



Danube Transnational Programme
AgriGo4Cities

Participatory urban agriculture governance plan for fighting social exclusion in the Danube Region



Project co-funded by European Union funds (ERDF, IPA, ENI).

AgriGo4Cities



Participatory urban agriculture governance plan for fighting social exclusion in the Danube Region

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Máté Szalók

The Danube River Basin is the most international river basin of the world. The Danube Region which extends over 14 countries encompasses some of the most developed parts of the European Union, countries that have joined the EU in the past fifteen years, countries in pre-accession phase and countries that are subjects of the European Neighbourhood Policy. **Capitalizing this great level of diversity**, the Danube Transnational Programme provides an excellent opportunity to learn from each other, thus contributing to the prosperity of the Region. The eleven partner organizations that form the AgriGo4Cities partnership aimed to capitalize this opportunity. To address complex needs and challenges of the Danube Region in the field of **participatory planning, social inclusion and sustainable urban development** the partners employed **urban agriculture**.

This publication is a result of an intensive learning process which aimed to develop and test the **concept of participatory urban agriculture**. For effective implementation of the project the partnership was divided into two groups: strategic partners were mainly responsible for knowledge-sharing, while territorial partners were the ones that implemented the pilot actions. During the implementation of the project the partners carried out several learning interactions and met and discussed with various stakeholders in order to gain in-depth knowledge about urban agriculture. The partnership studied the topic from various aspects, **developed a common methodology for participatory urban agriculture and tested it in five locations**. In this publication the authors summarized the knowledge and the experience of the partnership in order to provide guidance for stakeholders from the Danube Region and beyond that would like to apply the methodology of the AgriGo4Cities project.

During the development of the conceptual framework, the partnership researched the pilot areas (Blagoevgrad - BG, Prague 9 - CZ, Székesfehérvár - HU, Vaslui – RO, Velenje - SLO) during which they examined the municipalities in relation with the four main topics of the project: urban agriculture,

participatory planning, social inclusion and sustainable urban development. The research revealed that **urban agriculture is not a recent phenomenon in the pilot areas**, but since 2000 a new wave can be detected in which the cooperation of more actors has more emphasis than in the previous eras. This provides a good basis for applying participatory planning which is still in initial phase in the pilot areas. In case of the examined five municipalities the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups is targeted by supporting measures, however urban agriculture and participatory planning have just minor role in these strategies. Lastly, all municipalities have at least one legal document that aims environmental sustainability, however the role of urban agriculture is mentioned directly only in two cases. Examining the main fields of the project's intervention logic it was revealed that even though in all municipalities these fields are addressed by the local strategies **the interrelation between urban agriculture, participatory planning, social inclusion and sustainable urban development has still not been recognized completely**.

To develop the concept of participatory urban agriculture the partnership analysed existing good practices and organized five study visits to operating urban agricultural sites. This process revealed that not gardening, but **building a community is the primary aim of urban agriculture**. Regarding the community and social interactions the vulnerable and non-vulnerable people have similar needs; however, they must be addressed in different ways. Residents generally are well organized, but vulnerable groups need mentoring or the support from an NGO or other institutions to organize themselves. The best way to facilitate the integration of vulnerable groups is when they can mix with non-vulnerable people. To establish an urban agricultural site and ensure its sustainability it is important to guarantee the long-term use of the plot and its funding, to know the needs and skills of the target groups and to gain the support of the municipality and of the local economic and civic sector.

Building on the results of the research on the pilot areas and capitalizing the knowledge from good practices and study visits, the partnership developed the methodology of participatory urban agriculture. It encompasses six main steps of the preparation

of an action plan: Diagnosis, Ideation, Prototyping, Monitoring, Scaling and Systemic change. The methodology provides guidance through the whole action planning process, from the analysis of the needs and challenges through the planning of the urban agriculture practices till evaluating and capitalizing the results. For the effective implementation of the pilots the partnership developed a training tool and a tutoring programme for the territorial partners. When assessing their implementation, it was justified that **training the leaders and participants** before starting the development of an action plan is a key factor in success as well as guidance and mentoring through the process.

The partners experienced that while working with vulnerable groups **gaining and maintaining trust** has significant importance. For this, **constant communication** with and between the stakeholders is important, as well as **proving the capability** of being able to realize the collected ideas. For effective participation **the rules of the process must be set in the beginning**, however they should not be too rigid, because **friendly and informal environment** facilitates the engagement of the stakeholders. The leader of the action planning process must keep in mind the **complexity of participatory planning** in which participants and goals could change throughout the implementation. Because of this



To test the developed methodology the partnership implemented pilot actions. As a first step the territorial partners established local partnerships which proved to be very effective while planning and implementing the action plan. These partnerships encompassed public actors, representatives of vulnerable and marginalized groups and other interested stakeholders. During piloting the partners organized workshops with the involvement of stakeholders and final beneficiaries to develop an action plan. During the process the partners gained knowledge and experience about how to implement participatory urban agriculture successfully and identified key factors of success.

the leaders of the process must be prepared for reacting to changes rapidly and effectively.

This publication details more than two years of the Agrigo4Cities project to provide guidance for anyone who is interested in improving institutional capacities, social inclusion and sustainable urban development. In the following chapters the document synthesizes the knowledge and experience that has been gained by the project partners during this process. The complex challenges that the project partners faced with during the application of participatory urban agriculture approach will be described as well.

INTRODUCTION

Needs and challenges

Jani Kozina

The main challenges related to governance systems within the Danube Region can be associated with the **decreasing capacities of public authorities to incorporate a participatory approach into planning**. Recent austerity measures have left public administrators with limited instruments and channels for involving relevant stakeholders and civil society into decision-making processes. The absence of participatory mechanisms is contributing to a reduced motivation of people to engage in governance and administration, because they feel relegated from political, social and economic agendas and not competent enough to act as an equivalent counterpart and a considerable driver of change. The gap between citizens and public authorities is therefore increasing on all levels and leading to an intensified mistrust and lack of public participation, especially among the most disadvantaged communities at risk of exclusion such as the poor, unemployed, homeless, Roma communities, migrants, elderly, women and children. The growing social and

economic inequalities are reflected in a **reduced livelihood and quality of place**.

To overcome these challenges, the AgriGo4Cities project employed **participatory urban and peri-urban agriculture** as a powerful and emerging method to improve public institutional capacities for tackling social exclusion of marginalized groups and to stimulate sustainable urban development in the Danube Region. The project tested the innovative methodology of participatory urban and peri-urban agriculture in **five municipalities of the Danube region**: Municipal district Prague 9 (Czech Republic), Municipality of Velenje (Slovenia), Municipality of Székesfehérvár (Hungary), Municipality of Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria), Municipality of Vaslui (Romania).

The aim of this transnational plan is to **integrate all knowledge and experience** gathered in the process of designing and testing the methodology of participatory urban and peri-urban agriculture. The document aims to offer concrete lessons on how to enhance public services, promote active citizenship, reinforce public participation and contribute to the sustainability of cities by means of urban agriculture. It is intended for anyone interested in the fields of urban agriculture, participatory planning, social inclusion and sustainable urban development.



Countries of the AgriGo4Cities project partners

Focus, goals and activities

Jani Kozina

The main objective of the AgriGo4Cities project was to employ participatory urban agriculture as a method to improve public institutional capacities for tackling social exclusion of marginalized groups and stimulating liveable cities in the Danube region. The project addressed the decreasing capacities of public administrators to integrate participatory approach into decision-making processes. Innovative urban governance models facilitated active citizenship of disadvantaged communities at risk of exclusion from political, social and economic agendas and with low involvement in lifelong learning practices. Ameliorated planning approach and better public services boosted sustainable urban development in the Danube Region. The project contained a sound work plan to create and implement tools, transnational learning interactions, strategies and pilot actions in order to achieve three project specific objectives.

AgriGo4Cities co-workers promoting the project in Banská Bystrica



1) To integrate participatory approach into decision-making processes

The project improved public institutional capacities by integrating participatory approach into decision-making processes. New governance models contributed to the enhanced public services in order to promote active citizenship, the development of civil society, reinforced public participation and sustainable urban development.

2) To increase social inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups

The project intensified the involvement of various communities at risk of exclusion in decision-making processes. The enhanced urban governance models contributed to the increased socio-economic inclusion of marginalized groups, which has been one of the major societal challenges in the Danube region. The identified groups at risk of exclusion in five pilot areas have been the elderly, children, the unemployed, students with learning and behavioural difficulties, children with disabilities, and single mothers along with their children.

3) To promote sustainable urban development

The project promoted sustainable urban development through urban agriculture. New governance models stimulated job creation, income generation, community building and quality living environment in cities. The focus was on disadvantaged neighbourhoods where communities at risk of exclusion live and work. Their active involvement in urban agriculture contributed to food production and supply, carbon footprint reduction, sustainable waste management, active healthy lifestyle and wellbeing.



PARTICIPATORY URBAN AGRICULTURE AS A TOOL FOR ACHIEVING WIDER SOCIETAL EFFECTS

Conceptualizing participatory urban agriculture

Saša Poljak Istenič and Peter Kumer

Urban agriculture is the practice of cultivating, processing and distributing food in or around urban areas. It can encompass farming, gardening (horticulture), animal husbandry, aquaculture, agroforestry and urban beekeeping. It is deeply integrated into urban fabrics, social and cultural life, and the economy of the city. Besides urban areas, it also takes place in peri-urban areas, although it may have different characteristics.

Community garden in a construction pit in Ljubljana



Urban agriculture has become a means to increase **access to locally grown food**; on the other hand, it has also been used by advocate groups or educational institutions to **raise awareness** about many aspects of food that we have forgotten about, for example how food grows, which crops are local and in what season they grow. It plays an important role in **enhancing urban food security**, as it mitigates transport to consumers and food imports. It contributes to **local economic development** and global social goals such as **poverty alleviation** and the **social inclusion** of the urban poor and other vulnerable groups such as women, elderly, migrants etc. It also characterises the greening of the city and **sustain-**

able urban policies in general, especially by contributing a great deal to the sustainable development goals, set up in the new EU Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. **Participatory tools and processes** that appreciate the multi-functionality of land use, the diversity of stakeholders, and the spatial and temporal interactions of people and place can greatly maximize the potential of urban agriculture.

When systematizing urban agriculture, a distinction is made between the gardening and the farming level. **Urban gardening** encompasses agricultural activities with generally low production of food and economic effect. Other goals, such as recreation, stress relief, socialization etc., are usually more important for gardeners than growing food. **Urban farming** refers to intentional business models of offering local or regional agricultural products or services, which take advantage of the proximity to the city and its market(s), transportation options etc.

At gardening level, and according to production, urban food gardens can be divided into those based on individual production (family gardens and allotment gardens), and those based on collective schemes (educational gardens, therapeutic gardens, and community gardens). Besides aiming for (usually only partial) self-subsistence, they also provide a chance for recreation and tourism and can considerably increase urban social life, especially of the socially excluded people.

Farms, which have adapted their business strategies to an intra- or peri-urban location, can be categorized into two main groups as well. Some farms focus on the production of food or other agricultural products (fibre, cosmetics) while others provide leisure, educational, therapeutic or social opportunities.

Community garden in Banská Bystrica



Typology of urban agriculture

(adapted from the Cost action Urban Agriculture Europe)

URBAN (FOOD) GARDENING		URBAN FARMING	
ALLOTMENT GARDENS	Subdivided gardens; plots rented under a tenancy agreement; highly formalized, often managed by an organization/association	LOCAL FOOD+ FARMS	Produce for local markets; direct relationship with consumers; also non-food production (cosmetics, fibre)
FAMILY GARDENS	Non-commercial food-production for the household; no institutions or organisations involved	EXPERIMENTAL FARMS	Testing new agricultural technologies, production methods, varieties and breeds or models of social and economic interactions with their urban environment
EDUCATIONAL GARDENS	Teaching tool addressing food production, processing and consumption; raising public awareness and spreading ideas	EDUCATIONAL FARMS	Pedagogical tool; learning programmes or short-term stays for schools
COMMUNITY GARDENS	Based on bottom-up initiatives and tended collectively; producing food and providing social functions for the community	LEISURE FARMS	Offering recreational opportunities linked to farming activities
SOCIAL GARDENS	Addressing social problems; promoting the integration of people at risk of exclusion	SOCIAL FARMS	Addressing social problems; promoting disadvantaged people's rehabilitation and the integration of people at risk of exclusion
THERAPEUTIC GARDENS	Situated at physical and mental health care institutions; also contemplative gardens and production-oriented active gardens	THERAPEUTIC FARMS	Use of farming-related activities for physical or mental health and well-being; also occupational therapy
SQUATTER GARDENS	Food production on idle land; informal, extra-legal, not registered nor subject to public policies	ENVIRONMENTAL FARMS	High natural and environmental value and/or contribution to biodiversity or agro-diversity conservation; part of flood or fire prevention plans, green infrastructure, networks, green belts, Natura2000
		CULTURAL HERITAGE FARMS	Preserving the tangible and intangible cultural heritage through the maintenance of traditional materials, buildings, crops, breed varieties and cultivation techniques

Urban and peri-urban agriculture as a tool for participatory planning

Participatory planning implies the systematic effort to envision a community's desired future and planning for that future, which is realized through **active involvement of the communities** affected. In the ideal situation, staff of the organization that will run participatory planning, members of the target population, community officials, interested citizens as well as people from involved agencies, schools, and other institutions are invited to the table and encouraged to speak according to their knowledge, experience, skills, or visions.

