



RURACTIVE

Zagori, Greece

D6 - Local Action Plan

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0. Reading This Local Action Plan

This Local Action Plan (LAP) documents the co-development process of solutions undertaken by each Dynamo to establish and empower its local Multi-Actor Rural Innovation Ecosystem (RIE). It is the result of a 12-month participatory and inclusive community-led process from May 2024 to May 2025, and contains both the description of the four steps taken to activate the RIE as well as the co-developed, innovative, place based solutions that will be implemented to support the just, sustainable and smart transition of the Dynamo's territory.

The solutions described in the LAP target one or more core Rural Development Drivers (RDDs, namely: Sustainable multimodal mobility; Energy transition and climate neutrality; Sustainable agrifood systems and ecosystem management; Nature-based and cultural tourism; Culture and cultural innovation; Local services, health and wellbeing) and integrate aspects from the three RURACTIVE crosscutting priorities (climate change mitigation and adaptation, social justice and inclusion, and biodiversity), and take into account gender considerations. During the co-development phase, Dynamos activated, engaged and empowered the local community through four Local Workshops (LWs) that provided support in defining their place-based solutions. This LAP presents the results of these four LWs, highlighting the crucial role of the local community in creating each solution proposal. For further reference to the methodology to activate the RIE and to the conceptual framework of RURACTIVE, the full documents are [available on the website](#).

Each LAP is organised into six main sections:

- Background and Strategic Vision – Introduces the territory, its cultural identity, socio-economic profile, and key development challenges. Further, it outlines the chosen RDDs that guided the focus of local action.
- Step 0: Getting Started – Describes the early activities to set up the foundational elements of the RIE and frame the work, including the selection of the RDDs and territories where the LAPs will be implemented, mapping of previous participatory processes, and a review of relevant local and regional policies.
- Step 1: Identification – describes the activities undertaken for brainstorming, analysing and prioritising local stakeholders
- Step 2: Engagement – explains how local actors were involved through events like Open Days and the creation of Local Task Forces (LTFs).
- Step 3: Empowerment – summarises the series of Local Workshops (LWs 1–4), the recruitment of Local Community Trainers (LCTs) for capacity building and training of local communities, how local challenges were identified, and how solutions were co-designed and refined through structured participation.
- Place-Based Solutions – Lists the key challenges identified and introduces detailed breakdowns of the main place-based solutions co-developed with RIE stakeholders to be carried forward into the implementation stage starting from September 2025

This LAP serves as both a strategic roadmap and a practical implementation tool. It is intended to guide the co-implementation of local solutions and to support replication efforts by other rural communities across Europe in the future. The LAP has been collaboratively developed by the Dynamo partner in close cooperation with their RIE stakeholders, with support and guidance from mentors at the University of Bologna and RURACTIVE project partners.

1. Background Information

EcoMuseum Zagori (EMZ), the first EcoMuseum in Greece, was developed using a bottom-up approach in the mountainous Zagori region of North Pindos, Epirus. Covering an area of 995.3km² and home to 3,800 inhabitants, the region's main occupations are tourism and livestock farming. Founded in 2014 as a social cooperative enterprise, the EcoMuseum aims to safeguard and promote the area's natural and cultural heritage while supporting local sustainable development. The territory includes several protected areas, such as Northern Pindos National Park, Vikos–Aoös National Park, Vikos Aöos UNESCO Global Geopark, Mount Mitsikeli, Mt Tymphe, Valia Kalda, Vikos Gorge, Voidomatis River, and the Aöos Ravine.






Figure 1. Images of the mountainous region of Zagori including some natural and cultural heritage areas

The region's central principle is that an area's monuments should remain in situ as a living testament to a specific era. Here visitors can learn about various aspects of social life, production processes and the socio-economic and natural history of the region. At the same time, they are given the opportunity to interpret the spiritual, social and economic evolution of the local population, which is directly connected to the natural environment, and its effect on the definition of its identity. EMZ has the role of an educational and local development hub, serving as a reference point between visitors, the local community and local governance actors. EMZ offers soundwalks in nature, guided tours at transhumance routes, tours at the stone bridges and villages of the area, trail trekking and educational programs for schools. The activities offered are designed to give a well-rounded experience of the place and to transmit its unique power and knowledge.

The main pillars of the Ecomuseum's focus are sustainable and participatory biodiversity conservation of the protected areas, and equal accessibility to cultural and natural heritage. EMZ has implemented the EU funded participatory biodiversity conservation project EchoLocI, for the preservation and valorisation of pastoral routes. Projects like Listen-Touch-Feel, an educational solution designed for visually impaired people, raise awareness of the importance of accessibility in cultural and natural sites, and promotes an inclusive landscape approach by applying innovative tools, towards an inclusive interpretation of the natural and cultural heritage of Vikos-Aoös Geopark.

2. Step 0: Getting started

2.1. Chosen RDDs

 <p>Sustainable agri-food systems and ecosystem management</p>	<p>EMZ promotes agri-tourism initiatives that connect visitors with local farmers, showcasing traditional and sustainable food production methods.</p>
 <p>Nature-based and cultural tourism</p>	<p>EMZ aims to enhance nature-based and cultural tourism by developing immersive and educational experiences. This includes tours in transhumance trails, stone bridges, and villages, as well as soundwalks in nature. The aim is to integrate local cultural narratives into these tours, offering visitors a deep understanding of the area's cultural and natural heritage. By promoting sustainable tourism practices, EMZ ensures that tourism benefits both the local community and the natural environment.</p>
 <p>Culture and cultural innovation</p>	<p>EMZ focuses on cultural innovation involves preserving and promoting the unique cultural heritage of the Zagori region. EMZ has created a Soundscape application for accessibility of visually impaired people in the context of equal accessibility to cultural and natural heritage. Educational programs for schools incorporate traditional knowledge and contemporary cultural expressions, ensuring the transmission of cultural heritage to future generations. By blending tradition with innovation, EMZ aims to celebrate and sustain the region's cultural identity.</p>

2.2. Starting to set up the RIE

The RIE Coordinator for this initiative is EMZ, led by Dimitra Papaioannidou and Panagiota Koutsoukou. They oversaw all RIE activities, coordinated with stakeholders and facilitated workshops (LW1–LW4). The role of RIE coordinators was to manage implementation, support solution development, engage the local community, and ensure visibility through media outreach. RIE coordinators worked closely with the Local Task Force to foster collaboration and integrate solutions into the Local Action Plan.

Stakeholder identification and engagement processes were ongoing in the territory through EMZ's previous activities, which fostered a strong collaborative environment. Key initiatives include participatory workshops on cultural and natural heritage preservation, educational programs that bring together residents, youth, and local authorities. Several co-development projects have also contributed to this foundation, such as the Echoloci project exploring acoustic ecologies of Zagori, engaging youth, local breeders and researchers in sound-based exploration of local identity. The Listen Touch Feel project emphasised multisensory experiences of heritage, enabling access and participation for diverse audiences, including people with visual disabilities. These actions laid the groundwork for forming a dynamic and diverse stakeholder group involved in RURACTIVE and the Local Task Force (LTF). Workshops and engagement activities take place at the Conference Centre of Ano Pedina and selected community spaces across Zagori, ensuring accessibility and continuity with previous efforts.



Figure 3. Ecomuseum Zagori Head Office & Conference Centre of Ano Pedina, Zagori



Figure 2. Development Epirus S.A office



Figure 4. Town Hall of Municipality of Zagori, Aspraggeloi

2.3. Local Policy Analysis Results

Several key national and regional policies support the RDDs prioritised by EMZ. The National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) underpins actions for energy transition and climate neutrality, setting ambitious targets for 2030 and guiding sustainable development across sectors. For nature-based and cultural tourism, the National Development Strategy for Tourism promotes sustainable tourism models, including ecotourism and cultural tourism, directly aligning with Zagori's natural and heritage assets.

Sustainable agri-food systems and ecosystem management, a central RDD for the region, are addressed through the National Strategy for Biodiversity, aiming to halt biodiversity loss and protect ecosystems, and the Regional Spatial Planning Framework of Epirus, which integrates spatial planning with environmental protection and rural development. Complementing this is the Operational Programme of Epirus, which supports integrated spatial investments.

The RDD of Culture and cultural innovation is reinforced by both the tourism strategy and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, which support sustainable cultural development and community resilience. Social inclusion, as a cross-cutting theme, is supported through the National Strategic Framework for Social Inclusion, while innovation and local entrepreneurship in these domains are facilitated by the National Smart Specialisation Strategy.

Together, these policies provide the framework for RURACTIVE interventions, offering institutional support, funding pathways and policy coherence for the region's transition towards sustainable, inclusive, and innovative rural development.

What do our local policies tell us?

D6 – LOCAL LEVEL



Sustainable multimodal mobility

- inclusion in planning of the use of electric vehicles and low-emission vehicles for urban transport



Sustainable agri-food and ecosystem management

- sustainable management of natural ecosystems with the main aim the conservation of biodiversity
- enhancement of mountain agriculture, livestock farming
- rational and sustainable management of water resources
- creation and management of protected areas and the implementation of nature-based solutions to environmental challenges
- promoting agricultural practices resilient to climate variability
- maintenance of the exercise of agricultural activity in mountainous and less-favoured areas



Culture and cultural innovation

- protection, enhancement and promotion of the natural and cultural capital and landscape
- accessibility and promotion of cultural heritage
- promotion of buildings with architectural and historical significance for their use as spaces for culture and youth creativity
- social inclusion and access for all in culture
- research and development, innovative products, services, tools, applications, value chains to enhance and promotion of domestic Creative industries



Nature-based and cultural tourism

- improving touristic infrastructure by upgrading existing facilities and developing new ones
- launching international promotion campaigns
- showcasing diverse tourism products such as agritourism and cultural tourism
- workforce development through training programs and partnerships with educational institutions
- implementing sustainable practices and promoting green and eco-friendly tourism
- strengthen digital infrastructure and leverage e-marketing tools to better serve tourists
- coordinated efforts from the government, private sector, and local authorities
- preparing and adapting tourist destinations to cope with extreme weather events and other climate-related challenges
- enhance the resilience of tourism infrastructure to natural hazards and climate change impacts
- upgrading the quality of the tourist product into slow and alternative tourism
- the mountainous area of Pindos is promoted for rural tourism, agrotourism, mountain tourism, naturalistic, sport, cultural, educational tourism
- restoration and marking of paths of mountain hiking trails, use of digital technologies, development of user service infrastructures

Figure 5. Local policy factsheet based on the chosen RDDs.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation



Mitigation

- renewable energy deployment
- energy efficiency improvements
- greenhouse gas emissions reduction

Adaptation

- improvement of infrastructure resilience
- implementing adaptive land-use planning strategies
- prevention and reduction of the effects on biodiversity due to climate change
- promoting research and development of applications in the fields of climate change, agriculture, health, energy efficiency from the University of Ioannina

Biodiversity



- investments for the protection of wild mammals and the soil
- participation of society in biodiversity conservation
- valuation of ecosystem services
- promotion of the value of Greek biodiversity
- integrate the biodiversity dimension into sectoral policies, such as infrastructure, housing and industrial development, tourism etc.
- intensification of Greece's contribution to the global prevention of biodiversity loss
- cooperation between social and scientific groups, the public and the public administration in the decision-making, monitoring process and implementation of the biodiversity strategy
- management studies for the sustainable management of forest ecosystems
- incorporate appropriate criteria for the selection of development proposals which include clear requirements of compatibility with the conservation of biodiversity

Social justice and inclusion



- initiatives aimed at increasing access to renewable energy sources
- improving energy efficiency in low-income households
- creating job opportunities in the renewable energy sector
- tackling energy poverty/ poverty and access to finance and subsidies
- restore and safeguard the ecosystems that provide essential services, taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities, poor and vulnerable groups
- community participation, gender equality, and the reduction of structural disadvantages in tourism development
- improve access to education and healthcare
- enhance social cohesion and promote equal opportunities for all residents
- strengthening the digital capacities of education
- fostering participatory decision-making processes and promoting environmental justice
- encouraging the participation of women in STEM fields
- supporting entrepreneurship among disadvantaged groups
- promotion of social innovation projects that address the needs of vulnerable populations

What do our local policies tell us?

