



FORM BEST PRACTICES CONTEST 2026

Municipality Cittaslow Yeniboğaziçi Municipality **Country** North Cyprus

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Name project

Making Peace with Nature: Heirloom Seeds for Sustainable and Resilient Living

Category Certification Criteria: mark the category of your project

- ☒ **Energy and environmental policies (politiche energetiche e ambientali);**
☐ Infrastructure policies (politiche infrastrutturali);
☒ **Quality of urban life policies (politiche per la qualità urbana);**
☒ **Agricultural, touristic and artisan policies (politiche agricole, turistiche, artigianali);**
☐ Policies for hospitality, awareness and training (politiche per l'ospitalità, la consapevolezza e la formazione);
☐ Social cohesion (coesione sociale).

Summary project

This project carried out in Yeniboğaziçi is a long-term environmental and educational initiative aimed at raising public awareness about sustainable living, combating climate change, preserving biodiversity, and safeguarding heirloom seeds for future generations. As part of the project, the volunteer-based Cittaslow Yeniboğaziçi Environmental Initiative was activated to strengthen local participation and community solidarity.

The project aimed to reconnect different segments of society—especially children, young adults, local community—with nature through hands-on educational activities, seed planting and harvesting events, workshops, panels, and festivals.

Centered around a seed garden, the project was designed to allow children to directly experience production processes, build stronger connections with nature, and develop awareness about healthy living and sustainable agriculture. In addition, preserving heirloom seeds, encouraging individual gardening practices, and creating climate-resilient communities were among the project's main priorities.

Within the scope of the project, various seed beds were prepared in the seed garden, a drip irrigation system was installed, and infrastructure for permaculture and composting practices was developed. Preparations were also made for heirloom seedling production, and solar panel infrastructure was established to support sustainable energy transition. Furthermore, the necessary arrangements for environmental and agricultural workshops to be held in indoor and outdoor spaces were completed.

Goal project

Through this project, it was aimed to:

- Raise public awareness about climate change and its impacts
- Strengthen the relationship between humans and nature and promote a lifestyle in harmony with nature
- Develop awareness of sustainable living among children, youth, and adults
- Emphasize the importance of heirloom seeds and encourage their use
- Support local production, good agricultural practices, and sustainable agriculture



- Enable children to learn by experiencing the natural process from seed to production
- Build climate-resilient communities and support adaptation processes
- Raise awareness about healthy living and longevity (long and high-quality life)
- Increase community participation by encouraging individual gardening practices
- Strengthen future generations' relationship with the environment, production, and biodiversity

The main approach of the project is centered on the theme of “**making peace with nature,**” encouraging lifestyles and production practices that live in harmony with the natural world.

Result project

Within the scope of the project, numerous hands-on activities involving children, youth, and adults have been carried out, and these initiatives continue in a sustainable manner. As part of the project, the volunteer-based Cittaslow Yeniboğaziçi Environmental Initiative was activated, with weekly meetings and activities being regularly planned and organized.

In December 2025, a practical seed planting event was organized in the seed garden with the participation fourth- and fifth-grade primary school students and teachers. Before the activity, students were asked questions such as “What is a seed?”, “Why are seeds important?”, “What is climate change?”, and “Why is sustainable living necessary?” Their level of knowledge was assessed and missing information was addressed. Afterwards, coriander, arugula, and broad bean seeds were planted in the garden beds, while onions and garlic were also planted. The children were given practical information about irrigation, maintenance, and production processes.



In March 2026, the same group of students gathered again in the seed garden, where the growth processes of the previously planted seeds were observed on-site. The children monitored the development stages of the plants and harvested the grown coriander and arugula, taking the products home with them. As part of the activity, lavender, lilies, and various perennial flowers were planted, along with lettuce, tomato, and pepper seedlings. Through this family-inclusive event, not only children but also their families were encouraged to reconnect with nature.



During a later harvest event, the products of plants cultivated in previous periods were collected,



and the life cycle of coriander and arugula—from seed to seed—was observed through hands-on experience. Different varieties of lettuce were harvested, allowing students to directly experience the production process. In this way, children learned by experiencing the full cycle of a plant, from planting to seed production, and gained an understanding of the importance of this process for the environment, society, and a sustainable future.

Additionally, seed balls were prepared together with the students using sunflower seeds, encouraging the spread of seeds and supporting students in planting them at home, thereby extending the learning experience beyond the school environment.



