

FORUM SYNERGIES SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

Magdalena Hallinger AT COB (3rd of June – 28th of July 2025 and online until 13th August)

Magdalena Hallinger joined COB through the Forum Synergies Scholarship Programme 2025 for a two-month learning residency, immersing herself in the rhythms and responsibilities of a regenerative eco-community in rural Greece. As a host organisation, we aimed to offer her a comprehensive experience in self-sufficiency, permaculture-based farming, natural building, food preservation, eco-social entrepreneurship and cooperative living.

She was fully integrated into the everyday life of the project: participating in communal activities, supporting workshops, contributing to food production and engaging with a wide range of people and ages. Her active observation, care and analytical lens were evident throughout her stay and we commend her commitment to documenting both her practical tasks and critical reflections.

Main Activities Completed

Magdalena participated in a wide range of activities, in line with and beyond her initial workplan:

Hands-on Activities:

- Daily garden work (planting, weeding, harvesting, pruning, composting)
- Food forest maintenance (chop & drop, irrigation systems, support for bee habitats)
- Natural building: clay plastering, oven repairs, plastering in an off-site location
- Ecological maintenance: unclogging water pipes, solar power usage, compost toilets
- Preserving and processing food: pickling, drying, fermenting vegetables
- Basic animal care: feeding chickens, quails, cats, dogs, worms, and fish

Support for Educational Activities:

Participation and logistical support in two major workshops:

- *Master Builder Training Course* through the Erasmus+ scheme (~50 people)
- *Belgian and French Scouts workshop and intercultural exchange*
- Assistance with group hosting, coordination, cooking, music nights and open events
- Observation and engagement in daily coordination and hosting practices

Thematic Reflection & Community Engagement:

- Exploration of the themes of **access to land, gender, and intergenerational relations**
- Informal interviews and peer discussions
- Ongoing reflective journaling and photo/video documentation
- Active participation in community café events and intergenerational encounters in the village
- Engagement with traditional local knowledge holders (e.g. garlic braiding, dancing, cultural exchanges).

Outcomes and Contributions

Personal Development:

- Strong growth in practical competencies (gardening, eco-building, food preservation)
- Cultural adaptation and integration into a multilingual, multigenerational and diverse community
- Increased confidence in team coordination and collective living

Community Contribution:

- Provided consistent and reliable support in key daily areas (kitchen, garden, events)
- Contributed music and creativity to evening events, building atmosphere and community bonding
- Assisted with workshop logistics and created a safe, caring presence for younger participants and newcomers
- Offered critical and constructive reflections on gender dynamics and community roles, which sparked internal dialogue

Thematic Outputs:

- Completed a detailed written report that synthesizes personal insights with FS themes
- Ongoing work on a visual/video montage to share her experience with the FS network

Forum Synergies Themes in Practice

Access to Land:

Magdalena explored land access both as a physical/ecological practice and as a systemic issue. She observed COB's application of permaculture to preserve soil fertility, regenerate biodiversity and share land use via workshops and collective farming. Her reflections

included critiques of national land registry issues and seed patent restrictions, offering valuable comparative insights.

Intergenerational Relations:

She experienced multigenerational dynamics both within COB's internal community (including children and elders) and externally through village life and the café. Her report captures both the benefits and complexities of these exchanges, especially how they foster learning, empathy and resilience.

Gender Dynamics:

Magdalena's reflections on gender were especially valuable. She recognized structural patterns in the division of tasks and raised questions about inclusion, responsibility and implicit hierarchies. These insights are an important contribution to our ongoing process of self-awareness and improvement.

Evaluation of the Experience

We consider Magdalena's residency at COB a highly successful and impactful exchange. She brought a rare combination of attentiveness, critical thinking, kindness and initiative. She adapted well to the intensity of community life, contributed significantly to our daily function and learning spaces and engaged deeply with the values and contradictions of rural regeneration.

We are confident that this experience has provided her with both technical and social skills for future projects in sustainability and rural resilience. We also feel enriched by her presence and hope to continue our connection beyond this scholarship.

Dissemination and Next Steps

Magdalena is currently preparing a video montage using photos and footage she captured during her stay. This short video will serve both as a personal reflection and a visual storytelling tool to share her experience with a wider audience, including the Forum Synergies network.

In addition to the video, her written report will be featured on COB's online channels as part of a blog series on youth residencies, regenerative living and rural revival. We will also publish a dedicated social media post and reel, tagging Forum Synergies and amplifying the programme's visibility across our networks.

Magdalena expressed interest in continuing her involvement in regenerative education and community-based sustainability initiatives in Austria. We trust that her time at COB will influence her future path, and we look forward to potential future collaborations.

Dissemination Links (to be shared with FS when published):

- Blog post (pending)
- Video (pending)
- Instagram/Facebook post (pending)

Travel

Magdalena arrived at COB, Nessonas (Greece) on 3 June 2025 using low-emission public transport, including train, bus and coach from Austria via Villach, Sofia and Thessaloniki. She returned to Austria by plane on 29 July 2025.

Due to a serious personal matter, Magdalena had to leave the residency earlier than originally planned. However, she continued her involvement remotely for an additional two weeks, completing her final report, working on her video and maintaining communication with the COB team for feedback and follow-up.