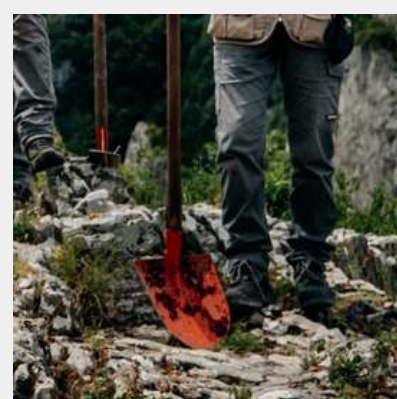
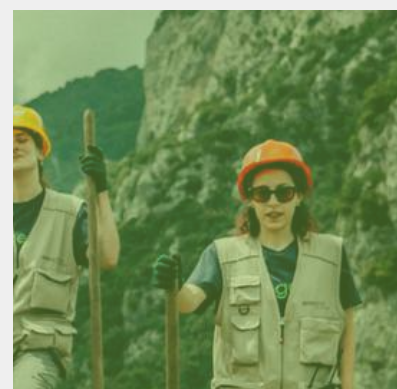


**ecogenia**

**2024**

# Annual Report



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# Letter from the Co-Founders

*From Pilots to Policy: 2024 as a Turning Point*

Dear friends, partners, and community,

2024 marked a defining chapter in Ecogenia's journey. It was the year our early pilot projects evolved into a scalable and recognized model for youth-led climate action. What began as a vision to bring civic service to Greece has now become a practical and impactful tool for environmental and social change.

This year, we launched our first full-time civic service project on Mt. Olympus, demonstrating that young people can deliver measurable environmental results while building valuable professional skills. At the same time, we introduced our Local Resilience Handbook to support municipalities in adopting this model, reinforcing our role not only as implementers but also as policy advocates.

We expanded our partnerships across public, private, and civil society sectors. These relationships enabled us to engage over 7,000 people, train 19 young adults, and begin embedding civic service into broader conversations about Greece's green transition and youth employment.

More than a year of programmatic success, 2024 represented a turning point. It signaled our shift from testing ideas to influencing systems, and from running pilots to building policy-backed, community-driven solutions.

We are deeply grateful to all who have walked with us on this path. Your support, collaboration, and belief in our mission make this work possible and sustainable.

With sincere appreciation,

Erika Spagakou & Lia Papazoglou

*Co-Founders, Ecogenia*

**Erika Spagakou**



**Lia Papazoglou**



# 2024: Year in Review

In 2024, Ecogenia made a decisive leap from early experimentation to a year shaped by strategic programming, impactful advocacy, and strong institutional collaboration. At the heart of this progress was Litochoro, a town at the foot of Mt. Olympus, where fire prevention became not just a program focus but the symbolic and strategic center of gravity for the year.

## Olympus 2024: A Model in Action

In the spring and summer, we implemented Greece's first full-time civic service program. A youth cohort was deployed on Mt. Olympus to focus on wildfire prevention, trail maintenance, disaster preparedness, and biodiversity cataloging. With support from the U.S. Embassy, the Ministry of Environment, and the California Conservation Corps (CCC), we trained 19 young people from Greece and the United States on hands-on climate resilience.

The collaboration with CCC marked a historic moment. Their service trip brought critical expertise, tools, and inspiration, and demonstrated the value of international partnerships for addressing local environmental challenges. The project produced measurable results on the ground while also setting the stage for deeper national dialogue around youth civic service and prevention-first climate strategies.

## Advocacy and External Capacity: Learning into Action

What made 2024 transformative was not just the success of program delivery, but how we translated fieldwork into policy tools. The lessons learned in Litochoro, especially around the importance of prevention, preparedness, and community engagement, informed our most ambitious advocacy effort to date. In October, we launched the Local Resilience Handbook, a strategic guide for local governments on how to implement civic service programs focused on climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Developed with input from civil society, government, and global peers, the Handbook has been distributed to more than 35 municipal officials across Greece.

This milestone was part of a broader effort to scale awareness and institutional engagement. With the U.S. Embassy and our growing coalition of public and private partners, we presented our findings at high-level forums and conferences. We also began exploring how to bring the message of prevention and resilience into the business sector, encouraging private actors to invest in preparedness as a core sustainability strategy.

# Youth and Jobs: A Focus on Future Pathways

Throughout the year, we placed strong emphasis on the intersection of climate action and youth employment. In collaboration with local partners, we hosted a Sustainability Skills & Career Fair in Athens that connected Ecogenia cohort members and local youth with pathways in conservation, sustainable tourism, and public service. This initiative underscored our belief that civic service is a catalyst for long-term career development. While not all participants will pursue “green careers,” the soft skills gained through civic service (collaboration, communication, problem-solving, and project management) are transferable and valuable across all sectors. Our model equips young people with both the mindset and competencies to become active, capable contributors to the workforce and to society at large.

## Building the Culture of Resilience

Later in the year, our education service program gained new momentum. In preparation for our 2025 return to Chania, we laid the groundwork for expanding climate education in schools, emphasizing civic values, local action, and sustainability. While our fieldwork focuses on immediate environmental needs, we understand that long-term resilience begins by cultivating awareness, responsibility, and active citizenship from a young age.

## High Level Lessons from 2024

- **Prevention is everything:** Addressing fire risk, climate shocks, and ecological degradation requires early, coordinated action.
- **Partnerships build power:** Our progress was made possible through strong alliances with ministries, municipalities, embassies, and global peers like the CCC.
- **Youth need pathways:** Our role is to equip young people with the tools, networks, and confidence to move from cohort experience to career opportunities.
- **Advocacy matters:** Field-based programs become scalable solutions when paired with dedicated policy engagement.
- **Impact is measurable:** An independent evaluation found our 2024 programs generated a Social Return on Investment (SROI) of €5.32 for every €1 invested, underscoring the efficiency and value of youth-led civic service.

“Looking ahead to 2025, we are preparing to return to Litochoro, expand our presence in Chania’s school system, and formalize civic service partnerships in multiple municipalities. The foundations built in 2024 are already growing, grounded in a shared belief that a prevention-first mindset is essential for the future of Greece.”

# 1. Ecogenia in Brief

## 1.1 Mission & Vision statements

As Ecogenia has evolved from a pilot initiative into a more mature organization, our vision and mission have undergone a parallel process of refinement and clarification. Since our founding in 2021, these guiding statements have been shaped by practice, learning, and reflection. In 2024, through a dedicated strategic planning process, we proudly formalized a renewed vision and mission that more clearly articulate the essence of Ecogenia and the impact we aspire to create.

### Our Vision

***A generation of active climate citizens working together for a sustainable and resilient Greece.***

We envision a Greece where every young person has the opportunity to become an active climate citizen. Informed, empowered, and engaged, they will shape a sustainable future for their communities and country.

Our vision is based on the belief that youth are not only affected by climate change but are essential leaders in responding to it. We see a generation united in purpose, equipped with the tools and knowledge to lead, and committed to the long-term well-being of people and the planet.