D6 – LOCAL LEVEL

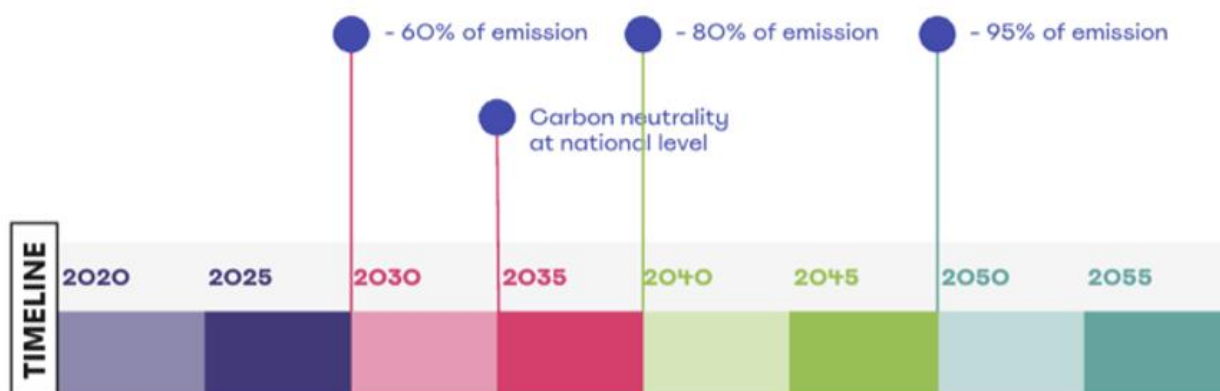


Figure 6. Local policy factsheet based on the cross-cutting priorities

3. Step 1: Stakeholders Identification: brainstorming, analysing and prioritising

3.1. RIE composition

The process of identifying, analysing and prioritising RIE stakeholders followed a structured approach to ensure inclusivity and effective engagement. The initial phase involved brainstorming, when it was compiled a comprehensive list of potential stakeholders based on previous collaborations, local databases, and community outreach. This included policy makers, researchers, industry representatives, service providers and community organisations, with special attention given to vulnerable groups at risk of exclusion, such as elderly residents, small-scale farmers, etc.

Next, a stakeholder analysis was conducted, evaluating each stakeholder's level of interest, influence, and inclusivity using the Three I Matrix. This helped determine their relevance in the project by assessing their potential impact, expertise, and willingness to engage. Stakeholders were categorised based on their ability to contribute resources, influence policies, or benefit from co-development activities. The final prioritisation phase involved selecting the most relevant stakeholders. Priority was given to those with high influence and interest, as well as those belonging to vulnerable groups, ensuring diverse representation. The outcome was a balanced mix of stakeholders actively engaged in co-developing solutions aligned with EMZ's sustainability and community-driven goals.

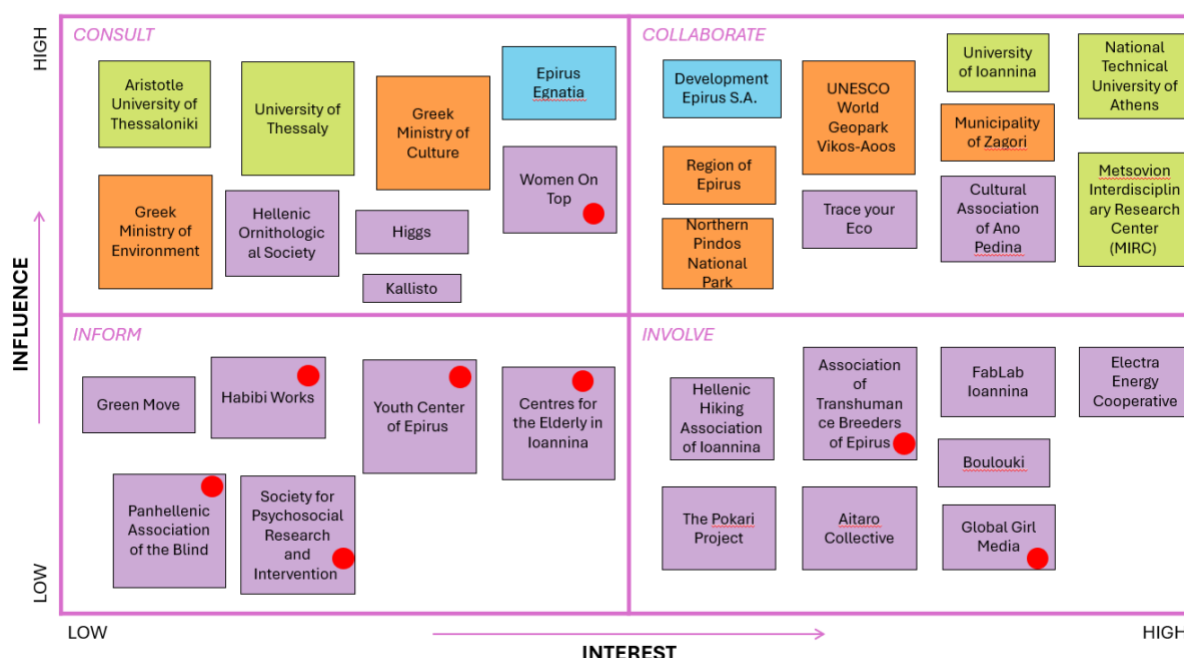


Figure 7. Stakeholder identification matrix. Red dots represent stakeholders at risk of exclusion. The domains are represented by the colours: (Policy = orange, Research = green, Industry/services/investors = blue, Public/user = purple).

4. Step 2: Stakeholders Engagement: local task force and involving stakeholders

4.1. LTF composition

The LTF comprises a diverse and balanced group of five key stakeholders, representing various sectors, domains, and RDDs relevant to the region. Dimitris Charalampos Papaioannou, from the UNESCO World Geopark Vikos-Aoos, brings expertise in nature-based and cultural tourism with a strong background in policy and protected area management. Georgia Kitsaki of Development Epirus S.A., a regional development agency, contributes cross-sectoral knowledge in industry, supporting transversal development strategies. Dimitra Kotsia, from the Recreational Association of Itea Liapi, offers community-based insights into culture and cultural innovation, representing the public domain through grassroots cultural engagement. Niovi Tomou, from the Region of Epirus, plays a strategic role in policy coordination at the regional level, adding institutional weight and alignment with the transversal policy framework. Finally, Elena Stavrou, representing the Panhellenic Association of the Blind, ensures the integration of accessibility, inclusion, and wellbeing concerns, representing the public/user perspective, especially for vulnerable groups. This composition ensures the LTF reflects local realities while supporting policy alignment and inclusive, sustainable innovation across RURACTIVE's core RDDs. The percentage of women in the LTF is 80%.

4.2. Open Day

The RURACTIVE Open Day served as the official local launch of the RURACTIVE project in D6, aiming to engage stakeholders and introduce them to its objectives, planned activities and future collaborations. The event provided an opportunity for the local community to learn about the project, its goals, features and planned activities, while also familiarising stakeholders with the project's structure, the Dynamo organisation and the members of the Local Task Force. Through presentations, discussions, and creative activities, the Open Day actively involved the local community. Highlights included expert talks on the sustainable development of rural areas, the impact of ecomuseums, women's empowerment in mountainous regions and an engaging theatrical performance inspired by the cultural and natural heritage of the area. A soundwalk through Ano Pedina Village offers an immersive experience of the village's acoustic landscape, reinforcing the project's connection to the local environment. Additionally, an exhibition showcased relevant themes and insights. The event encouraged stakeholders to get informed and sparked their interest in participating in upcoming activities, while also strengthening community ties and fostering support for the RIE initiative.

The Open Day attracted a total of 53 participants, reflecting a broad and inclusive cross-section of the local community and stakeholders. The age distribution was diverse, with 11 participants aged 18–35, 23 aged 35–50, 15 aged 50–65, and 3 participants aged 65–80. The gender balance was nearly equal, with 26 male and 27 female participants. Three individuals belonging to groups at risk of social exclusion, including 1 person with a disability and 2 long-term unemployed individuals. Participants were actively engaged across multiple RDDs. 16 people focused on

culture and cultural innovation, 11 on sustainable agri-food systems and ecosystem management, 9 on nature-based and cultural tourism, and a smaller number on energy transition and climate neutrality (1) and sustainable multimodal mobility (1). 15 participants engaged in transversal topics, contributing to cross-cutting discussions. Regarding domain representation, 33 participants came from the public/user category, highlighting strong community engagement. The event also included 10 researchers, 6 stakeholders from industry or service sectors and 4 representatives from policy-making bodies. The diverse composition ensured a rich exchange of knowledge and perspectives, making the Open Day a key milestone in mobilising local actors and raising awareness around RURACTIVE.



Figure 8. Participants listened to actively participated in discussions about the potential of the project in their region.

5. Step 3: Stakeholders Empowerment

5.1. LCT Recruitment

Ioannis Dimitropoulos is an economist and business consultant with a specialisation on Development. He owns a consultancy company focused on the development of SME's and European Funding Programmes. His professional background also includes working as a freelance auditor and evaluator of European funding Programmes for SME's (2007-2012) at ELANET AMKE, PLANET SA and K-ICON SA. Today, in parallel to his main occupation he lectures in the Public School of Advanced Vocational Training of Konitsa, in the field of economics and Special types of Tourism. As for his academic career, he has a BA Hons in Economics from Manchester Metropolitan University (UK), a PGDip in Development Economics from the University of Manchester (UK) and



Figure 9. Local Community Trainer for D6: Ioannis Dimitropoulos

an MSc in Development Economics, focusing on the effects of economic crises on poverty. Due to his line of work, he gained extensive experience in problem solving, coaching, collaboration, working on team projects and working under tight schedules. He also has good communication skills, since he has to collaborate with people from a variety of backgrounds and different levels of expertise.

5.2. LWs1 Vision and Challenges

The primary objective of LWs1 was to develop a shared vision for the territory and identify key challenges to address through solutions in upcoming workshops. LW1 marked the start of the co-creation phase. During the workshop, participants collaboratively developed an initial vision for the Dynamo's territory and compiled a list of key challenges.

The agenda began with a welcome and registration, followed by a presentation of the RURACTIVE project's features, past activities, and upcoming plans. A calendar of future workshops was shared to ensure continuity and engagement. A roundtable and icebreaking game encouraged interaction among participants, while a session on creating a Common Vision aligned objectives and goals. After a short coffee break, an exercise was introduced, and participants were divided into groups. Group work focused on identifying the main challenges the territories face, and the results were shared in a wrap-up session. The challenges identified in LW1 aimed to inform the solutions emerging from the Open Call for Innovators and the place-based solutions developed in LW2 and LW3, ensuring the RIE initiative addresses the most pressing issues facing the local community. LW1 laid the groundwork for collaborative problem-solving and innovative solutions that will shape the future of the RIE community. The workshop also sought to strengthen community support for the RIE initiative, foster relationships with stakeholders, and encourage broader participation.



Figure 11. The common vision of Zagori envisioned by stakeholders present at the communities Local Workshop 1

The stakeholders envision Zagori as a vibrant and thriving region, where villages are alive year-round with residents of all ages. Houses remain open, schools and health centres operate fully, and families with children and the elderly live together in a strong, intergenerational community. There is a deep sense of care for older residents, and respect for the coexistence of people with nature and wilderness areas. By 2050, the stakeholders envision Zagori as a vibrant, self-sufficient, and resilient region, where villages are alive throughout the year with residents of all ages. Houses are open and welcoming, schools and health centres function smoothly, and families—comprising young people, children, and the elderly—form a strong intergenerational fabric. Care for the elderly is paramount, and there is a profound respect for coexistence with wildlife, as green corridors are developed to protect wild animals and prevent accidents along the roads.

Zagori's natural beauty is cherished and carefully protected, with sustainable practices in place to preserve its rich biodiversity. Locally produced goods are a cornerstone of the community, and well-maintained hiking trails support a thriving ecotourism sector that invites visitors to explore the region responsibly. Safe roads and efficient public transportation ensure accessibility for both residents and tourists, fostering connections between villages, and minimising the environmental footprint of travel.

The community places a high priority on the conservation of cultural heritage, including the preservation of iconic stone bridges and the continuation of traditional practices such as transhumance. Local farmers and breeders thrive, living in harmony with their animals while producing high-quality, sustainable goods that are essential to the regional economy. Energy-efficient practices are widespread, contributing to a sustainable future for Zagori.

