



Social innovation training

A journey through sustainability

On the 19 and 26 September, AEIDL organised two introductory workshops on the "Evoneers' Journey", a training programme for entrepreneurs and project promoters wishing to work in a more sustainable way. Further workshops are planned for November and December at AEIDL. They are a taster version of the full programme, which will be delivered over five days in January and February 2018.

Patrizia Brandellero, AEIDL

Have you ever wanted to go on a holiday that truly respects the local environment, economy and culture? Would you like to see new approaches to elderly care, which empower rather than imprison older people? And what if a permaculture garden could bring cohesion to a multicultural local community? These are just some examples of projects discussed at the Evoneers workshops.

Over two days in September, more than twenty participants met at AEIDL in Brussels to share ideas on sustainable projects. Using the Evoneers' Journey (EJ) curriculum, developed during the [SIRClE project](#), as a guide, participants travelled together for a few hours, building connections and sharing ideas on effective and economically sustainable grassroots responses to climate and social challenges.

The projects discussed focused on engaging in activities that make a difference, that address challenges associated with modern life, such as burnout, unfulfilling jobs, feelings of being detached from our natural environment, social disconnection, and the struggle many experience to find a meaningful way to make a living.

The free half-day workshops are an introduction to the full training course, which AEIDL piloted in 2016, in Belgium, and is now offering. Participants are invited to come with a project idea and work through [the nine EJ stepping stones](#), moving through different stages of project definition and implementation, stopping to see where they are, what is calling them next, and what is needed to take that leap.

The curriculum includes tools such as:

- an introduction to the Social Business Model Canvas (<http://www.socialbusinessmodelcanvas.com/>) and how to map out one's project, in terms of value proposition, resources, partners, financial targets...
- assessing how projects address and contribute to sustainable development
- balancing personal priorities with community and world vision
- project pitching and communicating one's ideas.

Workshops so far have shown a clear interest from social entrepreneurs to create peer networks, to support, share and coach each other, confirming the sense that 'we are not alone'. As facilitators, the AEIDL team underline the importance of bringing new tools and methodologies to participants to help them take ownership of and bring their projects out into the world.

Pilot training programmes organised in six EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Romania, United Kingdom) attracted over 200 participants, including 35 in Belgium. Follow-up evaluations show that the EJ improved participants' belief in their chance of success.

Belgium was the country where, six months after the training, most participants reported having taken concrete steps to implement the project or idea developed during the EJ. Some of these projects are already up and running, but the majority are being further developed, based on learning from the training. Some are still in design phase. Below you can find examples of the variety of projects supported through the EJ.

The main lesson from the pilots is that entrepreneurs need more ongoing support, beyond training such as the EJ. This could involve extending the duration of the training, or providing follow-up coaching and mentoring as the project evolves. The availability of legal and fiscal advice was also seen as lacking, and stronger links could be made to other training programmes or organisations providing such advice. Finally, most project promoters also find it difficult to access seed funding and funding for scaling-up projects. Some pilots decided to introduce on-the-spot crowd-funding to encourage the most inspiring projects.

More half-day workshops in Belgium will be offered free of charge by AEIDL, on the 17 November and 6 December, as already [announced on AEIDL's website](#) and on social media.

The full, five-day version of the Evoneers' Journey will be given at AEIDL on the 27-28 January and the 9-11 February 2018. Registration will open soon. The training will offer the possibility for group work and individual work and support as well as coaching support in between dates. Note that a registration fee will be applied and that the numbers of places available is limited.

If you wish to participate in a half-day workshop or in the full training, please contact Eveline Durieux at edu@aeidl.eu

Evoneers' Journey snapshots

Roots, Fruits & Leaves



This project participated in the UK pilot and addresses the lack of nutritious, locally grown, high quality food, and the poor remuneration and working conditions for local vegetable growers.

