

food  
relations



**Food as a key medium for social  
inclusion and intercultural dialogue:**

A taste of lessons learned from  
European initiatives

food  
relations

# food relations

**Research prepared by:**

Juan Fernandez Gil, Hannes Gerlof, Emilie Fus, Peter Volz, Savannah Bein  
AGRONAUTEN organization - Adlerstr 12a, 79098 Freiburg i.B., Germany

**With the contribution of Food Relations project partners:**

ACRA, ABD-ONG, AgroEcoPolis, Kamba, SIS Sistema Imprese Sociali

# food relations





**Food as a key medium for social  
inclusion and intercultural dialogue:**

A taste of lessons learned from  
European initiatives



# PREFACE

Over the past few decades, civil society has developed a growing consciousness of the transformative potential of food on social and economic structures. This is largely due to global movements for the right to food and food sovereignty as well as lessons learnt from local and grassroots initiatives of solidarity economy.

The path towards an agroecological transition of food systems is being pursued through the renewal of consumption models and of connected social relations. Civil society initiatives in this field have often anticipated and stimulated policy and systemic changes quite effectively, driving social change and innovation.

Thanks to the “Food Relations” project, funded by the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, in the past few years we have explored European civil society initiatives working on food production, distribution and consumption with a focus on the promotion of intercultural dialogue and social inclusion of migrants.

This publication summarises the findings of our research (led by the Agronauten team, with the support of project partners) in mapping and understanding these initiatives, including their key challenges, strengths and weaknesses.

We share it with the aim of opening spaces for exchange, mutual learning and networking, as well as hopefully inspiring a further growth and diffusion of effective inclusion initiatives based on food as a key medium.



*Michele Curami*  
Project Manager, ACRA



# CONTENT

<b>Preamble</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Definition of Third Country Nationals</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Refugees, UNHCR definition</i>	9
<i>Migrant, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights definition</i>	10
<i>Asylum-seekers, UNESCO definition:</i>	10
<b>RESEARCH PROCESS, METHODOLOGY AND CHALLENGES</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>NATIONAL CONTEXTS OF FOOD-RELATED PROJECTS IN THE EU</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>KEY CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Integration basics</i>	20
<i>Satisfaction of TCNs basic needs</i>	21
<i>Psychological well being</i>	22
<i>Localization</i>	22
<i>Establishing a routine</i>	24
<i>Learning the language</i>	24
<i>Resolving institutional barriers</i>	26
<i>Vocational Training</i>	26
<i>Networking</i>	28
<i>Involving the local community</i>	30
<i>Sustainability</i>	32
<b>CHALLENGING OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>34</b>
<i>Financing, independence vs dependence</i>	34
<i>Heterogenous stakeholders, chaos vs creativity</i>	34
<i>Perception of migrants for community as problem vs resource</i>	35
<i>Involvement of upper-middle-class volunteers vs less-favoured host communities</i>	35
<i>Gender perspective</i>	36
<i>Helping approach vs sharing approach, vertical vs horizontal</i>	36
<i>Scale of project to small, local and disconnected. Think global, act local</i>	37
<i>Labels "intercultural", "refugees"... - exclusives vs open for all</i>	37
<i>Cultural differences, stressing differences vs foster dialogue</i>	37
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS PER SECTOR</b>	<b>38</b>
<i>Recommendations for Restaurants/ Catering</i>	38
<i>Recommendations for community cooking / private dinner events</i>	38
<i>Recommendations for community gardens</i>	39
<i>Recommendations for farms / professional gardens</i>	39
<i>Recommendations for education projects</i>	40
<b>Cross-sector issue: How to promote ecological sustainability in the initiatives</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION OF THE 35 SELECTED INITIATIVES</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Germany</b>	<b>44</b>
1. <i>Über den Tellerrand.e.V. (all over Germany)</i>	44
2. <i>Zusammen leben (Freiburg)</i>	45
3. <i>Annalinde gGmbH (Leipzig)</i>	46
4. <i>Buntes Meißen Bündnis Zivilcourage e.V. (Meißen)</i>	47
5. <i>Cookin' Hope (Wuppertal)</i>	48

<b>Portugal</b>	<b>49</b>
1. Associação Pão a Pão (Lisbon)	49
<b>France</b>	<b>50</b>
1. Food Sweet Food: Refugee Food Festival (Paris/ various places)	50
2. En.chantier: La Cantine du Midi (Marseille)	51
<b>Spain</b>	<b>52</b>
1. Asociación por ti mujer (Valencia)	52
2. Integraschool (Lleida and other cities)	54
3. COOPE/Central Parc (Sant Boi de Llobregat, Barcelona)	54
4. Mescladís (Barcelona)	55
<b>Greece</b>	<b>55</b>
1. Nan (Mytilene, Lesvos island)	55
2. Options FoodLab (Athens)	56
3. Pervolarides of Thessaloniki (Thessaloniki)	57
<b>Italy</b>	<b>58</b>
1. Orient Experience, Africa experience, Venice and Padua	58
2. Maramao, Canelli (Asti)	58
3. APS Barikamà. Rome	59
4. Kamba (Milan)	60
5. Salus Space (Bologna)	61
6. Food For inclusion (Pollenzo)	62
7. Le Galline Felici (Sicily)	63
<b>Austria</b>	<b>64</b>
1. IGOR,Vienna	64
<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>65</b>
1. HEKS Neue Gärten beider Basel, Switzerland	65
2. Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk SAH Landwirtschaft und Garten	65
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>67</b>
1. Gastronomaut (Stockholm)	67
<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>68</b>
1. A Beautiful Mess (Amsterdam)	68
2. Oost Indisch Groen (Amsterdam)	69
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>70</b>
1. Tandem Europe/ Multi-Kulti Collective (MKC): New Roots (Sofia)	70
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>70</b>
1. Comfrey Project (Newcastle upon Tyne)	70
2. Mazi Mas (London)	72
<b>Czech Republic</b>	<b>73</b>
1. Ethnocatering	73
<b>Finland</b>	<b>73</b>
Immigrants Villages	73
<b>Belgium</b>	<b>74</b>
1. Collectactif (Brussels)	74
2. Atelier-Groot-Eiland (Brussels)	75
<b>FINAL REMARK</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>80</b>





## Preamble

(Translated from the original text of Dr. agr. Josef Heringer, university graduated gardener and founder of the Weltgarten in Laufen, Bavaria, Germany, 2014)

“The world is moving. At first glance, this is nothing new to us, what is new at most is the dramatic increase of movement on the crust of our planet. We live at the end of an epoch quite similar to the end of antiquity. Many people, sometimes tribes, are getting more and more into motion. While in former times many people from densely populated Europe migrated to continents with more resources, spaces and opportunities, today migration is the other way around. Inside the EU there is a migratory trend towards west and north to more prosperous areas of the continent. People from countries with political, ethnical, religious, climatic and social-economic conflicts are seeking better lives in seemingly more developed, stable and safe countries of Europe.

Migration can trigger discomfort in many political, social but also individual spheres. Especially, if the people arriving have a different cultural background, look different and speak in foreign languages. A potent remedy is in being aware that every one of us is a hybrid of the last mass migration 1500 years ago. Not only are we heirs of mixed people in terms of nationality, culture and religion, but also most of the plants we use to nourish ourselves, growing in our native soil and sold in the local shops enjoy a migrant background. The botanical endowment of the newcomers was provided over the last thousands of years and our tables are richly covered because of these historical imports.