Everyone's participation should be welcomed and respected, and the process should not be dominated by any individual or group or by a single point of view. Participatory planning aims to **harmonize views of all the participants** as well as prevent conflicts between opposing parties. In addition, **marginalized groups** have an opportunity to participate in the planning process, especially when it is adapted to their needs and abilities.

Urban and peri-urban gardening as a tool for social inclusion

Gardening can address social exclusion in all its aspects: from production, consumption, social interaction and political engagement. Gardening and farming projects enable **production** through activities that have many of the attributes of paid employment and which are regarded as 'work'. Planting, cultivation and other garden works are seen as both meaningful and 'productive'.

Such projects give participants access to a popular leisure activity from which they are often excluded. In some cases, they also provide them with food that contributes to their quality of life. In this way they allow them to participate in the process of **consumption**.

The activities also provide opportunities for many forms of **social interaction**. Ideally the interactions result in establishing permanent social ties and forming a gardening community.

Such projects can also enable participants to deal with the management of a garden or activities and in this way include them in a specific form of **political engagement**. The method of participatory urban agriculture thus has a great potential to facilitate an active citizenship of socially marginalized people, who are generally less politically engaged and rarely included in lifelong learning processes. Furthermore, it can also provide a way to build institutional capacities. Using urban agriculture as a method, the authorities can better support and promote the engagement of citizens, including the marginalized, in urban issues.

Urban and peri-urban gardening as a tool for sustainable development

Sustainable development has usually been conceptualized as supported by three "pillars", i.e. the economy (economic development / growth), the environment (environmental protection / balance) and society (social equity / inclusion). Sustainable development means balancing all three goals of urban planning in a way that economic growth would be achieved without unfair distribution of resources and jeopardising the ecosystem.

Urban and peri-urban agriculture contributes significantly to sustainable urban development, as it has economic, socio-cultural, environmental as well as psychological benefits. It can provide employment opportunities, increase food self-subsistence, security and access, positively affect diet, health, physical activity and personal wellbeing, strengthen a sense of place and community, place attachment and collective identity, develop personal skills and knowledge and increase gender equity.

Garden beds in Banská Bystrica



Lessons learnt from good practices and study visits

Mateja Šmid Hribar, Saša Poljak Istenič, Christina Miller, Claudia Schwarz and Florian Lintzmeyer

Good practices

An important **source of know-how** on how to establish or manage urban agriculture could be **good practices** of participatory gardening. The main aim of collecting them was to provide the ideas and guidelines on how to design successful practice. When searching for cases, all project partners conducted internet research. They were looking for examples in their own country, in the Danube region and globally, and selected a few best cases based on the following criteria:

- inclusion of **vulnerable groups**,
- **participatory** approach,
- addressing **sustainable** development.

These cases were then debated at the meeting of all project partners. The final selection was made by voting, bearing in mind different types and aspects of participatory gardens. The selected cases were further analysed through field visits, in-depth analysis and phone or Skype calls, where most pieces of information were obtained in semi-structured interviews with initiators, participants, decision-makers and other interested stakeholders.

The partners analysed the chosen practices focusing on:

- **Basic information** (main characteristics and target groups involved),
 - **Establishing the garden** (initiative, funding, support, ways of inclusion),
 - **Roles of the involved stakeholders** (types, tasks, engagement),
 - **Characteristics and specifics of the practice** (why is the practice good?),
 - **Participatory aspects** (involvement and participation, inclusion of vulnerable people),
 - **Future plans** (potential development trajectories),
 - **Guidelines and lessons learnt** (tips and instructions for initiators),
 - **Personal accounts** (motivations and values of stakeholders included in the good practice).
-



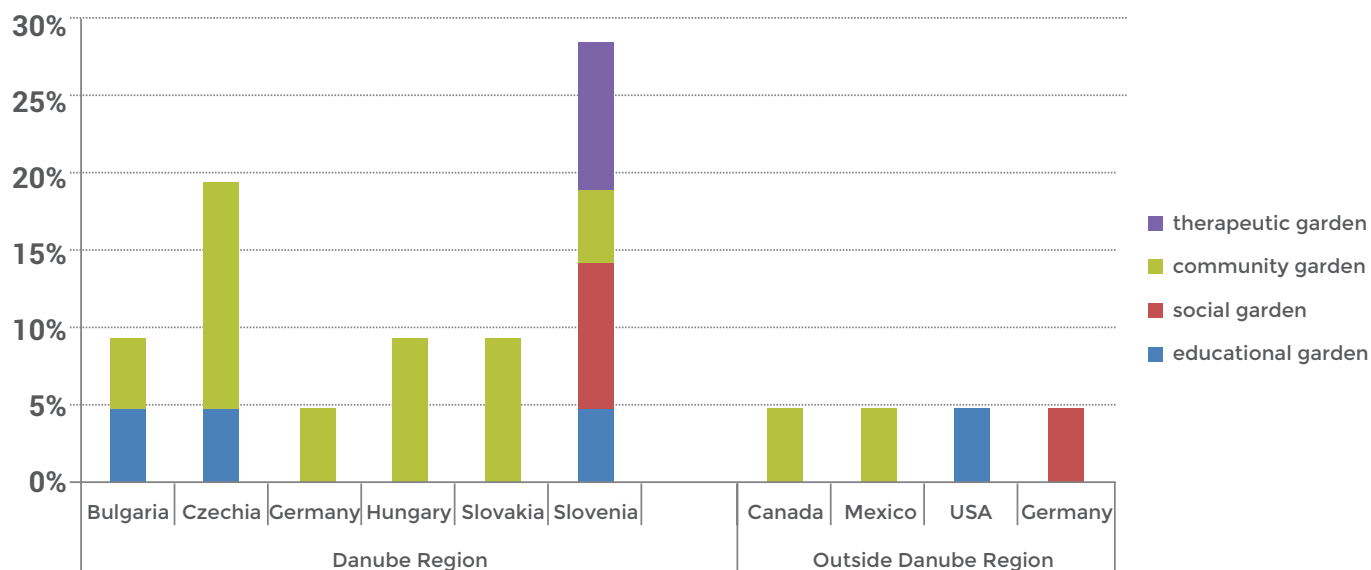
21 good practices were identified, 17 from the Danube Region and 4 from outside (including one in Germany not belonging to the Danube program area). Although due to the past experiences of the socialist regime the practices from the Danube region are **easier to transfer**, those outside the Danube Region serve as a means **how to think differently** when approaching the practice, especially because they build on the long tradition of **practicing democracy**.

The second categorization was based on the **type of participatory practice** according to the COST typology, which divides them into urban farming and urban gardening. The practices identified were all small-scale, thus belonging to the category of urban gardening. This could be an indication that small-scale practices are easier to manage and implement when one wants to employ participatory approach or/and include vulnerable groups in an egalitarian way.

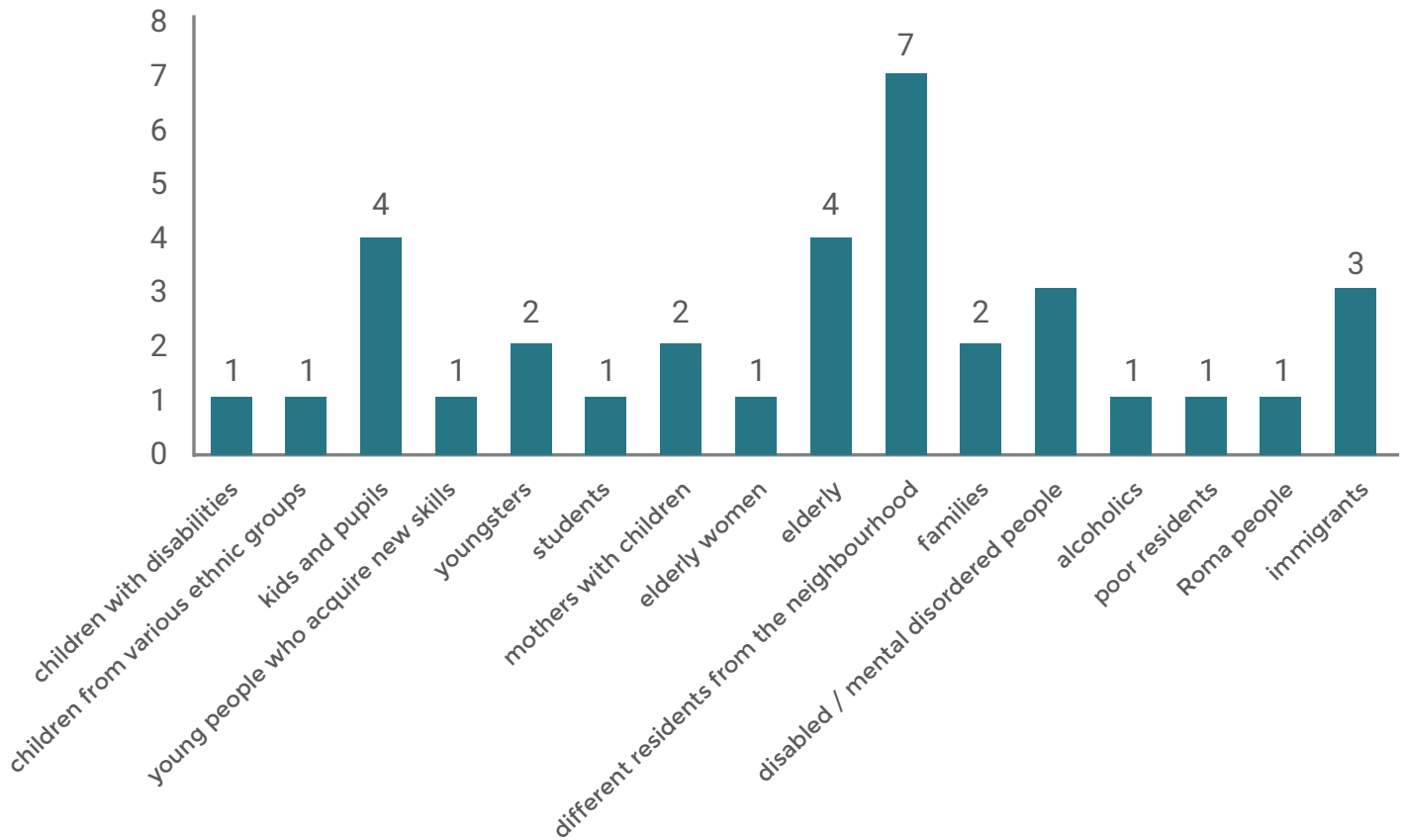
Based on the included vulnerable groups, urban agriculture good practices were further categorized into the following types:

- **community gardens**, which are not directly focused on the inclusion of vulnerable groups, but address citizens in a certain area in general; vulnerable individuals are integrated into the community;
- **social gardens**, which focus on the inclusion of a specific vulnerable group (e.g. migrants, Roma people, school drop-outs etc.)
- **educational gardens**, which are usually set up in primary and high schools; and
- **therapeutic gardens**, which focus on the handicapped or people with mental disabilities or health problems (alcohol addicts, mentally handicapped etc.).

Good practices of participatory urban agriculture by geographical location



Vulnerable groups included in the identified good practices of participatory urban agriculture



The analysis of good practices of participatory urban agriculture revealed that:

- vulnerable groups included in identified practices are **very diverse** (especially the group of children and youngsters),
- vulnerable groups usually are not able to organize and activate themselves, they **need help**, usually from an **NGO**,
- **well organized residents are successful and proactive**, but they cannot be classified as a vulnerable group; however, they usually have similar needs, such as a possibility to establish **social contacts** and socialize, develop a **sense of belonging** as well as to produce **fresh and healthy food** of their choice;
- the most successful cases are those with many different stakeholders who help each other and where **vulnerable people get mixed** with non-vulnerable community members,

- **building a community** is generally more important for participants than gardening, although users really enjoy doing it;
- **decision-makers are mostly indirectly involved**, they provide infrastructure and attend events if invited, but do not personally engage in practice; however, this strengthens the bottom-up approach;
 - the lack of (at least minimum and permanent) **funding** as well as temporal and unsecured **plot** of land threaten urban agriculture practices,
 - urban gardens contribute to sustainability, as they bring nature and **biodiversity** to cities (ecology), **activate people** who might have difficulties in integrating into the society by enhancing inter-generational as well as intercultural dialogue and by exchanging, creating and transferring knowledge (society); and providing fresh vegetables and fruits, serving as a social corrective for poorer inhabitants (economy).



Study visits

During the last two years the partners were given the chance to **learn from similar attempts** outside their country. Through 5 study visits, they gained first-hand experience in 5 different countries: Slovenia (Velenje), Slovakia (Banská Bystrica), Germany (Munich), Czech Republic (Prague), and Bulgaria (Blagoevgrad).