This is a future built on civic participation, environmental responsibility, and social equity. Climate resilience must be cultivated locally, led by those who care deeply about their communities and the environment they depend on.

### Our Mission

***To establish Greece's first Climate Corps, empowering youth through civic service to lead climate action.***

Ecogenia exists to establish Greece's first national Climate Corps. Our mission is to create meaningful opportunities for young people to take action, serve their communities, build careers in climate and sustainability, and carry a mindset of civic responsibility and climate action into every step they take.

Through service, we aim to empower a generation of active citizens equipped to lead Greece toward a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable future.

We mobilize young people aged 18 to 30 by recruiting, training, and supporting them in paid civic service roles. These roles currently include trail maintenance, fire prevention, biodiversity monitoring, climate education, and disaster preparedness.

Our goal is to address key national challenges such as youth unemployment, environmental degradation, and civic disengagement. At the same time, we are building a workforce for Greece's green future and creating stronger, more resilient communities.

Civic service is more than a program. It is a model for national progress, where young people lead the way toward a sustainable and inclusive society.

## **1.2 Ecogenia's model: Civic service for climate resilience**

In July 2024, Ecogenia undertook a strategic reflection process to assess evolving needs, sharpen our impact, and clarify our direction for the years ahead. Through this process, civic service and climate resilience emerged as the clearest and most urgent pillars of our identity. While our mission remains rooted in youth engagement and local impact, we are increasingly honing in on climate resilience as our unifying frame, the space where civic participation, environmental action, and social equity intersect.

To support this reflection, in October we convened a mini staff retreat in Athens. Taking advantage of our full team being together for the Sustainability Skills & Career Fair, we dedicated two full days to debriefing, learning, and planning for the year ahead. These sessions allowed us to zoom in on what our mission and vision mean in practice, and to collectively set intentions for scaling our work and deepening our impact.

We are deeply grateful to The Demos Center at the American College of Greece and Emfasis Nonprofit for generously hosting our team during this retreat. Their support created a space for thoughtful dialogue, renewed energy, and shared purpose.

This moment of strategic clarity reminded us that Ecogenia is more than a program. It is a growing movement to equip youth with the skills, pathways, and support to become leaders in Greece's climate transition. Our vision of active climate citizens is the blueprint for building a more resilient and equitable future.

## 1.3 Why youth, why now (contextualized for Greece)

Greece is facing a dual crisis. On one hand, the country is increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including wildfires, floods, coastal erosion, and biodiversity loss. On the other hand, youth unemployment remains among the highest in Europe, leaving thousands of young people without meaningful opportunities to contribute to society or build secure futures.

Ecogenia operates at the intersection of these two urgent challenges. We believe the most effective strategy for long-term resilience is the prevention of environmental degradation, disaster risk, and social exclusion, and that young people are uniquely positioned to lead it.

### ***Climate Resilience Begins with Prevention***

The scale and frequency of climate-related disasters in Greece continues to rise. Yet national responses remain focused primarily on emergency intervention rather than long-term preparedness. Ecogenia's work challenges that model. From trail maintenance and wildfire buffer zones on Mt. Olympus – to climate education in Chania schools, our programs demonstrate what it means to fight fires before they start, both literally and figuratively.

We train youth to assess environmental risks, restore degraded ecosystems, educate their peers, and support local communities in preparing for future climate threats. This not only reduces climate vulnerability but also shifts the national conversation from reaction to readiness.

### ***Job Readiness Through Civic Service***

Our model also addresses long-standing gaps in workforce development, particularly in the green and civic sectors. By placing young people in paid, purpose-driven service roles, we give them the chance to build technical skills, leadership capacity, and professional networks that are often out of reach. Just as importantly, we equip them with a strong foundation in sustainability that strengthens their impact across any career path and contributes to climate action across sectors.

In 2024, our cohort members earned certifications in climate literacy, disaster preparedness, and first aid. They organized volunteer events, maintained critical trail infrastructure, and engaged the public. Each project serves both the community and the personal development of each young participant.

### ***A Generation Ready to Lead***

This is not just a response to current crises. It is an investment in a generation that is eager to lead, capable of creating solutions, and committed to protecting Greece's environmental and cultural future.

Ecogenia is helping to build that generation. Prevention is our strategy. Civic service is our tool. Youth at the heart of our impact.

## 2. Team and Leadership

### 2.1 The Ecogenia Team



**LIA PAPAZOGLU**  
CO-FOUNDER



**ERIKA SPAGAKOU**  
CO-FOUNDER



**ELENI ANTONIADOU**  
PROGRAM COORDINATOR



**VASILIS DIAMANTOPOULOS**  
PROGRAM COORDINATOR



**MELINA DUNHAM**  
DEVELOPMENT MANAGER



**KONSTANTINOS KARALARIOTIS**  
EVENTS COORDINATOR



**ANGELOS ORFANIDIS**  
COMMUNICATIONS  
COORDINATOR



**STEFANOS PAPADOSIFOS**  
PROGRAM MANAGER

## 2.2 Our Extended Network

At Ecogenia, we are more than a team or a program. We are a growing network of individuals and institutions committed to climate resilience, youth empowerment, and civic engagement. In 2024, our extended community continued to play a crucial role in sustaining and scaling our work across Greece. We thank them for all their support, ongoing leadership and dedication to our mission.

### Governance Support

Supporting Ecogenia's leadership on strategic, advocacy, and organizational development matters, the Board of Advisors in Greece and the Board of Friends of Ecogenia (501(c)(3)) in the United States serve as invaluable resources to the organization. Drawing on their diverse professional expertise, they provide critical insight and guidance on key issues shaping Ecogenia's growth and long-term development.

#### Our Board of Advisors

- **Marnie McGregor**
- **Giorgos Iliopoulos**
- **Rania Marandos**
- **Kostapanos Miliarexis**
- **Eleni Sotiriou**



#### The Friends of Ecogenia Board

- **Dr. Mary Cardaras**
- **Peter Daskarolis**
- **Elizabeth Hannon**
- **Stella Kafka**
- **Kelsey Moore**
- **Katerina Sokou**



## 2.2 Our Extended Network

### ***Ecogenia Alumni Network***

Our alumni, affectionately known as the "Eco-lumni," are living proof of the long-term potential of civic service. Since our first pilot in 2022, more than 30 young people have completed Ecogenia programs. Many remain actively involved through community events, training sessions, and peer mentorship.

In 2024, we continued to build the infrastructure of our alumni network by selecting a leadership team and expanding opportunities for ongoing involvement.

We look forward to sharing a full report on our alumni activities in next year's edition.

### ***Volunteer Contributions***

#### ***Thank You to Our Volunteers!***

Throughout the year, dozens of volunteers lent their time, energy, and expertise to our programs. From helping clean trails and beaches, to mentoring youth, to supporting public events, their contributions helped amplify our impact on the ground.

To each volunteer who showed up, gave back, and stood with us in building a more resilient Greece, thank you. Your efforts are deeply valued and truly appreciated.



