



gaia
YES!

APPLICATION IN
INFORMAL EDUCATION

*An Erasmus youth exchange
guided by Gaia Youth and
inspired by Gaia Education*



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Gaia Youth- Youth in Permaculture Youth Exchange, Italy



GAIA YES! Curriculum and Guide resources were created to be used in both formal and informal educational environments and programs. Informal learning environments can include after school programs, summer camps, and activities such as youth exchanges and youth workshops. Every year thousands of youths all over Europe participate in Erasmus funded youth exchanges and many of these youth exchanges have sustainability and skills for building a better future at the heart of their program and activities.

The holistic and connected modular approach provided in Gaia YES! allows users the flexibility to share the Curriculum in any order, and to any depth that suits their circumstance. The Curriculum could be applied though weekly after school sections, or during a summer camp, or as a guide to laying out a ten day youth exchange.

Below we share an example of the Gaia Dimension and Modules applied to an Erasmus Youth Exchange in Italy shortly after one of the first Gaia Youth meetings held in Estonia which lead up to the Gaia YES! project. We have requests for Gaia YES! resources for the next round of Youth Exchanges from youths and youth workers alike.



Estonia, 2017 Gaia Youth meeting

In the summer of 2017 Gaia Education and Gaia Kool in Estonia organized an international workshop that brought together organizations who had been using and developing Gaia Education in their own formal and informal educational settings with youth and children. Participants from many countries (including Brazil, Argentina, Spain, Estonia, Scotland, England and India) gathered to share their experiences and ideas and help develop materials to make Gaia EDE curriculum more accessible to youth educators.

One of the participants in the Estonia meeting was Permaculture Mediterranea (PermaMed), a non profit permaculture education association which runs an informal hands on education program aligned with and inspired by Gaia Education and permaculture. PermaMed has an active youth program, and after participating in the meeting in Estonia, decided to use the Gaia Education format as part of a Gaia Youth certified, and Erasmus sponsored, youth exchange program partnering with eight other European youth organizations in Cavagnolo, Italy. This was the first certified Gaia Youth program in Europe. The guiding requirements included facilitation by Gaia EDE certified participants and providing a holistic approach to sharing the four Gaia Education dimensions with youth, with a group project presentation to weave the Gaia materials and methods together.



Gaia Education and permaculture educators and youth leaders from Italy, Slovenia, Spain, Macedonia, Portugal, Romania and UK, partnered in providing this Erasmus youth exchange. The impetus of the youth exchange was inspired in response to the demand we had been receiving from many of our youths and youth educators for permaculture and Gaia Education resources to be made more readily available to them. The Erasmus Youth Exchange program provided an opportunity to share Gaia EDE resources from multiple countries with youth and youth leaders in a residential and informal education setting at a remote rural farmhouse estate in Italy.

The partners co-designed the program to include all four dimensions and selected activities from the modules that were appropriate for the venue and timeline. PermaMed worked with Gaia Education and developed the program content and followed the provided guidelines to meet a certified Gaia Youth Event. Gaia Education developed and provided a logo for use and basic guidelines and reviewed the proposed content. At the end of the ten day project 58 youths were awarded Gaia Youth certification certificates along with their Erasmus Youths Pass as a reflection of their participation and sustainability projects.



This dynamic youth exchange included a variety of activities from all four Gaia Education Dimensions, (Ecology, World View, Social and Economic) and modules for the youth leaders and participants. Since several of the youth leaders had already run or participated as facilitators in Gaia EDE courses, it was easier to convey the Gaia Dimension themes using Gaia facilitation methods. In addition to sharing Gaia Education curriculum content, the youth exchange provided the opportunity to demonstrate the Gaia holistic approach to presenting the content through “heart, head, and hands” experience learning activities. For example, rather than a lecture on how to make compost, we made it, or to share the importance of attentive listening we practiced methods of active supportive listening to each other in small groups. Sociocracy and other power sharing and decision making tools were demonstrated to be applied during small group project development.



The youth were divided into smaller groups of approximately 15 to join in rotating simultaneous workshops, many offered by the youths themselves. In larger groups we used “Open Cafe” or “Open Space” type tools to share and facilitate discussion and project

development. Much like a Gaia EDE or Permaculture Design Certification (PDC) course the youth exchange wove the Gaia Curriculum themes together through a group project that was presented toward the end of the program. During the youth exchanges youth meet regularly in small groups to design and create sustainability projects that they would try to implement on their return to their home country.