The study visits provided insights into local initiatives and practices as well as the chance to support and use the transnational training framework, especially through the development of training tools. They enabled **knowledge exchange** between AgriGo4Cities expert group and pilot regions and offered a chance for a constructive debate.

Locally relevant issues, obstacles, best practices and lessons were extensively debated by the partners after each study visit. A short overview of the main findings is given in the following table sheets.

Community garden Beyond the construction site in Ljubljana



Study Visit: Velenje, Slovenia



Number of visited sites:	3
Types of urban agriculture:	temporary (1) and permanent (2) allotment gardens
Target group:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each household of Velenje • families of Velenje's miners • unemployed and persons with low income
Main good lessons learnt:	municipality is well aware of the importance and benefits of urban agriculture / gardens are easily accessible through public transportation and by bike / strong political will

Study Visit: Banská Bystrica, Slovakia



Number of visited sites:	3
Types of urban agriculture:	community garden
Target group:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • civil society • teenagers • children with mental disorder
Main good lessons learnt:	easily accessible in the city centre / place for meetings / combined with cultural projects / flexible and open for further development / diversity (not only urban agriculture) / marketing of garden products / events



Study Visit: Munich, Germany



Number of visited sites:

4

Types of urban agriculture:

(informal) allotment garden (1) and community garden (3)

Target group:

- young (16-21 years) unaccompanied refugees
- civil society
- residents of the multicultural and multi-ethnic neighbourhood
- elderly, migrants, children

Main good lessons learnt:

stable financing / experienced leaders and educators / educational and learning space / experimenting / use of recycled materials / extendable / open for everyone / public support / nearby housing area

Study Visit: Prague, Czech Republic



Number of visited sites:

2

Types of urban agriculture:

community garden, open-air event

Target group:

- primary and elementary schools
- mothers with little children
- elderly

Main good lessons learnt:

walking distance from a kindergarten / supply on site (e.g. water, shed) / workshops / ecological gardening / playground



Study Visit: Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria



Number of visited sites:	4
Types of urban agriculture:	social garden, therapeutic garden
Target group:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children with special needs • elderly • Roma people • long-term unemployed people
Main good lessons learnt:	<p>municipal social enterprise as employer of vulnerable people / economic and social inclusion / aesthetic improvement of public parks / public visibility / gender balance / usable all year (winter garden) / therapeutic aspect / guaranteed funding / small enough to be managed / personalisation of trees</p>

Looking back at experiences from the study visits and especially their own pilot action, territorial partners were able to reflect on the steps they have taken. For the successful implementation of participatory urban agriculture it is recommended to pay attention to the following:

Target group

- It is important to pay attention to the age of the target group. Learning its needs and abilities is helpful to get to know how to successfully address the group. The most important is to get in touch with the group and **maintain direct, personal contacts** with people involved.
- Focusing on the most active participants helps **mobilizing** the more reluctant ones (pay attention to those who have the potential to lead and whom the other participants will follow).
- Create **common workspace** for more people.
- Visualisation is an effective tool for communication with all age groups.
- Workshops should be **interactive** and not dominated by lectures.

Sustainability

- Employ a **mentor** for the coordination of activities despite the voluntary engagement of the people involved.
- Establish connections with **city councillors** and relevant **organizations** and cooperate with them.
- Provide results as soon as possible to **undermine scepticism**. Mistrust and misunderstandings can be handled by working together, as it increases the trust of those who doubt in success.
- Gain the support of **local companies** to ensure the sustainability of the project and give credit for it (e.g. represent the supporters on a board at the project site).

- Take the different routines of participants into account when setting up meeting hours or days.
- **A clear explanation** of all steps and possibilities is necessary to prevent conflicts and disappointments.
- Think about **weather conditions** when setting up a garden (e.g. garden beds should be able to hold wet soil etc.).
- **Create events** to preserve the interest in the project by the participants, other stakeholders and general public.



Peri-urban garden in Blagoevgrad



COMMON METHODOLOGY OF PARTICIPATORY URBAN AGRICULTURE

Guidelines for action planning

Kaja Cunk

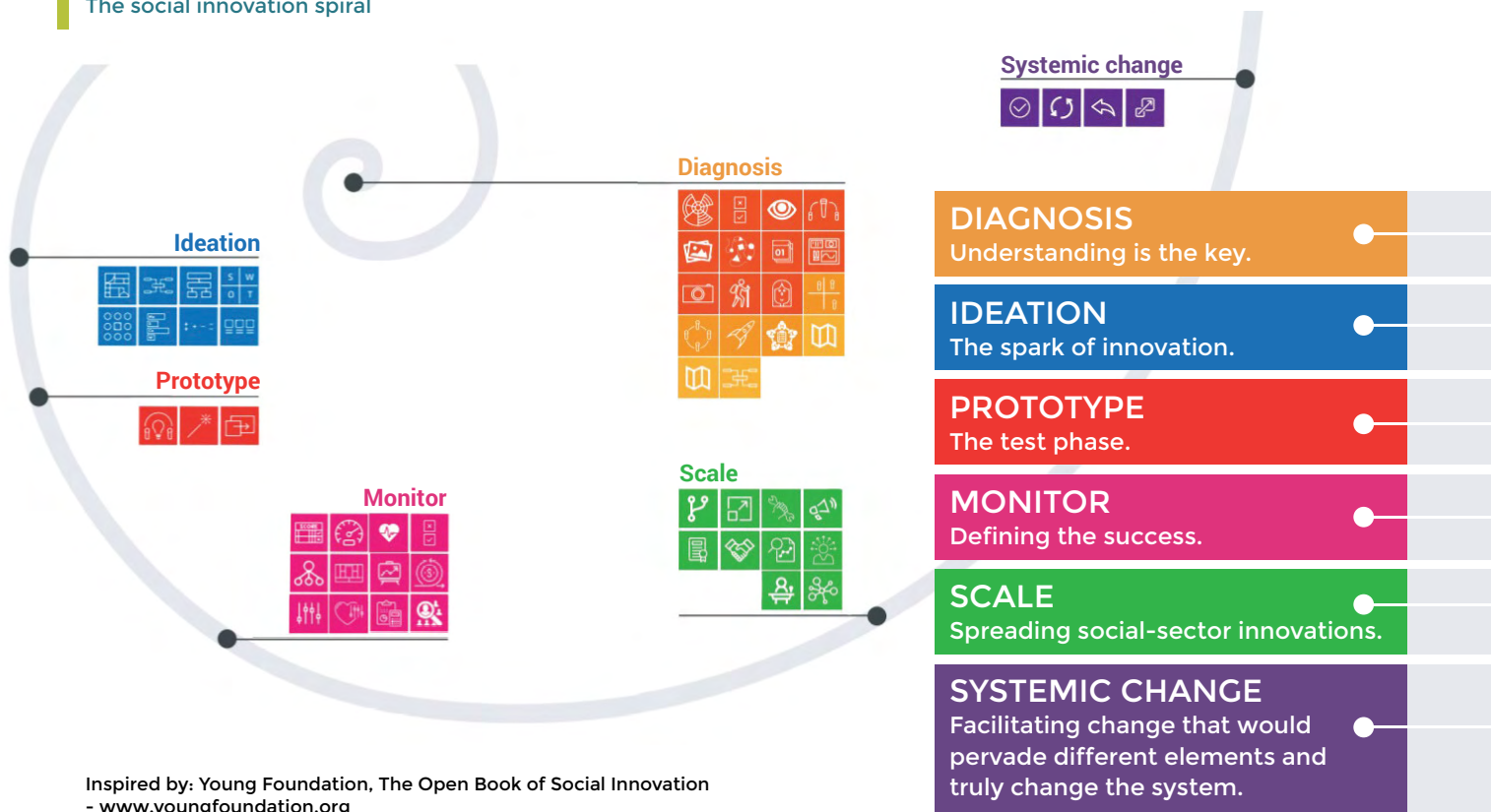
When thinking about addressing urban agriculture as a process of social innovation, in order to integrate participatory mechanisms into decision-making processes, to increase the social inclusion of the disadvantaged segments of society, and stimulate the liveability of cities, the need for action planning approach emerges.

There has been a significant detachment between those who drive and organize urban agriculture and

those who regulate and manage it. Without any formal support, urban agriculture has mostly been a bottom-up process, typically initiated by individuals or non-governmental organisations rather than by governments and urban planners. By providing guidelines for the development and implementation of action, it is possible **to improve the capacities of public administrators to involve relevant stakeholders and civil society in governance and public participation through the means of urban agriculture.**

A successful participatory urban agriculture is a social innovation. To design it as such, it should follow the six steps of social innovation from good diagnosis of the situation, through a creative process of ideation and iterative prototyping to continuous monitoring. Once successful, participatory urban agriculture could be scaled to new locations and be targeted at a higher level; changing the system.

The social innovation spiral



Inspired by: Young Foundation, The Open Book of Social Innovation
- www.youngfoundation.org

DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis is the foundation for all further phases, since understanding is the key. There is a variety of approaches to analysis and exploring them is necessary because each case is unique and needs a specific set of diagnostic techniques.

In the case of participatory urban agriculture, three areas of diagnosis were proposed:

- **The social circumstances of the target groups;**

Social analysis can be general (statistical analysis, surveys) or detailed (participants observation, interviews). The techniques to understand the social circumstances include photo elicitation, resource flow, photo safaris, guided tours and others.

- **Relationships between stakeholders in their neighbourhoods and communities;**

Every project is a part of a larger network of activities and services, run by diverse stakeholders. These create the institutional environment in which actors need to cooperate and support each other, in order to ensure the success of our action.

- **The spatial dimensions of the area to be used for urban agriculture.**

Space is an integral part of any activity and needs to be explored and analysed at both the city and neighbourhood level.

PROTOTYPE

No plan is perfect from the beginning. Instead of planning the final format of an urban garden, several smaller and gradual steps should be considered before. Prototyping allows to gather feedback from users while still in planning and designing the urban participatory agriculture.

Prototyping should:

- save time, energy and resource investment;
- provide an opportunity to have something in a larger scale;
- point at elements that would otherwise be missed;
- result in higher user satisfaction.

Prototyping should be properly documented and moderated, with notes why and how something was done differently and defining several steps towards a conclusion.

IDEATION

Ideation demands an iterative process of revising and refining the concept. It is the bridge between problems and solution, based on the analysis and the outcomes of the diagnosis phase, and leads towards prototyping.

When ideas are created, one needs to look at the following aspects of the proposed ideas:

- Emotional;
- Organizational;
- Experiential;
- Economic;
- Social;
- Cultural;
- Spatial.

Variety in ideas and options is favoured as each uncovers unexpected areas of innovation and opens up new perspectives. It is important to share those ideas, knowledge and expectations, so that decisions can be made from the various options.

The ideation process includes an analysis of what could be achieved according to the constraints pointed out, as well as an attempt to find the optimum solutions for such constraints.

MONITOR

Monitoring ensures effective implementation and the achievement of the final goals of a participatory urban agriculture. During monitoring, we collect and analyse data about the ongoing activities in order to get detailed information about the work that has been done.

Although monitoring is usually done after or during the project activities, a crucial step occurs at the very beginning, by defining the key performance indicators (KPIs). The most important of these are:

- inputs (the needed resources);
- activities (the actual work, that has to be done);
- outputs (the direct and measurable results);
- outcomes (the changes that lead to the final goals);
- impact (the final goals, the effect of the activities).

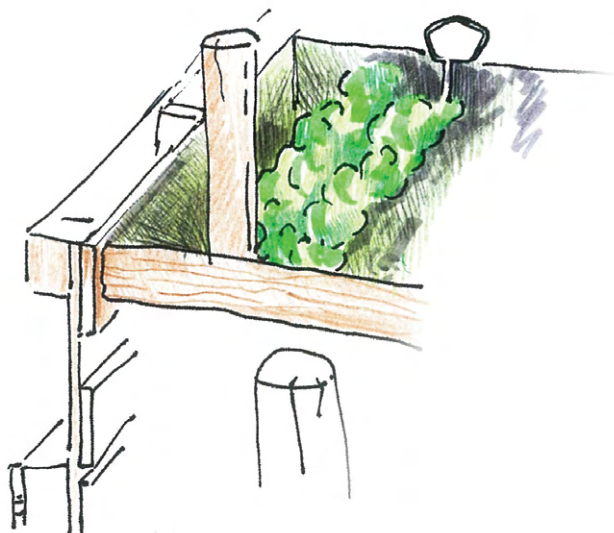
SCALE

After the initial assessment of the opportunity and definition of an innovation, an effective way of spreading social-sector innovations in order to achieve greater impact should be determined.

There are several ways of scaling participatory urban agriculture activities:

- **Influencing** (providing information and raising awareness about social issues and the potentials of the approach);
- **Direct approach of replication** (investing in the organizational capabilities, inclusion of new users, development of new locations);
- **Dissemination** (Supporting and providing information, consulting and training, licencing the approach)

Through sharing, lobbying and branching out, all scaling activities contribute to the improvement of the social circumstances of the defined target groups.



SYSTEMIC CHANGE

By introducing a new type of social service, redefining ownership, developing new funding models or facilitating the circular economy, urban participatory agriculture should not end with urban gardens, but with a change in the position of its users within the social system.