The connection between food and migration not only demonstrates itself in the shared existential need we satisfy by eating but also through the idea, that we would not eat, what we eat without migration, both of people and of plants.”





## INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the number of people arriving on European shores in search for asylum, fleeing war and persecution as well as lack of economic perspectives in the Middle East, Central and South Asia or West Africa, increased substantially. Many experienced dangerous and traumatic journeys to reach Europe. In Europe, these people face the challenge of inclusion and integration into society - from the job market, housing and education to societal participation. In this study, the authors are looking at the medium of food to enable such integration and inclusion.

Why food? It represents a basic human need for nourishment, bringing people together - no matter which background, gender or other differences they have. Our definition of food encompasses all relative activities across different sectors (production, transformation, retail, catering, education, ...) - from social gardening and professional farming to cooking/catering as well as creation of food products and teaching. What is crucial at all stages, is that food is used **as a medium for exchange, integration or inclusion**, be it non-commercial or job-related or entrepreneurial or another hybrid form.

The mentioned activities that use food as a key mean for integration of Third National Countries in society is also aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) included in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in 2015 by all the members of the United Nations. The specific SDGs also addressed in the context of this research are: 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries; 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; and 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

## Definition of Third Country Nationals

In search of a term suitable for the main target group of the evaluated projects and initiatives, the Food Relations team decided to use TCN (Third country national).

Third Country National (TCN) is a term often used in the context of migration, referring to individuals who are in transit and/or applying for visas in countries that are not their country of origin (i.e. country of transit), in order to go to destination countries which are likewise not their country of origin. In the European Union, the term is often used, together with «foreign national» and «non-EU foreign national», to refer to individuals who are neither from the EU country in which they are currently living or staying, nor from other member states of the European Union. The main categories for this term include:

### **Refugees, UNHCR definition:**

*A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.<sup>1</sup>*

---

1 <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>



### **Migrant, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights definition:**

- (a) *Persons who are outside the territory of the State of which there are nationals or citizens, are not subject to its legal protection and are in the territory of another State;*
- (b) *Persons who do not enjoy the general legal recognition of rights which is inherent in the granting by the host State of the status of refugee, naturalized person or of similar status;*
- (c) *Persons who do not enjoy either general legal protection of their fundamental rights by virtue of diplomatic agreements, visas or other agreements.*<sup>2</sup>

### **Asylum-seekers, UNESCO definition:**

*Asylum seekers are people who move across borders in search of protection, but who may not fulfil the strict criteria laid down by the 1951 Convention. Asylum seeker describes someone who has applied for protection as a refugee and is awaiting the determination of his or her status. Refugee is the term used to describe a person who has already been granted protection. Asylum seekers can become refugees if the local immigration or refugee authority deems them as fitting the international definition of refugee. The definition of asylum seeker may vary from country to country, depending on the laws of each country. However, in most countries, the terms asylum seeker/asylee and refugee differ only in regard to the place where an individual asks for protection. Whereas an asylum seeker asks for protection after arriving in the host country, a refugee asks for protection and is granted this protected status outside of the host country.*<sup>3</sup>

We must be aware that the term TCN refers to a conglomerate of people with very different backgrounds and personal stories. For instance, a refugee from Syria might not have a lot in common with an asylum seeker from Gambia or a newcomer from Ukraine, regarding their educational backgrounds, personal stories (experience of violence, war, trauma) and legal background to be suitable for protection.

It is however clear that most people seeking refugee status and asylum form a highly vulnerable group in society since their rights and access to employment, income and housing are reduced. This vulnerability, the resulting needs and the status of TCNs must be considered in the context of this study.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/migrant/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/asylum-seeker/>

# RESEARCH PROCESS, METHODOLOGY AND CHALLENGES

The research organization Agronauten (Freiburg i.B./Germany) in cooperation with the other partners from the Food Relations project team (ACRA (Lead); SiS, KAMBA, all Milano/Italy; AgroEcoPolis, Thessaloniki/Greece; ABD, Barcelona/Spain) have created this research study to identify civil society initiatives based on food as a key medium to foster intercultural dialogue and increase social inclusion. The result is this report which aims to provide information, inspiration, contacts and guidance on the success factors. This is meant for the target audience of existing and new initiatives as well as policy makers, donors and the wider public.

In the process of our work to create a guideline of best practices, we first researched current European programs in terms of such initiatives, dealing with the topic of food and inclusion. In a survey conducted from April to July 2018, we found 300 initiatives all over Europe which use food as a tool for integration in the job market or cultural exchange and as a way to empower people to develop skills to nurture themselves and the community. The overview of these initiatives can be found here. To acknowledge the dynamic nature of the topic we have decided, in cooperation with the **Food for Inclusion\*** project (University of Gastronomic Sciences and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), see also case study), to provide a database where new or missing initiatives can be added. This database caters to the need of exchange that was communicated to us by several initiatives – something that does not exist on a European level.

All the initiatives that enable the food relations fill a gap in society, providing space for ingenuity, creativity, innovation and exchange. The initiatives follow the idea of self-empowerment and bringing people together to make the world a better place (or as the Berlin-based initiative **Über den Tellerrand\*** would say: “Make the world a better plate”).

The initiatives found were narrowed down to the 35 best European initiatives, according to an evaluation process. Of course, there are many more best practices, but we had to make a selection. The selection of the criteria was a participatory process of all projects members of Food Relations. Depending on their importance, they were categorized into the two groups, mandatory and optional criteria. Mandatory criteria were given double value compared to optional criteria. The evaluation was performed by using an ordinal scale from 1 to 3, with 1 being the lowest score, 2 representing a medium and 3 being the highest score.

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, Italy, 6. Food For inclusion (Pollenzo)

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, Germany, 1. Über den Tellerrand.e.V. (all over Germany).



### **Mandatory criteria:**

- Social sustainable initiatives (work conditions etc)
- Pedagogically sustainable (possibility to practice the language, to foster the dialogue about global issues, like global food crisis, alternatives production techniques).
- Environmental sustainable initiatives: in the direction of agroecology.
- Special considerations for women empowerment.

### **Optional criteria:**

- Immigrant's participation in the process of design of the initiatives.
- Independence of external consumables, operating along the chain of added value.
- Connections with social ,political and public sectors.
- Sustainability of the projects over time. (Assignment of plots,infrastructures, professionals).
- Innovative and creative concept.
- Financial sustainability.
- Long standing experience.

By looking at the European initiatives, we realized that there is no "one size fits all" recipe. Key challenges and recommendations to design initiatives working with TCNs integration/inclusion via food are strongly dependent on the context. The forthcoming chapter "national context" addresses these different aspects. The fact that the participating organizations in the project were themselves involved in work with food and migrant projects brought the advantage of learning first-hand about challenges and recommendations – in addition to the research and interviews that were conducted.

All this we used to design three open but topic-oriented workshops in Berlin, Barcelona and Milan, covering vocational training, involvement strategies for TCNs and activation of the local community.

After we had compiled a draft version of this report, the project partners got feedback from 300+ TCNs as well as 60 organizations to strengthen the results.