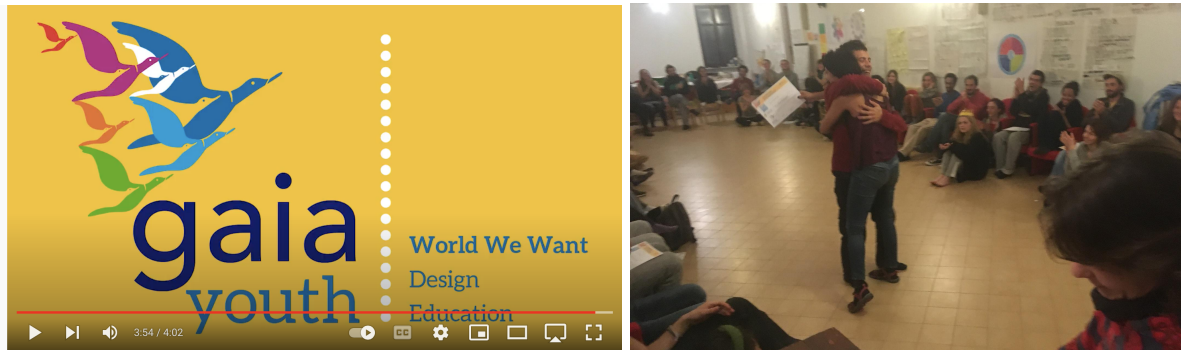
These projects were designed using permaculture and holistic management tools, including a vision, mission and goals for the project, timelines, resources, and roles etc.. These projects were then presented to the whole group on the last days using creative, often playful ways of capturing and sharing the project they presented. Many of these projects were successfully implemented upon their return. One such project, Jóvenes en Permacultura, is still active and continues to receive multiple grant awards and media coverage.

In summary, the Gaia EDE four dimension and modules curriculum inspired and guided the activities included in the youth exchange. In particular, the holistic “Heads, Heart, and Hands” approach used in facilitating the uptake of these resources and sharing them within dynamic and interactive activities is what engaged the participants. This congruence between “what” is learned and “how” it is learned is key to the power of Gaia Education inspired teaching and learning and integral to Gaia YES!

We hope by sharing this experience others can use the GaiaYES! Curriculum and Guide to help develop and implement youth exchanges and other informal learning programs that engage, inspire, and empower youth workers and youths with holistic design and sustainable living skills and tools.

At the end of the project one of the youth *Damian Miesak* and several youth participants created a video to capture their experience:

Erasmus Youth Exchange “It's our Future”. See video here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqVaLi0EWqQ> (*Damian Miesak*)



Quotes from participants:

"This permaculture youth exchange was a 10 day program gathering youth from all around Europe. Youth in Permaculture (YiP) and Gaia Youth are initiatives to support and empower youth and young adults to create resilient, fulfilling and fun lives inspired by permaculture and sustainability. The youth exchange proved to be extremely empowering both for the participants and the facilitators. It offered us an environment where we could meet people who share our passion for permaculture and sustainable living and where we could create partnerships and lifelong friendships. During the intensive programme there were interactive workshops about permaculture, sociocracy, a sustainable lifestyle and nature awareness. The workshops covered different aspects such as: Bio-construction and upcycling, renewable energy sources, food cultivation & composting, and economy. We also went deeper into the social aspects of permaculture under the topics of self-care, communication and relationships. We learned practical tools to help us design projects and started to implement these new skills in practice in small groups. We came up with a variety of ideas and plans for projects from online-tools and platforms to concrete permaculture center projects. Together we can make this world a better place, step by step"

Henkilön, Youth in Permaculture Kuva.

" In the youth exchange in Torino, I experienced an amazing time with inspiring and extraordinary people with a lot of knowledge to share. The programme was full of interesting subjects, very well facilitated, great conditions and food. This youth exchange was a good opportunity to improve my knowledge about sustainability and permaculture and world views of cultures from different countries, to make good friends and to help me decide what to do next. I'm very glad for this experience. Thank you Gaia Youth and YIP (Youth in Permaculture)! "

Nelson 21, Portugal.