Beyond growing vegetables and participation, participatory urban agriculture is about establishing structures that secure and strengthen the breadth and duration of the integration of marginalised social groups into urban society. It might lead to creating a new form of participative and more inclusive social service provision. Or it might end up with introducing new concepts of it. It might even facilitate the development of a circular economy in which the previously marginalised groups become the centre of economic processes; or it might experiment with different understandings of benefits for the long-term unemployed.

Participatory urban agriculture is a process, not a project. It should not end with the creating of a garden, but should continuously evolve according to needs, while its effect and impact are monitored. If it is successful, then there is the opportunity to scale – and increase the number of users upon whom it has an impact. And so, a vision of systemic change can emerge: a long-term vision that goes beyond growing vegetables.

The steps to systemic change are the following:

- **Adopt**

Innovation is introduced by external players and the ownership over it is gradually institutionalised or adopted by relevant players in the system.

- **Adapt**

Behavioural changes of relevant players are sustained, and different changes are incorporated in standard operations.

- **Respond**

Other supporting functions and rules begin to change in response to the innovation.

- **Expand**

The boundaries are being pushed. The seed of change grows and expands into new directions.

Publication: Approaching urban agriculture as a social innovation

AgriGo4Cities has prepared a publication titled *'Approaching urban agriculture as a social innovation: Guidelines for the development and implementation of an action plan'*. The publication introduces various types of systemic planning tools which are available to integrate planners, practitioners, and civil society in a process of joint learning that can effectively guide the development of urban agriculture.

The chapters of the book include reasons for urban agriculture, the inclusion of marginalized social groups, participatory planning and define the role of social innovation. In the further chapters, each phase of action planning is presented, along with concrete planning tools and a good practice example. The publication includes short takeaways from all chapters and types of Urban Gardens for further understanding. The final element of the publication presents the Urban Agriculture Canvas which was developed to support the action planning process.

The publication is available online in the Library section of the AgriGo4Cities webpage (<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/agrigo4cities>).

The cover of the publication *Approaching urban agriculture as social innovation*

A good practice example in the publication



TABOR PARK
Ljubljana, Slovenia
2010 - 2014

Initiator: ProstoRož, Zavod Bunker
In collaboration with: Inštitut za politike prostora (IPOP)
More info: prostoroz.org/portfolio/items/park-tabor/

The Tabor Park project was built on the basis of a study prepared by the Bunker Institute, with the help of IPOP, which aimed to determine a strategy to revitalise the then-abandoned Tabor Park. The key problem was that local residents had avoided the degraded park. Following renewal of basic infrastructure and changes in the traffic regime, the initiators encouraged the local population to use the park and integrate it into their lives. This was done through a series of events that were held regularly between May and September during the project. Today, after the end of the project, the Tabor Park is still a lively public space, where local residents and visitors meet for self-organised events.

Lessons learned

The research identified key problems in the neighbourhood and the park, and also provided insight into the wishes and needs of local inhabitants and institutions. Renovation of the basic infrastructure and interventions in the traffic regime enabled the initiators to organise a variety of events that attracted the local population, encouraging them to participate and use the park. As a result of the conclusions of the research, regular events were organised for each week between May and September throughout the duration of the project. Thus, over four years, with the cooperation of one hundred and fifty organisations and individuals, 950 events took place. Among them were regular fairs, marketplaces, garage sales, seed exchanges and an outdoor cinema. Work campaigns were organised to clean the park and so encourage residents to take care of the area and continue their activities after the formal close of the project. The project served as a positive example of how to integrate local initiatives and develop them into sustainable strategies, and is still an inspiration and model for other similar initiatives in Slovenia.

Urban Agriculture Canvas

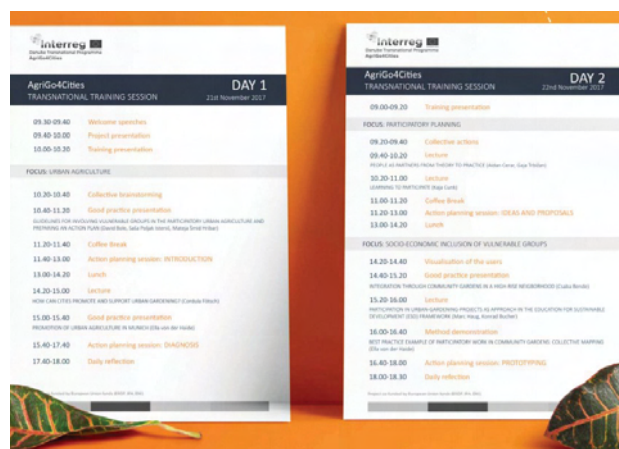
Key Resources	Key Activities	Type of Urban Garden	Social Issue	Value Proposition
<p>What Key Resources do your Value Propositions require?</p>	<p>What Key Activities does your Value Propositions require?</p>	<p>What type of urban garden would fit your case (key resources, social issue, beneficiaries)?</p>	<p>What is the social problem you are trying to solve?</p> <p>What are the causes of the problem?</p> <p>Who are the key stakeholders (beneficiaries, third parties, communities) related to this social problem?</p>	<p>What value do you deliver to the beneficiaries?</p> <p>Which one of your beneficiary problems are you helping to solve?</p> <p>Which beneficiary needs are you satisfying?</p>
Partners		Channels	Beneficiaries	
<p>Who are your Key Partners?</p> <p>Who are your key suppliers?</p> <p>Which Key Resources are you acquiring from partners?</p> <p>Which Key Activities do partners perform?</p>		<p>Through which Channels do your beneficiaries want to be reached?</p> <p>How are you reaching them now?</p> <p>Which channels work best?</p>	<p>Who are the key stakeholders (beneficiaries, third parties, communities) related to this social problem?</p>	
Costs		<p>Which are the most important costs inherent to your project?</p> <p>Which Key Resources are most expensive?</p> <p>Which Key Activities are most expensive?</p>		

Training tool for action planning

Kaja Cunk

In order to prepare various stakeholders (decision makers, public servants, NGO representatives, researchers) for action planning, a two-day **transnational training** session was developed and implemented in Munich, on 21st and 22nd November 2017.

Transnational training session programme



AgriGo4Cities TRANSNATIONAL TRAINING SESSION DAY 1 21st November 2017	AgriGo4Cities TRANSNATIONAL TRAINING SESSION DAY 2 22nd November 2017
09:30-09:40 Welcome speeches 09:40-10:00 Project presentation 10:00-10:30 Training presentation	09:30-09:30 Training presentation
FOCUS: URBAN AGRICULTURE	FOCUS: PARTICIPATORY PLANNING
10:30-10:40 Collective brainstorming 10:40-11:30 Good practice presentation: GARDENS FOR MEDICINE: COMMUNITY GARDENS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD (COLLECTIVE AND PROFITING) IN ACTION: PLUM (David Bell, Sara Polak Hovell, Marisa Smit-Peters)	09:30-09:40 Collective activity 09:40-10:20 Lecture: PEOPLE AS PARTNERS (Peter Högler, FR Practice (Julian Green, Olga Pöhlner)) 10:30-11:00 Lecture: GARDENS FOR MEDICINE (David Bell)
11:30-11:40 Coffee break 11:40-13:00 Action planning session: REPRODUCTION 13:00-14:20 Lunch 14:20-15:00 Lecture: HOW CAN CITIES PROMOTE AND SUPPORT URBAN GARDENING? (Linda Fleury)	11:00-11:20 Coffee break 11:20-13:00 Action planning session: IDEAS AND PROPOSALS 13:00-14:20 Lunch
15:00-15:40 Good practice presentation: RESPONSE OF AGRICULTURE IN URBAN AREAS IN BARCELONA (Eva del Moral) 15:40-17:40 Action planning session: DIAGNOSIS 17:40-18:00 Daily reflection	FOCUS: SOCIO-ECONOMIC INCLUSION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS 14:20-14:40 Visualization of the work 14:40-15:20 Good practice presentation: WITNESSING THROUGH COMMUNITY GARDENS IN A HIGH-RISK NEIGHBOURHOOD (Luis Benito) 15:20-16:00 Lecture: PARTICIPATION IN URBAN GARDENING PROJECTS: AN APPROACH IN THE EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (Sara Pöhlner, Olga Pöhlner, Sara Polak Hovell, Marisa Smit-Peters) 16:00-16:40 Method demonstration: BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE OF PARTICIPATION HOW IN COMMUNITY GARDENS COLLECTIVE MARKING (Sara Pöhlner, Olga Pöhlner) 16:40-18:00 Action planning session: PROTOTYPING 18:00-18:30 Daily reflection

Project AgriGo4Cities has participatory approach in its core, and the following measures were taken, in order to reflect that in the training session:

- All project partners were invited to propose lecturers for the training session;
- The lecturers needed to provide the title of the lecture, its short description and their biography;
- A voting scale was developed, and partners had to grade each lecture based on need and interest;
- Best graded lectures were included in the training session.

Once the lectures were selected, the transnational training session programme was developed. It was aimed at:

- Acquiring the understanding of **participatory urban agriculture**;
- Developing **skills for action planning** with multi-stakeholders involved in the process;
- Using well-known **participatory methods** in the training session: brainstorming, open floor, design thinking techniques, and Theatre of the Oppressed techniques.

Transnational training session group work in Munich



Training is a welcomed tool to **motivate participants** to acquire or improve new skills, much needed for their future work. Moreover, international training environment enables exchange of experiences between participants and results in a better understanding of the training topic and the variety of possible approaches to it. With the aim of not only developing, training can solely be used for the purpose of AgriGo4Cities project implementation; **the training session was developed as a training tool, that can be used as such, or transformed and reshaped into the needed form.**

All training session steps are collected in a publication 'Preparing for action planning: An account of the training session' which you can access in the Library section on the AgriGo4Cities webpage (<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/ag-rigo4cities>). All lecture presentations have been uploaded online for further use (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mW0vFoznZDKr9eVVGj_IHFEREE-jN1hR/view).

In the publication, you will find:

- The final version of the training session programme;
- A short summary of each lecture with the relevant further recommended reading list;
- Step-by-step explanations to the exercises used (such as collective brainstorming, daily reflection, collective action and similar);
- All handouts that were created for the training session (programme, action plan framework, reflection question cards).

Cover of the publication 'Preparing for action planning: An account of the training session'



Lecture presentation in the publication



Exercise presentation in the publication



Daily reflection

Individual activity

To reflect on the group work process in order to recognise and foster the awareness of individual and group learning outcomes and new insights.

We reflected individually by answering the following questions:

1. What has been, in your opinion, the most important value added by working in a group work, the thing you could not achieve while working individually?
2. What was the most valuable thing you learnt today, if anything?
3. How can you use your new learning/ insights (if any) in your local environment once you return home?

Tutoring program for action planning

Lucia Vačoková

In order to provide a constant professional support for the development and implementation of action plans in the pilot areas, ENVICORP Slovakia with the cooperation of the strategic project partners developed a **tutoring program**. The program ensured a regular and frequent consultancy for the territorial partners in the key phases of the action planning process. The program defined also mechanisms and key personnel responsible for tutoring in fields of:

- urban agriculture,
- integrating participatory approach into decision-making,
- socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalized groups,
- sustainable urban development.

AgriGo4Cities tutoring program

The tutoring program is one of the outcomes of the development of a common methodology and its objective is to summarize the guidance provided by the tutors for territorial partners in the process of

action plan development and implementation. The purpose of the developed action plans was to **generate a new participatory governance model and manage an existing or create a new urban garden through the active involvement and cooperation of target groups**. Communities at risk of exclusion were actively involved into decision-making processes. They designed their own models of social and economic engagement (e.g. recreation and community building, social enterprise, regional food production and supply chains for restaurants, places of learning, communicating and/or criticizing, alternative usage of public spaces, etc.) in accordance with the city's strategic orientations.

Professional guidance services were built upon the specialized information delivered during the Transnational Training Session held in November 2017 in Munich and later summarized in the Guidelines for the development and implementation of an action plan. **For guiding the territorial partners during the pilots, the strategic partners have nominated its own professionals that were responsible for a particular step of the action plan development and implementation.** During the tutoring programme three types of activities have been carried out: group guidance, individual consultations and surveys.



A summary table of the methods used for action plan development and implementation including types of consultations:

	Methods	Types of consultations
Diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statistical analysis A day in the life Stakeholder map Mind maps Participant observation Participatory mapping Analysis of the evaluation questionnaires and the inventory questionnaire Meetings and interviews Personal development 	
Ideation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moodboard MoSCoW Mind map Problem tree Planning group SWOT Evaluation questionnaires and the inventory questionnaire Meetings 	
Prototyping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proof of concept testing Slow prototyping Benchmarking (comparing to other PAs) Survey with the gardeners Workshops Inhabitants opinion survey 	
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public opinion survey & questioning users on activities Benchmarking Proof of concept testing Balanced scorecard Social audit 	
Scaling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding the organization's delivery capacities Knowledge dissemination Influencing public awareness Norms Behaviours Technical assistance International conferences, Spreading to twin cities 	
Systematic change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt & Adapt & Expand & Respond methods 	

Implementation of the tutoring programme

The essence of the action plans was the development of an urban garden with the involvement of the local partnerships and target groups. Every pilot area has different specific features and needs. So, although **the local action plans have common structure and use common or similar methods, they represent individual plans.**

Diagnosis represents the first step in action planning. As the municipalities had planned this step already when applying for the project, they did not need many consultations with tutors. ZRC SAZU the responsible partner for this step received questions on the following issues:

- gathering statistical information on the target groups,
- involvement of children with special needs,
- explaining people how to participate in planning of the gardens, what does social inclusion mean in practice, and how to include both aspects in urban gardening,
- strengthening the cooperation among actors,
- convincing people that the project will have fruitful outcomes,
- negotiating suitable date and time for participants' meeting,
- organizing appealing and easy-to-follow workshops.