# 3. Ecogenia's Program Impact

## 3.1 Olympus 2024 – First Full-Time Service Project

### Project Summary

After two years of piloting our civic service model, Ecogenia's work scaled to a new region, a new impact area, and for a longer duration. The 2024 service project in the Olympus-Dion Municipality was our first full-time service opportunity and allowed us to also expand to a 3-month duration, getting us closer to our goal of a longer-term 6-12 month service term.

In addition to these firsts, Ecogenia expanded into a new program impact area – disaster management and wildfire prevention. With support from our strategic program partner, the California Conservation Corps (CCC), our team boldly stepped into this important and strategic impact area, combining the impact with our ongoing ecotourism development and trail building. This partnership also allowed our staff to expand our capacity in managing a crew more than double the size of our previous projects.

Olympus was chosen as a strategic place of national importance. The needs of this region are demonstrative of the needs of the country and our impact set a new standard for the type of work young people in civic service can accomplish for Greece. Having worked with independent experts to measure the Social Return on Investment (SROI) of the project, ***we are proud to report that for every € invested in the program, 5.32 € of social value was generated.***

The Ecogenia youth team of 8 cohort members (CM) worked alongside a crew of 11 California Conservation Corps (CCC) youth to pave the way for future service projects in neighboring regions and across the country.



**8**

Cohort  
Members



**11**

California Conservation  
Corps

## **Cohort Members**

Cohort members are always at the heart of our work. We prioritize recruiting dynamic teams of young people with diverse backgrounds from across different regions of Greece, including locals to the project location. We invest in and train our young people to lead their service projects in the field, while they receive ongoing coaching, mentorship and professional development during their service term.

In 2024, Ecogenia's cohort carried out a high-impact civic service project on Mt. Olympus, combining trail restoration, wildfire prevention, citizen science, and community support.

### **Our participants:**

- Gained practical insight into how they can contribute to climate solutions
- Felt their team role enhanced their professional growth and learning opportunities
- Left the program with a stronger desire to engage in socially impactful work
- Would confidently recommend the Ecogenia service experience to peers

## **Ecogenia and CCC Crews**

Through the support of the US Embassy in Greece and the CCC Foundation, the 2024 service team in Olympus had the additional privilege of working side by side with a team of 11 youth from the California Conservation Corps for a service-learning exchange. The CCC crew shared and demonstrated their expertise ranging from wildfire fighting, flood prevention and rehabilitation, disaster response, trail management and design, etc. In addition to practical skills learned, each team benefitted from the cross-learning and sharing that is inherent to cultural exchanges.

## **Ecogenia and Tulane University**

From June 6-12, Ecogenia also welcomed students from Tulane University's film and media studies program for the second consecutive year. As part of a study abroad initiative focused on environmental storytelling, the students worked alongside our youth crews to produce a media project highlighting the Olympus service experience, capturing the power of civic service and international cooperation in climate action.

# Impact

| Service Outcomes                                        | Results               |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Cohort Members                                          | 8                     |
| California Conservation Corps (CCC) Youth               | 11                    |
| Total hours served in the community                     | 8,800+                |
| Social return on investment (SROI 2025)                 | €5.32 per €1 invested |
| Trail Development, Wildfire prevention, and Maintenance | Results               |
| Total trail work completed, of which:                   | 36.5 km               |
| New trails built                                        | 5.2 km                |
| Trails maintained                                       | 31.3 km               |
| Wildfire buffer zones created                           | 45 acres              |
| Hazard-prone areas restored                             | 2                     |
| Public spaces and squares maintained                    | 5                     |
| Community Engagement                                    | Results               |
| Community Members Engaged                               | 4,000                 |
| Community Volunteer Days organized in Litochoro         | 6                     |
| Total volunteers involved                               | 55+                   |
| Citizen Science BioBlitz events implemented             | 2                     |
| Participants engaged in BioBlitz events                 | 200+                  |
| Hours of volunteer service                              | 850+                  |
| Professional Development & Training                     | Results               |
| Training hours delivered per Cohort Member              | 175+                  |

## Volunteer Engagement

Volunteerism is a cornerstone of Ecogenia's civic service model. In 2024, we expanded our volunteer initiatives, creating opportunities for both cohort members and local residents to take collective action in support of their communities and natural environments. These activities supported local priorities and offered hands-on leadership and event planning experience for cohort members.

### Flagship Events include:

#### *April 14, 2024 – Beach Clean-Up, Plaka Litochoro*

As part of the Our Ocean Conference and the Let's Do It Greece national day of action, 22 volunteers collected **1,000 liters of trash** and **500 liters of recyclables** from the local coastline.

#### *June 15, 2024 – Community Volunteer Day of Action*

The cohort designed and led **six volunteer initiatives**, engaging over **50 community members** and CCC collaborators:

1. Facilitated a **community hackathon** to create a QR code with key trail and safety information for the Litochoro Info-Kiosk.
2. Built **3 animal feeders** for stray animals in the region.
3. Created and installed **24 trail signs** across 6 trails.
4. Led a **BioBlitz citizen science event**, training volunteers and contributing biodiversity observations.
5. Delivered a **family-friendly eco-crafts workshop** using recycled materials.
6. Cleared **4 km of trail** in preparation for the Olympus Marathon.

## Partnership for Scaling

The project hosted distinguished international guests, including Larry Notheis, Senior Deputy Director of the CCC, and Hayden Bridgeman, Europarc Scholarship winner and UK park ranger, who led a workshop on accessibility in national parks.

Additional highlights included supporting the Olympus Marathon Weekend through trail preparation and volunteer coordination, and leading a flood recovery project in Larissa in partnership with the Network of Cities with Lakes, demonstrating the adaptability of civic service to respond to urgent climate-related disasters.

# Testimony

“

“The program inspired in me a desire to pursue a career that values and promotes teamwork and collaboration. It motivated a lot of interests I didn't know I had, and got me thinking about career trajectories across different industries. It made me all together more optimistic about my professional prospects.” **-Sonia Makantasi, Ecogenia Cohort Member**

“My participation in this Ecogenia program was the best first step as a Forester/Environmentalist. I was given the opportunity to work on Digital Mapping and Signage, which offered me great experience, knowledge, and confidence.” **-Anna Georgiadou, Ecogenia Cohort Member**

“The technical know-how of Ecogenia's team is very important. For this reason, we plan to create new programs together, to maintain all trails that exist in the mountains of the region and accessible only by foot, so that all the authorities-in-charge have reliable access to the mountain in places where there is no road network.” **-Petros Papapetrou, Director of Pieria Forests, General Directorate of Forests, Ministry of Environment and Energy**

“We are very happy as HRADF and as the Unit of Strategic Contracts that we contributed to the involvement of Ecogenia in such an impactful project in the context of the 'AntiNero' program, that supported the upgrading of the local natural environment.” **-Panagiotis Stampoulidis, Executive Director at Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund (HRADF)**

