

12. Gardens of the future in Nicosia

Cyprus faces challenges related to climate change, such as rising temperatures, drought, intensified rainfall fluctuations and rising sea levels. “Gardens of the Future” is a social collective initiative aiming to empower locals to become agro-entrepreneurs and create a network of communal gardens in cities. The implemented innovative circular NBS for urban greening, food production, water treatment and reuse, is improving the urban microclimate, reducing the heat island effect and providing a range of ecosystem services. Nicosia’s initiative to use public spaces for growing food, especially by unprivileged citizens, is being enhanced.

Tags: Communal gardens, Urban gardens, Food production, Urban Heat Island, Social cohesion.

CHALLENGES ADDRESSED:

- **Promoting zero waste:** reducing waste generation and ensuring sustainable use of resources.
- **Promoting open-source technologies:** ensuring accessibility and inclusivity in technology adoption.
- **Lack of capitalization in the timeframe that is needed:** limited financial resources and delayed funding hinder timely progress.

MAIN OBJECTIVES:

- **Enable locals to become agro-entrepreneurs,** in the heart of Nicosia.
- **Promoting innovation** utilizing new technologies.
- **Build a community.**
- **Promote circular economy** from farm to table.

+ FACTS

Project type: Social collective initiative

Partners: Municipality of Nicosia, Cyprus Energy Agency

Beneficiaries: Young people up to 35 years old, minorities (asylum seekers, migration), people with disabilities, government institutions, corporations, municipalities, NGOs (Energy Agency), Commissioners, industrial partners.

Date: May 2019 – May 2021

+ PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Gardens of the Future is a social collective initiative launched in May 2019, aiming to empower locals to become agro-entrepreneurs and create a network of communal gardens across cities. The project started with transforming a 500 m² area in Nicosia into a green space accessible to all, with the main garden opening in October 2020. Its goal is to establish 300 gardens in cities across Cyprus by 2021, targeting young people, minorities, people with disabilities, and various institutions. The project promotes social exchange, climate mitigation, food security, and urban revitalization while reducing CO₂ emissions and the urban heat island effect. Despite facing challenges such as funding constraints, and transportation issues, the initiative has gained recognition and volunteer support, and aims to be replicated in other cities.

+ IMPACTS AND RESULTS

Increase awareness and recognition, attracted the interest of volunteers to run the project, two award nominations. Since the project is still ongoing, the results and impact will be identified as implementation of the project evolves:

- **Social cohesion and community building:** the project fosters social interaction and connection among neighbours and communities in Nicosia, bridging divides in a city historically marked by conflict.
 - **Environmental benefits:** by reducing the urban heat island effect and CO₂ emissions, the gardens contribute to climate mitigation and the improvement of urban space quality.
 - **Sustainable food supply:** the gardens promote local food production, reducing food waste by utilizing plants grown within the gardens, strengthening the local food supply chain.
 - **Co-city approach:** the project leverages collective community efforts, unused spaces, and institutional support to create a network of urban gardens, enhancing the overall resilience and celebration of the city.
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