Cultural events play a significant role in community life, offering activities that are inclusive and accessible to all, spanning a range of interests far beyond folklore. These events foster a collaborative spirit, bringing together people of all ages and backgrounds to celebrate and share knowledge. Additionally, there is a focus on strengthening community ties, with ongoing efforts to inform and engage the local population in shaping the future of their region.

Zagori in 2050 is a model of sustainability and inclusivity, where tradition and innovation come together to create a self-sufficient and resilient region. It is a place where the community thrives, and where collaboration and cooperation ensure a shared vision for a prosperous, balanced, and sustainable future.

List of challenges	
Challenge 1 - Place based	<i>Sustainable Year-Round Tourism: Develop sustainable tourism opportunities to mitigate youth outmigration and create job stability. Foster partnerships between transhumance practitioners and tourism operators to enhance cultural experiences and economic opportunities.</i>
Challenge 2 - Place based	<i>Digitisation and preservation of intangible cultural heritage practices, like transhumance, in the face of mass tourism</i>
Challenge 3 - Place based	<i>Create a comprehensive management plan for natural resources to minimise pollution and promote sustainability. Improve local infrastructure (health centres, pharmacies, and roads) to support both residents and tourists. Develop strategies to manage increased pollution and garbage production due to tourism.</i>
Challenge 4 - Place based	<i>Address the increased fire risk to built environments and natural areas due to rising temperatures and changes in land use.</i>
Challenge 5 - Place based	<i>Establish plans for the maintenance and preservation of historical monuments facing deterioration and digitally preserve intangible cultural practices while ensuring responsible tourist engagement. Ensure that buildings and public infrastructure are designed to withstand extreme weather conditions by using traditional architecture and building technics</i>
Challenge 6 - Place based	<i>Develop climate-resilient outdoor activity spaces that can accommodate adverse weather conditions and reduce the ecological footprint</i>
Challenge 7 - Place based	<i>Use traditional practices to protect local biodiversity and wildlife from threats posed by changing climatic conditions</i>
Challenge 8 - Place based	<i>Restore old walking paths to reconnect villages and enhance community engagement while reducing reliance on vehicles.</i>

Challenge 9 - Place based	<i>Design transportation solutions that consider environmental impacts and wildlife protection, including the establishment of wildlife corridors.</i>
Challenge 10 - Place based	<i>More sustainable year-round opportunities maybe within tourism sector to prevent youth outmigration. Revive and repurpose abandoned houses for communal use, providing young people and families with affordable housing options to live and work in the area.</i>
Challenge 11 - Place based	<i>Adapt traditional farming to climate change impacts, ensuring crop viability and protecting local biodiversity.</i>
Challenge 12 – For open call for innovators	Community-driven, multimodal mobility solutions
Challenge 13 – For open call for innovators	Water-Saving Solutions for Rural Communities
Challenge 14 – For open call for innovators	Accessibility in Nature-Based and Cultural Tourism for People with Disabilities

LW1 gathered 18 participants, including 11 new attendees who had not participated in the earlier Open Day. The group was evenly distributed across three main age brackets, with 6 participants aged 18–35, 6 between 35 and 50, and another 6 between 50 and 65. The gender composition leaned slightly male, with 11 men and 7 women attending. Among the participants, there was representation from vulnerable groups, including one person with a disability and one individual experiencing long-term unemployment.

The workshop attracted a variety of expertise aligned with the region’s RDD priorities. Participants actively engaged in domains such as nature-based and cultural tourism (5 people), culture and cultural innovation (3 people), and sustainable agri-food systems and ecosystem management (2 people). A significant portion, 7 participants, worked across transversal themes, reflecting the interconnected nature of rural development challenges. Energy transition and climate neutrality were represented by a single participant. The group included 13 members of the public/users, complemented by stakeholders from policy-making (2 participants), industry and services (2 participants), and research (1 participant). This mix fostered rich discussion and collaboration between community members.

5.3. LWs2 Learning from others

LW2 focused on exploring and co-developing solutions to address the challenges identified in LW1. The workshop provided the stakeholders with an opportunity to engage with the RURACTIVE Solutions Catalogue, discuss relevant existing solutions and contribute new ideas tailored to Zagori.

Through structured group work and discussions, participants collaboratively identified and prioritised potential place-based solutions to be further refined in LW3.

The session began with a welcome and registration, followed by a short presentation outlining the RURACTIVE project, its main objectives, the Open Call for Innovators and the challenges to be addressed. Participants were introduced to the workshop dynamics and presented with solution factsheets before being divided into groups. During the group work session, stakeholders explored possible solutions, considering their relevance and adaptability to local needs. A coffee break provided an opportunity for informal exchanges before the group discussion resumed, allowing participants to share insights and refine ideas. The workshop concluded with a prioritisation exercise, selecting the most promising solutions to be further developed. In addition to co-developing solutions, LW2 assessed stakeholder commitment, reinforced engagement, and strengthened community support. The workshop also aimed to enhance visibility through social media and broaden stakeholder participation.

List of challenges	
Challenge 1 - Place based	Reviving abandoned buildings as community hubs
Challenge 2 - Place based	Facing low fire risk awareness in Zagori population
Challenge 3 - Place based	Abandoned old walking paths and community disengagement
Challenge 4 - Place based	Preventing the loss of local knowledge and practices based on the use of natural resources, by also tackling social exclusion, loneliness and loss of capabilities in seniors and people with dementia
Challenge 5 - Place based	Seasonal and unsustainable tourism
Challenge 6 - Place based	Facing the risk of Zagori's musical traditions fading due to aging musicians, rural depopulation, and a lack of intergenerational transmission.

List of Solutions Proposals	
Proposal 1	Living Lab: Reviving Local Traditions through Innovation and Co-Creation for Regenerative Tourism
Proposal 2	Pathways of Art
Proposal 3	Echoes of the Land: Recording Oral Histories with QR Codes
Proposal 4	Thematic Guided Tour Map: Connecting Paths, Heritage, and Nature in Zagori
Proposal 5	Building Memories: Revitalising Zagori's Abandoned Buildings

LWs2 brought together 14 participants, including 7 newcomers who had not attended the Open Day nor LW1. The participants' ages ranged widely: 2 individuals were aged 18–35, 4 were between 35 and 50, 7 fell within the 50–65 range, and 1 participant was aged between 65 and 80. The gender balance was fairly even, with 8 men and 6 women taking part. 2 attendees were long-term unemployed.

Nature-based and cultural tourism and culture and cultural innovation, each involved 4 participants. Sustainable agri-food systems and ecosystem management involved 3 participants, while transversal topics attracted another 3. Energy transition and sustainable mobility were not directly represented in this session. The group included 7 public/users, complemented by 3 researchers, 3 representatives from industry and services, and 1 policy stakeholder. This mix supported a collaborative environment where practical insights from local communities, scientific knowledge, and sectoral expertise contributed to advancing the workshop's objectives.

5.4. LWs3 Fine-Tuning

In LWs3, the feasibility of selected solution proposals from LWs2 was assessed, ensuring they align with RURACTIVE principles such as inclusion, participation, gender considerations, innovation, and crosscutting priorities. Ahead of LWs3, supported by the Local Task Force, prioritised up to five solutions, refined them using the Solutions Proposal Template and assessed synergies with other initiatives and policies. During LWs3 in roundtable discussions, each dedicated to a single solution proposal, with the help of stakeholders and LTF, using the RURACTIVE Canva model to fine-tune solutions, evaluating their economic and financial viability, defining stakeholder commitments, and exploring potential partnerships. The goal was to transform these proposals into viable, implementable actions for WP5. The workshop also served as an opportunity to update stakeholders on previous activities, introduce the next steps, strengthen local engagement and expand collaboration. To address the logistical and needs of Local Workshop 3, it was implemented across two different days (2.04.2025 and 25.04.2025):

Participants on 2.04.2025

The session on 2 April 2025 gathered 9 participants, including 3 newcomers. Age-wise, the group was diverse: 1 participant aged 18–35, 2 between 35 and 50, 4 between 50 and 65, and 2 between 65 and 80. Gender distribution favoured men, with 6 males and 3 females attending. No participants identified as belonging to groups at risk of social exclusion during this session. The RDDs represented were balanced, with 3 participants each focusing on nature-based and cultural tourism, culture and cultural innovation and transversal themes. The group included 4 public/users, supported by 3 policy stakeholders and 2 researchers.

Participants on 25.04.2025

On 25 April 2025, 9 participants attended the meeting, with 4 new individuals who had not been present before. The age distribution was 2 participants aged 18–35, 4 between 35 and 50, 2 between 50 and 65 and 1 participant aged 65–80. The gender split was nearly even, comprising 4 males and 5 females. Two participants reported being long-term unemployed, bringing important perspectives

on social inclusion and economic challenges. In terms of RDDs, the group was engaged across culture and cultural innovation (3 participants), transversal topics (4 participants), and 1 in sustainable agri-food systems and ecosystem management and 1 nature-based and cultural tourism. The professional background of attendees included 5 public/users, 2 researchers, and 2 policy representatives, enabling a well-rounded discussion blending local needs with research and policymaking insights.

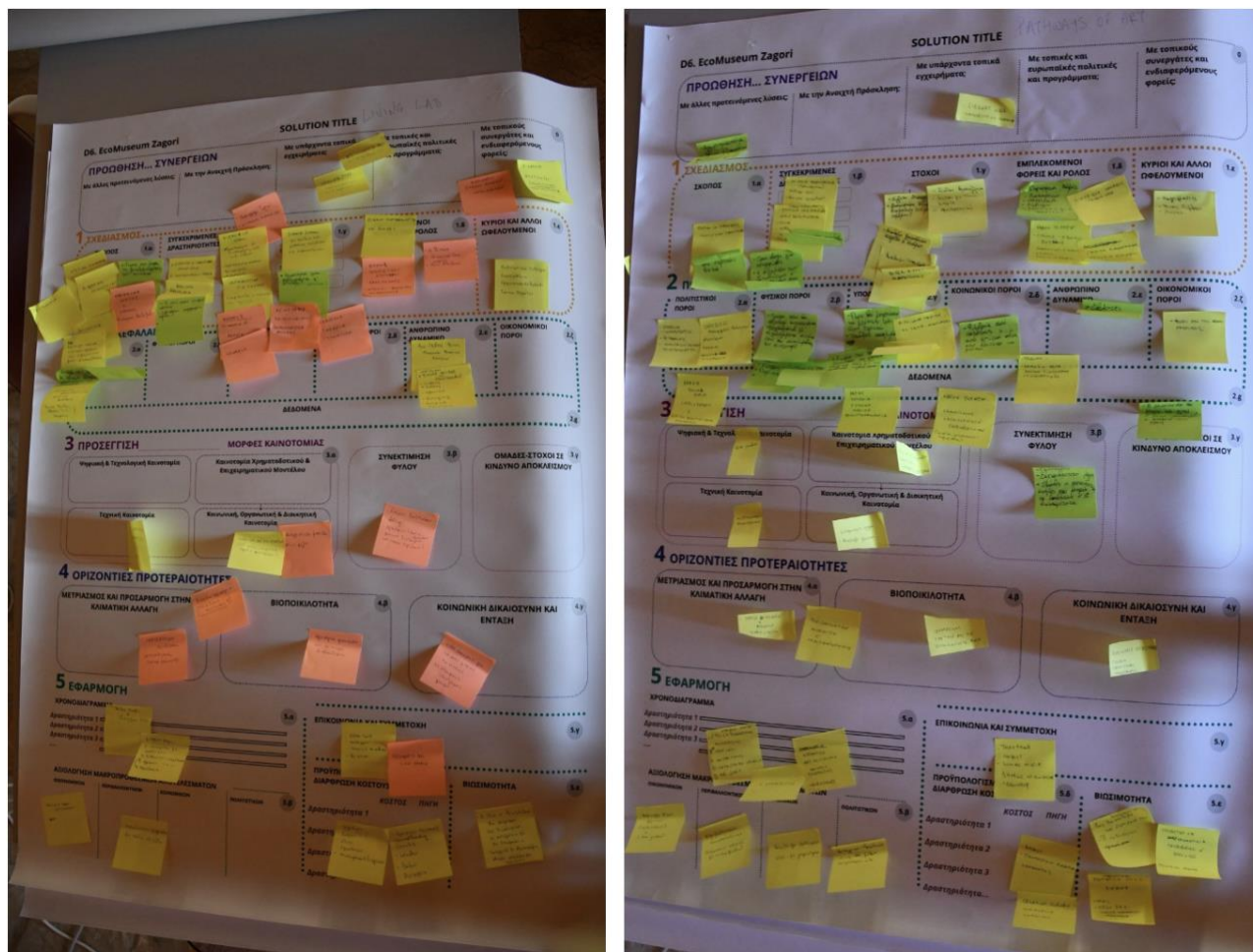


Figure 12. Pictures of the RURACTION Canva models filled out for the solutions 'Living Lab: Reviving Local Traditions through Innovation and Co-Creation for Regenerative Tourism' (left) and the solution 'Pathways of Art' (right)