Both Ideation and Prototyping were focus in the transnational training in Munich during which the strategic partners introduced the two steps to the territorial partners and provided consultation about them. The **Ideation phase is based on the analysis and outcomes of the Diagnosis phase.** During Ideation, the different possible scenarios are considered and evaluated. In the framework of tutoring the

piloting partners were surveyed through questionnaires about their ideation activities. Based on their experiences **co-operation and a variety of points of views are fundamental to obtain the best results.** Technicians, local population, workers, businessmen and public officials should all be included to share ideas and discuss options and approaches. Generally, at this stage it is a good approach to look at local, as well as national and international previous participatory planning projects carried out in similar contexts.

Prototyping was simulated with all territorial partners in Munich through round table methods, where strategic partners were tutors. Territorial partners used several methods for prototyping process (drawing of garden or small garden model development with use of natural and artificial components). Presentations of results with possibility of information change was organized as well.

In the second phase of the implementation of the tutoring programme **the partnership focused on group discussions and workshops to share ideas and experiences.** A group discussion that directly aimed the last three steps (monitoring, scaling, systemic change) was organized on the 5th project meeting in Blagoevgrad. On the workshop the world café method was used, during which one table was dedicated for each one of the steps. At every table the responsible tutors led the discussion about the certain step. Territorial partners had the opportunity to **share challenges that they have encountered during the pilot, reflect to each other and ask for guidance from the strategic partners.** Receiving advices from other partners was useful for territorial partners before entering to the last phases of the pilot. In addition, the workshop also provided an overview for the strategic partners about the ongoing activities.

Results of the Tutoring program implementation

Under the scope of the tutoring program the strategic partners cooperated with ENVICORP Slovakia on “Frequently asked questions” (FAQ) development which is one of the main results of the Tutoring program implementation. Below you can find a collection of the most important questions that emerged during the implementation of the program:

DIAGNOSIS:

How to increase the level of cooperation among actors?

Collaborate with well-known organizations and individuals from this field of expertise and refer to them when inviting new actors to the process. It is also wise to subcontract an association from the field to organize the workshops to channel their network into the project.

IDEATION:

How to obtain a suitable land for the garden?

Do not contact directly the municipality but contact and cooperate with city councillors and relevant organizations of the field. Start planning and cooperation as early as possible.

PROTOTYPING:

Why do I prefer prototyping over a design plan?

Prototyping is a simple method for visualising a garden and making necessary changes is an easy process. The primary advantage of prototyping instead of a design plan is the lower cost, as there is no need for a certified architect or a special design program. Conversely, the completion of a design plan requires a designer/architect and associated costs and changes in a design plan increase costs in line with the difficulty or complexity of the changes to be made in the plan.

MONITORING:

Which methods should we use?

Methods always must be based on the types of indicators and target groups. There are several mathematical methods that you can use when working with data and numbers, but if you make interviews or questionnaires with the members of your target groups you must choose a methodology which fits to their needs. For example, while working with vulnerable people you should choose an interesting and simple methodology and not to measure their opinion with a long questionnaire with complicated language.

SCALING:

What are the preconditions needed to scale up the action?

Not every activity should be scaled. Preconditions need to be carefully assessed when planning a scale up. You must assess the scalability of the idea or project, or, whether you have anything worth scaling up. Firstly, define what makes your activity innovative, what makes it successful and why. Secondly, assess the needs or whether there is significant unmet or poorly met need elsewhere. Thirdly, assess whether you have enough organizational support and stability. According to your vision and aims build a base of ‘followers’ and alliances and realign or mobilize resources. Fourth, assess whether this is just the right time for exploring scale seriously.

SYSTEMIC CHANGE:

What aspects should be considered while trying to reach a systemic change?

- Stasis (systems thrive because of stasis)
- Power (during a decision-making process power is exercised and possessed and therefore it implies responsibility)
- Networks (networks have stronger potential to change)
- Delivery (to be effective introduction must be tailored to the persons concerned)

IMPLEMENTATION OF PARTICIPATORY URBAN AGRICULTURE IN THE PILOT AREAS

Outline of the pilot areas

Jernej Tiran and Drago Kladnik

Despite **all pilot areas belong to the Danube Region, they differ in many characteristics** such as surface area and natural conditions. Most of them are located in mountainous areas in valleys and basins, except Székesfehérvár the surface of which is quite flat, and it is located on a marshy plain. Climatic conditions also differ significantly. Most of the pilot areas have moderate continental climate except for Blagoevgrad where there is a strong Mediterranean influence in its climate.

The differences in population density are significantly more distinctive than in natural conditions.

General characteristics of pilot areas

Pilot area	Surface area (km ²)	Population	Population density (people/km ²)
Prague 9	13,3	57,000	4286
Blagoevgrad	621	77,000	125
Székesfehérvár	171	98,000	571
Vaslui	48	70,000	1460
Velenje	83,5	33,000	392

Population growth shows two models of population development. Czech capital Prague has a permanent but slow population growth in almost the entire period after 1960. In other municipalities, population was growing until 1990 or 2000. From then on, the population has remained the same or has dropped up to 8%.

Three common **demographical trends** can be identified in pilot areas and they correspond to the rest of the European Union: dropping total birth rates, population ageing, and negative or dropping natural reproduction of population.

With 41.6%, Municipal district Prague 9 has the highest percentage of discontinuous urban fabric zones. The lowest percentage is in the Municipality of Blagoevgrad (2.6% and 1.8%). Industrial, commercial and transport areas and urban green areas also have the highest percentage in Prague 9. On the other hand, the share of agricultural areas is by far the highest in Vaslui and Székesfehérvár (71.3% and 63.5%), just as the share of forests and marshes in Blagoevgrad and Velenje (65.8% and 53.3%).

The most characteristic particularities of all five pilot areas include:

- Contemporary buildings of large housing estates and extinct industry in the Municipal district Prague 9,
- Still important role of agriculture and forestry in Blagoevgrad,
- Historic role of Székesfehérvár as the medieval capital of Hungary and a coronation and burial place of the Hungarian kings,
- Forest steppe type of both the flora and the fauna, and distinguished parks in Vaslui,
- Intensive lignite mining in the young town of Velenje, important industrial centre designed as a garden city,

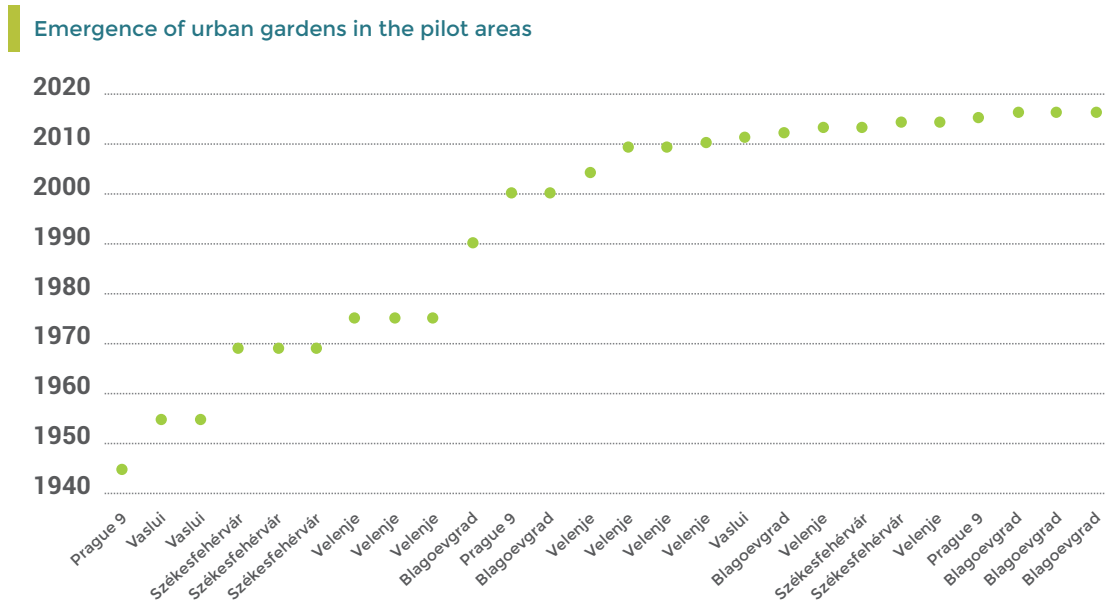
Features of urban and peri-urban agriculture in pilot areas

The role of urban agriculture in pilot areas can be first observed by examining **local strategic and legislative framework**. From this perspective, all partners can rely on at least one local document, related to urban agriculture. However, most of the documents do not deal with urban agriculture directly. They (e.g. spatial plans and development strategies) usually touch the subject indirectly by emphasizing more general fields, such as agricultural land or green areas within land use, food production and self-sufficiency. A distinction between urban and rural agriculture is not clearly outlined. Rare cases with concrete reference to urban agriculture can be found in Velenje, Blagoevgrad and Székesfehérvár.

Altogether, there are currently **32 urban agricultural sites** in the pilot areas. Around two thirds are gathered under a broader category of “urban food gardening”, whereas the other third belongs to “urban farming”. Most of the pilot areas host multiple examples of urban agriculture, while most of the identified types of urban agriculture are represented, with an exception of more non-conventional types, such as therapeutic and experimental farms. The most common types of urban agriculture are identified as allotment gardens, educational gardens, leisure farms and local food+farms.

Urban agriculture is not a recent phenomenon in the Danube region, although a new impetus is recognisable in the last decade. Historically, the first urban agricultural site in selected pilot areas is Zahrádkářská kolonie in Municipal district Prague 9 (1945). Since then, we can distinguish two periods in the evolution of urban agriculture. The older urban agricultural sites were set up in Vaslui after World War II, in Székesfehérvár at the end of 1960s and in Velenje during the 1970s. In all three cities, the establishment can be associated with a socialist context. After socialism, a stagnation in urban agriculture is noted that lasted until the new millennium. Since 2000, a fresh and stronger wave of new urban agricultural projects can be detected in most of the pilot areas, and the trend is still ongoing.

For newer urban agricultural projects, a cooperation of multiple actors is more common than for older ones. The ownership structure is more in favour of the municipalities. It is lands in transition and green-field areas that are mostly cultivated in the form of urban agriculture. These locations can be reached by bicycle and personal car and less by public transport or on foot. More than half of urban agricultural sites are openly accessible, while the majority of urban agricultural sites are equipped with larger or small-scale facilities on the land itself.



Participatory planning in the pilot areas

Successful implementation of participatory approach is not an easy task. Usually it takes a lot of **time and effort to ensure that participation becomes an integral part of every planning process.**

Four municipalities (except Székesfehérvár) already implemented a participatory planning process, and in two cases it turned out to be a positive experience.

Groupwork at the transnational training session in Munich



In all five pilot areas except for Prague 9, which only has a jurisdiction over neighbourhood planning (Prague capital city is in charge of strategic issues), local communities are able to participate, and they are involved in the planning of municipal strategic documents and it seems that there are no big differences among municipalities from that point of view. Municipalities differ more in the use of tools for the engagement of community involvement. Workshops, face-to face meetings and web platforms are the most common tools (used in 4 municipalities); they are followed by social media and consultation surveys (used in 3 municipalities). Generally, vulnerable groups are involved in planning to a lesser extent – their inclusion is reported in Blagoevgrad, Velenje and Vaslui. However, it is only Blagoevgrad where vulnerable groups are targeted (and defined) more specifically – for each group a special workshop or live lab is organized. In pilot areas the involvement of community in neighbourhood planning is similar to the one on municipal strategic level.

The **decision-making process is predominantly “top-down”** schemed in all municipalities, meaning that an action is initiated by the municipality with the aim to directly involve local communities in its implementation. Although **grassroots initiatives**

in some cases promote and encourage changes endorsed by the municipality, none of the municipalities administer in co-governance, in which local communities and the municipality would be equal partners. Community is nowhere concretely involved in the management of municipality-owned urban agricultural land.