A further 2-day workshop was conducted in Milan in June 2019 with experts from civil society, initiatives, research and donors to finalize this study.

We addressed the challenges and opportunities in a logical way, beginning with the basics of integration and the needs of TCNs, then going to organization-structural issues and ending at specific guidelines for starting initiatives in their respective areas of activities. Finally, we outline the 35 best initiatives chosen.

The research methodological approach is largely qualitative and based on interviews and workshops with practitioners, researchers, donors and TCNs.

In order to complete the study we faced some obstacles. The topic is little researched and gathering feedback to the guidelines from TCNs proved to be difficult – in regard to language but also the understanding of our project aims. Our Italian partner SIS stated that the very concept of Guidelines and their content are too far from the experience of the beneficiaries: although SIS has drawn attention to aspects more related to daily life, leaving the tools in the background, their hypothesis is, that the guideline analysis is still too far from the priorities of our beneficiaries to become a field of fruitful exchange with them. This translates into the fact that the amount of «intermediation» that had to be put into the feedback collection was significantly high. Also, the linguistic factor has negatively affected the collection of feedback: some of the TCNs beneficiaries, in fact, are illiterate in their native language: the presence of a mediator, even for help, was not always sufficient to overcome this limit.



# NATIONAL CONTEXTS OF FOOD-RELATED PROJECTS IN THE EU

Migration flows around Europe are not evenly distributed. Many migrants do not stay in their country of first arrival, but move on to other countries, in order to join relatives and friends or to reach countries in which they expect to improve their situation. The first step, when designing or upscaling food-related initiatives in host countries, is to understand their respective national, political and cultural contexts and the implications that come along with this. Of course when talking about Europe it's not only the nation state that matters, but also the EUs regulatory and political context and the role its institutions play. However, a clear perspective on the national situation can show the limitations and possibilities of action and help to set more feasible goals for a new initiative (see graph n° of *initiatives/country*, page 16). There are different factors which are varied within the EU member countries, for instance, access and permission to work, the political situation, the general climate for TCNs and whether a country is a transfer or target country. These factors, as well as the regional or local and cultural-religious contexts will determine how initiatives can work, what their main targets will or can be and which challenges they face in particular. This chapter cannot outline the national contexts as this would be a study in itself. However, it is crucial to understand the context – also, when looking to implement elements found in this study.

The first distinction to be made is whether a country is a transfer or a target country. **Target countries** (for TCN) such as Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, tend to have projects with an emphasis on community building, vocational training and social and ecological change (urban gardening, intercultural dialogue, etc.). One of the main factors in these areas of activities is the motivation of the respective newcomer to stay and build up a foundation for their lives (target countries). This is in contrast to the scenario of **transfer countries**, where TCNs are being forced to stay due to Dublin III, which regulates the procedure of asylum applications in the first country through which a migrant entered the EU. When starting an initiative one should first and foremost evaluate what motivations and needs newcomers might have in connection to their interest in staying or moving on to another country. For instance, in Greece, which is a transfer country, initiatives are often addressing basic needs, e.g. providing food packages to fight malnutrition in refugee camps. Many projects exist in informal ways without legal structure, due to a lack of political cooperation. In Germany, one of the main target countries, there are many initiatives which are designed and driven by a long-term perspective from the initiators, volunteers and participating TCN.



Different regulations concerning the **access to employment** for TCNs within the EU, and the legal status (asylum seekers or refugees) determine if initiatives will focus on vocational training and job integration. Despite a common European Asylum and Migration Policy, the EU member states have a significant autonomy regarding the national implementation of integration strategies. While the 2015 European Reception Conditions Directive aims to harmonize the legal rights of TCNs between the different EU member states, refugees' and asylum seekers' access to work still varies significantly among them.

National laws and regulations regarding TCN rights can change very quickly, for instance in the case of government change, which drastically influences the planning and goals of initiatives, adding a factor of insecurity (see graph *Year of Foundation*, page 16). While the EU support initiatives through different funds (Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF)) many initiatives are funded by municipality funds. These can be dependent on national policies which are often affected by the general economic situation and the political climate.

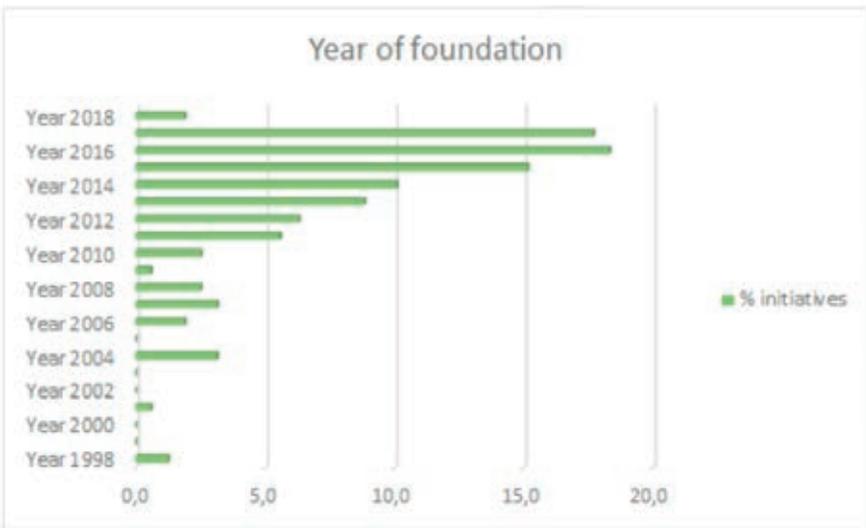
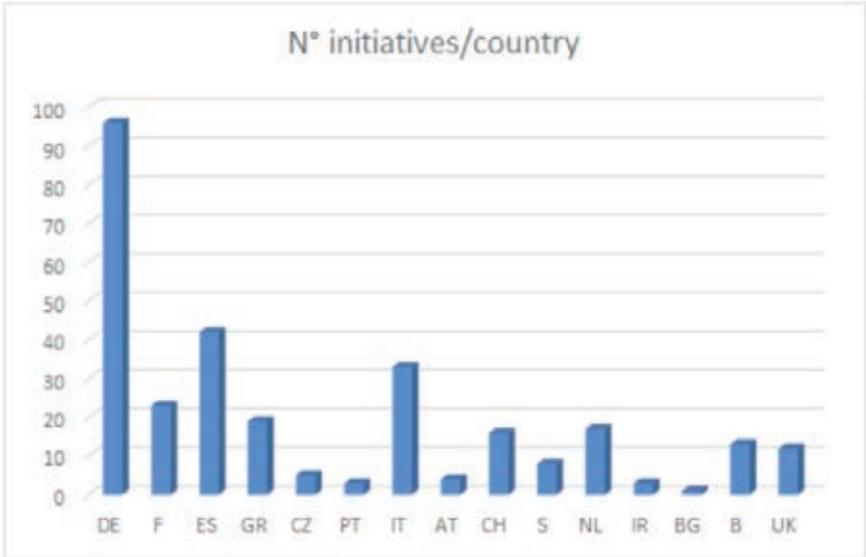
Germany and the Netherlands experienced a big welcome culture towards TCNs especially during the first migration period in 2015/2016 and many projects started first as civil society events like community cooking etc. before they broaden their activities and put their organization into a legal form (NGOs or social enterprises). This enthusiasm has partly changed and there has been a Europe-wide swing to the right with increasing votes for populist parties, in some cases making it more difficult for initiatives to exist and work – due to a variety of factors (legal, economic, socio-psychological). New legislation in Italy in 2018 (Salvini's security and immigration decree) has greatly influenced the potential to act on the projects.