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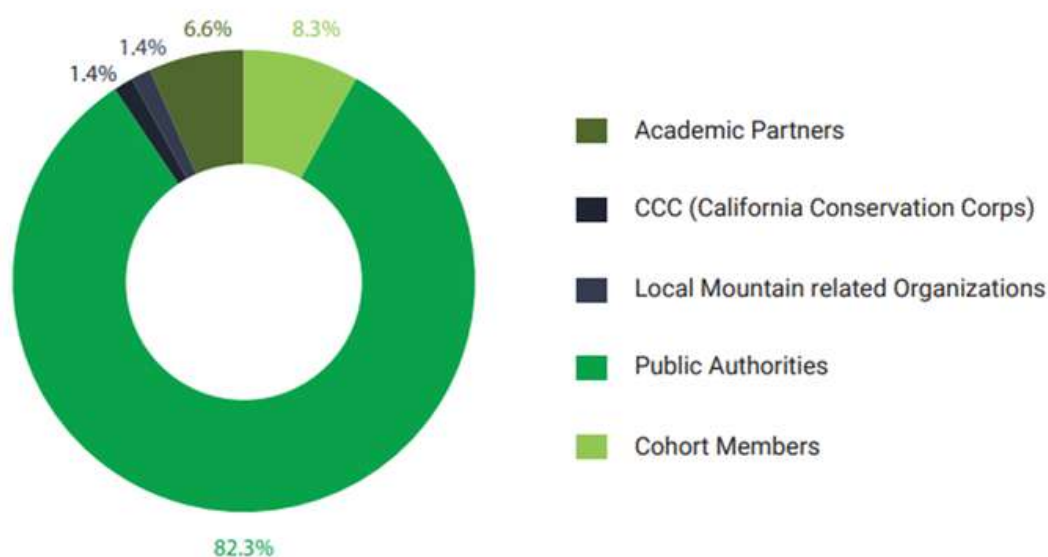
## **Olympus 2024 – Social Return on Investment**

In 2024, Ecogenia conducted its second Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis to assess the impact of its Civic Service Program on Mt. Olympus. The findings revealed a strong SROI ratio of €5.32 for every €1 invested, demonstrating the program's capacity to generate significant and measurable social and environmental value.

This analysis quantified outcomes across key stakeholder groups, including youth participants, local authorities, and environmental agencies. Notable impacts included enhanced disaster preparedness, increased youth job readiness, and strengthened community resilience. The SROI outcome highlights the transformative potential of civic service as a tool for advancing Greece's green transition and youth empowerment agenda.

A breakdown of the value distribution shows that the largest portion of the generated social value accrues to public authorities. This reflects the program's direct contribution to strengthening public capacity for wildfire prevention, environmental monitoring, and illegal activity deterrence in protected areas. While these outcomes are particularly prominent, the analysis also confirmed meaningful value generated for other stakeholders, including participating youth and the local community.

**Figure: Social Value Allocation**



Ultimately, the total SROI reflects the interconnected value created through the collaboration of all actors involved. It affirms that resources committed to the Civic Service Program are not only cost-effective but catalytic, delivering lasting benefits across both environmental and social dimensions.

## Exploring Pathways for a Green Future

In March 2024, Ecogenia co-organized the first-ever Sustainability Skills & Career Fair in Greece in partnership with the American College of Greece, with generous support from the U.S. Embassy in Greece. This landmark event was designed to help young people explore diverse career pathways in the growing field of sustainability and to equip them with the tools to pursue meaningful and impactful work.

More than 150 participants joined the Fair, including university students, recent graduates, and young professionals. The event created a dynamic space where participants could learn about the wide range of career opportunities in climate resilience, green innovation, environmental education, and civic service.

The Fair was not just for those with a clear career plan. It also welcomed those who were still exploring their options, building capacity, and seeking inspiration. With sustainability as the compass, the event empowered attendees to envision their role in Greece's green transition.



**Career Clinics:** Hands-on sessions offering mock interviews, CV reviews, professional headshots, and personalized career coaching



**Networking Opportunities:** Direct connections with sustainability professionals, NGOs, startups, and public sector organizations



**Interactive Booths:** Opportunities to engage with Ecogenia and its partners on real-world projects and job openings



**Panel Discussions:** Experts and employers shared insights on the future of work in sustainability, civic service, and the climate economy

## Program Highlights include:

- **Career Clinics:** Hands-on sessions offering mock interviews, CV reviews, professional headshots, and personalized career coaching
- **Networking Opportunities:** Direct connections with sustainability professionals, NGOs, startups, and public sector organizations
- **Panel Discussions:** Experts and employers shared insights on the future of work in sustainability, civic service, and the climate economy
- **Interactive Booths:** Opportunities to engage with Ecogenia and its partners on real-world projects and job openings

This event also served as the culmination of Ecogenia's Sustainability Skills & Career Month, a broader initiative to spotlight green career development through workshops, storytelling, and digital outreach.

By bringing together educators, employers, and emerging professionals, the Fair laid a strong foundation for Ecogenia's long-term workforce development strategy, connecting youth to practical, purpose-driven roles that support both personal growth and planetary health.

## Testimony

“

*"As someone who does not come from the sustainability sector, the Fair helped me understand how I can support the field through my own skills."*

**-Young Participant**

*"This Fair has the potential to become an important institution, bringing together people who are genuinely interested in environmental issues."*

**-Young Participant**

*"The organization was truly wonderful, with great attention to detail and a celebratory atmosphere - something we very much needed. We are tired of excessive formality. Thank you so much!"*

**-Participating Recruiter**

*"It was certainly beneficial for us, as many candidates were not familiar with our corporate initiatives, nor with how sustainability relates to the telecommunications sector. The fair gave us the opportunity to showcase our work and connect with potential candidates to meet future needs."*

**-Participating Recruiter**

”

## 3.3 European and Global Collaborations

Ecogenia's engagement in European and global initiatives reflects its growing role as a key contributor to youth empowerment and climate action across the continent. Through strategic partnerships, EU-funded projects, and international networks, Ecogenia is helping shape policies and pilot innovations that support environmental resilience, democratic participation, and green workforce development. The following collaborations highlight our commitment to advancing shared goals through civic service and youth-led solutions.

### LOCALY Project

Ecogenia is participating in the European project LOCALY, alongside partners from Greece, Spain, Italy, and Germany. The initiative aims to develop a train-the-trainer model and educational toolkit for youth workers across Europe.

In July, staff member Eleni Antoniadou and three Ecogenia alumni traveled to Spain for a training and co-creation workshop with partner organizations. The toolkit is now being piloted in each participating country through the end of the year.

As part of the implementation in Greece, Eleni led a beach and forest clean-up in Chania on December 8, engaging 20 students and community members. The action was part of a two-month youth engagement series focused on building local sustainability projects led by young people.



### FIRE-RES Project

Ecogenia was selected as an innovator in the EU-funded FIRE-RES project (Horizon 2020, 2021–2025), which supports solutions to enhance wildfire resilience across Europe. Our civic service model was recognized as a social innovation contributing to the socio-ecological transition toward a fire-resilient continent.