Social inclusion in pilot areas

Urban agriculture can address several dimensions of social exclusion – i.e. from production, consumption, social interaction and political engagement. The activities also provide opportunities for many forms of **social interaction.**

Urban gardening in Blagoevgrad



Vulnerable groups, defined as the most relevant in areas where project partners come from, are the elderly, followed by the unemployed and people with low income. Some vulnerable groups are already engaged in gardening, but predominantly in family gardens. In addition, several forms of businesses and mechanisms exist in the Danube region which employ or encourage the employment of vulnerable groups. Vulnerable groups are also involved in education in specialized or regular forms. They can attend other educational programmes outside formal education. Certain vulnerable groups are eligible for receiving social transfers and also extra help in emergency situations. Besides municipalities, several local, national or transnational NGOs or associations work with them as well. Social inclusion is also supported by the legislation and local strat-

egies. Furthermore, the municipalities provide basic means for the physical adaptation of physically handicapped people, shelters, safe houses, professional help and endeavour to communicate with the blind (through adapted webpages), the deaf (in sign language) and the Roma (in local Roma dialect). They generally have positive experience with social inclusion.

Sustainable urban development

Urban agriculture considerably promotes sustainable urban development. All partners have at least one local document that promotes sustainability, however, the paradigm of sustainable development has fully been adopted only in Velenje and Székesfehérvár but with urban agriculture as one of the tools to **achieve greater sustainability** only in the latter city.

From economic perspective, the development of urban gardening is more or less at the initial stage. The estimated number of inhabitants involved in

Indoor garden in a daycare centre in Blagoevgrad



urban gardening, is in most cases, less than 1% of the total population. We can assume that the actual number of people dealing with urban gardening is much higher, especially when taking into account family gardens. In Blagoevgrad, Velenje, Vaslui and Prague 9, integration into local economy is achieved through local outdoor markets, which usually operate once per week.

Urban gardening in pilot areas is more developed from social aspect. In the pilot areas, two examples of the use of urban gardening as a teaching method stand out: the Daycare Centre for Children with Disabilities "Zornitsa" and the Natural school *Tvoriltsi* for all children, both in the Municipality of Blagoevgrad. A similar example can be found in Velenje where in primary schools seven educational parks with high beams have been established.

There have been very few agricultural activities which would address the environmental aspect of sustainability despite a general awareness of the project partners about the environmental potential of urban gardening. In practice, the promotion of eco-gardening principles was only reported in Velenje and Székesfehérvár. The only good practice from waste management aspect was reported in Velenje, where the local community has organised waste recycling in allotment gardens and uses it as a possibility to set up composters.

Announcement board at Kunta Kinte gardens in Velenje



Testing common methodology of participatory urban agriculture

Nela Halilović

The aim of the pilots was to **test the common methodology of participatory urban agriculture** set up by the partnership previously in the project. The territorial partners established **local partnerships** of which main task was the development and implementation of Action plans. In five pilot areas, Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria), Prague (Czech Republic), Székesfehérvár (Hungary), Vaslui (Romania) and Velenje (Slovenia), partners prepared their action plans through a **participatory and inclusive approach**. By the latter, they brought together public administrators and those living at the risk of exclusion and in this way the top-down and bottom-up approaches met.

The purpose of the developed action plans was to generate a **new participatory governance mod-**

el and create a new urban/peri-urban garden or manage an existing one through the active involvement and cooperation of target groups. Communities at risk of exclusion were actively involved into the action planning process. They designed their own models of social and economic engagement (e.g. recreation and community building, social enterprise, regional food production and supply chains for restaurants, places of learning, communicating and/or criticizing, alternative usage of public spaces, etc.) in accordance with their city's strategic orientations.

The activity leader, the Municipality of Velenje, prepared a template for action plans in reference to Guidelines for the development and of the implementation of action plan, which was the base for the preparation of actions plans all the way. Each partner conducted at least three participatory workshops. Action planning was constantly supported by strategic partners through the innovative tutoring program. Each action plan had to include following steps:



PHASE ZERO:

Preparation of the first draft action plan

Each partner had to organize its first internal meeting with representatives of local partnership aiming to set the first draft of action plan. At the meeting, they discussed the future steps of implementing each phase in accordance to their own characteristics. They talked about responsibilities, methods and timetable with time boundaries for each phase.

PHASE ONE:

Analysis

Each territorial partner gathered all the information on current situation connected to the implementation of pilot actions in their area. Besides strictly statistical data, they included the results of evaluation questionnaires. They checked and evaluated the framework conditions and the planned improvement of policy instruments (e.g. new regulation, updated spatial plan). They chose from the recommended methods from the guidelines, which suited the best to their conditions for workshops.

PHASE TWO:

Ideation

This phase was dedicated to sharing ideas, knowledge and expectations so that the participants could make decisions from the various options. Ideation is the interim phase between problems and solutions and can be understood as a comprehensive analysis. In the framework of ideation partners together with the local partnership representatives invited other stakeholders from local level who work with vulnerable groups to discuss about the pilot. The workshop aimed to present the analysis and to raise awareness about the problem, which should be solved by implementing pilot actions.

PHASE THREE:

Prototyping

Prototyping phase was dedicated to the collection of feedbacks from future users, while pilot actions are still in the planning phase. This was accomplished by conducting the next two (and all the other) workshops, with target groups – the future users of urban gardens. At the workshop the participants

developed a concrete plan including the micro location, design etc. of the urban agriculture site. For the workshops each partner chose the method which fit the best to the local conditions.

PHASE FOUR:

Monitoring, Scaling and Dissemination

The aim of phase four was to plan future on the pilot actions. For maintaining the successful implementation of pilot actions in local areas, it is important to plan regular activities, to set the responsible personnel and tools to communicate the monitoring of the progress. This is also relevant for scaling. The participants tried to predict the impact of other projects.

PHASE FIVE:

Systemic change

Finally, yet importantly, systemic change is an endless phase in which the partners had to think about lessons learned and how they can change the system by the knowledge gained during action planning and the implementation of pilot actions. Urban agriculture should not end with urban gardens, but with a change in the positioning of its users within the social system.

As a part of action planning territorial **partners completed at least three participatory workshops** and based on the results of these workshops they **drafted their local action plan** as a result of intense cooperation with the stakeholders. Each action plan is different in accordance to the conditions of the pilot area and was written in their local language. The **development of Action plans is the core issue of pilot actions**, as public administrators were able to capitalize their knowledge gained in the transnational learning environment and at the same time, communities at risk of exclusion were able to stress and follow their ideas by working on urban agriculture local projects. The pilot actions contributed to social-economic integration of vulnerable and marginalized groups and better urban environment, which are the specific objectives of the project.

Community garden Paletka in Prague 9, Czech Republic

Barbora Kvačková

Prague 9 has faced a unique opportunity to establish a community garden, where the main goal is to **stabilize and strengthen the position of the targeted vulnerable group**: mothers with children. The different phases of the implementation of the project Action Plan passed differently. In this case, the phases Analysis, Ideation, Prototyping and Monitoring went without any serious issues, the cooperation with vulnerable groups and with the local partnerships was mostly easy and the project team managed to create valuable outcomes. However, the phases Scaling, and Systemic change were far more difficult to implement. In this case, these phases were connected with lots of experiments and uncertainty. At this point it is difficult to assess the outcomes of the last two phases, because the outcomes are rather of a long-term character.

The target group, or in other words vulnerable group are **mainly single mothers with children**. They were chosen due to the significantly high number of members of this group within the Prague 9 District in the hope that a community garden is a new way to strengthen and unite the members. The community garden is a perfect place to spend time, possibly learn and meet new people with similar problems and needs, because the green and non-traffic place is safe for social interactions. Nonetheless, there is a possibility **to expand the target group and involve the elderly** from the nearby nursing home **and also children from the neighbouring kindergarten** in order to provide education on growing food.

To the pilot action various stakeholders were involved which are all people somehow engaged to the project. Besides the vulnerable groups described above, significant partnerships were developed during the project. For example, a partnership with NGO Kokoza, a new NGO aiming to create a network for all community gardens in the Czech

Republic, which was contacted because of the know-how and scaling possibilities. Nice cooperation was developed also with the maternity centre Knoflík which already had a great network of citizens of Prague 9, especially mothers with children but couldn't provide the opportunity to spend some leisure time outside, growing different plants. The project team has also a good relationship with **the kindergarten Pod Krocínkou**, which is conveniently situated just next to the community garden. The opportunity was offered for children to learn outside about planting seeds, watering, growing and harvesting, food cycle.

In order to support the chosen vulnerable group, it was discovered (by using recommended methods) that a **community garden** would be the best type of urban agriculture project to implement. For establishing the garden, a **place was needed where the vulnerable group would feel pleased, safe and could spend time with people of the same interest and social position/needs**. Also, the community garden should serve as a place for education and to extend knowledge and skills. Moreover, the aim was that the garden will be a place where the vulnerable group could form a network and naturally build a community.

Public Workshop – Moodboard activity (at the Kindergarten Pod Krocínkou)



While action planning, several public workshops were organized where several activities were implemented making use of the presence of representatives of different stakeholders to better understand the needs of a particular group. The most interesting in the planning was **prototyping the garden in groups using all different materials in order to visualize the expectations**. Right after this the groups switched and assessed and evaluated the other group's drafts of the garden. It was discovered that the ideas and needs of the groups were rather similar.

One of the greatest challenges was the improvement of **communication between the citizens of Prague 9 and the authorities of the Municipality**. The willingness of the representatives of Municipality to participate on public workshops and the rising number of successful public meetings are considered as the highest accomplishment. However, it does not mean that the Municipality suddenly launched a systemic change. This adjustment is to come very slowly and will also modify the administration of the Municipality itself. So far, the Municipality representatives evaluate this community garden as a good project – which they are ready to support in the future.

The opening event at the community garden Paletka



A well-functioning community garden was sufficiently established. Most of the owners of the garden beds are members of the vulnerable group. But kids from the Kindergarten was also included and one of the garden beds belongs to the home for the elderly. This should strengthen the integration of the elderly into the society. Additionally, the garden has successfully participated on an all-Prague event (*Zažit město jinak - Experience the city differently*) in order to raise awareness. It is planned that the garden coordinators will continue further scaling and networking. One of the main achievements is the satisfactory communication between the members of the vulnerable group and the representatives of the municipality at several public meetings - a successful pathway for further communication has started between the municipality and the members of the vulnerable group - by this mutual relationship they built trust and a growing understanding of each other.

In case of establishing a community garden, the most important precondition is to have support at municipality level. This kind of support (primarily land, law support), is the necessary basis for establishing the community garden. Another very important prerequisite for effective start is developing collaboration among different fields that help and support the community. Having more partners makes it easier to maintain and further develop the community garden. As it was discovered while establishing a community garden, it is vital to find and discover such members of the vulnerable group/target group who will take over the responsibility and run the community garden together. It is important that particular members have the notion of responsibility to successfully run/manage the garden and are projecting themselves as leaders of the group.

PILOT 2

The establishment of urban gardens in Velenje, Slovenia

Nela Halilović

The Action Plan for developing urban gardens in the Municipality of Velenje was developed in August 2018 as a part of document Urban agriculture for changing cities – Action plan for establishing community garden. The Action Plan was prepared with the aim **to establish a community garden based on the wishes of future users** – vulnerable social groups – as a part of participatory approach. During the implementation the action planning guidelines that were designed in the framework of the project was followed.

At the very beginning of action planning, the **local partnership** was established with two local organisations who work with marginalized groups in Velenje – the University of Lifelong Learning and the Association of Friends of Youth – together with external experts in the field of landscape architecture. A timetable was prepared for the implementation of each phase while preparing action plans, with steps and responsibilities of each partner. All the three organisations collected the necessary **data regarding urban gardening, the situation in the social field and the current governance model** in Velenje for spatial planning. Together a brief description on the current state in the municipality was prepared.

After the analysis, the first workshop was organized with representatives of organisations who work with vulnerable groups in Velenje – the Association of Friends of Youth, Youth Centre, University for Lifelong Learning, Kindergarten, Homecare Centre for Elderly People, Centre for Homeless People, Association for People with Difficulties in Psychical Development, etc. The first theoretical part was intended to present the results of the analysis regarding project topics – gardening, sustainable development, social conditions and participative planning approach. **Good practices** were presented regarding

the related topics. The aim of the second part of the workshop was ideation, which is an interim phase between problems and solutions. The participants decided on the methods for involving vulnerable groups in gardening. Through discussions the project team got an insight into their opinion on urban gardening as a method to involve the socially vulnerable into decision-making and spatial planning to achieve sustainable development.

Creating mind map with stakeholders about reasons to participate in urban gardening



The prototyping phase included **three workshops with vulnerable groups** as future users of urban gardens, with the aim of the development of a concrete plan for future community gardens. All the workshops were organized in an **informal way**, without strict formalities to **make the participants feel comfortable and facilitate their engagement**. In the first workshop, the project team discussed with immigrants about their dream garden – what they would plant and besides getting the idea what their needs are, they learned some new Slovenian words. In the second workshop, the models of 'dream gardens' in intergenerational groups were built. In the third workshop, the gardens were built outside, to get the micro location of the community garden. The project team talked with more than 150 residents, immigrants, children, youngsters, elderly people, etc. and this was one of the most important steps in the process of developing new urban gardens.