When we discuss the national context we should understand the limits of this lens. Marc Guhr from the project Grandhotel Cosmopolis points out: «The aspect of national context should be replenished by other concepts and terms, which also do matter for how we perceive the world and act in it, such as cultural implications, which may not be represented in the nation state someone derives, religion/confession and/or local and regional contexts. National methodologies and the premise of nation state probably are part of the challenges of integration and co-living, it should therefore be questioned and analysed.»

In our research we found a huge variety in terms of the number of initiatives existent in the respective countries. One explanation is the amount of TCN arriving and already present in the countries, but an even bigger role plays the nationwide climate about TCN and the governmental and non-governmental

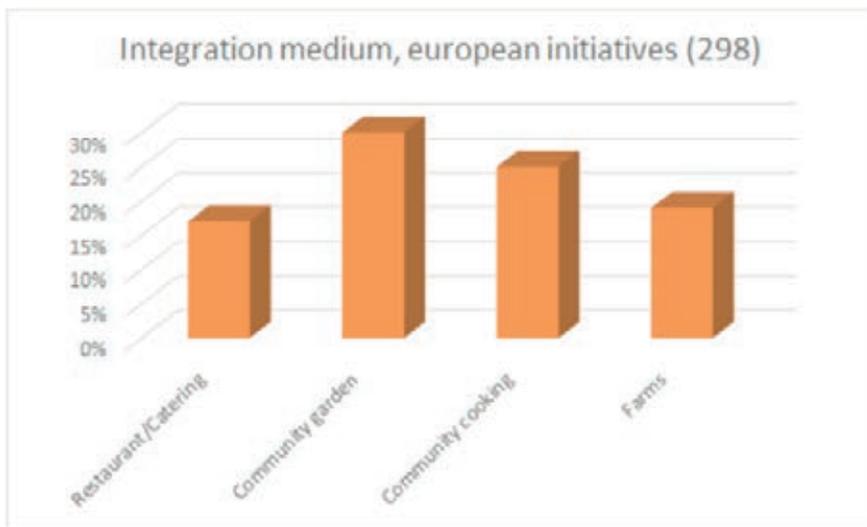


tools provided to support food-related projects with an aim of integration. This climate paired with the motivation of the TCN to either stay or move on makes the numbers more understandable.



Countries which are only transition-countries for refugees, like for example Bulgaria, don't have initiatives like community gardens or restaurants for vocational training because there is no point in terms of sustainability to set them up. There are charity projects but they are limited to the provision of food packages in refugee shelters or privately organized dinner cooking events.

Looking at the fields of action (see graph 3 *Integration Medium*, page 17) one can say, that projects can be divided into two main groups: Community-Building and Skill-Training. For sure the boundaries are blurred, but there are projects which tend to put a focus on voluntary work, a situative approach, self organized structures and very low profile entrance requirements. These initiatives are found in community gardens, open cooking events, intercultural cafés, solidarity meals and likewise. Projects who provide an infrastructure for vocational training, skill development and a work-oriented learning environment tend to be a social business securing the social work through a running business. Restaurants play an important role in this section, they can provide a welcoming environment by also having the chance to work and develop skills for a potential self-employment. On the other hand catering is a tough business and it's hard to compete, especially in urban areas. Not underestimating the importance of the mentoring and individual challenges working with people from crisis-torn backgrounds, social businesses like restaurants or cafés present a valid tool for vocational training as well as a place to build up relations/networks with locals.







# KEY CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

## Learnings from the experiences of best-practice initiatives

Best-practice initiatives do not pop up out of the blue. Many of them have faced obstacles they had to overcome, but they managed to be flexible enough to evolve. Initiatives can learn from whatever barriers they have experienced as well as by getting inspiration from other projects. Taking the time to recap and learn is the path to resilience. This guide aims to provide insights into the main factors which have to be taken into account in order to design and implement a well-functioning initiative dealing with food and TCNs – based on the experiences reported and discussed. This chapter will address key challenges and solutions.

### *Integration basics*

To work on the integration of TCNs, the people active in the initiatives need to have a set of basic skills. Empathy and soft skills are especially important in dealing with intercultural dialogue. There is no space for power trips as mutual respect is the basis of exchange.

Language barriers are normal in the beginning and can be a challenge during common activities and for the mobilization of new participants. However, a common language in initiatives is the fundamental base to create a community and promote the inclusion of everybody within the project. Common activities such as intercultural cooking and eating together can increase the bond between participants and start an intercultural dialogue without words.

In order to make the community and project really grow and persist, the process of trust-building cannot be overlooked. Trust is built up for instance, by the common use of a location and the shared use of equipment and tools. Trust and responsibility go together. If there are issues arising related to trust they should be addressed not ignored. Some initiatives are applying conflict resolution methods like nonviolent communication. When a conflict arises, they are prepared.

Community building, volunteering and community management should play an important role in the special position of the community mobilizers of an initiative. The German initiative **Cookin' Hope\*** pointed out that it is important for the projects not to rely exclusively on volunteers, but to have some professional and interdisciplinary employees.

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, Germany, 5. Cookin' Hope (Wuppertal)

A participatory approach, in contrast to a top-down integration approach, is important to overcome the segregation between the supporters and beneficiaries, which often prevents a real inclusion at eye level. This was an outcome of the workshop held in Milano, Italy, in July 2018: We cannot follow a linear approach to integration but rather have to understand the needs of the TCNs and find the right way to communicate in order to create an enabling environment. There are also initiatives, which are designed and lead by TCNs themselves, with the help of local volunteers, donors and supporters. For instance, **Barikama Yogurt\***, an Italian cooperative was founded by Senegalese migrants and sells home-made natural yogurt and vegetables on local markets to purchasing groups and individuals.

The ultimate aim of the initiatives are to achieve a situation where the label TCN does not apply and matter. The state when someone belongs to a diverse and open society, having the same rights and a dignified life, instead of merely being seen as a migrant. It is a two-way process that changes society at large as well as the newcomers. In this process, work plays an important role. For example, the biggest achievement for the social cooperative **Maramao\*** from Italy is the creation of jobs for refugees and the achievement to help TCNs to become just humans in their new country.

Finally, one must bear in mind that integration is a multi-layered concept which includes the important aspects of housing, health system, access to education and work, and financial and social inclusion. It is difficult for one aspect to succeed without the others, and initiatives will ideally draw on an interdisciplinary team.

Those who work in initiatives need to be broadly informed, provide a network of contacts for social inclusion and have the ability to translate between civil society, administration and politics.

### **Satisfaction of TCNs basic needs**

Before TCNs have the will and wish to participate in food-related or other initiatives, there are some basic needs which need to be satisfied. Housing, nutrition, good healthy constitution or access to healthcare and a certain degree of basic social inclusion in the environment are what we understand as basic needs. In most EU-countries the state provides these basic needs. The situation in Greece is different and the lack of basic resources and infrastructure was and is the starting point for initiatives. The Italian initiative SIS states that “the main concerns of our TCNs beneficiaries were to obtain a permit of stay and to find a job.”