## 3.3 European and Global Collaborations

### European Climate Pact

Ecogenia was selected as a partner organization of the European Climate Pact, joining a network dedicated to advancing the European Green Deal and climate action across the continent. Additionally, Ecogenia's Melina Dunham was appointed as an EU Climate Pact Ambassador, reinforcing our commitment to local leadership and community-driven change.

### YEUF – Youth Empowerment Universal Franchise

Ecogenia was selected as a partner in the EU Parliament-funded YEUF project, aimed at increasing youth participation in the June 2024 European elections. In February, we hosted the national event in Thessaloniki, engaging young people in civic dialogue and democratic action. Five Ecogenia alumni served as changemakers, leading outreach efforts to mobilize youth voters across Greece.



## 3.3 European and Global Collaborations

### Athens Sustainability Workforce Booster Initiative

With support from the Municipality of Athens and Bloomberg Philanthropies' Youth Climate Action Fund (YCAF), Ecogenia launched the Athens Sustainability Workforce Booster Initiative to inspire and equip young people to become active citizens and future leaders in Greece's green workforce.

The initiative featured two key events:

- **“Find Your Climate Superpower”** – a workshop to support young people in identifying where they can best contribute towards climate action based on their unique skills and passion
- **“Human Live Library: Sustainability as a Professional Compass”** – a panel discussion with sustainability professionals across sectors, fostering dialogue and skills for climate-focused careers.

The campaign also included a social media awareness effort titled “Every job is a climate job!” to broaden public engagement, as well as the publication of [\*\*Youth and Climate Action: A Small-Scale Study in Athens\*\*](#), a White Paper developed by Ecogenia through the support of three of its alumni. Drawing on participant questionnaires, the White Paper captures young people's perspectives on key sustainability challenges and proposes actionable solutions for the Municipality of Athens.



## 3.4 Environmental Thought Leadership

Ecogenia continues to play an active role in shaping environmental dialogue in Greece and beyond. Through strategic participation in high-level conferences and public forums, the organization is contributing to national and international conversations on climate resilience, marine conservation, and sustainable development. The following highlights showcase Ecogenia's growing leadership in environmental policy, youth engagement, and cross-sector collaboration.

### Our Ocean Conference & Coastal Action

To celebrate the launch of the 2024 service project on Mt. Olympus, Ecogenia led a beach cleanup on April 14 in Plaka, Litochoro, as part of the global Our Ocean Conference.

At the conference's Youth Summit, Ecogenia Co-founder Erika Spagakou and Larry Notheis, Senior Deputy Director of the California Conservation Corps (CCC), co-presented on the theme "In Service of Our Ocean: The Role of Youth Development Programs and Civic Service in Fostering Marine Sustainability." The session highlighted the impact of international civic service partnerships, including the CCC x Ecogenia exchange. The event was attended by Maria Olson, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy, in support of this ongoing collaboration.

### Protecting Blue: Marine Conservation Dialogue

On the occasion of the Our Ocean Conference (OOC), Ecogenia co-hosted the session "Protecting Blue; the case for reinforcing civic engagement in marine conservation in Greece" in collaboration with the Hellenic American Leadership Council (HALC) and the Demos Center, bringing together experts and citizens for an in-depth discussion on advancing marine conservation in Greece. Topics included marine protected areas, sustainable fisheries, blue economies, climate change, and pollution.

Ecogenia's Erika Spagakou spoke on a panel alongside Elisabeth Chatzigakis (Chatzigakis Foundation), Eleni Atsikabis (Healing Lesvos), and Yannis Palaialogos (Sustainable Cyclades). Prof. Stella Apostolakis of the American College of Greece and Larry Notheis, Senior Deputy Director of the California Conservation Corps, also joined as a featured guest speaker. Key outcomes of the conversation were captured in a [\*\*Policy Paper\*\*](#) with recommendations from the panel addressed to the OOC.



## 3.4 Environmental Thought Leadership

### *Hellenic Impact Investing Conference*

On September 27, Lia Papazoglou represented Ecogenia at the 2nd Hellenic Impact Investing Conference (HIIC), themed “Emerging Horizons.” Invited by the Hellenic Impact Investing Network, she joined a panel on Carbon Markets & Nature-Based Solutions, where she highlighted the potential of institutionalizing a national youth climate corps to drive local climate action. Lia also emphasized the need for flexible financing and public-private partnerships to scale youth-led environmental service programs across Greece.



## 3.5 Other Initiatives Spotlight

### 4th of July Celebration with the U.S. Embassy

On American Independence Day, members of the Ecogenia team were invited to celebrate with our valued partners at the U.S. Embassy. The event included U.S. Ambassador to Greece, George Tsunis, and Deputy Chief of Mission, Maria dG Olson, reinforcing our ongoing collaboration and shared commitment to youth civic service.

### End-of-Year Campaign Success

Ecogenia's end-of-year giving campaign exceeded expectations, raising over €19,000. We are incredibly grateful to all supporters whose generosity directly fuels our mission to mobilize Greek youth for climate action.

### Global Recognition at Nature Ideathon

Ecogenia was selected as one of the top 15 organizations out of 270 nominees from 78 countries to participate in a global Ideathon focused on protecting nature. Hosted by IAVE, the Emirates Foundation, and the UAE's Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, and supported by General Motors, the event showcased our civic service model as a tech-driven solution for environmental impact. **See our final pitch in the linked video.**



George Tsunis  
U.S. Ambassador of Greece



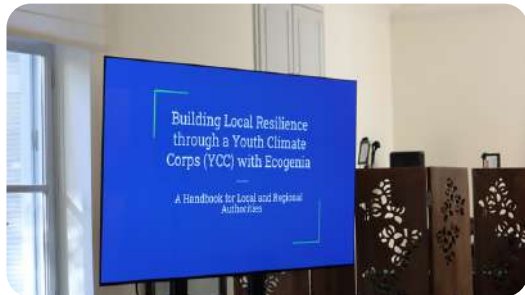
Ecogenia's end-of-year  
giving campaign



Global Recognition at Nature Ideathon

# 4. Advocacy & Systems Change

In 2024, Ecogenia solidified its position as a key actor in shaping Greece's approach to youth civic service, disaster preparedness, and local resilience. Through high-level engagements, strategic partnerships, and systems-oriented deliverables, we advanced our long-term vision of embedding a **national Youth Climate Corps (YCC)** model into Greece's environmental and youth policy landscape.



## National and Institutional Recognition

A defining moment was when our team had the opportunity to introduce the added value of youth in civic service to Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis during his site visit to Olympus, where he met Ecogenia and California Conservation Corps (CCC) crews in action. This direct engagement signaled an important step towards state recognition of civic service as a legitimate and scalable mechanism for addressing climate risk, especially wildfire prevention.

In parallel, Ecogenia hosted high-level field showcases day in Litochoro, attended by:

In parallel, Ecogenia hosted high-level field showcases day in Litochoro, attended by:

- HE Deputy Minister of Development, Anna Mani-Papadimitriou
- Mayor of Dion-Olympus, Vaggelis Geroliolios
- Executive Director of HRADF, Panagiotis Stampoulidis
- Director of the Pieria Forests Division, Petros Papapetrou
- Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy in Greece, Maria Olson

These visits provided key decision-makers with firsthand exposure to the transformational power of youth civic service and helped position Ecogenia as a credible delivery partner for national programs such as AntiNero.