Intergenerational participative planning of Community garden



The first plan on developing two, bigger community gardens was adapted to the needs of participants. It was decided together that one big public community garden will be built in front of the premises of one of the local partners, the Association of Friends of Youth in Velenje and a kind of scattered garden with high beds in front of different organisations, for their own needs – the local kindergarten of Velenje, homecare centre for elderly people and school for children with special needs. In addition, the municipality will try to get some seeds, new equipment, etc. for organisations, who already have garden – homeless people centre and youth centre. Besides the workshops, additional **meetings were organized** with stakeholders, with the aim of getting a deeper insight into their work. For each a **garden according to their needs will be established**, for example for some with only herbs and for others different vegetables or flowers. Together with vulnerable groups and experts the micro locations and further administrative things – e.g. the future management of the gardens and ownership – were decided, so it will be ensured that the gardens will exist even after the project ends.

After each conducted workshop, a report was prepared with the analysis of results. The report was compiled from general data – the number of participants, the methods used, the results and from the evaluation that was done during workshop. The project team took everything into consideration when planning the next workshop.

The only bad thing was that the **implementation of ideas was not done right after the planning, when the motivation of participants was the highest**. The project team will keep in touch with vulnerable groups and before the official opening of the gardens on 22nd of April, 2019; – on World Earth Day, each organisation will plant their own plants with experts of the field. **Promotion was done** and the corporate identity of results was already considered, which will be visible not only in gardens, but also in the homes of many inhabitants with a seeding calendar for creating 'balcony urban garden'. With much energy input, the pilot in Velenje met the project's objectives: Improving public institutional capacities, Increasing the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable/marginalized groups and promoting green urban development via new forms of urban agriculture.

Stakeholders, decision makers, vulnerable groups and experts – **all of them learned a lot of new things and methods**, especially for supporting the involvement of inhabitants in decision-making processes. On the other hand, the inhabitants were encouraged to get active in those kinds of processes. The capacity of the municipality was built, and even if the municipality has been trying to implement participation planning approach for many years, it will be upgraded it with the knowledge from the project.

PILOT 3

Community and educational garden for students with learning and behavioural difficulties in Székesfehérvár, Hungary

Máté Szalók and Csaba Bende

The Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency (CTRIA) implemented the Hungarian pilot action in Székesfehérvár. The city with a rich history now is the seat of Fejér County and the economic centre of the surrounding areas. Thanks to the economic prosperity, the city is developing fast in which the local government plays an active role.

Based on the previous research in the project **there are attempts in Székesfehérvár to involve the citizens in decision-making**, however they are not based on a comprehensive strategy and seldom address special target groups such as vulnerable and marginalised people. Urban agriculture exists in the city; however, it is not a direct part of urban planning strategies and rarely seen as a tool for social and economic inclusion. The Hungarian pilot is aimed to test the AgriGo4Cities participatory urban agriculture methodology in Székesfehérvár with the **involvement of broad ranges of target groups and as a result it provides a model for decision-makers and other stakeholders**.

In Székesfehérvár the Hungarian partners worked together with Arany János Special School to carry out the pilot action. It is a secondary school which offers several vocational education programmes for children with learning and behavioural difficulties; some of them have direct or indirect relationship with urban agriculture in such fields as gardening, florist and kitchen staff training. After identifying the needs of the school and matching them with the possibilities in the project the local partnership decided to **establish a community and educational garden which could be used in daily education and could also serve as a community place** for the

students of the school. The transnational training in Munich was an important step before starting the pilot action; it proved to be very useful and effective that a few representatives of the local partners participated on the training and could help in the planning phase of the pilot.

During the implementation of the pilot action CTRIA followed the AgriGo4Cities guidelines and based on them three workshops were organized to plan the garden. On the first workshop the representatives of the school, city councillors, the representatives of the city's maintenance service and the representatives of NGOs gathered together to develop a common vision and discuss the next steps of the pilot action, especially the way of the involvement of students.

Preparation of the prototype of the garden



For the second workshop – besides the representatives of the partner organizations – CTRIA invited the students who are the final users and beneficiaries of the garden. In the initial phase the leaders of the workshop tried to **create a friendly environment** with a short and colourful presentation about community and educational gardens. Then students were split into groups and worked together with the invited stakeholders on **preparing a prototype** of their ideal urban garden. For this action they received different materials (coloured papers, stickers, etc.) for creative work. The **creative workshop** proved successful, the participants enjoyed the

common work and they developed the prototype gardens which were drawn up by the students.

In the framework of the third workshop CTRIA organized a short tour for the participants in one of the two community gardens in Székesfehérvár. The aim of this activity was to give them the opportunity to try out gardening work, get them engaged in the gardener's job to gain ideas for the management of the community and the educational garden that was established in the next phase of the pilot.

Based on the results of the workshops the final layout of the garden and a workplan of the establishment was developed. It must be mentioned that **the participatory approach was also emphasized during the establishment of the garden.** The involved students and other stakeholders built the garden together with the project team and it was a great opportunity to **strengthen the commitment** of the participants to the project. Cooperation was a key issue in the pilot; in this spirit the building materials of the garden were donated by local companies.

With joint effort the small community and the educational garden was built in one day. To celebrate the success of the process and to disseminate the results CTRIA organized an opening day in the garden for what everyone was invited who participated in the planning and building phase. Besides them CTRIA invited the local media and students from other schools in Székesfehérvár.

A few months after the establishment of the garden the project team conducted a short survey among the students. From the survey they could conclude that the students enjoyed planning and building the garden. They **frequently visit it during schooldays, they take care of it and classes are also held in the garden.** Keeping contact with the target groups in the period following the garden's establishment is important because it helps to maintain **the momentum** and enables the project team to **monitor the long-term impact of the process.**

The pilot action in Székesfehérvár was a successful small-scale project during which the AgriGo4Cities method of participatory urban agriculture was tested. The pilot was successful, the lessons learnt could be used and exploited in order to promote participatory planning, social inclusion and sustainable urban development in the city. On the one hand the **participatory planning methods with special focus on the involvement of vulnerable groups proved to be an effective tool in urban planning** which could be used in the future especially in the case of neighbourhood planning. On the other hand, **the awareness raising possibilities of urban agriculture related to sustainable urban development could be utilized** by establishing educational gardens in schoolyards. AgriGo4Cities pilot action was a small-scale project but building on its results could contribute to the achievement of larger societal and environmental goals.

Opening day in the garden



Gardening for everyone in Primaria Municipiului Vaslui, Romania

Stefan Dudau, Bogdan Ciubotaru and Cristina Dumbravă

During the action planning Vaslui Municipality relied on the previous results of AgriGo4Cities project. Developing the concept of participatory urban agriculture and the transnational training session enabled the project team to implement the pilot action, which took part with the involvement of a **broad range of stakeholders**: related departments of the municipality, social services and consultative councils of youth and elderly.

The project team participated in the **transnational training** session in Munich where the basis of the action plan was introduced. The participants drafted the action plan which comprised a chosen title - Gardening for everyone – a list of the involved stakeholders and their involvement, the foreseen duration of the action plan (until reaching the objectives from the application form). The team prepared a **description of the current situation of urban agriculture in Vaslui and they described the selected target groups**. They set up initial output indicators and planned the activities that must be carried out to achieve the goals set. They also listed the necessary inputs such as financial, human and material resources for performing the participatory planning process.

The action planning and the implementation of the pilot action aimed to reach the following goals:

- Improvement of institutional practices,
- Building a playground for learning,
- Obtaining and selling the food for vulnerable groups,
- Knowledge exchange,
- Social integration of the vulnerable groups,
- The establishment of the vulnerable groups' association.

As a first step of the pilot action a deeper analysis on the possible impacts of the action plan on the target groups - that are composed of elderly and children - was carried out. As already observed, many elderly adults have remained highly self-sufficient, however others require more care. As a result of the fact that the elderly typically no longer maintains their jobs, financial challenges can occur. They face many challenges in their later life, but they should not enter the old age without dignity. Through this project, Vaslui Municipality will try to **maintain and at the same time give back the personal dignity that the elderly deserves for their whole life's work and knowledge achieved**.

Action planning workshop with elderly



With the involvement of children, the pilot aimed to support the **development of their social skills that involves learning the values, knowledge and skills** which enable them to relate to others effectively and to contribute in positive ways to family, school and the community. Having a strong cultural identity enhances children's self-knowledge and promotes a sense of connectedness and belonging. Children's cultural identity is nurtured when they learn about their own cultural traditions and when those around them show respect for their cultural values. Teaching children to respect and appreciate variations and differences between cultures is therefore very important for all children's social development.

Children from minority cultural groups can encounter differences between the rules and expectations required at school and those they are accustomed to at home. Not acknowledged differences, or ig-

nored and minimized cultural traditions that the children identify negatively affect the cultural identity and sense of belonging of the children.

Action planning workshop with children



With the **involvement of the stakeholders and the representatives of the mentioned vulnerable groups** Vaslui Municipality organized 3 workshops at Buna Vestire Elderly Club and Bucuria Day Center. The two centres are under the administration of the Social Assistance Department from Vaslui Municipality. With organizing the workshops at the venues of the stakeholders and with **creating a familiar and comfortable environment** the involvement of the target groups was facilitated. The main result of the workshops is the commitment of main stakeholders to urban agriculture.. They had a chance to see the presentation about a similar garden, ask questions and present their imaginary garden about a similar urban agriculture practice to what they will contribute.

At the workshops a large amount of ideas emerged, and a lot of discussions were carried out about the way urban agriculture should be developed in Vaslui City. For sustainability it is important to establish the garden according to what the target groups have imagined. The approach of the project team was to **involve the beneficiaries in all sessions of the training period, both theoretically and practically**. All the activities were performed together with

municipality, considering the local conditions of the vulnerable groups, based on the information provided by the stakeholders. The participants worked in teams to develop the action plan and at the end of the process **the objectives were validated by all the team members**.

The conclusions were summarized in the action plan titled Gardening for Everyone. One of the most challenging parts of the workshops was when the project team had to present the idea of an urban garden which was a little theoretical and hard to understand for some categories of age. The elder participants mostly saw this activity as an individual one, not associative, since they are not used to work in teams, and they tend to work alone. Another difficult challenge was **how to put people to work together in order to reach common objectives and not individual ones**. In the case of the elderly people, the project team had interactive discussions where they asked them questions in order to not lose their interest during the presentation of the idea. For the group of children, they presented everything as a story adapted to their age and they showed them lots of pictures. Furthermore, it became clear that for such pilot project, the establishment of a set of rules has high importance and the activity should be properly organized in order to achieve the proposed results within the garden.

Currently (February 2019) the urban garden has not yet been established, it will be done in the next months of the project. However important conclusions can be already be drawn. The participants of the pilot from each target groups – decision-makers, vulnerable groups and other stakeholders – acquired important skills and understanding between them has increased. The representatives of the municipality learnt about participatory planning in theory and in practice and this enables them to increase the quality of public services and the capacities of public institutions.

PILOT 5

Peri-urban garden for elderly and children with special needs in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

Simana Markovska

Bulgaria is a traditional rural and agricultural country. The **concept of urban gardening is therefore new** and even strange to most Bulgarians and good practices in this field are not so common. That was the starting point for the Association of South-Western Municipalities (ASWM) when launching a local urban agriculture initiative in the town of Blagoevgrad. Another aspect of the base-level situation was the **willingness of local government to expand its efforts in involving local people and various social groups in dialogue and cooperation** for the future of the town and the region. A third aspect was the **existence of vulnerable local groups** with specific needs, many of which are encompassed by the Municipality's social policy but still need more attention and care.

In that situation, ASWM started applying locally the AgriGo4Cities approaches, by making a momentary 'snapshot' of **opportunities in urban agriculture, levels of public participation in decision-making, and the needs and constraints of vulnerable social groups**. Contacts were established with representatives of those groups, their organizations (where such existed), various specialized institutions and experts. Two specific target groups were selected for the pilot local initiative within the AgriGo4Cities Project: children with special needs and elderly people. A **local partnership was officially formed** at the end of 2017, including the representatives of Blagoevgrad Municipality, the local Union of Retirees, Zornitsa Day Care Centre for children with disabilities, and some local associations and institutions working in related fields.

These partners worked together in the first half of 2018 to develop a Local Urban and Peri-Urban Agri-

culture Action Plan for the pilot area of Blagoevgrad. It included the organization of **three consecutive workshops and some intermediary work meetings**, and was structured in six phases, common for all AgriGo4Cities pilot areas: Diagnosis, Ideation, Prototyping, Monitoring, Scaling and Systemic Change.

Action planning workshop with stakeholders



Before the start of the planning process, an analysis and assessment were made on the specific needs and constraints of the selected target groups. The **methods used were taken from the AgriGo4Cities Guidelines** for the Development and Implementation of an Action Plan – “Personal Development” and “One Day in the Life of...”. During the first workshop in May 2018, participants drew together a Stakeholder Map and discussed the physical (geographical) location and organization of a pilot urban / peri-urban garden in Blagoevgrad. It was decided that the garden will be a ‘collective’ one comprising two or three different plots in the peri-urban area of Dabrava and combining municipal and private ownership.