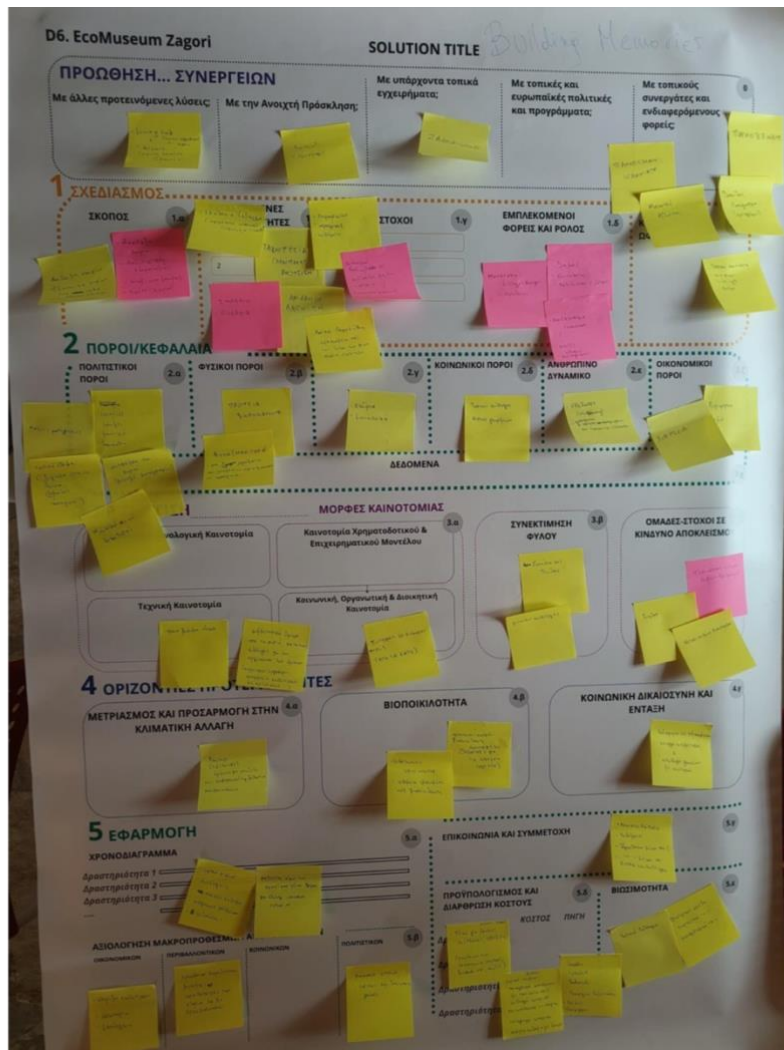


Figure 13. RURACTIVE Canva model for the solution “Building Memories: Revitalising Zagori’s Abandoned Buildings”

5.5. LWS4 Co-Tuning

LW4 marked a pivotal stage in the RURACTIVE Innovators Programme, facilitating close collaboration between EMZ, selected innovators and local stakeholders to refine and adapt innovative solutions to Zagori’s specific needs. Held on May 21st and 22nd, 2025, in Ano Pedina Zagori, LW4 provided a focused, in-person setting to review, discuss, and co-tune the proposed solutions. LW4 offered the space to contextualise and fine-tune the selected solutions, foster dialogue on collaboration strategies, develop clear implementation roadmaps, and prepare innovations for Stage 2 evaluation. The workshop included detailed presentations and reviews of each innovator’s proposal, and discussions on technical and financial feasibility.

During the workshop, each innovator presented their solutions and received targeted feedback from the Dynamo team and local stakeholders, ensuring that the solutions are better aligned with local needs and implementation realities. Zagori ECOPLANNER+ introduced a participatory digital platform for sustainable mobility, with suggestions to better accommodate elderly users and include

ride-sharing features. LOUTSES proposed restoring traditional water infrastructure to support pastoralism and biodiversity, earning support from local breeders who offered their knowledge for the project's development. S.E.N.Z. focused on improving trail accessibility for visually impaired users, though concerns were raised about technical feasibility within the project timeframe. A recurring theme was the importance of ensuring solution continuity beyond RURACTIVE's lifespan. Each team left with clearer feedback, a stronger sense of local expectations and areas for improvement. Revised proposals will be submitted by the innovators in the next phase Stage 2, incorporating the outcomes of this workshop.

A total of 23 participants from diverse RDDs attended LW4, representing a balanced mix of roles essential for co-development. The group included 10 innovators presenting and refining their solutions, alongside 12 local stakeholders from diverse backgrounds engaged to provide insights and feedback. The Dynamo team was also actively involved, coordinating interactions and facilitating discussions to ensure alignment between innovative proposals and local needs. This collaborative environment fostered productive exchanges that enriched the workshop's outcomes and helped tailor solutions for successful implementation.

Open Call for innovators: Selected Solutions	
Proposal 1	Community-driven, multimodal mobility solutions
Proposal 2	Water-Saving Solutions for Rural Communities
Proposal 3	Accessibility in nature-based and cultural tourism for people living with disabilities

6. List of Solutions and action plan for implementation

In the unique ecological and cultural landscape of Zagori, three interconnected solutions aim to regenerate heritage, strengthen community ties, and promote sustainable, inclusive tourism in line with the mission of the EMZ.

The Living Lab for Regenerative Tourism establishes a collaborative space where residents, artisans, and visitors co-create hands-on experiences—such as weaving, botanical dyeing, and agro-tourism activities—that celebrate traditional knowledge and biodiversity. With a strong focus on women-led initiatives and year-round tourism, it supports EMZ's commitment to inclusive, low-impact cultural development.

The Art Residency on Cultural Trails breathes new life into neglected paths by inviting artists to co-create site-specific works and embed recorded oral histories from elders along the routes. These trails become living archives, blending art, memory, and environmental awareness. Gender-inclusive and intergenerational, the initiative fosters social cohesion while enhancing EMZ's interpretive work through sustainable artistic practices.

The Revitalisation of Abandoned Buildings through Art transforms disused structures into open-air cultural spaces. Community stories inform site-specific artworks and performances, preserving both tangible and intangible heritage. This initiative boosts cultural tourism, supports local craftspeople, and repositions Zagori as a creative and heritage-rich destination.

Together, these solutions reflect EMZ's bottom-up approach by embedding education, accessibility, and environmental stewardship into cultural heritage practice. They reinforce the connection between people and place, promote inclusive participation, and offer replicable models for sustainable development in mountainous regions like Zagori.

Solutions N.	Solutions' title	Related challenge/s
1	Living Lab: Reviving Local Traditions through Innovation and Co-Creation for Regenerative Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonal and unsustainable tourism Preventing the loss of local knowledge and practices
2	Pathways of Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abandoned Old Walking Paths and Community Disengagement Seasonal and unsustainable tourism
3	Building Memories: Revitalising Zagori's Abandoned Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviving abandoned buildings as community hubs Seasonal and unsustainable tourism

6.1. Living Lab: Reviving Local Traditions through Innovation and Co-Creation for Regenerative Tourism

Living Lab: Reviving Local Traditions through Innovation and Co-Creation for Regenerative Tourism	
Objectives of the solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Regenerative Tourism by integrating local traditions, environmental awareness and innovative practices, fostering long-term benefits for the community and environment. Develop community-led tourism programs that educate visitors about local customs, history, and environmental stewardship, such as interactive village visits where guests can participate in traditional farming, weaving, or cooking Support sustainable tourism practices with year-round tourism activities that mitigate the seasonal pressures of traditional tourism, promoting sustainability and reducing negative environmental and social impacts.

	<p>Offer off-season creative residencies or retreats in partnership with local artisans and chefs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard and promote traditional crafts, culinary practices and cultural activities that highlight the region's unique heritage, ensuring they are passed on to future generations. Visitors can take short classes in weaving, cooking etc, taught by locals. • Provide authentic immersive experiences for visitors so they can engage in hands-on, authentic cultural experiences • Enhance community engagement co-creating workshops that build connections, share knowledge and create new sustainable tourism models. • Encourage environmental stewardship and promote awareness of local biodiversity and sustainable practices, encouraging both locals and visitors to actively participate in environmental conservation. • Design and implement biodiversity-themed workshops, such as botanical dyeing or nature-inspired art, that educate participants on local flora and ecosystems. Promote the use of sustainable, local materials in workshops (e.g., natural fibres like wool, locally sourced dyes from plants) to demonstrate and encourage circular, eco-friendly practices. Involve local schools and youth (university) in eco-tourism activities, linking educational outcomes with environmental action.
Brief Description (max 250 words)	<p>Creation of a Living Lab focused on regenerative tourism by integrating local traditions, environmental awareness, and innovative practices, with a strong emphasis on women-led initiatives and community empowerment. The Living Lab will act as a dynamic hub where local communities, residents, tourists, researchers, and businesses collaboratively implement thematic workshops centred on local natural and cultural heritage, such as traditional crafts (e.g., flower impressions on fabric inspired by local biodiversity, wool weaving workshops led by local women artisans), agro-tourism opportunities (traditional shepherding activities, mushroom hunting, both of which highlight intergenerational knowledge transfer), and culinary experiences rooted in regional recipes and ingredients.</p> <p>The goal is to preserve cultural heritage while providing tourists with authentic, immersive experiences that promote sustainability throughout the year, mitigating the seasonal and unsustainable pressures of existing tourism. This initiative connects with multiple RDDs, not only in the field of nature-based and cultural tourism, but also through culture and cultural innovation, sustainable agri-food and ecosystem management, and social innovation, by embedding together traditional knowledge, ecological awareness, and inclusive economic models. It directly supports Cross-</p>

Cutting Priorities such as climate change adaptation and mitigation through low-carbon activities, biodiversity protection via ecosystem-based workshops, and social inclusion by empowering local women, artisans, and farmers. By co-creating workshops, stakeholders will develop new models for responsible tourism that benefit local economies, protect the environment, and foster lasting connections between locals and visitors. The Lab will explore eco-friendly production techniques, community-based governance, and alternative funding models as key innovations. Women-led initiatives will be central to the design and implementation, ensuring gender-responsive development. This approach not only showcases the richness of local traditions but also provides a sustainable framework for tourism that aligns with the community's values and goals, ensuring the long-term preservation of both culture and environment.

This Living Lab will also serve as a model for other regions facing similar challenges in balancing tourism with sustainability, especially in contexts where women play a central role in preserving and revitalising cultural landscapes.

Relevant RDD and RDD subcategory	Nature-based and cultural tourism, Culture and cultural Innovation
Relevant Challenge/s	Seasonal and unsustainable tourism Preventing the loss of local knowledge and practices
Specific Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and secure a central location to host workshops, meetings etc • Set up facilities and resources for interactive sessions, traditional craft demonstrations, and culinary experiences. • Create partnerships with local artisans, farmers, and cultural organisations to co-develop the authentic, community-led experiences that preserve cultural heritage and promote sustainable practices. Women will be actively engaged (e.g. collaboration with women-led groups and specific workshop topics like weaving) • Organise co-creation sessions with locals to gather ideas and needs. • Conduct training for community members on regenerative tourism practices, hospitality and workshop facilitation. Map and contact qualified trainers/facilitators for regenerative tourism, hospitality and facilitation skills • Organise trainings with the qualified trainers/facilitators • Design and implement thematic workshops on local traditional crafts (e.g., wool weaving, flower dyeing) using sustainable materials.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage tourists in traditional farming, shepherding, foraging (e.g., mushroom hunting) and seasonal harvest events. Develop and implement a strategy to intercept and engage tourists in Living Lab activities (Engage local tourism businesses (hotels, restaurants etc), Promote activities on social media, pop-up info booth during weekends or local events, posters on info-boards) Cooking classes and tasting events featuring traditional recipes, local ingredients and food sustainability practices, featuring traditional recipes, local ingredients, and sustainable food practices, with a focus on climate resilience and biodiversity conservation. Curate storytelling events, folklore nights to deepen cultural immersion. Use social media, eco-tourism networks and local tourism boards to promote the Living Lab. Create multilingual promotional materials targeting environmentally and culturally conscious travellers. Develop feedback collection tools and methods for continuous improvement Collect feedback from participants to refine activities.
Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish the Living Lab Infrastructure Establish partnerships with at least 5 local artisans, cultural organisations Engage at least 30 local residents in initial co-creation sessions Host at least 10 thematic workshops (traditional crafts, agro-tourism, culinary experiences) Reach at least 50 participants on the workshops. Collect feedback from at least 80% of participants (locals and tourists) after each event or workshop.
Location of implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zagori Epirus Greece
Geography and territorial context	Mountain area
Integration of relevant crosscutting	<p>Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation:</p> <p>Use of climate-adaptive resources: Workshops prioritise materials and ingredients sourced from local biological producers using sustainable methods. This reduces dependency on high-emission supply chains and supports local resilience.</p> <p>Climate-focused education: Participants learn low-carbon techniques such as natural dyeing, sun-drying and traditional food preservation. These</p>

workshops highlight their role in reducing emissions and adapting to changing climates.