## **Operationalizing Youth Civic Service under national wildfire prevention plans**

Olympus 2024 successfully demonstrated how a Youth Climate Corps can be mobilized under the national wildfire prevention frameworks, working in coordination with appointed contractors on critical trail maintenance through the “fee-for-service” model. This model shows that civic service can be a complementary force multiplier, providing trained youth labor to support public works while also advancing youth employability, climate awareness, and community resilience.

Ecogenia aims to scale this model nationwide in alignment with Greece’s disaster risk reduction plans, through fee-for-service arrangements that cover basic operational costs, creating a financially sustainable and socially impactful model.

## **Governmental Partnerships and MoUs**

A major step forward was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the General Directorate of Forests at the Ministry of Environment and Energy. This partnership ensured daily coordination with the local forestry service in Pieria, streamlined permitting, and enhanced oversight of field activities. It also set a precedent for future collaborations between Ecogenia and line ministries seeking to mobilize youth for environmental service delivery.

Additionally, Ecogenia signed an MoU with the Network of Cities with Lakes, opening new pathways for municipal deployments and supporting shared goals around flood recovery, water resilience, and community engagement.

## **Systems Tools and Thought Leadership**

To support the institutionalization of its model, Ecogenia launched the Local Resilience Handbook on October 18 at The Demos Center in Athens. Developed in partnership with the U.S. Embassy and the American College of Greece, the Handbook provides a practical guide for municipalities and regional authorities interested in launching their own civic service programs with Ecogenia. This effort is further complemented by the publication of the White Paper on “The Role of a Youth Climate Corps for Wildfire Disaster Prevention and Management in Greece”, published with the support of Ecogenia’s Advisor and resilience expert, Aphrodite Bouikidis.

## **Global Visibility: Clinton Global Initiative**

In September, Ecogenia’s model for youth-powered climate action was featured at the 2024 Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Annual Meeting in New York. Selected as a CGI Commitment Maker, Ecogenia joined a global network of solutions-focused organizations that have impacted over 500 million people in 180+ countries. At CGI, Ecogenia announced a new commitment: to scale to five new municipalities by 2027, accelerating its mission to institutionalize civic service as a tool for local resilience, climate action, and youth inclusion.

# Special Events and Speaking Engagements

In 2024, Ecogenia leveraged key platforms and high-level forums to advance its mission, increase visibility, and cultivate national and international partnerships. From wildfire prevention workshops to global climate summits, the organization positioned its **Youth Climate Corps model** as a scalable solution for disaster risk reduction, youth empowerment, and systems-level change.

## Strategic Advocacy & Workshops

- **Wildfire Disaster Prevention Advocacy Week (June 17–21)**

Ecogenia and CCC leadership hosted a series of targeted workshops in Athens on the Role of a Youth Climate Corps in Wildfire Prevention and Management. These sessions engaged policy stakeholders, ministry officials, and civil society leaders to explore how civic service can contribute to Greece's disaster resilience agenda.

- **Field Immersion with Institutional Stakeholders**

Ecogenia organized an in-field experience in Litchoro for key government leaders, including HE Deputy Minister of Development Anna Mani-Papadimitriou, Mayor of Dion-Olympus Vaggelis Geroliolios, and Ministry of Environment and HRADF officials, showcasing civic service in action and exploring future collaboration models.

## Public Speaking & International Recognition

### Delphi Economic Forum – 5th Southeast Europe & East Med Conference

Board Member Kostapanos Milaresis represented Ecogenia at this influential forum held in collaboration with Kathimerini & The Hellenic American Leadership Council in D.C., presenting the case for a national youth climate corps in Greece. The forum followed a joint announcement by the U.S. and Greek governments recognizing youth civic service as a key tool for climate resilience, citing Ecogenia as a leading example.

### NY Climate Week – Friends of Ecogenia Meet & Greet

In partnership with Greece in USA and HACC, Ecogenia co-hosted an event during NY Climate Week to introduce the program to U.S. supporters and grow its Friends of Ecogenia Ambassador network. The evening spotlighted Ecogenia's international partnerships and future scale-up vision.

## Athens Urban Climate Resilience Panel

Co-Founder Erika Spagakou joined a distinguished panel hosted by GCoM and Resilient Cities Catalyst Europe, in collaboration with C40 Cities and Bloomberg Philanthropies. She spoke alongside the mayors of Athens and Tirana, positioning Ecogenia as a practical example of engaging youth in urban climate resilience solutions.

## Meeting with U.S. Congressman John Sarbanes

During a visit to the American College of Greece, Ecogenia's leadership met with Congressman Sarbanes, drawing parallels between Ecogenia and AmeriCorps, and advocating for transatlantic civic service collaboration.





## 5. News & Media



### Reach

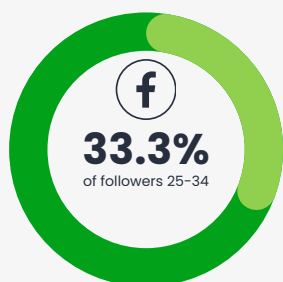
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Facebook

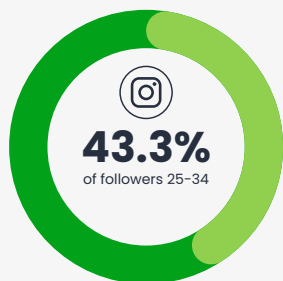
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Instagram