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, Italy, 3. APS Barikamà (Rome)

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, Italy, 2. Maramao, Canelli (Asti)



The link between individual priorities (permit of stay and job) and importance of active participation in projects that indirectly might lead to such a goal (language improvement, social exchange, networking, etc.) is not always immediate for all. The point of basic needs was reconfirmed by the review of TCNs.

### **Psychological well being**

Learning a new language or joining vocational training is difficult without dealing first with the trauma, which some TCNs experienced in their home country and/or on their flight. Additionally, the insecure legal status of many TCNs has a negative psychological effect. Working with vulnerable groups can be challenging and should be accompanied and supported by service providers such as doctors, psychologists, therapists etc. Ideally, at least some people involved in the initiatives should have a common origin or language like the TCNs, to increase the understanding and openness for each other as was pointed out by the Spanish initiative *Evalu*. At the same time, it must be assured on an individual level, if participants really want these psychological or therapeutic services. In general, all health connected professions might be open for volunteering or special treatments for people in need. The moral obligations connected to these jobs can give a foothold for requests of help. Initiatives fostering psychological well-being, will not only gain trust and gratitude of their participants but also support in their field of action, sometimes from the least expected places. It can be even possible to employ a psychologist as part of a stable team offering personal support for TCNs and the coordinator, as it is the case of **A beautiful Mess\*** restaurant in Amsterdam. Signposting someone in need of the respective service is a duty. Facilitating the actual entrance to treatment is not always affordable but nevertheless a crucial part of the success of initiatives providing vocational training.

### **Localization**

One of the main problems of the initiatives is access to infrastructures like land or housing. On the one hand, there are many fallow fields and abandoned places in Europe and municipalities are often very happy for ideas and groups willing to revive these gaps in the urban, peri-urban or rural areas. On the other hand, the pressure on settlement and commercial zones which municipalities often face makes long-term and secure leases impossible. A lesson from well-established initiatives in this respect is, that working the land and building up the infrastructure with a kind of ownership approach, despite the determining lease factors, makes life easier and increases the motivation and energy put into setting up the place. A productive garden or working restaurant is much harder to dismiss than a half-hearted project not being used to its full potential due to doubts about the

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, Netherlands, 1. A Beautiful Mess (Amsterdam)

contractual insecurity. Nevertheless, access to the infrastructure is one of the biggest challenges and often defines the failure or success of the respective project. Connections and partnerships with municipalities and other forms of local government and also from the private sectors and civil society can help in this case, with assignments of land and infrastructure, or inclusion of activities (training, workshops) in their facilities. One example is the Spanish initiative **Central Parc\*** which cultivates organic vegetables at abandoned fields which they got access to through contacts with the public sector and local farmers. The project Maramao got agricultural land from a women sympathetic to their approach. Apart from land (and financing), local governments can also help with small things like putting up official signs.

In some European countries, difficulties to access land and housing is not only a problem for the initiatives, but also for the general (and mostly urban) population. Rural areas offer easier access to land or infrastructures.

The right localization of an initiative can attract many people to get involved in the project and specifically reach TCNs if the initiative is located in a place which is known and frequently visited by them. For instance, *A beautiful Mess* restaurant was built in a former prison, which was used as a refugee shelter until it became a refugee/locally run restaurant. Also, Casa Chiaravalle (Italy) is hosting their projects in the property of a state-confiscated Mafia villa now hosting newcomers. This represents the easiest case in terms of mobilizing TCNs to join an initiative. However, when initiatives are located in areas which do not reach TCNs due to lack of communication and information or when access via transport is difficult, networks can compensate for this deficit. **The Comfrey Project\*** (UK) offers, for instance, refunds for public transport to their project for those in need (being a day ticket this adds another motivating factor for TCN of visiting the project in the beginning). **Oost Indisch Groen Community Garden\*** (Netherlands) demonstrates how networks can help to facilitate the access of TCNs to a project: social workers and other NGOs accompany and bring TCNs regularly to the *Oost Indisch Groen Community Garden*.

Our evaluation has shown that the proximity of an initiative is an important factor to participate, for locals as well as TCN. People do not want to lose too much time and money for transport, parents might want to be close to their kids or are more likely to visit the project together with them if the journey is not too far. Furthermore, the identification with the neighbourhood can be a motivating argument for people to join an initiative.

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, Spain, 3. COOPE/Central Parc (Sant Boi de Llobregat, Barcelona)

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, United Kingdom, 1. Comfrey Project (Newcastle upon Tyne)

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, Netherlands, 1. Oost Indisch Groen (Amsterdam)



Finally, no matter which kind of localization- urban, peri-urban or rural - it is always recommended for initiatives to get into contact and involve the neighbourhood as soon as possible.

### **Establishing a routine**

Establishing easy routines by taking into account, that the respective newcomer may need longer to adapt than expected, is an important factor in any activity and especially in training environments. Recurring activities offer a secure and predictable environment for the participants and create internal tranquility. Providing spaces to retreat and a clear mentor-trainee relationship will help the users to adapt and accept common routines at their own pace.

Giving a structured agenda or day plan for each of the participants seems to be a key factor. Work can also be seen as a routine but a routine does not need to be connected to the actual learning or working area. Establishing a morning circle to catch up on everybody's emotional status, current challenges or problems but also sharing moments of success and gratitude supports a good climate in the group and produces important information for the mentors or trainers. At the end of the day sharing experiences and learnings can also act as a tool for reflection and empowerment of the participants (*the Comfrey Project* in the UK is a good example if one is looking for such routines and tools). At the same time, initiatives should be aware of not being intrusive by implementing too many routines. While routines are absolutely recommended, they should be used in a balanced and flexible way and not give the impression that everything is already thought out before. A participatory approach to establish the common routines in a project may be a good solution. Part of such routines can be also regular non-verbal activities such as sports, musical jam-sessions, cooking together etc., which brings fun and encourages the community to grow together.

Volunteers and employees of an initiative should also establish a routine themselves, such as how to stay in contact with participants from the project in times when community members are busy with education, work or dealing with their legal situation. From the experience of the intercultural garden **Annalinde\*** in Germany, it is important to bridge these periods when members are absent from the initiative, by informing them about the activities and inviting them personally to join activities. This personal component seems to be a key factor to keep members in the initiative in the long-term.

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, Germany, 3. Annalinde gGmbH (Leipzig)

## Learning the language

Language plays a key role in the integration and inclusion process. Initiatives that include a good mixture of native speakers and newcomers foster and accelerate the learning process. Formal and school-based language training is important, but needs to be complemented by spaces where practice and theory are connected. Working together in a garden or restaurant makes using a common language almost mandatory and it is this necessity which leads to learning. There are also creative ways to practice language and obtain a result which makes all participants proud: The best examples are cook-books, for instance, published by *Über den Tellerrand e.V.* or the *Comfrey Project* which could even provide a means for self-financing. Also, journalism clubs where little magazines are developed together is a fun and creative way to practice language, this idea has been put into practice by **La Cantine du Midi\*** in Marseille. Barcelona-based initiative **Mescladis\*** enabled TCNs to tell their stories through a comic book medium<sup>4</sup>.