Sustainable mobility: Visitors are encouraged to use carpooling, bikes, or walking routes. Carpooling incentives and eco-travel tips will be integrated into promotional materials.

Awareness tools: Educational signs during the workshops (e.g., “Your Carbon Savings” cards) will help visitors understand their environmental impact and encourage low-emission choices.

Biodiversity: By integrating workshops inspired by local biodiversity, such as flower impressions and nature-based tourism, the solution raises awareness of ecosystem conservation and promotes eco-friendly land use practices that protect habitats.

Nature-based tourism: Thematic experiences such as mushroom foraging, wild herb walks, and traditional shepherding will be guided by local experts and include educational content on ecosystem preservation and sustainable harvesting.

Eco-crafts: Workshops on natural dyes and flower imprinting will use local plants while raising awareness of their ecological importance and habitat value.

Social Justice and Inclusion: The initiative fosters inclusivity by empowering local residents, artisans, and farmers through co-creation and economic opportunities. It ensures equitable participation and benefits while preserving cultural heritage for all.

The project will proactively engage underrepresented groups—particularly women, youth, long-term unemployed in both the co-design phase and as workshop facilitators or trainees.

Workshops will include specific sessions focused on women’s traditional skills, accessible formats for people with disabilities, and youth-friendly formats.

Feedback forms and participation data will be disaggregated by gender, age, and background. Training sessions will include modules on inclusive facilitation and equity in tourism.

Forms of Innovation considered

Digital & Technological Innovation: Use Instagram and Facebook to post 1-minute videos or photo stories of local facilitators (artisans, farmers, chefs) explaining their craft/workshop. (Mini-Series: “Meet the Makers”)
Place QR codes around the Living Lab space, workshops, that link to the videos
At the end of each workshop, give participants QR codes to a quick digital feedback form (Google Forms)

Technical Innovation: Implementing new and improved methods for sustainable tourism, such as eco-friendly workshop techniques, responsible tourism models and efficient ways to integrate local traditions with modern sustainability practices.

Examples: Instead of simply showcasing traditional recipes, the cooking workshops source ingredients from local biological producers

Instead of using synthetic materials for a traditional dyeing workshop, use locally sourced plant-based dyes and wool collected from traditional livestock farmers.

Social, Organisational & Governance Innovation: Fostering community collaboration, participatory decision-making and new organisational models like sociocracy and non-violent communication principles to ensure inclusivity and fairness.

The Living Lab initiative will be based on a formal partnership model, involving a lead organisation (Social Cooperative Enterprise EMZ) and a network of local stakeholders such as artisans, chefs etc. This will be formalised through Memorandum of Understanding or collaboration agreements outlining clear roles, shared values, and methods of communication.

Place a physical suggestion box, for locals to provide input and stay informed.

Organise informal monthly gatherings where locals (farmers, artisans, youth, elders) can share ideas, provide feedback, and help co-create upcoming workshops.

Create a simple document during the initial meeting that outlines shared values (e.g., respect, fairness, inclusion, openness to feedback).

Adopt sociocratic or consensus-based decision processes that require consent rather than majority votes, ensuring objections are heard and addressed.

The Living Lab itself represent a form of social/ organisational innovation, as this is community-led (more often, this type of infrastructures is established top-down).

Financial & Business Model Innovation: Offer flexible pricing for workshops to include low-income locals, students etc

Set up a transparent system where a percentage of workshop goes directly to the local artisans, farmers, or producers who contribute.

Invite participants to join a low-cost membership program that offers perks (early booking, discounts, special events) and helps fund ongoing activities.

Gender Sensitive Planning aspects

- incorporates gender-sensitive planning by ensuring equal participation of both women and men in the development and implementation of tourism activities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides a platform for empowering women by offering opportunities for them to lead workshops, share knowledge, and showcase traditional crafts such as wool weaving, which may have historically been women's roles in the community. • promotes inclusive decision-making by engaging diverse groups, including marginalised communities, to ensure that all voices, particularly those of women and youth, are heard in shaping sustainable tourism practices. • The workshops and tourism activities are designed to be accessible to all, considering the needs of women, men, and families, with a focus on supporting women's economic participation through entrepreneurship in areas like local crafts, culinary arts, and hospitality.
Resources/Capitals needed	<p>Cultural Capital</p> <p>Available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local expertise in traditional crafts and techniques such as wool weaving, flower pressing, traditional cooking etc • Traditional agro-tourism activities like shepherding, mushroom hunting, and harvesting. <p>Natural Capital:</p> <p>Available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of plants for natural dyes, medicinal herbs and ingredients for traditional recipes. Forests and local landscapes for activities like mushroom hunting and nature walks. • Areas for agro-tourism, including farming and sheep herding. • Rich ecosystems that can be showcased to visitors through environmental workshops. <p>Built Capital:</p> <p>Available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local spaces that can be adapted for workshops <p>Needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated spaces for workshops that are equipped with necessary tools and materials <p>Social Capital:</p> <p>Available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A network of artisans, farmers and culinary experts who can share their skills and products. • Ecomuseum Zagori as potential partner for promoting and preserving the region's cultural and environmental assets. <p>Needed:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding partnerships to include educational institutions and international heritage organisations for knowledge exchange and resources. <p>Human Capital:</p> <p>Available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> local craftspeople and artisans with expertise in traditional crafts, such as weaving, dyeing etc People with deep knowledge of local customs, traditions, and culture. <p>Needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sustainability experts in environmental conservation, sustainable tourism and eco-tourism practices. <p>Financial Capital:</p> <p>Needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential funding from regional government programs or EU grants for cultural and sustainable tourism initiatives. Collaborations with larger tourism agencies or foundations to secure more financial support for growth. <p>Available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> payment from tourists and the revenue from the events/workshops/nature-based and cultural initiatives <p>Data:</p> <p>Available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal knowledge and documentation of local crafts, culinary traditions, and cultural activities.
Main stakeholders involved and their contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> local communities: co-create workshops, share traditional knowledge and engage in tourism activities, ensuring cultural preservation. tourists and visitors: participate in experiences municipality of Zagori: provide support, funding, and promote the initiative. cultural and sustainability experts (university of Ioannina): advise on best practices in sustainable tourism and environmental management. local artists and craftsmen (pokari project, saita lenas, association of women for cooking lessons, Rizareios, Cultural association of Zagori - melina): share knowledge, facilitate workshops local association of the village: provide infrastructure
Main and other Beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local communities (residents, artisans, farmers, etc. tourists and visitors Local government-Municipality of Zagori Local businesses researchers and academics

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other areas facing similar challenges
Target groups at risk of exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women • Young people • Older people • Long-term unemployed • LGBTQA+ • General public
Timeframe (M to M)	<p>Sept 2025 - September 2026</p> <p>Sept-Nov 2025: Secure location, form partnerships with local artisans and groups and plan thematic workshops.</p> <p>Dec- March 2025: Develop first workshops (e.g., crafts, culinary, agro-tourism).</p> <p>April - May 2026: Promotion and outreach</p> <p>June-Aug: Launch and implement workshops</p> <p>April - September 2026: Monitor and refine</p>
Indicative cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • infrastructure & setup: location setup, materials, partnerships €1500 • community engagement & capacity building: workshops, training, community events €2000 • workshops: materials, facilitators €3,000 • marketing & outreach: website, social media, printed materials €1000 • monitoring & management: €2000
Indicative funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU grants and funding programs that support cultural and heritage projects (Creative Europe) • RURACTIVE • National Foundation (Onassis, Bodossaki) • Sponsors • Tourism agencies • Erasmus+ • Payment from tourist and people taking part in the offered activities • Facilitators and participants can sell locally made crafts during workshops. Revenue from the sales of handmade goods will support artisans and provide additional funding for the Living Lab's ongoing activities.
Long Term Impact Assessment	<p>Economic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job opportunities for facilitators, farmers etc (Monitor through agreements with facilitators) <p>Social:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The solution will create a strong sense of ownership and pride among locals, improving social cohesion. • Local residents will gain new skills in tourism management, environmental stewardship, and cultural preservation. • Through collaborative workshops and activities, both locals and visitors will build lasting connections, fostering cultural exchange and understanding. <p>Environmental:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project will promote eco-friendly practices such as waste reduction, sustainable agricultural methods, minimising the ecological footprint of tourism and promoting the conservation of local biodiversity • Through activities like natural dyeing with local plants, mushroom hunting, and guided nature walks, visitors and locals will learn about the region's unique plants and their ecological roles. This will foster a deeper understanding of local biodiversity and the importance of protecting it. <p>Cultural:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional crafts, culinary practices, and cultural activities will be safeguarded and passed on to future generations, preserving the region's heritage. • The project will revive interest in local traditions, ensuring they remain relevant and practiced by younger generations, preventing the loss of cultural identity. • The Living Lab model will increase global awareness of the region's unique cultural heritage, attracting international interest and recognition for its cultural richness.
Communication and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct outreach through phone calls and personal invitations. • Use local networks and partnerships with community leaders, organisations and educational institutions to promote involvement. • Use social media platforms to share updates and events. • Collaborate with local media (radio stations, newspapers, websites) to promote and communicate the solution. • Promote the initiative via cultural tourism platforms to reach a broader audience. • Announce the project at local events and cultural gatherings. • Distribute printed materials in key locations (flyers, posters & word-of-mouth)
Sustainability consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitators will be empowered to form a network (working group under EMZ cooperative established through memorandum of understanding), ensuring the continuity of the Living Lab initiative. This

	<p>network will collaborate to organise future workshops, share best practices, and keep the momentum going, both locally and regionally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Living Lab can be integrated into the Ecomuseum Zagori, creating a long-term structure for preserving and showcasing local heritage. This partnership would provide ongoing visibility, resources, and institutional support for the initiative. • Charging a small fee for workshops (tickets) will provide a sustainable revenue stream to fund future activities. This income can help cover operational costs, facilitator fees and materials for workshops. • Facilitators and participants can sell locally made crafts during workshops. Revenue from the sales of handmade goods will support artisans and provide additional funding for the Living Lab's ongoing activities. • Continued involvement from local artisans, chefs, and farmers will ensure the project remains authentic and rooted in the local culture. The community's active role will also foster a sense of ownership, increasing the likelihood of long-term success and sustainability.
Synergies with other solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pokari Project (αρχική - The Pokari Project) : “The Pokari Project” aims to restore wool’s value. It is an interdisciplinary group mainly based in Greece, consisting of artisans, livestock farmers, and scientists. (Joint wool-related workshops (e.g., felting, natural dyeing). Knowledge-sharing on sustainable wool practices.) • European Wool Day (European Wool Day 2025 Ewe FoundationEuropean Wool Day 2025 Ewe Foundation) : A Europe-wide celebration of wool culture, sustainability, and community heritage. : Use Living Lab as a venue for European Wool Day activities in Zagori. • Joint marketing and storytelling to raise awareness of wool-based tourism and cultural preservation. • Participation in European networks on wool heritage and circular textile practices. • Workshop of Rhythm (Facebook An initiative exploring the relationship between movement, rhythm and learning • Co-facilitation of movement-based learning sessions alongside traditional craft. • Enrichment of visitor experiences through non-verbal, sensory engagement with the landscape and materials. • Inclusion in your well-being or mindfulness strand of regenerative tourism. • Pathways of Art (Solution 2) • Building Memories (Solution 3)

Synergies with local policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Living Lab aligns with local policies aimed at safeguarding cultural traditions and promoting regional identity and with local environmental policies aimed at biodiversity protection. • The solution also complements the Regional Spatial Planning Framework of the Region of Epirus, which emphasises sustainable development, the protection of natural and cultural assets, and enhancing the quality of life for residents. By focusing on slow tourism and alternative tourism, the Living Lab contributes to the upgrading of the region's tourism offerings, promoting a more sustainable and responsible visitor experience that reduces the pressures of mass tourism. • Also, the cultural landscape UNESCO encourages initiatives related to cultural heritage and nature-based tourism
Synergies with EU policies when relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Living Lab supports the goals of the European Green Deal by promoting sustainable tourism and environmentally conscious practices. • It supports the New European Bauhaus initiative by integrating art, culture, and sustainability, aligning with EU efforts to foster creativity and cultural heritage.