Roots, Fruits & Leaves provides access for all to fresh, healthy, affordable, local, seasonal and organically grown fruit and vegetables. It also aims to ensure that the people who grow this food receive a fair and sustainable price for their produce – creating a strong and resilient local food network. A weekly selling system and customisable vegetable box scheme has been created with a flexible online ordering system.

<http://www.rootsfruitsandleaves.co.uk/>

Natural Living Belgium



Natural Living Belgium was one of the case studies that participated in the EJ in November 2016. It now hosts permaculture activities, biodynamic gardening, natural construction workshops and other personal development workshops. The longer term aim is to become an intergenerational intentional community in the heart of Belgian Limburg.

<https://www.Facebook.com/NaturalLivingBelgium>

More Than One Perspective (MTOP)



The pilots in Austria focused mainly on support to one of the most vulnerable groups in society, namely migrants and refugees. Because of the refugee crisis, many academics have been entering Austria in search of a new life. However, tailored support for their entrance into the labour market in Austria has been lacking. More Than One Perspective (MTOP) supports refugee academics to better settle in their new country of residence, providing German language classes, individualised training and personal coaching to ease the transition to their new life.

MTOP is now up and running and is financed through public funding and through corporations that are looking for well-trained academic staff. The project recently won an entrepreneurship prize in Austria.

<http://mtop.at>

Refugees Learn



Refugees Learn is a voluntary organization operating in the Tyrol region in Austria. Its goal is to support refugees and migrants setting in Europe by providing a space for cultural exchange, orientation in their new society and integration into the labour market. The organisation focuses in particular on the organisation, coordination and delivery of individual and group German language courses. The idea is also to build a community of exchange and trust. Refugees Learn seeks motivated German speakers to provide this support, and encourages migrants with a good level of German to also partake and support new migrants.

<http://refugeeslearn.at>

Transitando



Transitando is an association dedicated to promoting and disseminating socio-ecological scientific research and findings to society and policy-makers in order to make urban areas more resilient and sustainable.

The products and services provided include the following:

- designing and delivering training courses on urban sustainability from a socio-ecological perspective aimed at policy-makers, technicians, urban professionals, students and citizens;
- developing educational programmes, workshops, activities, materials and campaigns;
- carrying out applied research in urban ecology and developing socio-ecological assessments at the local and regional scale;
- facilitating participatory processes to transform urban areas.

<http://transitando.org/>

Aúna



In Spain, Aúna helps initiatives with a social purpose to enhance their mission through knowledge and social innovation. To do this, they connect the resources and knowledge of institutions and professionals with the needs of social organizations through three main axes of work: designing national and international projects through training and mentoring; collecting learning from volunteer projects to create new projects and products with high social impact; and stimulating a network of institutions and experts that generates social innovation and acts as a platform for dialogue and exchange.

<http://auna.org.es/>

Oxigénio



In Portugal, Oxigénio facilitates workshops for the general public, educational organisations and individuals, which contribute to increasing self-awareness, enhancing empathy and developing collaboration skills.

The introductory and advanced workshops focus on Authentic Communication, Mindfulness, and Non-Violent Communication. The project also runs a Mindful & Empathy Café and Circle (community of practice) and offers coaching and conflict mediation sessions for individuals or organisations. All activities are on and offline.

<https://www.facebook.com/projetooxigenio>

Serendipity – Creating sustainable clothing



One of the project owners is developing an eco-friendly and resilient textile and fashion design business in Belgium.

The aim is to produce equitable and sustainable hand-made clothing, from seed to final garment, through the production of sustainable textiles. The project seeks to address issues of waste, reduce carbon emissions and promote textile relocalisation, local economic development, dissemination of know-how on fabric production and crafts, and awareness raising on environmental and social issues in the textile industry.

The approach supports local resilience and partnerships between farmers, craft persons and designers. Following the EJ training, the project was successfully selected to be supported and hosted in a new craft community centre in the Condroz region, in Wallonia.

<http://www.petitemasque.be/>

<http://lechasduwarchais.wordpress.com/>