### Age Group



Strongest Age Group 25-34



Strongest Age Group 25-34

### Media Engagements



**US embassy to cooperate with local environmental protection organization**



**Καθαρισμός Ακτής στην Πλάκα Λιτοχώρου από την EcoGenia και την Πρεσβεία των ΗΠΑ**



**Click on the active links**



# 5. News & Media

## Videos



## Podcasts



Click on  
the active links

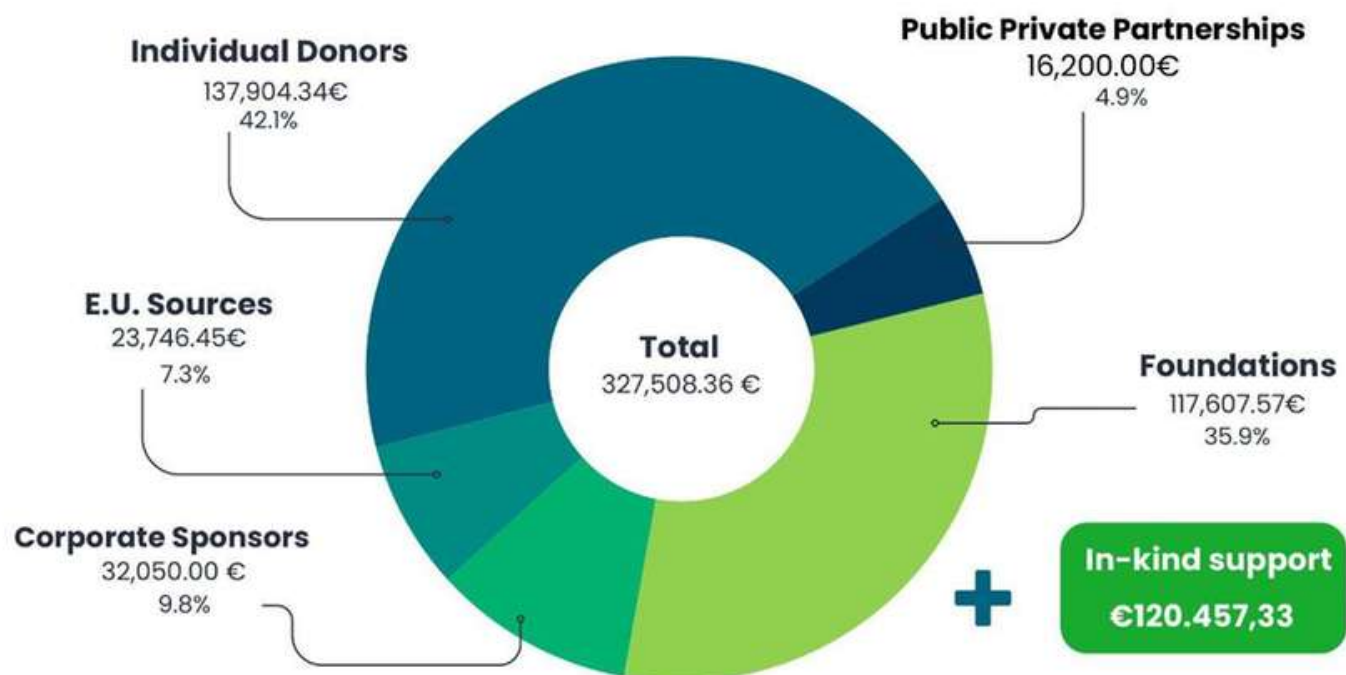


## Other Media References

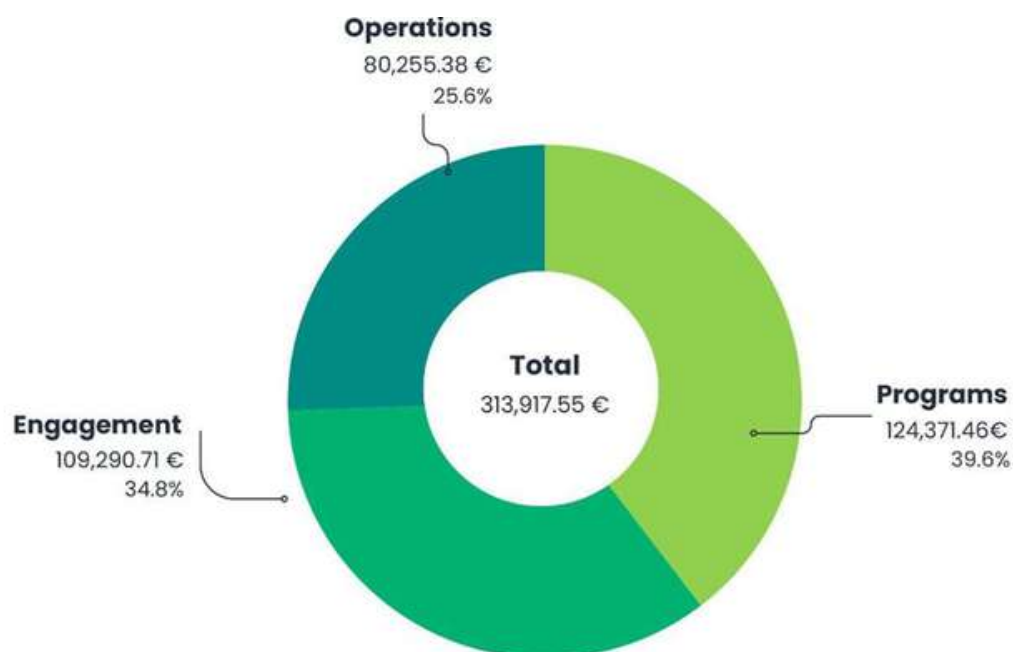
- [Greek, US Environmental Groups Launch Project to Protect Mt. Olympus](#)
- [Καθαρισμός Ακτής στην Πλάκα Λιτοχώρου από την Ecogenia και την Πρεσβεία των ΗΠΑ](#)
- [Από την Καλιφόρνια στον Όλυμπο, εκπαιδεύοντας νέους για το κλίμα και μια πιο ανθεκτική κοινωνία](#)
- [Fire Prevention Work by the California Conservation Corps at Mount Olympus](#)
- [The First Ecogenia Social Service Program Launched in Litochoro](#)
- [Joint Statement on the U.S.-Greece Strategic Dialogue \(09.02.2024\): Ecogenia is mentioned in the official joint statement](#)
- [Προγράμματα κοινωνικής προσφοράς από την Ecogenia](#)
- [Ecogenia: Engaging Greece's Youth in Civic Climate Action](#)
- [A youth climate corps for Greece](#)
- [Η Ecogenia αναγνωρίζεται ως Commitment Maker στην Ετήσια Συνάντηση του Clinton Global Initiative στη Νέα Υόρκη](#)
- ["Counterpoint" with Katerina Housos & Aggeliki Psonis - With Melina Dunham - "Ecogenia"](#)
- [Μία ημέρα με την Ecogenia – Κοινωνική υπηρεσία στην πράξη](#)
- ["Πρόγραμμα Κοινωνικής Υπηρεσίας – Όλυμπος 2024" της AMKE Ecogenia](#)
- [The First Ecogenia Social Service Program Launched in Litochoro](#)

# 6. Financial Overview

## Income



## Expenses



# 7. Lessons Learned

## **1. Prevention-first climate action delivers outsized value**

2024 reaffirmed that investing in prevention, including trail maintenance, wildfire buffers, preparedness, and education, generates far greater social and environmental returns than reactive responses alone. Our work on Mt. Olympus showed that early, coordinated action reduces risk, strengthens public capacity, and delivers measurable economic value, as reflected in our Social Return on Investment findings.

## **2. Civic service works best when embedded in public systems**

Olympus 2024 demonstrated that youth civic service is most effective when it complements existing public frameworks rather than operating in parallel. Alignment with national wildfire prevention programs and contracts, daily coordination with forestry services, and formal memoranda of understanding reduced friction, improved oversight, and strengthened institutional trust.

## **3. Youth can deliver high-stakes, technical work when properly supported**

Our first full-time, three-month service term confirmed that young people can take on complex, safety-sensitive climate resilience work when given the right training, supervision, and responsibility. Longer service terms, clear roles, and strong field leadership proved essential to unlocking youth capacity at scale.

## **4. International partnerships accelerate learning and credibility**

Collaboration with the California Conservation Corps (CCC) strengthened both technical capacity and external validation. Cross-border service exchanges enabled rapid skills transfer, raised performance standards, and increased confidence among national stakeholders.