The second workshop in early June 2018 was held in two sessions, where the two target groups prototyped the future garden. The elderly people used the methods “Lotus Blossom” and “MoSCoW” to generate ideas for urban and peri-urban agriculture and **broader public involvement**, while the children with special needs did some **creative modelling of their desired city garden**. The third workshop at the end of June 2018 wrapped up all ideas and helped local partners to formulate an actual Action Plan for the pilot initiative of Blagoevgrad.

The first activities in pilot implementation took place in the early autumn of 2018. A **special brand was developed to label and promote the small agricultural producers from Blagoevgrad peri-urban area** with the logo “Blagoevgrad Local Produce”. It was multiplied on a series of promotional materials including special labels for market stalls, posters and signs, T-shirts and hats for the sellers. 6th of October, 2018 was named a special Market Day under the slogan “Try the Autumn Tastes of Blagoevgrad” and was used to test the local brand at the open town market.

On the 8th of October, 2018 **elderly people and children with special needs together set the foundations of the pilot peri-urban garden** in Dabrava,

planting first almond trees on a municipal plot and then herbs and vegetables in raised garden beds on the nearby private property. Every child was given the chance to ‘adopt’ his or her own tree which was labelled with the child’s name. The Union of Retirees also got their personal tree and garden bed. The initiative ended by a garden picnic for both groups.

Both events were largely promoted with the help of the local radio and printed media, plus websites and social networks. ASWM produced a short video from the local initiative which was uploaded on YouTube and shared on the project profiles. **The local initiative has been evaluated as a large success by all parties involved**, and follow-up steps are under planning.

Target groups in the garden



CONCLUSIONS

Máté Szalók

This publication is the result of a more than two years long learning process during which the eleven partners from eight countries worked together to develop and test a methodology for participatory urban agriculture. They did this to answer complex challenges and needs: The partnership tried to reduce the gap in trust between public administration and citizens with incorporating participatory methods in decision-making while putting special emphasis on social groups that are threatened by the risk of exclusion. Furthermore, urban agriculture is also a tool for stimulating sustainable urban environment which is a crucial question in the current urban agendas. In this publication the partnership summarized the lessons learnt during the implementation of the project to provide guidance for implementing participatory urban agriculture practices.

The research work and concept development in the first half of the project provided a sound basis for the pilot actions which aimed to develop local strategies for the mentioned urban challenges. The on-field research of the Evaluation report on the pre-project effectiveness of participatory urban agriculture in pilot areas determined the most important strategic directions of local urban agricultural policies:

Provision of land and funding for urban agriculture: Investment in urban agriculture returns in improved well-being of citizens, however economic and social benefits should not be overlooked, especially in the case of vulnerable groups. To capitalize these benefits of urban agriculture, municipalities should ensure land for urban agriculture through urban land use policies and fund it through small scale, but direct investments.

Awareness-raising, knowledge and information on urban agriculture: The utilization of the social, economic and environmental possibilities of urban

agriculture is still in initial phase in the Danube Region. Therefore, soft measures must be taken by the key actors to spread knowledge and raise awareness about urban agriculture in order to facilitate the capitalization of its potential.

Urban gardens and farms as meeting points of the target groups: During researching the pre-project effectiveness of participatory urban agriculture perceptual differences have been revealed between the target groups about public participation which contribute to the increasing gap between public administration and citizens. Since urban gardens and farms function as meeting points, they offer the opportunity to organize public events in them which could facilitate the involvement of citizens in public debates.

During the implementation of the pilot actions the partners gained practical experience about participatory urban agriculture which supplements the strategic findings of the on-field research. The following things were identified by the partners as the main lessons learnt and key factors of success:

Learning and the development of skills: for cooperating effectively learning from and about each other has key importance. Decision-makers, representatives of vulnerable groups and the civic sphere should be open to learn about each other's challenges and consider them during the process. Furthermore, learning about new and innovative methods in urban strategic planning enables local governments to provide better services for the inhabitants and enhance the quality of life.

Communication: Communication turned out to be a key factor in a participatory process. Some partners mentioned that one of the biggest results of the pilot was that the municipality was engaged in such a process and started constant communication with the other target groups. Continuous communication is crucial to keep the participants interested. The right way of communicating must be chosen, in case of vulnerable and marginalized groups face-to-face meetings and workshops proved to be ef-

fective. In addition, there is also a need to change the attitude and learn new skills. The members of vulnerable/marginalized groups should learn how to express themselves, while public administrators and decision-makers should learn how to listen.

Friendly environment: In case of vulnerable/marginalized groups creating a friendly environment for common work has crucial importance. Organizing the workshops in their facilities, creating friendly and informal environment could help them to be open and could increase the level of their engagement.

Presentation of good practices: Urban agriculture as tool for participatory planning, social inclusion and sustainable urban development is a new and complex approach. Because of this, presenting practices that have already proved to be successful could help the target groups to better understand the topic. However, the ways of presenting these practices is also important; different methods should be used for children, the elderly, handicapped people

etc. Visiting already existing urban agricultural sites could be also an effective tool to support the understanding of the concept.

Maintain trust: The partnership used urban agriculture to reduce the gap between decision-makers and citizens. Gaining trust is important, but maintaining it is also crucial. For this sharing the outputs of the previous workshops could be effective. In addition, it's important to show to the target groups that it is possible to convert their ideas into reality. Timing is also a factor. After the planning sessions try to show quick – even small – results to prove your capability of realizing their ideas.

Involvement in every phase of the process: Involve the target groups not just in planning but in every phase of the project because it could increase the personal engagement of the participants. Building the garden together could form the community and it is also an occasion when the participants meet under informal circumstances.



Forms of participation: Forming an official organization by the beneficiaries could facilitate better cooperation with the local government and other organizations. Legal requirements must be taken into consideration when establishing an urban agricultural site; and it is easier for public services to cooperate with an organization than with individuals. On the other hand, through civic engagement the citizens (including vulnerable and marginalized groups) could learn about democratic participation and about cooperation with others.

Keep in mind that participatory urban agriculture is a complex process: Participatory planning, social inclusion, sustainable urban environment and urban agriculture are complex topics themselves but addressing them together demands even a higher level of complexity. Due to it, implementing participatory urban agriculture is not a simple and straight process from the idea till the realization, but a process in which many factors could change. Involving all the stakeholders and coordinating between them is not easy, but the results will compensate. Setting up clear rules in the beginning could ease the cooperation.

From the conceptual framework and from the pilot actions we can see that participatory urban agriculture could be used in various ways to increase the social inclusion of vulnerable/marginalized groups

and stimulate sustainable urban development. Besides community gardens that have gained more attention and visibility in the previous years there are several other forms such as therapeutic, educational and social gardens which are effective to address the mentioned needs and challenges. To establish a successful urban agricultural practice the most suitable form must be chosen with the involvement of the stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The AgriGo4Cities pilots and the project itself could be considered successful, but the more difficult part will come after the end of the project. The partnership has taken serious efforts to ensure the sustainability of the established urban agricultural sites, scale-up the pilots and make systematic change. But after the project ends the local governments and other participating associations will be responsible to manage the established urban agricultural sites and utilize the results of the pilots, by integrating the lessons learnt into their local policies.

In the AgriGo4Cities partnership we believe that for a prospering Danube Region we need inclusive and green cities. With the project we tried to answer some of the recent needs and challenges of the cities of the Danube Region by applying an innovative tool: participatory urban agriculture. Based on our experiences we consider participatory urban agriculture as one of the several tools that could help us to make our cities more inclusive and increase the quality of life of their citizens.



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PARTNERSHIP

Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU)

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The Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts is the leading Slovenian research centre in humanities and a cutting-edge academic institution in Central, East and Southeast Europe. It has a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary character; in addition to humanities, its spheres of research also cover natural and social sciences. ZRC SAZU has its own publishing house, bookstore, and several laboratories; it houses the Geographical Museum, and boasts numerous collections. Among its rich publishing activity, five academic journals are listed by Thomson Reuters. It encompasses 18 research institutes.

Municipal District Prague 9 (Prague 9)

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The Municipal district of Prague 9 is located within the capital of the Czech Republic. It is one of Prague's administrative districts and it is located in the north eastern part of the whole capital city. Due to its location – neither in the city centre nor in the suburbs – Prague 9 is a former industrial area which develops rapidly into a residential area. In the area of Prague 9 you can find both brownfields and revitalized parks, hilly terrain and near a small, but significant inflow to river Moldau, an estate and family housing district. Prague 9 is also the home of the world's famous O2 Arena.

European Development Agency (EuDA)

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european development agency

EuDa is a private company acting as a head of an EU-wide network of institutions and experts in education, innovation and regional development. Since 2008, EuDA has created an extensive network of partners with a variety of institutions and enterprises from all over the EU, EEA and other countries. The network ranges across sectors and includes public as well as private entities. EuDA aims at providing its network with know-how, international education programmes, partner search support, project development and administration services. It has established many strong partnerships in the framework of European projects. EuDA has also participated in international cooperation projects including programmes such as Interreg Central Europe/Danube, Erasmust+, etc.

Municipality of Velenje (MOV)

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MESTNA OBČINA
VELENJE

The City of Velenje is located in northeastern Slovenia, among the rolling green hills of the Šalek Valley. As the youngest city of the country it grew on coal mining and industry in the last 60 years. With an unusual development progress in the first years of its history, it was built for miners who spent a lot of time underground, with an intention to create green, sunny, spacy and healthy place for living with their families. Innovativeness remained a common feature until today, as it became a good practice on sustainable development, environmental management and supporting conditions for business development. Municipality of Velenje executes the tasks imposed on self-government legislation.

Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency (CTRIA)

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Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency

The Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency started its operation in 2005 as a consortium and the Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency Nonprofit Ltd. was established in 2008 by six organizations. CTRIA works on coordinating the regional innovation processes in Central Transanubia, organizing technological innovation networks and providing innovation support services. The Agency cooperates with international project developers, potential entrepreneurs, idea owners, innovative enterprises, SMEs, public administrators, higher educational institutions, research institutions and local governments.

Vaslui Municipality (PMV)

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Vaslui Municipality (Romania) is the most important urban centre in the county of Vaslui (over 130.000 inhabitants according to last population census carried out in January 2019) and currently fulfils its residential role. Together with the other localities that make up its metropolitan area, this urban agglomeration is at the same time the main polarizing center at county level in terms of the many functions it performs administrative, economic, social, cultural, medical, educational.

ENVICORP Slovakia (ENVICORP)

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ENVICORP Slovakia is a professional NGO working with a group of skilled professionals in environment and ecology. Its members have expertise also in participatory and strategic planning: an element that is going to be crucial for the AgriGo4Cities project. ENVICORP Slovakia's members are authors and co-authors of several methodologies in topics as follows: environmental education, sustainable development of European mountain areas, spatial systems of ecological stability and so on. Among them the topic of Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture holds one of the most central positions. ENVICORP Slovakia is an NGO that implements activities at national and transnational level.

Association for culture and education, PiNA (PiNA)

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PiNA, founded in 1998, is a non-governmental organization bridging people, civil society organizations, public structures and political representatives through educational and informational activities. PiNA is a Europe Direct information centre, an Eurodesk regional partner, a youth centre with the status of operating in the public interest in the field of youth and regional NGO's HUB. PiNA has experiences in coordinating international projects (Interreg, Erasmus+, Europe for Citizens, European Social Fund, Norway's Financial Mechanism), wide thematic coverage (youth employment, socially responsible entrepreneurship, design thinking and action planning) and 10 full-time employees, and more than 40 external experts.

Association of South-Western Municipalities (ASWM)

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The Association of South-Western Municipalities was established in 2000 as a non-profit legal entity working for public benefit.

The objectives of the Association are to protect and represent the common interests of member municipalities; to coordinate members' actions to solve local problems and to develop local self-government; to provide quality and diverse services to members and to encourage citizens to participate in local government.

Expert assistance and advice on: project development and management; implementing the principles of good and transparent governance; improving the quality of services offered; conducting public events; planning and programming of local and regional development.

Twenty six municipalities from Southwestern Bulgaria are members of the Association.

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Over the last 25 years, ifuplan has provided numerous services relating to environmental planning and spatial development. The innovation in our work arises - in addition to our fundamental interest in the new - from our work at the interface of science and practice. We are convinced of environmental planning and spatial development as meaningful and future-oriented fields of work. Our numerous projects range from international to local level and combine strategic issues with concrete local implementations - a range that fascinates us again and again.

Municipality of Ulcinj (MoU)

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Ulcinj is a coastal city in the Montenegro of Montenegro which has a population of 20000 people. The town is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea and due to this it is a popular touristic destination. Because of the Mediterranean climate Ulcinj has a developed agricultural sector as well. The municipality intends to create new governance models to start a dialogue between the citizens and public services, which is the main reason why it has joined the AgriGo4Cities partnership.

Associated Strategic Partners

- Regional Development Agency of Ljubljana Urban Region (Slovenia)
- Prague City Hall (Czech Republic)
- Association of City Municipalities of Slovenia, Regional Office Koper (Slovenia)
- EBB Europaberatung (Germany)
- Employment Service of Slovenia, Regional Office Koper (Slovenia)
- Association Euni Partners (Bulgaria)



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 www.interreg-danube.eu/agrigo4cities