6.2. Pathways of Art

Pathways of Art	
Objectives of the solution	<p>General: Revitalise abandoned paths into engaging cultural and artistic spaces that attract both locals and visitors.</p> <p>Specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise path clean-up and maintenance events with local volunteers and visiting artists. • Identify and map 2–3 strategic paths through community consultation that are culturally or environmentally significant. • Install interactive art pieces and along these paths to attract exploration and engagement. <p>General: Preserve and share elders' stories, songs, and traditions, making them accessible to visitors, wider community and future generations. Integrate art inspired by local history and the natural environment into cultural heritage.</p> <p>Specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch a residency program where artists co-create works inspired by local culture and nature. • Require each artist to design at least one site-specific installation directly referencing historical or ecological themes. • Display art in outdoor exhibits

- Foster community engagement and encourage locals to participate in workshops and collaborative projects, strengthening intergenerational bonds and cultural pride.
- Promote sustainable tourism through promoting a year-round attraction that supports eco-friendly, experiential tourism beyond peak seasons

General: Enhance Cultural and Environmental Awareness and educate visitors and residents about the area's traditions, crafts, and natural significance through interactive storytelling and art.

Specific:

- Partner with schools and University to include educational trail visits
- Provide a platform for artists and artisans to showcase their work, fostering creativity and economic opportunities through the exhibition and performances
- Encourage physical activity and outdoor exploration. Inspire people to walk, engage with nature and connect with the landscape in a meaningful way, through the walking trails

**Brief Description
(max 250 words)**

An Art Residency program can transform a neglected path into a vibrant cultural trail, attracting both locals and visitors by inviting artists to create site-specific installations, performances, or exhibitions that celebrate local heritage. This art-filled trail revitalises walking paths, encouraging their preservation while promoting physical activity, engagement with nature and cultural discovery.

As part of the residency, artists collaborate with local communities, especially elders, to record oral histories, capturing elders' stories, songs or traditions. These recordings are then linked to QR codes placed along the trails, allowing visitors to experience the voices of the past while exploring the landscape. In doing so, the project supports social inclusion and intergenerational justice, giving voice to underrepresented narratives and fostering community pride.

Through collaborative workshops and co-created art projects, locals reconnect with their heritage, fostering intergenerational exchange and strengthening community bonds. The art projects will be designed to be gender-inclusive, ensuring equal participation of women, youth, and marginalised groups in shaping the trail and its storytelling. Artists also document the cultural and natural significance of the paths, ensuring the preservation of local traditions while showcasing the area's unique identity. The initiative promotes climate-conscious art practices, using sustainable materials and raising awareness of the area's ecological fragility.

As a year-round attraction, the residency supports sustainable tourism, drawing visitors beyond peak seasons and offering eco-friendly, immersive experiences. It also boosts the local economy while respecting community values and the environment. Artists document and interpret the biodiversity and natural significance of the trails, creating works that encourage conservation and appreciation of the local ecosystem.

By weaving storytelling, creativity, and technology into the landscape, this initiative transforms an abandoned path into living cultural archives. The result is an ever-evolving, interactive experience that ensures both natural and cultural heritage thrive for future generations in the face of climate change and social transformation.

Relevant RDD and RDD subcategory	Nature-based and cultural tourism, Culture and cultural Innovation
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Relevant Challenge/s	Abandoned Old Walking Paths and Community Disengagement Seasonal and unsustainable tourism
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Specific Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify 2-3 paths with the most potential for transformation (culturally significant, scenic, easily accessible). 2. Consult the local community (elders, youth, local leaders) to gather input on which path is most important and what aspects of local culture to highlight. 3. Coordinate with relevant authorities to ensure that the project aligns with regulations and does not disrupt the natural environment. 4. Secure facilities to host artists and workshops, ensuring a suitable space for creative work and community engagement. 5. Establish partnerships with art institutions and experts to facilitate knowledge-sharing through lectures, discussions, and educational programs. 6. Define the residency schedule and structure to provide a clear framework for participating artists and community activities with clear timelines, roles, and expectations for artistic creation, community engagement, and final public presentation. 7. Develop a selection process that prioritises community engagement, cultural relevance, and sustainable artistic practices, including criteria that prioritise experience in community-based or participatory art, a commitment to cultural relevance and sensitivity, use of sustainable materials and practices and interest or
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expertise in themes like climate change, biodiversity, and eco-cultural identity

8. Launch an open call for artists, inviting those who specialise in site-specific installations, performances, and exhibitions related to cultural heritage and the environment, with a clear focus on those whose work engages with environmental storytelling and themes of climate and ecological justice.
9. Organise intergenerational workshops and collaborative sessions where young people and elders exchange stories, songs, and traditions, strengthening cultural identity.
10. Record and archive oral histories of local elders, preserving their stories through digital audio and video formats.
11. Integrate QR codes along the pathways, linking visitors to these recorded oral histories, traditional songs, and storytelling sessions for an interactive experience.
12. Host events and exhibitions along the trails to attract visitors throughout the year, including off-peak seasons.
13. Collaborate with tourism boards and local businesses (restaurants, accommodations, craft shops) to promote the trail as a cultural and historical destination while supporting economic sustainability.
14. Design a monitoring and evaluation plan including Ongoing surveys, feedback forms, and informal interviews with participants and visitors, use of engagement metrics (e.g., workshop attendance, QR code usage, social media reach)
15. Monitor the project's impact on the local community, tourism, and the environment through surveys, feedback, and engagement metrics.

Targets

1. Identify 2-3 abandoned paths for transformation:
 - Conduct at least 3 site assessments to evaluate cultural significance, accessibility and environmental feasibility.
 - Finalise selection of one path based on community input and expert evaluations.
2. Engage the local community to determine cultural highlights
 - Hold at least 2 community consultation meetings with 30+ participants, including elders and youth.
 - Gather at least 20 stories, traditions or key cultural and ecological elements identified for integration into the project.
3. Coordinate with relevant authorities to ensure feasibility
 - Obtain approvals/permits from municipal authorities.
4. Secure facilities to host artists and workshops
 - Identify and confirm at least 1 venue.
5. Establish partnerships with art institutions and experts

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formalise collaborations with at least 2 cultural or educational institutions. <p>6. Define the residency schedule and structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finalise a detailed residency plan with clear milestones. <p>7. Launch an open call for artists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Receive at least 30 artist applications. ● Select 5-7 artists whose work aligns with the project goals. <p>8. Selection process prioritising community engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shortlist and confirm artists within 2 weeks after the application deadline. ● Ensure at least 50% of selected artists have experience with community-based projects. <p>9. Organise intergenerational workshops and collaborative sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct at least 3 sessions, engaging participants across different generations. <p>10. Record and archive oral histories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Record at least 20 oral history interviews with elders. ● Upload and archive at least 15 recordings onto a digital platform accessible via QR codes. <p>11. Integrate QR codes along the pathways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Install at least 15 QR code markers along the selected path and ensure that they function properly. <p>12. Host events along the trail</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organise at least 2 public events (e.g., opening event, artist-led tours). ● Attract a minimum of 100 visitors to the pathways. <p>13. Collaborate with tourism boards and local businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish partnerships with at least 5 local businesses (e.g., accommodations, restaurants, tour guides). <p>14. Monitor the project's impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collect at least 100 visitor feedback responses through surveys.
Location of implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zagori • Epirus • Greece
Geography and territorial context	Mountain area
Integration of relevant crosscutting	<p>Climate change adaptation and mitigation: By revitalising abandoned walking paths through art, this initiative promotes eco-friendly tourism and mobility, encouraging visitors to explore on foot rather than using cars- (monitored through Metrics on visitor transport modes via visitor surveys). The residency can incorporate sustainable materials and environmentally</p>

conscious art practices. Artists are required to use sustainable, local, and biodegradable materials, and the residency promotes environmentally conscious art practices, minimising the project's ecological footprint. Additionally, the program raises environmental awareness by integrating themes of climate change, local ecology, and sustainability into the artistic installations.

Additionally, revitalised trails contribute to ecosystem management, reducing risks of wildfires and soil erosion by maintaining vegetation corridors and discouraging off-path trampling. Specific activities include consultations with forestry/environmental agencies and trail-based maintenance campaigns focused on fire/flood prevention.

Biodiversity: The project protects and enhances natural landscapes by guiding visitors along carefully curated routes that respect and highlight local biodiversity. Artists can work with local conservationists to create installations that educate visitors about native species, traditional ecological knowledge, and land stewardship. By reopening and maintaining paths, the initiative helps prevent environmental degradation and fosters appreciation for nature through creative expression.

Social justice and inclusion: Collaborative workshops allow intergenerational and cross-cultural exchanges, empowering marginalised groups and fostering a sense of ownership and belonging. Additionally, by attracting visitors throughout the year, the program creates economic opportunities for local artisans, businesses, and guides, promoting sustainable livelihoods and reducing reliance on seasonal tourism.

The initiative also addresses land abandonment and rural depopulation by creating new job opportunities for artists, cultural workers, guides, and artisans, which can be tracked from new economic initiatives sparked by the project (e.g., artisan cooperatives, eco-tourism ventures), surveys on resident retention or return, especially among youth,

**Forms of
Innovation
considered**

Digital & Technological Innovation: QR codes linking to oral history recordings and digital storytelling to enhance engagement with heritage.

Technical Innovation: Site-specific art installations designed with sustainable materials, innovative conservation techniques for cultural preservation, and creative documentation of trails through digital and physical media.

Social, Organisational & Governance Innovation: Community-led co-creation of art, intergenerational knowledge exchange through storytelling, participatory workshops, and collaborations between artists, locals, and cultural institutions. The solution promotes community-led governance by forming a Local Cultural Trail Committee made up of residents, elders,

artists, youth, and municipal representatives. This group will oversee project implementation, coordinate artist selection and trail maintenance, co-manage funding proposals and stakeholder relationships. This governance model prioritises participatory planning, shared ownership, and intergenerational exchange, turning the trail into a living commons and not just a one-off project.

Financial & Business Model Innovation: Sustainable tourism model extending beyond peak seasons, local economic stimulation through art-related events, artist residencies and cultural projects. To ensure economic sustainability, the project will pursue a low-budget, diversified model built on hosting artists in short, affordable phases to reduce accommodation costs (partnership with University and Lampriados to offer accommodation). Partnerships with universities or cultural foundations for in-kind support, research grants, or student participation

Gender Sensitive Planning aspects

- Ensure inclusive participation and that women, non-binary individuals and other marginalised gender groups have equal opportunities to participate in the Art Residency, storytelling, and decision-making processes. Actively involve them in workshops, oral history recordings and artistic collaborations to ensure diverse perspectives are represented.
- Prioritise the documentation of women's and gender-diverse individuals' narratives, including their roles in local history, culture and environmental stewardship. Their voices should be highlighted in oral history recordings and artistic interpretations to ensure a more balanced and inclusive heritage representation.
- Encourage artists to explore themes related to gender equality, women's contributions to cultural heritage, and social empowerment through their site-specific installations and performances, fostering awareness and dialogue on gender issues.
- Facilitate intergenerational exchanges where women elders mentor younger generations in storytelling, crafts, and traditional knowledge. Additionally, create spaces for men and boys to engage in gender-awareness conversations, promoting a more equitable and inclusive community.
- Ensure that all workshops are inclusive, welcoming and accessible to people of all genders, considering cultural sensitivities, childcare needs, and work schedules to maximise participation.

