



Global Ecovillage Network of Europe e.V.  
Rosa-Luxemburg Strasse 89  
D-14806 Bad Belzig  
[www.gen-europe.org](http://www.gen-europe.org)

Office in Spain  
Calle Abajo n.1, 31480 Artieda

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## refuGEN

### GEN Takes Action regarding the Refugee Crisis on the Island of Lesbos

*“Together we aim to provide help on the ground in Greece and take responsibility for an issue that affects us all.”*

Dear Ecovillage Communities of Europe,

Every day new refugees from Syria and other war-stricken countries arrive in Europe. Many of them in the Greek Island of Lesbos after a dangerous boat trip over the Mediterranean Sea.

We are all affected and saddened by the extreme uprooting of hundreds of thousands of people forced to flee their homes. As we know, many existing and emerging communities stand for a different, peaceful development in our world. Many members of our communities are already active locally, offering their support to those fleeing war zones and to the people arriving in Europe with little more than the clothes they are wearing.

This topic was also central to this year’s Green Phoenix congress, which took place from 4-8 November in the Unity Center in Switzerland’s Schweibenalp Community, bringing together representatives from 14 communities along with the GEN Europe Council. We devoted an entire day to discussing how, using our combined strength, we could actively help the refugees. Following a 1.5 hour walk in silence through the Swiss mountains and ending in a natural place of power, we exchanged our personal impressions of the experience of refugees on their arduous journeys to Europe. Anna from Skala Ecovillage near Thessaloniki enriched this exchange with her poignant description of the dramatic situation on the Greek islands of Lesbos and Leros, and how help there is so critically needed. We were all deeply moved, and as a result decided as soon as possible to field a mission to Greece in which all of us across Europe could take part.

Global Ecovillage Network of Europe e.V.  
Legal headquarters: Sieben Linden 1, D-38489 Beetzendorf  
Postbank Berlin, bank code 10010010, Account no: 7681105  
IBAN: DE 11100100100007681105, BIC: PBNKDEFF  
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Donations to us are tax deductible depending on your country!

Towards this end a team has been formed consisting of colleagues from ecovillages in Switzerland, Spain, Greece, Sweden and Germany (Skala, Schloss Glarisegg, Amalurra, Los Portales, Suderbyn, Schweibenalp and Heilhaus communities) and Robert and Rosalie from the GEN Europe Council. This team will establish the necessary structures to build up a group of 40-50 people coming from the various communities, with each person spending a minimum of 1-2 weeks in Lesbos over the next 6 months. Anna, from the Skala community in Greece, is currently on site in Lesbos making contacts and searching for a suitable building to be used for accommodation. You will be hearing from us with further details very soon.

During the Green Phoenix congress we already raised 1355 Euros for the refuGEN project. A sub-account for donations has been set up to provide support the Lesbos mission. Donations can be made to the GEN Europe Postbank account at the foot of this letter. Please mark your donation with “refuGEN”.

The link below shows the our GEN Europe colleague Gabriela in the field on the Greek-Macedonian border. She has been there for several months providing help, and she gives us a first impression of the type of support needed in working with the refugees. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V79iNNmBJe8!>

Today we are asking you to **inform your communities** about this project, and to see if there are people among your communities willing to consider a deployment of this type to Lesbos, on a self-financed basis. Please refrain at present from replying directly with further enquiries as we will be following up this letter with an email providing more detailed information of how to apply to be a refuGEN volunteer. It would be wonderful if we succeed to gather this large team of volunteers creating a community of communities, as it were, so that we may offer some hope to those who need it.

On behalf of the GEN Europe Council and the refuGEN team,



Robert Hall  
President  
robert@gen-europe.org