



## **SEEDing – Nurturing the Ecological Self**

An experiential training in ecocentric, nature-based youth work

We are creatures of the Earth, not separated, but ‘a part’ of the living planet. We are not only a product of the mind, but a complex system, a tapestry of heart, body, mind, soul, spirit and... relationships. This is our Ecological Self, which allows us to be deeply connected with the entire biosphere, and also know our place in the world.

Living in modern societies, where the nature deficit disorder is a common reality among many youth and adults, we are being called to return to Nature, the one within and the one around us.

**‘SEEDing – Nurturing the Ecological Self’** is an opportunity for educators and human development facilitators to immerse in a seven day experiential training in ecocentric, nature-based youth work. The training process is rooted in the vision of seeing empowered humans who are deeply connected with themselves, others and nature, and who live authentically in service of the world. By following this course, the participants will learn how to cultivate the Ecological Self of youth from their communities.

## The training methodology

We are going to connect with, nurture and expand our Ecological self through a creative and experiential exploration of three fundamental concepts and nature-based educational approaches:

- **Ecocentric Development:** We will explore and work with the Ecocentric Developmental Wheel created by the depth psychologist Bill Plotkin. Rooted in eco-psychology and indigenous wisdom, the model offers a holistic approach to human development.
- **Deep Ecology:** We will explore and work with Joanna Macy's creation 'The Work that Reconnects', Embodied exercises, deep connection processes, metaphorical work and contemplative practices will guide us in this realm.
- **Outdoor Education:** We will create an experiential playground that will activate new layers of our ecological selves. Hiking, mountain biking, canoeing and kayaking on a mountain lake, engaging in adventurous exercises in a rope garden will offer us new educational tools.

To explore, understand and learn the three approaches we will engage in a wide variety of practices and activities, such as: wandering on the land, sharing circles, storytelling, singing, dancing and embodiment, presentations, group games, hiking, biking, canoeing/kayaking, poetry, journaling, hands-on work, community living, contemplative practices and more.

## The place

The land will be the most important guide. We will spend the whole time in Chatama protected area, which is situated on the shores of Beglika Dam, nestled within the magnificent Rhodopes mountain, largest in terms of area in Bulgaria, at an altitude of 1520 meters.

The place provides excellent conditions for outdoor learning, offering specialized equipment and resources to facilitate nature-based activities. This unique setting will allow you to gain a deeper understanding of the constantly evolving life within the area, harmoniously coexisting with nature. It offers conditions to be closer to nature, closer to camping style – outdoor compost toilets, shared bathroom on solar panels, and pristine water.

## Who can participate?

- We are looking for people who are actively involved in the field of human development and youth work, who work especially with young people, but also with adults. The roles that describe the selected participants should be trainers, youth workers, teachers, coaches, mentors, facilitators, counselors, wilderness guides, outdoor instructors etc.
- The participants must be over 18 years and have a good level of English.
- Participants can apply to this training if they have legal residency in Bulgaria and Romania.
- There are 16 places available, for 8 participants/country (Bulgaria and Romania).

## The facilitators

**Sashka Vitanova** is co-founder and director of Natureexplorers, from Bulgaria, a mountain guide, educator, facilitator, a woman devoted to sharing the message “we are nature”. Sashka has been active in the field of non-formal and environmental education since 2007, applying the Experiential Learning methodology in combination with Outdoor education in her practice since 2010. She is a passionate outdoor education facilitator whose work is rooted in a deep, lived connection with the natural world — guiding others to discover nature not just as an environment, but as a teacher, a mirror, and a source of meaning. Her commitment to nature’s preservation flows naturally from this relationship, weaving through everything she does, both in the field and beyond.

**Albena Popova** – Albena is a facilitator, trainer, and teacher from Bulgaria working at the intersection of storytelling, human development, and ecological awareness. In her work, she combines elements of deep ecology, experiential learning, psychodrama, storytelling, and metaphorical cards to create spaces for reflection, dialogue, and inner exploration. For more than 15 years, she has been involved in international participatory projects focused on the relationship between people and the environment. Born and living in Bulgaria, Albena continues to explore nature as one of the deepest sources of learning and insight — a living metaphor and teacher through which she seeks to better understand herself and the human journey.)

**Bogdan Romanică** – Bogdan is a human development guide, trainer, and mentor, from Romania. In his work, he combines elements of eco-psychology, nature connection, experiential learning, outdoor education, storytelling, and art. He loves exploring nature and the human soul. He feels in his element when inspiring and empowering people to

become the truest versions of themselves. He has worked locally and internationally in the field of human development since 2010. He developed his craft by engaging consistently in deep and meaningful work and training with the Animas Valley Institute from the USA (organization founded by Bill Plotkin) and other organizations and teachers.

### **Practical aspects (traveling, location, costs, preparation)**

- Arrival day is the 26th of July.
- Departure day is 3rd of August.
- There are 7 full training days.

### **Traveling**

The project is financed by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, thus, all the activities, accommodation and food are 100% covered by the EU grant.

The travel costs will be reimbursed to the participants after the course in the amount limit presented below.

- Bulgaria – 150 Euros (green travel)
- Romania – 250 Euros (green travel)

\* Green travel: means of transportation with lower carbon footprint, such as trains, buses, carpooling. Green traveling may take longer but is a necessary action for the environment.

### **Financial contribution**

Each participant is asked to make a **financial contribution on a sliding scale of €40–€60**, with each person choosing an amount that feels right for them. If this presents a barrier to your participation, please let us know and we'll be happy to discuss it.

Each participant must have comprehensive travel and medical insurance, covering both the travel and the stay from the first until the last day of the way back home. The insurance should be covered by the participants.

If you plan to arrive earlier or leave later your expenses for accommodation outside of the days of the training will not be covered by the project.

### **A dissemination activity**

As a continuation of the experience, each participant will have to implement at least one ACTION in their own community (dissemination event/workshop for youth).

### **IMPORTANT: NO alcohol – NO drugs policy**

The practices and activities that will be done during the training require our full mental and physical capacities. Thus, we invite the participants not to consume any alcohol and drugs during the whole training duration.

### **Application procedure and deadline**

If you feel a deep calling to participate in this training course, you must fill in the application form available at this link:

<https://forms.gle/ba8NAXKNE4S9NbyL9>

Deadline for application: 1st of June.

Selection results: By the 5th of June

### **Contact**

For Bulgaria – Sashka Vitanova: [sashka.satori@gmail.com](mailto:sashka.satori@gmail.com)

For Romania – Bogdan Romanica: [romanica.bogdan@gmail.com](mailto:romanica.bogdan@gmail.com)

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