Some initiatives even provide courses to learn the technical language of the respective profession. Especially in professions where tools and methods are loaded with technical terms, skills like this are crucial for success and will provide an advantage when searching for job vacancies. Some initiatives provide trainings where the professional gastronomy language is taught.

Language is an important aspect in all kinds of training. Initiatives must take into consideration that some TCNs may be illiterate which means that training manuals cannot be used by this group in the same way. This is why **Kamba\*** (Italy) has the vision to develop a training manual for cooking which can be understood without knowing how to read. Initiatives which know that they are likely to host illiterate TCNs can begin to think of appropriate processes to foster learning. Many initiatives like to use pictograms and photographs to transmit information, which can easily be understood by everybody. At the same time some initiatives, like **Zusammen Garten\*** (Freiburg, Germany), use translations and some signs with German words as a way to support the language learning process of TCN, both literate and illiterate. Therefore, a mixture of pictograms, photos, translations and words seems the best way. For a sustainable process of inclusion and involvement, it is crucial to respect the native languages and to offer translations from time to time. Upon request, for instance, *Zusammen Leben* provides translators for their internal workshops in order to avoid the exclusion of those who are still not familiar enough with the German language to join the workshops.

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, France, 2. En.chantier: La Cantine du Midi (Marseille)

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, Spain, 4. Mescladis (Barcelona)

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, Italy, 4. Kamba (Milan)

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, Germany, 2. Zusammen Leben (Freiburg)





The biggest difference between educational backgrounds and the individual vocational agenda of each TCN also calls for an individualized plan of the required language skills, e.g. depending on the profession they want to choose. There are national standards for the required language level in order to apply for a formal education, a particular job or even go to evening school. These must be taken into account individually so that participants can achieve their personal vocational goals.

### ***Resolving institutional barriers***

Knowledge and navigation skills through the jungle of offices, agencies and other institutions go hand in hand with language skills. Initiatives with more capacity and longer experience often provide legal and employment counselling on top of their main activities.

Initiatives need to have a clear idea about the legal framework as well as the potential opportunities and challenges their participants face. However, they often do not have the expertise on all the issues TCNs have to deal with, in this case, it is crucial that they know about institutions or people who can help. The fostering of peer to peer support networks will facilitate the design and implementation of training and labour-integration adjusted according to the needs of the participants. This is, for instance, practiced by Über den Tellerrand where the Job Buddy program pairs new TCNs with established TCNs or locals who have already integrated into the job market and navigated their way through the institutional barriers. (Urban) gardening initiatives, especially during the winter months when gardening activities are sparse, can use the time to focus on individual counselling regarding the legal status, the next steps on the vocational agenda, on finding housing, filling out forms, providing translations etc. Successful initiatives should always provide the opportunity and capacity to provide support and networks regarding these topics- even if the actual concept of the initiative is different. It is also important for initiatives to consider the necessary human resources for this kind of service, from the beginning. Since it cannot be expected that initiatives are professionals in all areas regarding the legal status or labour market integration, it can be a good idea to invite external professionals in these fields to visit the project.

### ***Vocational Training***

TCNs shall be included in the community with an economic vision and not from an assistance perspective, leading to social dependency. For this, they should be supported by initiatives.

Before refugees/migrants can be supported through job integration, their vulnerability has to be recognized and their basic needs have to be met. If housing or access to food and shelter are not secured, any effort of supporting individuals to find training or employment will fail. To break the isolation TCNs feel in terms of being thrown into a new society and local community, training and finally (self-) employment play a key role. The key function of initiatives should be the empowerment and preparation for entry into the working population.

Sustainability of initiatives in the sense of voluntary engagement and long-lasting participation of TCNs is deeply connected to opportunities to not only socialize and informally learn skills, but also to improve the personal living conditions (by getting nationally accepted qualification) and work on everyday problems. In order to access jobs, trainings, social and financial sustainability, and proper involvement in food-related project the lack of local networks paired with unrecognized qualifications and the unsteady residence is a crucial factor for the TCNs.

The spectrum starts at informal volunteering with a mentoring professional gardener (*Annalinde*, Germany) to three-months traineeships with curriculum and final mediation to future employers in the catering business (*A beautiful mess* in the Netherlands or *Cookin' Hope* in Germany).

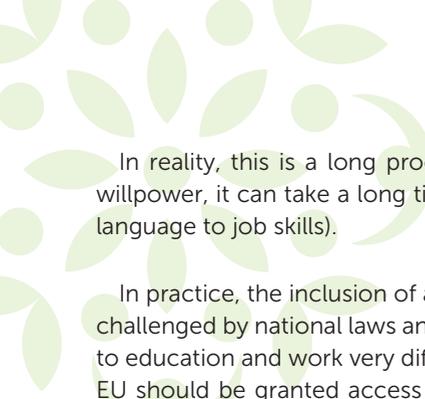
To ensure a fertile breeding ground, initiatives willing to tackle this issue need to take the following underlying basics into account:

Based on the experience of successful initiatives which provide vocational training, it is very important to create connections with social enterprises which offer real working and inclusion opportunities. Internships are an important way to offer a first step into the labour world. In some countries such as Germany, it is even the standard way to enter the job world: people first have to work unpaid, gathering competencies and experience, before they have the opportunity to be hired. However, job centres pointed out that internships have been misused to exploit TCN's free labour.

In the design process of vocational trainings, all the specific needs of the interested parties must be met. Good vocational training is not limited to teaching particular skills like cooking or agriculture, but also comprises, for instance, online job-hunting workshops, such as those implemented by *Integraschool\** (Spain). Besides teaching farming practices, they deliver active job-hunting resources to find work in the farming sector, gain communication skills (farming vocabulary: types of farm work, types of fruit, tools, etc.), SWOT analysis, knowledge on immigration law, courses in forklifts, food handling and animal welfare.

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, Spain, 2. Integraschool (Lleida and other cities)





In reality, this is a long process, which requires patience, perseverance and willpower, it can take a long time and not everyone is capable of doing it (from language to job skills).

In practice, the inclusion of asylum seekers into vocational training and jobs is challenged by national laws and regulations, which make asylum seekers' access to education and work very difficult - although by EU-law, asylum seekers in the EU should be granted access to labour markets after nine months of an initial waiting period. From the experience of *Annalinde*, initiatives also need to think strategically when advising TCNs regarding their work perspectives. This means to consider which jobs are currently needed in the host country and which vocational training courses offer the chance to obtain an exceptional leave to remain, in the case that asylum applications are denied. In fact, this means that even if TCNs want to work in the gardening and food sector, initiatives might recommend them to enter into educational or job programs, which are related to other sectors

The requirements of resources in terms of money, infrastructure, professionals etc. can limit the capacity of some initiatives to offer training in some specific fields, like cooking or farming.

## Networking

A great challenge for many initiatives is the lack of connection between different sectors and fields of work. Most of the initiatives are focussed in the social field, so there is a need to build relationships with other sectors of the society in order to develop an integral strategy and holistic approach to getting everybody together. Networks foster social values and identity, sense of belonging and social growth, and keep the project updated in space and time.