Strategic international partnerships can fast-track organizational maturity when roles, expectations, and learning goals are clearly defined.

## **5. Fieldwork becomes scalable when translated into tools for others**

While direct service created tangible local impact, its broader value emerged when lessons were codified into the Local Resilience Handbook. Translating lived experience into practical guidance allowed Ecogenia to extend influence beyond individual project sites and into municipal decision-making.

## **6. Youth employment pathways must be intentionally designed**

Although civic service builds transferable skills, 2024 highlighted the importance of making career pathways explicit. The Sustainability Skills and Career Fair and professional development components addressed a clear need for structured bridges between service, employment, and further training. Workforce outcomes improve when career exposure, mentoring, and sector connections are built into program design.

## 7. Scaling impact requires pause and reflection

Mid-year strategic reflection proved critical as Ecogenia transitioned from pilots to policy influence. Clarifying our focus on civic service and climate resilience sharpened partnerships, messaging, and future planning. Growth without reflection risks dilution. Clarity enables scale.

## 8. Our team is ready to scale

In 2024, Ecogenia transitioned from managing small pilot cohorts to overseeing a significantly larger, multi-national team operating in a high-stakes, protected environment. Managing 19 youth simultaneously, across Ecogenia and California Conservation Corps crews, required advanced coordination, safety oversight, logistics, and leadership. Investments in staff systems, training, and trust paid off. Our team demonstrated readiness to scale while maintaining quality, safety, and strong stakeholder relationships.

## 9. Volunteering is a powerful on-ramp to civic engagement

The introduction of regular, well-designed volunteer opportunities in Litochoro revealed volunteering as more than a supplemental activity. It became a pathway to deeper civic participation. Weekly and flagship events created low-barrier entry points for residents, visitors, and partners to engage in climate action. Structured volunteer experiences strengthened community trust, expanded the reach of youth-led initiatives, and built a pipeline for ongoing civic engagement.

## 10. Replication requires strong local anchoring

Olympus 2024 demonstrated that civic service models can be replicated across regions and national parks, but only when grounded in local context, relationships, and needs. Success depended on early engagement with municipal leaders, forestry services, and community stakeholders, and on adapting service activities to local risks and governance realities. What scales is not a fixed program, but a flexible framework that combines standardized training, safety protocols, and impact metrics with locally tailored partnerships and priorities.

## Closing Reflection

Together, these lessons reinforced a central truth in 2024: ***youth civic service is not a temporary intervention, but a durable public good that delivers the greatest impact when rooted in prevention, partnership, and systems thinking.***

# 8. Looking Ahead to 2025

As Ecogenia prepares for the year ahead, 2025 will mark a pivotal stage of growth, replication, and systems alignment. Building on the momentum of 2024, we are poised to deepen impact across communities, scale institutional partnerships, and further solidify youth civic service as a recognized pathway for climate action and education in Greece.

## **Olympus 2025—Strengthening Disaster Prevention and Community Engagement**

Returning to Mount Olympus for our third consecutive year, Olympus 2025 will deploy a 12-person youth cohort focused on disaster preparedness and sustainable forest management. The project will continue to operate under the AntiNero national framework, in coordination with local authorities and the Ministry of Environment, ensuring fieldwork aligns with urgent wildfire prevention needs. Olympus 2025 will also serve as a model for operationalizing civic service at scale, through fee-for-service arrangements and formal public-private partnerships.

## **Chania 2025 – Scaling the Civic Service Model for Education**

We are thrilled to return to Chania, Crete, the site of one of our earliest pilot programs, to launch our second environmental education service project. Beginning January 13, 2025, a 7-member youth cohort will deliver the Local Green Heroes curriculum to 700 local children, fostering climate literacy, environmental awareness, and active citizenship.

Backed by the generous support of the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation, the Bodossaki Foundation, and the TUI Care Foundation's Helping Hand Fund, the Chania 2025 project will introduce new curriculum elements and experiential components, developed in collaboration with key partners including the European Outdoor Education Hub, SaveYourHood, and Planet Agents.

## **Scaling to New Municipalities**

A major organizational goal for 2025 is expanding to new regions through strategic collaborations with municipalities and local stakeholders. Following successful MoUs with the Ministry of Environment and the Network of Cities with Lakes, Ecogenia is exploring deployment opportunities in both urban and rural areas, laying the groundwork for our CGI Commitment to reach five municipalities by 2027.

## **Advocacy, Alumni, and Sustainability Priorities**

In 2025, Ecogenia will:

- **Scale advocacy efforts** by sharing the **Local Resilience Handbook** and advancing civic service policy dialogues with ministries and municipalities.
- **Activate our growing alumni network**, engaging former cohort members in mentoring, outreach, and facilitation roles.
- **Prioritize diversified funding and collaboration models**, with a focus on long-term sustainability through fee-for-service contracts, philanthropic partnerships, and EU funding mechanisms.



## 9. Our Supporters and Partners



Our 2024 impact was made possible thanks to the generous trust, funding, in-kind support and strategic input of our institutional donors and philanthropic supporters. Alongside our institutional partners, we are continuously humbled by the ongoing support of our growing network of individual donors.

**Firehouse Fund:**  
**Cultivating Sparks**

Firehouse Fund



Helidoni Foundation



U.S. Embassy Greece

**Raycap**

Raycap



Erasmus+



Good Move Initiatives



TUI Care Foundation



Libra Philanthropies



Bodossaki  
Foundation



Bank of Greece



Columbia



Municipality of Athens



CCC



CCC Foundation



# 9. Our Supporters and Partners



## Strategic Partners

All of this important work would not have been possible without the support from our valued program partners and the trust and support of the communities that hosted us and embraced our work. Thank you for your support.



Ministry of Environment  
Pieria Forestry Service



HRADF/TAIPED



Dion-Olympus Municipality



NECCA



Tulane University



Olympus Marathon



The Demos Center at the  
American College of Greece



AHEPA



Network of Cities with  
Lakes



EOS Litochorou



Olympus Adrenaline  
Festival



AZ Bible Camp



## 10. Join us



### **A Call to Action for a Resilient Greece**

As we near the middle-point of a decisive decade for climate action, Greece is already experiencing the consequences of a warming planet. Devastating floods and wildfires have exposed the vulnerabilities of our landscapes and communities, making it clear that urgent, coordinated, and innovative responses are needed.

#### **Now is the time to act.**

We have the opportunity to catalyze climate resilience and empower a new generation of youth leaders through civic service. By investing in youth-powered solutions, we can strengthen disaster preparedness, protect our natural heritage, and build the foundations of a sustainable future.

We call on all stakeholders including policymakers, funders, civil society, media, and Greece's global diaspora to join us in this mission. Together we can forge powerful partnerships that amplify impact, scale proven solutions, and lay the groundwork for a national climate corps.

Let us harness the energy, skills, and vision of young people across Greece to confront the climate crisis head-on. The time for action is not tomorrow. It is today.

**Join us in building a resilient Greece and a healthier planet for all.**



## Connect with us!



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