness to endorse these topics in education**.

## Discussion

- Ben shares his experience working in Denmark with educational institutes, pointing at the **gap between the food ministry and the educational ministry and schools**. Even though the future of the school system in Denmark is very much debated and difficult, they have managed to advance at a local level in two of their Living Labs. But to reach and get the ministers listening is still a real challenge
- Thalia comments on this: “I think this is very important, beyond the ministries, **to have the local authorities and the municipalities on board** on this as they play an important role in the mainstreaming and the implementation of innovative education activities on food in schools
- [School Food for Change](#) has been advocating the implementation of food education activities - training people to speak about SDD teaching, science/team teaching, education for sustainable development – **and speak the right language**. If you can try to add food to that way of thinking then you can come a long way.”
- Micky raises an issue: “even though we have the municipality on board in our living lab, a big hindrance is that teachers have a lot to do, even though they support food topics and STEAM education. **How did you involve the teachers and the headmasters to get committed and not just punctual involvement that's stopping after a month or so? I'm curious how you handled that.**”
- Thalia answers; “we have a large network of schools that are implementing activities and the teachers and school heads that want to implement this, we bring them in connection with municipalities like yours that also giving the support. Find teachers networks or to try to connect with the academies that in this phase are doing this work on open food education; e.g. **Focus on frontrunner schools that are already engaging with food**. They have a large network of schools and teachers all over Europe that are willing to implement projects like this.”
- Clara raises an important point on “non-formal education sector, such as science centres and museums that can get the schools “on board”. They have the connections, they're able to develop the resources and e-activities, run the activities themselves, and save a lot of money and a lot of time from the teachers.”
- Ben agrees and points to when you start **speaking the language of science to schools**, you get their attention as they want to promote science and innovation
- Dirk: The EU funding and the usual applicants for this are not identical with kind of the teaching community that are not equally equipped in terms of skills for applying to funding opportunities. It would be almost important to, like living labs, to **take already early on school communities into these proposals, into these projects**, to allow a more coherent and stepwise common/ open approach in funding applications
- Livia: the **dissemination of project results is very important** to reach the schools.

## Attendees

Clara Boissenin  
Reiner Braun  
Brigitte Braun  
Greta Alliaj  
Livia Cepoiu  
Johanna Vordemfelde  
Micky Hickersberger  
Lies Forrest  
Anthony Fardet  
Bent Egberg Mikkelsen  
Chiara Ferravante

ECSITE  
os4os  
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ECSITE  
RCE Graz  
ICLEI Europe  
Ecosocial Forum  
Forrest Food Belgium  
INRAE  
Copenhagen University  
NW Local Health Authority of Tuscany

## Further reading/Annex

- [Whole School Approach, Leren voor Morgen](#)
- [DERC](#)
- [GreenComp](#)

## Next CoP events

**18th of May 2024**

Send your case to [copfeast@gmail.com](mailto:copfeast@gmail.com)!

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Co-funded by  
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FEAST is co-funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement number 101060536. Views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

UK participant in FEAST (Good Food Oxfordshire) is supported by Innovate UK grant number 10041509 and the Swiss participant in FEAST (FiBL) is supported by the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) under contract number 22.00156.