Successful initiatives put a focus on networking to facilitate job and vocational training. In order to share and exchange resources, labour- and work opportunities, a dense and vivid communication structure between organizations and initiatives is present. Initiatives which produce food are in contact with social catering enterprises (or even restaurants with a focus on fair and regional products), creating links for the benefit of newcomers and gaining a better strategic position. Public relations in this respect, networking with the local business landscape and visiting the companies to provide information about the legal status, educational background and possibilities and obstacles in terms of employment, are tools to facilitate entrance into jobs and vocational training (see *Cookin' Hope* for instance).

Agreements between food initiatives and local enterprises to organize contact to newcomers and to offer internships and training will help overcome barriers for both employers and employees.

Initiatives offering training in certain areas such as cooking, catering, horticulture or preservation often maintain direct partnerships with local businesses willing to offer vocational training for the participants, knowing that a first introduction and practical experience in the area of work has already been made. A gentle formalization of training courses, working together with local job agencies and educational institutes increases the credibility for future employers and companies. Documenting the curriculum and learning progress and a transparent concept describing the aims and means of the respective training program help to communicate the benefits to the public and private sector. Most of the food-related businesses are open for TCNs as employees or trainees but do not have the capacity to get into contact or administer special programs to involve and employ newcomers. People without a working permit are often supported through different state-funded programs. Cooperating with universities which offer the educational infrastructure can provide the theoretical input and first formal learning experience for newcomers in food related projects. Pre-study programs to prepare for entrance into later studies can be complemented by practical projects providing a real-world learning environment.

Social businesses/solidarity economy such as restaurants or cafés provide a secure learning environment and are simultaneously a chance for auto-financing. Social economy involves the integration of the TCN into the economic sector and brings added values such as debates on human rights, equitable production and revitalization of shrinking regions/villages in rural areas. If used in public relations, the aspect of supporting newcomers to settle down and make a living can provide a relevant competitive advantage. Aside from this, access to different grants and funding opportunities plays an important role in the start-up phase of social businesses. Fair production and employment conditions are not only mandatory but a networking and financing opportunity - e.g. when communicated properly so people can support the project/social business.

Access to jobs and training can also be an emergent effect of projects with broad and diverse backgrounds in terms of education, origin, culture and status of the participants. Special Job-Buddy programs formalize this potential for relationships between established citizens and newcomers. Food brings people together and by doing so it constitutes a space where direct connections between individuals, as well as organizations, can evolve. These relations do not necessarily end at the confines of the project but have the potential to open doors pointing in all sorts of directions.



One common practice of some initiatives which offer vocational training in agriculture, horticulture or cooking/catering, is to connect with local enterprises to offer internships and first contact with the working world in the host countries. After finishing their vocational training, TCNs usually have the opportunity to stay in the initiative, working in the café or catering (*Kamba*, *Über den Tellerrand*, *Cantine du Midi*, *Cookin' Hope*) or they are placed into other local businesses (***Refugee Food Festival\****).

An innovative networking tool of the Italian initiative *Kamba* features team building cooking courses, which are led by TCNs for local enterprises. As a result, *Kamba* establishes contacts to local enterprises and extends the network involving potential employers of TCN.

## ***Involving the local community***

### ***Permaculture principle Number 8: Integrate rather than segregate***

Motivating a local peer group of volunteers is the first step for most of the projects. Observing and accepting the current situation and atmosphere of the local community to evaluate chances and challenges is the preliminary stage before planning and designing a project. A participatory approach involving both locals and newcomers is organized so that the final project will satisfy the needs of both. The first step to involve the local community is the acceptance of the current situation and to communicate the necessity to welcome and integrate TCN into our society. During this important step, the narrative around migration can be changed, leading to a better understanding between local communities and newcomers, which increases the success of the project. Knowing the background and history of the TCN can increase understanding, social cohesion, acceptance of the multicultural reality and facilitate the involvement of the local communities in initiatives. Working in the field of public relations is crucial to initiate a change in awareness regarding the challenges of migration. In this respect, remembering their own countries national history can help in the process of acceptance. In most of the European countries, (e)migration played a big role in shaping society, politics and economy into what they are today. This is the exact idea and vision of *Kamba* (Italy).

Their aim is to remind the citizens of Milano that by tracing back to their grandparent's generation, almost all Milano citizens have a migratory background. This is illustrated and witnessed by participants of the Milano Recipe project, a public eating event where 10,000 people bring their favourite childhood recipe

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, France, 1. Food Sweet Food: Refugee Food Festival (Paris/ various places)

to share it with other participants. It also fed into the idea of the Human Manifesto that emerged from the understanding that we have to engage on a human to human level exchange.

When starting to develop a strategy to involve locals, successful initiatives need a clear representation of the goal(s) they want to achieve. Apart from suitable tools for involvement, the social, cultural and economic context of the area need to be taken into account. By doing so, projects adjust their goals to the local reality. During this phase, project coordinators have the important role of connecting different social spheres, official agencies and local collectives to create a network of support. This network can spread the responsibility of the project on several shoulders and enhance its sustainability. Working together in shared projects empowers and benefits the initiatives and finally leads to more impact and visibility.

Locally focused events and social dinners (with regular dates) are recommended to build trust, thus leading to a more relaxed atmosphere (overcoming the us and them dichotomy).

Initiatives which already have a meeting place for food, like a garden or a café, can use their facilities at the same time to invite artists, musicians, novelists etc. to combine for instance, community cooking events or catering with art. This is practiced by *zusammen leben* (Germany). Such events which combine agriculture, cooking and arts make the project more visible.

Active involvement of creative groups in the city or area to offer attractive experiences (art and music in the garden, theme dinners, craft and artisan workshops, etc.) motivates the host community to participate. In conclusion, the design of the projects must involve the local community in order to understand their motivations and necessities. Without this participatory approach, the project will not be able to integrate into the social context and therefore connect to the crucial peer group of locals in the process of integration.

Most of the initiatives need funding to operate, at least in the first phase of the project. Connections with the local private and public sector are necessary to ensure the economic sustainability of the project. A large part of the European initiatives are supported by private donations at local level. This can be monthly contributions, providing land or houses, tools and food. Having a group of permanent donors, sharing the basic operating costs makes planning and implementation easier.





As in other social fields, action without awareness does not bring good results. Raising public awareness for the challenges people face when leaving their home country in search of refuge and security, is an important step to increase local volunteers and supporters. Communication strategies help to make the projects visible and thus enable them to enlist supporters. These strategies involve being present in social media, a space where cultures and individuals already interact and multiculturalism is already taken for granted as part of a new and diverse society.

## Sustainability

Initiatives are sustainable when the following two resources are evaluated as sustainable: first, money to finance the project and second, work force to run the project. The experience of all best-practice initiatives shows that a stable team with employees is an important factor for the sustainability of the initiative. Staffing and finances go hand in hand, most initiatives would be willing to hire more employees if their budget allowed. As a result, in most initiatives, employees need to take on a heavier workload due to lack of staff. However, initiatives can only be sustainable in the long term, if they ensure that the workload and the engagement of employees does not exceed their mental, physical and emotional capacities. This is especially important in this field, where the necessity and desire to help vulnerable people can easily lead to the neglect of one's own necessities and limitations.