Resources/Capitals needed

Cultural Capital

Available:

- Rich local history, tales and traditional practices.

- Traditional crafts and techniques like woodcarving, weaving and other local art forms that can be incorporated into the installations.
- Traditional songs, dances and instruments that can be used for storytelling and artistic performances.
- Unique expressions, sayings and dialects that can be preserved through the residency program.

Needed:

- Historical records like photographs or maps that document the evolution of the paths and the history of points of interest

Natural Capital

Available:

- Rich natural landscapes with forests, rivers and mountains that provide a strong visual and thematic connection to the project.
- Local flora and fauna that can be incorporated into educational and artistic elements.

Natural Resources Needed:

- Sustainable materials for installations (recycled wood, stone, natural dyes).

Built Capital

Available:

- Potential venues for workshops and artist residency and volunteers.
- Existing abandoned pathways with cultural and scenic value.

Needed:

- Signage and minor repairs to make trails more accessible.

Social Capital

Available:

- Local community groups for example cultural associations
- elders' groups and youth from Ioannina city willing to participate.
- Schools and universities with arts, history or sociology programs that can contribute knowledge and research.
- ΕΨΕΠ - Organisation for Psychosocial Research and Intervention

Needed:

- More engagement with national or international tourism boards to market the pathway effectively.
- Artist networks to attract a wider pool of artists interested in site-specific and community-based work.
- Support from local authorities

Human Capital

Available:

- Local artists and craftspeople skilled in traditional and contemporary art forms.
- Elders with deep knowledge of local history.

- Individuals with experience in cultural and heritage projects.
- Environmental specialists to ensure sustainable use of natural landscapes. (eg Northern Pindos Park)
- photographers and geographers to support the evolution of the paths and the history of points of interest

Needed:

- Multimedia and digital storytelling experts: To record and edit oral histories and integrate them with QR codes. (maybe Global Media Girl NGO)
- Volunteers to support clearing and maintaining the path in a sustainable way to ensure accessibility and environmental preservation.

Financial Capital

Available:

- Potential small grants for community-led heritage initiatives from municipal funding?
- Business sponsorships to support the initiative in exchange for visibility?

Needed:

- National and international funding for public art, heritage, and tourism development.
- Crowdfunding or donations to cover artist stipends, trail restoration, and technological integrations.
- Potential sponsors interested in supporting cultural sustainability.
- Small fee/tickets to attend the exhibitions

Data

Available:

- Local knowledge like oral stories, community records etc
- Environmental data about the local ecosystem and biodiversity.

Needed:

- Maps or old photographs that document the original use of these paths.

Main stakeholders involved and their contribution

- Local community & elders: Cultural storytelling, engagement, heritage preservation. (Local Cultural Association of the villages that the path connect)
- Artists & artisans: Create art installations, performances, and workshops – recruited through open call
- University of Ioannina: Provide historical expertise
- Department of Fine Art: Share expertise, network and students.
- PALACE: Provide facility to host the residency
- Municipality of Zagori: Provide approvals, funding and promotion

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Pindos Park: Ensure ecological preservation and provide environmental data. Forestry department: maps, permits Global Girl Media NGO?: develop QR codes, record and archive oral histories. Volunteers (scout troop of Ioannina): Assist in logistics and engagement Schools: Visit the trail Epekeina Hora: Support the organisation of the art residency and host workshops Vikos-Aoos Geopark: provide information and promote the path
Main and other Beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> local community & elders: cultural preservation, intergenerational exchange, community pride, trail conservation, sustainability awareness. artists & artisans: residency opportunities, exposure, funding, creative collaboration, networking. local businesses: increased tourism revenue, new partnerships, new attraction youth & students: cultural education, workshops, potential research opportunities, networking visitors & tourists: interactive cultural experiences, historical education. municipality of Zagori: Benefits from enhanced tourism, cultural preservation and visibility
Target groups at risk of exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women Young people Older people Long-term unemployed LGBTQA+ General public
Timeframe (M to M)	<p>Sept 2025 – June 2026</p> <p>Sept– Oct 2025: Planning & Preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify paths, consult the community and coordinate with authorities <p>Oct-Nov 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure facilities, define the residency schedule and establish partnerships.

	<p>December -January 2026:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch artist recruitment and finalise participants. <p>Feb-March 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean the trail and prepare for artistic interventions. • Promote the project to attract visitors and media attention for the residency. • Record oral histories with elders and community members. • Develop QR codes and integrate digital storytelling along the trail. <p>April 2026: Artist Residency & Public Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artists create site-specific works and installations. • Host workshops, performances, and exhibitions. • Officially launch the trail as an artistic and cultural space. <p>May-June 2026: Sustainability & Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the project's impact and collect feedback. • Strengthen partnerships and secure long-term funding. • Plan for the next residency cycle and ongoing trail use.
Indicative cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of the path, community consultation: €500 • Define residency schedule & structure, manage artists recruitment: €1,000 • Secure facilities for artists (seek in-kind support): €0 • Organise intergenerational workshops: €2,500 • Record and archive oral histories: €2,000 • Infrastructure & trail enhancements (QR code installations, minor trail restorations, and signage): €1,500 • Marketing & promotion (event organisation, digital outreach): €1,000 • Project management & monitoring: €1,500
Indicative funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RURACTIVE • In-kind support from University, Municipality etc • Volunteer work • Crowdfunding • Explore diverse funding opportunities from EU grants, private sponsors, regional funds, cultural institutions.
Long Term Impact Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic: It can create jobs in cultural management, guiding, event planning

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental: The artworks and exhibits created during the residency will be inspired by the natural landscape, flora, and fauna, raising awareness about environmental issues and local ecosystems. • Social: The initiative strengthens community bonds through intergenerational exchange and active local participation. It promotes local pride, well-being through outdoor activity, and gives the community an active role in shaping cultural heritage • Cultural: It preserves intangible heritage (stories, songs, language), supports local artists, and turns the landscape into a living cultural archive.
Communication and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise community meetings to gather community input. • Host interactive sessions where locals can participate in storytelling and cultural activities. • Publish articles in local media (websites, newspapers, radio) • Post engaging content (videos, photos, testimonials) on Instagram and Facebook. • Announce the project at local events and cultural gatherings. • Exhibit a small installation in University of Ioannina to showcase work-in-progress and invite participation. • Distribute printed materials in key locations (flyers, posters & word-of-mouth) • Use local networks and community leaders to spread the word. • Promotion through the Municipality of Zagori email • Use artist networks, residencies, and online platforms (e.g., Art Residencies, Open Calls).
Sustainability consideration	<p>The sustainability of this initiative will be centered on local ownership to ensure long-term impact. A community-led committee will oversee ongoing activities, supported by a toolkit/guide that can be maintained and shared over the years to facilitate continuity. The toolkit will be created to document best practices, operational guidelines, funding strategies, and community engagement methods and shared among committee members to facilitate knowledge transfer and onboarding of new stakeholders.</p> <p>To generate income, the initiative will establish guided tours and cultural events, seek national and EU heritage preservation grants, and engage with corporate sponsors supporting arts and sustainability. Additionally, crowdfunding platforms will be explored to attract global supporters. The art residency will become an annual or biannual event, strengthening the region's cultural presence. A digital archive and QR-coded storytelling will preserve and promote local heritage, while sustainable trail maintenance, in partnership with environmental organisations, will protect the natural landscape. Finally, the partnerships built through this initiative will serve as a foundation for its long-term continuation and potential expansion.</p>

Synergies with other solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LIBRART PERFORMING ARTS ENSEMBLE-Art Walk (share know-how and network) • The installations could be used for the needs of solution 3 (put on abandoned buildings). Also the art path can be part of an activity of the artistic events). • The activities of the Residency program can be connected to the Living lab of the solution 1 (use the same space for the workshop, use the same participants, local artcraft) • Collaborations with the same stakeholders as a continue collaboration from solution 3 e.g Department of Arts of the University
Synergies with local policies	<p>The Region of Epirus prioritie initiatives that promote eco-friendly tourism, cultural engagement, trail restoration and the revitalisation of rural areas. cultural landscape UNESCO encourages initiatives related to cultural heritage and nature-based tourism</p> <p>The Municipality of Zagori aligns closely with the initiative's goals, as it actively supports heritage conservation, sustainable tourism, and the promotion of local culture. Given its focus on preserving Zagori's traditional villages, stone-built trails, and cultural landmarks, this initiative can integrate into existing municipal efforts related to trail restoration, eco-tourism, and community-driven heritage projects.</p>
Synergies with EU policies when relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By combining technology, tradition, and environmental responsibility, this initiative directly contributes to EU priorities on green, digital, and inclusive transitions. • It supports the European Green Deal by encouraging low-impact, eco-friendly tourism, reducing carbon emissions through walking-based exploration, and incorporating sustainable art practices. The project also aligns with the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 by protecting and enhancing natural landscapes, educating visitors on local ecosystems, and promoting responsible land stewardship. • European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage, which emphasises digital innovation, local participation, and heritage-driven sustainable development.

6.3. Building Memories: Revitalising Zagori's Abandoned Buildings

Solution Building Memories: Revitalising Zagori's Abandoned Buildings	
Objectives of the solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revitalise abandoned buildings and transform them into vibrant cultural spaces, bringing new life to these structures while preserving their historical and architectural significance.

- Promote artistic expression by organising open calls for artists, focusing on those with experience in site-specific and heritage-inspired art.
- Use art as a tool for preserving the region's cultural heritage by developing a diverse program of artworks (murals, sculptures, performances) tailored to each building's history and community stories.
- Attract sustainable tourism by turning abandoned buildings into open-air galleries and performance spaces, offering visitors a unique, immersive cultural experience.
Specific: Promote the project through targeted marketing campaigns focusing on eco- and cultural tourism channels.
- Involve local residents in the project, encouraging them to share stories, memories, and ideas that shape the artwork, fostering community ownership and pride in the preservation process.
Specific: Host community meetings to gather local narratives and historical information.
Recruit and train local volunteers to assist in project activities and serve as cultural ambassadors.
- Boost the local economy by attracting tourists and encouraging visitors to explore the area, generating income for small businesses, artisans, and local hospitality services, by organising cultural events centered around the revitalised buildings. Promote local artisans by integrating craft demonstrations and sales in the cultural spaces.
- Position Zagori as an artistic and creative hub, enhancing its reputation and establishing it as a destination for cultural tourism, creativity, and heritage preservation. Specific: Establish a series of events showcasing the project's outputs and attracting regional and international visitors. Network with other cultural heritage and arts initiatives across Greece and Europe for knowledge exchange and joint promotion.
- Promote interdisciplinary art forms (visual arts, performing arts, digital media, crafts).
- Establish a long-term approach to engaging with built heritage through art, ensuring the preservation of both the structures and their cultural value in a sustainable, ongoing manner. Partner with Universities and schools for student involvement and engage young people to manage this as part of school projects.

**Brief Description
(max 250 words)**

This solution proposes transforming Zagori's abandoned buildings into living canvases for artistic expression, breathing new life into these forgotten spaces while preserving their history. Artists, both local and

nomadic, will be invited to create site-specific works inspired by each building's story, engaging the community and visitors in a unique cultural experience.

Art forms will vary, including for example murals, sculptures, short films, theater, music performances, storytelling, wool art, and/or shadow puppetry, fostering interdisciplinary and intergenerational engagement. Each piece will be co-created through community consultation and storytelling sessions, ensuring local voices, memories, and traditions shape the artistic narrative. Each artwork will reflect the building's past, its connection to the landscape, and its potential future.

The project aims to turn abandoned buildings into open-air galleries and performance spaces, attracting sustainable tourism while redefining public art as a tool for heritage preservation.

Inclusivity and gender-sensitive planning will be central to the process, with activities designed to be accessible to women, youth, elderly residents, and marginalised groups. Special focus will be given to showcasing female artists, artisans, and storytellers, and to creating safe, welcoming spaces for all community members to participate.

By integrating environmental consciousness, gender equality, and community empowerment, this initiative positions Zagori as a dynamic cultural hub—preserving its tangible and intangible heritage through sustainable, creative, and socially inclusive practices.