One of the project's major events, the "Seed Exchange Festival" and the panel titled "The Importance of Seeds and Biodiversity in the Climate Crisis," was organized in collaboration with Cittaslow Yeniboğaziçi Municipality, Slow Food Salamis, EKODER. During the event, expert speakers delivered presentations on climate crisis, biodiversity, agroecology, local production, and cooperatives. Participants from different segments of society attended the event. Following the panel, a festival was held featuring heirloom seed exchange stands, children's workshops, recycling activities, folk dance performances, local product stands, and music performances. Citizens participated in free seed exchanges, contributing to the preservation and dissemination of heirloom seeds.



Through these activities, children's environmental awareness increased, families strengthened their relationship with nature, and a stronger public awareness of sustainable living began to develop within the community.

Finance (costs and benefits)

The project was implemented through a cost-effective and sustainable approach by combining financial support with in-kind contributions. Approximately 250 USD was allocated for seedling



procurement, while seeds were obtained through free seed-sharing initiatives and local contributions. Around 5,000 USD was projected for the solar panel system. The prefabricated structure was provided free of charge, and existing municipal materials and equipment were utilized for flooring and infrastructure works. Approximately 2,000 USD was used for sound system rental and the transportation and hosting of guests.

The use of existing municipal resources throughout the project contributed to reducing costs while also promoting community solidarity, local cooperation, and sustainable resource use.

Applications such as solar panels supported environmental sustainability, while seed-sharing and seedling activities increased awareness of local production and biodiversity conservation.

Staff (staff involved and use of time)

Mehtap Sayiner – Cittaslow Yeniboğaziçi Coordinator
Esen Beyköylü- Cittaslow Yeniboğaziçi Municipality Councilor
Dr. Özge Cumaoğulları Eker (PhD) Eastern Mediterranean University
Umut Kurşun- Slowfood Salamis, Chairman
Nermin Kandili- Slowfood Salamis, Co-chairman
Yeniboğaziçi Municipality Staff

Additional information (if necessarily)

The Seed Garden was established in Yeniboğaziçi to promote sustainable living and environmental awareness and has been reactivated and further developed over the past year. The garden hosts hands-on educational activities, programs for children and youth, sustainable agriculture practices, and community-based events. There is additional information about the Reşat Bergen Seed Garden:

Reşat Bergen (Richard) and the Reşat Bergen Seed Garden

Reşat Bergen (Richard) was one of the important environmental volunteers in the TRNC who carried out significant work in the fields of nature conservation, organic agriculture, heirloom seeds, and sustainable living. He became well known for his seed garden initiatives in the Yeniboğaziçi region and devoted many years to protecting local seeds, preserving natural production culture, and promoting lifestyles in harmony with nature. Reşat Bergen passed away on October 7, 2019.

In order to honor and continue his contributions to nature, production, and public awareness, the previously established Cittaslow Yeniboğaziçi Seed Garden was renamed the Reşat Bergen Seed Garden in December 2020.

The Reşat Bergen Seed Garden aims to preserve heirloom seeds, support organic farming practices, provide ecological education for children and youth, and transfer the culture of sustainable living to future generations. It also serves as an exemplary Cittaslow project that keeps Reşat Bergen's environmentally respectful philosophy alive and connects it with the community.

Future Goals of the Project

Future objectives of the project include:

- Transforming the seed garden into a sustainable community garden model
- Encouraging active participation not only from children but also from youth and local residents
- Strengthening community solidarity and neighborhood culture
- Expanding environmental, agricultural, and production-themed workshops in indoor and outdoor spaces
- Promoting compost production, good agricultural practices, and sustainable energy



systems

- Conducting educational activities about local products, heirloom seed-based production, and healthy nutrition

As part of the sustainable energy transition, a solar panel system and drip irrigation system have been implemented in the garden, while infrastructure for heirloom seedling production, composting, and permaculture practices continues to be developed.

The project also supports broader goals related to healthy living, nature-friendly production, and leaving a livable environment for future generations.

Link website

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DWEEWCOjKyd/?igsh=cWJkZ3ZoZGw2Mmh2>

<https://share.google/bjt2Rtf7sAp6CzOXA>

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Once filled in this form please send it to: info@cittaslow.net

- Participation Deadline, 19 May 2026 -