Relevant RDD and RDD subcategory	Nature-based and cultural tourism, Culture and cultural Innovation
Relevant Challenge/s	Reviving abandoned buildings as community hubs Seasonal and unsustainable tourism
Specific Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Map, Identify and select abandoned buildings across Zagori for potential revitalisation with the support of the Municipality of Zagori and cultural associations of the villages. (Prioritise structures based on historical value, safety, accessibility and community interest.) 2. Organise workshops with local residents to gather personal histories, memories and folklore related to each building. 3. Invite artists to propose projects focused on site-specific, heritage-inspired work.. Facilitate collaborations between artists and the community to co-create meaningful works. 4. Develop diverse artworks: murals, sculptures, performances, storytelling events, films and/or other interdisciplinary formats that integrate cross-cutting priorities such as gender equality and climate adaptation.. (Integrate artworks into buildings while preserving architectural integrity.) Encourage artists and architects

	<p>to incorporate nature-based solutions, like climate-conscious sculptures or structures using local materials, which raise awareness of environmental issues while serving functional purposes (e.g. shading, water collection). Ensure works reflect inclusive community voices, especially women and youth, and are embedded into buildings without compromising architectural integrity.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Design an open-Air Gallery /walking route that connect revitalised buildings into a cohesive cultural trail. Organise a series of public events to activate the artworks and engage both locals and visitors (such as performances, storytelling nights, and guided tours) Develop engaging marketing materials (print, digital, social media) to promote the artworks, events and the overall project. Organise school visits to the revitalised sites, using the project as an educational tool to teach students about history, art and sustainability.
Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate at least 15 abandoned buildings for revitalisation Evaluate the project's impact and collect feedback (culture, environment, gender) Select 5 buildings Organise and host 3–5 community workshops to gather stories, folklore and personal memories about those buildings. Receive 10–15 artist proposals from local and external artists Creation of 1 artwork for each building Host 10 events Engage at least 30 participants
Location of implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zagori Epirus Greece
Geography and territorial context	Mountain area
Integration of relevant crosscutting	<p>Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation: The initiative promotes the adaptive reuse of abandoned buildings, reducing the environmental footprint associated with new construction. By revitalising existing structures through artistic interventions, it minimises waste and resource consumption, contributing to more sustainable land use, by turning waste (metal scraps, plastics, textiles) into environmental-themed installations. Artists will be encouraged to design climate-conscious installations using local, sustainable, or recycled materials, and to create structures that provide functional benefits like shading.</p>

	<p>Biodiversity: By integrating nature-inspired art, this solution highlights the ecological richness of Zagori. Some artistic installations could focus on local flora and fauna, raising awareness about biodiversity conservation. Install low-tech audio art that play local bird songs, shepherd's bells. Additionally, repurposed buildings can be used as nature interpretation centers, hosting educational activities on local ecosystems and transhumance traditions that have historically shaped the region's biodiversity.</p> <p>Social Justice and Inclusion: This initiative empowers artists, local communities, and marginalised groups, including young creatives, elderly storytellers, and nomadic artists, by giving them a platform to share their perspectives. By engaging a diverse range of voices, it fosters social cohesion and ensures that Zagori's cultural narrative is collectively shaped. Dedicate one wall of each revitalised building as a "Community Expression Wall" where local residents (of all ages and backgrounds) can contribute drawings, symbols, or handprints. Use art like shadow puppetry, theater, or movie night to stage short plays about inclusion, gender roles, or climate change.</p>
Forms of Innovation considered	<p>Digital & technological innovation: use of digital artworks</p> <p>Technical innovation: use of sustainable materials for artistic work interdisciplinary artistic collaborations integrating traditional and modern media.</p> <p>Social, organisational & governance innovation: community involvement in art creation, participatory cultural events and partnerships between artists, locals and heritage organisations.</p> <p>Financial & business model innovation: sustainable tourism through year-round artistic events</p>
Gender Sensitive Planning aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The solution ensures equal participation and gender equality in artistic creation. Public art installations and performances provide an opportunity to address gender issues in the community. By highlighting gender equality themes in some of the art, the project can raise awareness about gender roles and help challenge traditional stereotypes in the region. To operationalise these goals, the project will include at least one dedicated artistic action focused on women's and/or gender-diverse narratives. Engaging an all-women artist collective (local or regional) to lead a dedicated project, such as a mural, textile installation, or performance, based on women's stories in Zagori (e.g., motherhood, rural labour, resistance). • It promotes empowering women through art • It incorporates gender-sensitive planning by ensuring that the spaces created for artistic and cultural events are safe and accessible for

	<p>everyone, regardless of gender and that activities are designed to be inclusive for all members of the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach strategies will intentionally engage women in rural and underrepresented groups. • A key indicator will be the number and percentage of women and non-male-identifying artists involved.
Resources/Capitals needed	<p>Cultural Capital</p> <p>Available: traditional Crafts, stories, folklore, music,</p> <p>Needed: Artists with expertise in various contemporary art forms (e.g., murals, digital art, interactive installations) to integrate modern art with local culture. Cultural experts who can assist in ensuring the correct representation of local traditions and heritage.</p> <p>Natural Capital</p> <p>Available: rich natural landscape, including mountains, forests, rivers and villages, which provide an immersive backdrop for revitalising the buildings.</p> <p>Needed: sustainable infrastructure and resources that support eco-friendly practices</p> <p>Built Capital</p> <p>Available: Abandoned Buildings that will be revitalised into cultural spaces and performance venues.</p> <p>Needed: Additional built infrastructure (e.g., outdoor stages) for performances, workshops and exhibitions.</p> <p>Social Capital</p> <p>Available: local cultural associations which will provide support, knowledge, and local expertise. Community networks that can help engage residents in sharing their stories, organising events and supporting the project.</p> <p>Needed: Partnerships with national cultural organisations, museums and national heritage institutions to expand the project’s reach.</p> <p>Human Capital</p> <p>Available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Artists with expertise in traditional and contemporary art, who can create the site-specific works that will form the backbone of the revitalisation. • Local historians, architects and other experts who can provide insights into the cultural significance of the buildings.

- Experienced local professionals who can help coordinate workshops, performances and events e.g.: art exhibitions curators, museologists, cultural event managers, etc.

Needed:

- A network of volunteers for event management and assisting with workshops etc.
- Professionals to help promote the project

Financial Capital

Available:

- In-kind support such as donated materials, tools, or space use by local municipalities and residents
- Voluntary contributions of time and skills from local artists, craftspeople, youth groups, and civil society organisations
- revenue that might derive from events and activities involving paying participants
- EU and international cultural funding (e.g. Creative Europe)
- In-kind support from universities or art schools, such as student residencies, research partnerships, or internships

Needed:

- Sponsorship from arts organisation (e.g. Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Onassis Foundation etc)
- Support from local and national government initiatives aimed at preserving cultural heritage and promoting tourism such as the Greek Ministry of Culture

Data

Available: Information on the abandoned buildings, including historical significance, architectural styles and previous uses, which will guide the revitalisation process.

Needed: Detailed plans of the abandoned buildings to plan the integration of artworks.

Main stakeholders involved and their contribution

- Local residents that will be the custodians of their heritage, sharing stories, memories and local knowledge that inspire the artwork and guide the selection of buildings
- Local cultural associations of the villages to provide info on the available building and share their contacts and knowledge
- Artists that will develop site-specific artworks
- Municipality of Zagori to give necessary permits
- Cultural Association of Zagori (MELINA) (Architects and cultural experts) to ensure that the revitalisation of buildings maintains their

	<p>historical integrity and complies with heritage preservation standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Fine Art – University of Ioannina to provide educational resources, research, and possibly even students or faculty to assist in creating or evaluating the artworks. • Epekeina hora and Aristi Mountain Resort to support the workshops and events organisation • Schools & Educational Institutions: Organise school visits to the revitalised sites, using the project as an educational tool to teach students about history, art and sustainability. • Local agricultural providers to participate by providing traditional products (cheese, herbs etc.) for the events, creating an authentic experience for visitors.
Main and other Beneficiaries	<p>local residents: Increased cultural pride and active participation in heritage preservation.</p> <p>Artists: Creative expression, increased exposure, collaboration with the community to create site-specific art, expand their network.</p> <p>Local businesses: increased visitors</p> <p>Municipality of Zagori: Economic growth, enhanced cultural reputation and long-term sustainable tourism development.</p> <p>Visitors and tourists: Unique cultural experiences, historical immersion</p> <p>Cultural associations of the villages: visibility, support for heritage preservation and new partnerships for cultural initiatives.</p> <p>Educational institutions: Learning opportunities, practical engagement in art and heritage and fostering community pride in the younger generation.</p>
Target groups at risk of exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women • Young people • Older people • Long-term unemployed • LGBTQA+ • General public
Timeframe (M to M)	<p>July 2025 – September 2026</p> <p>July – October 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and select abandoned buildings • Initial community engagement • Collection of information for each building <p>November 2025 – February 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artists selection and community co-creation sessions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of project designs and approval of permits <p>March – June 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of artworks (murals, installations, performances) • Coordination with local businesses and event planning <p>July – September 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch artworks and host main events • Guided tours, performances and community celebrations • Communication campaign & documentation of outcomes • Evaluation
Indicative cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and select abandoned buildings (€1000): Site visits, documentation, coordination meetings. • Community workshops & story collection (€1500): Hosting 2–3 workshops, basic materials, facilitation, refreshments. • Invite artists & co-creation process (€2000): Artist outreach, coordination with locals. • Develop and implement artworks (€3000): Materials, modest artist fees, support for installation • Organise cultural events (€2000): Basic logistics, local performers, promotion. • Develop marketing materials (€500): Posters, social media content
Indicative funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RURACTIVE • Municipality of Zagori • Cultural Associations • Small-scale cultural heritage or rural revitalisation grants (e.g., LEADER, Creative Europe, Ministry of Culture programs). • Contributions from hotels, restaurants etc (e.g., Aristi Resort in exchange for visibility during events). • Crowdfunding /donations • In-kind support • Volunteers • Bodossaki – Support Points • Tickets from participants
Long Term Impact Assessment	<p>Economic: job creation for artists and a boost to small enterprises like artisans</p> <p>Environmental: Integration of eco-friendly materials and sustainable practices in artistic interventions</p>

	<p>Raised environmental awareness among residents and visitors</p> <p>Social:</p> <p>Strengthened community cohesion, increased local pride and enhanced cultural identity through active participation in the initiative.</p> <p>Ongoing involvement of residents, especially through storytelling and workshops, will foster a sense of ownership and improve social integration, while creating new opportunities for youth and marginalised groups.(Active engagement of youth, women, and marginalised groups)</p> <p>Cultural:</p> <p>Preservation of local heritage and traditions through art, storytelling, and cultural events. The solution fosters a renewed appreciation for Zagori's history, providing a platform for its cultural expressions to be shared with a global audience.</p> <p>The project reinforces local traditions while incorporating contemporary art, ensuring the continued relevance of cultural practices across generations.</p>
Communication and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise workshops in local gathering to keep residents informed and involved. • Use Social Media platforms to share updates and events. • Collaborate with local media (radio stations, newspapers, websites) to promote and communicate the solution. • Direct outreach through phonecalls and personal invitations. • Use local networks and partnerships with community leaders, organisations and educational institutions to promote involvement. • Promote the initiative via cultural tourism platforms, festivals, and media outlets to reach a broader audience. • Announce the project at local events and cultural gatherings. • Distribute printed materials in key locations (flyers, posters & word-of-mouth)
Sustainability consideration	<p>fostering local community involvement, securing partnerships with key stakeholders, and diversifying funding sources. The active participation of residents, the ongoing attraction of cultural tourism, and the establishment of an organisational structure for long-term oversight will ensure that the initiative continues to thrive well beyond its initial implementation.</p>
Synergies with other solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with the Department of Fine Arts of the University of Ioannina • Bagamonto • Kopi Ioannina • Synergy with solution 2. Integrate the pathway of art into a cultural event in combination with the buildings repurposing • Antrala Puppet Theater

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zagoriwood
Synergies with local policies	<p>Building Memories aligns with local policies focused on preserving cultural heritage, promoting sustainable tourism, and fostering economic growth through cultural activities.</p> <p>It also aligns with the National Smart Specialisation Strategy which is Greece's strategic framework for regional innovation and development. It focuses on sustainable development, climate adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and social inclusion. The strategy encourages innovation in key sectors, promotes the participation of underrepresented groups, and supports projects that drive economic growth and resilience.</p>
Synergies with EU policies when relevant	<p>It contributes to the European Cultural Heritage Strategy, the European Green Deal and it complements the EU Creative Europe Program, which supports cultural and artistic initiatives that foster creativity, innovation, and cultural exchange.</p>