While some salaries are covered by public grants (*Association A fleur de Pierre* in France), it is more sustainable if initiatives can pay their staff from mixed or their own financial resources. How to become more sustainable in financing as an initiative? Funding schemes especially designed for integration work with TCNs are rare, but due to the fact that TCNs represent a vulnerable group in society, funding projects can succeed if looking for funding opportunities in terms of activities and topics. Cultivation of food is not only community-related but also an environmental issue. Funding schemes for rural development, like the European LEADER, are suitable to apply for projects which tackle sustainable rural development through the inclusions/integration of TCN. LEADER has been used as a financing scheme for several initiatives throughout Europe, e.g. in Sweden, Luxemburg, Italy, Scotland and Austria. The fact that the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development/European Network for Rural Development has addressed the issue of TCN contribution to the rural economy in an informative publication<sup>5</sup> can be seen as a promising sign that these approaches can be supported.

It is recommended that initiatives become self-financed and/or have several channels of financing, like *Mescladís* from Spain. With the income from the restaurant (*Espai Mescladís*) they support the rest of their projects like the cooking school and the community development projects. They promote responsible and sustainable consumption by using local and organic products. Instead of relying on a few market partners, initiatives do well to expand their networks and have a number of markets where they can sell their products. In this sense, *Mescladís* has many partners, participates in different markets and events and organizes cooking and catering activities with different collectives and enterprises.

But, what else is necessary for the persistence of initiatives in the long term? Our evaluation has shown that dedication and motivation from staff, participants and leadership, that is to say one or more key persons taking over the leadership within an initiative is highly relevant. Developing networks and channels or platforms of communication between actors increases the resilience of an initiative and simultaneously creates community. Last but not least, concrete aims, goals and mediums as well as long-term action plans are also important points to ensure the initiative's sustainability.

The European participants of a workshop panel in Milano in 2019 highlighted the best practices to follow in order to be economically sustainable for different contexts:

**Public funds:**

- Establish a proper business model and access to finance
- Cultural and education activities
- Mutual exchange
- Solidarity crowdfunding
- Work towards a social and fair economy

**Private funds:**

- Create a social enterprise
- Fundraising
- Sound business plan - e.g. control the production and the operative costs

**Local economy:**

- Search channels in the ecosystem of the social economy
- Ethical business
- Create a new market
- Innovative business ideas<sup>6</sup>
- Awareness raising

---

6 An approach which you can create without money is Bootstrap because everyone will earn from the shares of the society



# CHALLENGING OPPORTUNITIES

*"Out beyond ideas of wrong-doing and right-doing there is a field - I'll meet you there"* (Jalaluddin Rumi)

In the research and exchange of practitioners, there appeared to be a number of topics that were not suitable for providing clear-cut recommendations but appeared to be both a challenge and an opportunity. These topics need to be taken into account in the process of designing or improving a food and integration initiative:

## ***Financing, independence vs dependence***

Financial resources are limited in most cases, and external financing is needed. This economic dependence should not influence the objectives of the projects. Nevertheless, applying for project funds requires creativity and clever thinking to fit the needs of the funding institution while being able to progress with the initial project. To share costs, it can be helpful to cooperate with other initiatives, for example regarding the renting of a place or by sharing certain tools or equipment.

## ***Heterogenous stakeholders, chaos vs creativity***

Whatever the regional and social context is, participants will be diverse. One never knows who the strongest opponents and advocates of the project will be. The balance between openness for the needs and ideas of the participants and a structure giving guidance for volunteers, users, supporters and employees is sometimes hard to find. This is especially true in socially driven initiatives starting with the idea of filling a gap in society and providing support for several - sometimes vulnerable - groups of users. Outlining the project, having an idea of what the objectives are and what they are not, is important for the long-term existence of initiatives. Most of the selected initiatives of our research have a clear description of what the project is about in terms of practice (what can you do to participate, what will you gain, what will you provide, times, activities, expectations). At the core of a successful initiative lies strong and proper management. They should, however, give space for participatory-driven approaches and be flexible to integrate new ideas which should be linked to clear responsibilities (and resources). The aims and concepts of projects should

be reviewed every now and then with the possibility to add new ideas and aims. Moreover, agreements and a fixed day of the week to reflect and solve conflicts in the initiative are recommended.

### ***Perception of migrants for community as problem vs resource***

Initiatives find themselves in contexts, areas, cities or villages, where the general climate for migrants and TCNs differ a lot. Initiatives in big cities are more likely to find a supportive crowd and are therefore often designed in the following manner: Lots of volunteers, some employees, a huge group of potential users. But also, in rural areas, for projects with the aim to support and interconnect with people applying for asylum, it can be easy to build up a community with locals and newcomers. The ageing population in these areas often participates in such projects benefiting from the community aspects and spaces to get to know people they would not have met otherwise. A positive climate for migrants and newcomers often results in more openness for funding on a governmental or even private side. With the success of more right-wing populist parties the climate has become more negative. Some initiatives, however, commented that because of this climate they get even more support from citizens interested to counter these hateful tendencies.

In general, projects need to take into account, that they are dependent on the status quo in their area, but also have the power to change it by undertaking activities and using open approaches to attract all sorts of people. Donating seeds and seedlings from the garden to the local community, schools, kindergartens, and homes for elderly people provides opportunities to get into contact and promote the aims of the project. Inviting school classes for gardening or cooking workshops opens spaces for kids and teachers to meet newcomers and learn about their situation and backgrounds. Providing an environment for language training, intercultural exchange, vocational training and access to work opportunities acts as an instrument to tackle social prejudices against migrants.

### ***Involvement of upper-middle-class volunteers vs less-favoured host communities***

In most of Germany, France and England, a majority of volunteers and participants from the local community could be labelled "middle class", well-educated and coming from a "good" home. In contrast to this, people who are in less secure economic situations, often share a neighbourhood with TCN. As the aim is to foster social exchange, this group is an important target-group





for food initiatives. There is a potential for solidarity. Providing help and support for all local vulnerable groups increases the acceptance of projects and by doing so, also creates situations where TCNs can give a helping hand to people in need. The Comfrey Project in North-England offers lunch during school holidays to tackle the problem of holiday-hunger (families struggling to meet the extra cost of food due to the absence of free school lunches). The international garden in **Meißen\*** in East-Germany is not only a garden but also a place to play football and to relax for families, just like a park, a secure place for children to play and families to meet. Both of them are situated in socially disadvantaged areas.

Fallow fields and plots or even abandoned houses which can be used by food-related projects are often found in areas with lower income. Utilizing these areas and inviting local peers to join the community makes projects sustainable and socially accepted. Community or intercultural gardens in particular offer many activities apart from gardening, such as movie nights, arts, sports and DIY workshops (soap-making, T-shirt printing etc.), which open the initiative to the broader (not just middle-class) public.

### **Gender perspective**

The gender issue is a complex one: On the one hand, there is a need to address the issue within the projects, on the other hand, this should not be overemphasized. Despite the advantages of addressing the gender perspective in the projects, especially regarding the behaviour of TCN men towards women, there is a danger of over-emphasizing this point, which can lead to frustration on the TCN side (“We are not stone-age people”, “Who are you to tell me..?”).

The reality is that more men come to seek refuge in Europe than women and therefore, in a lot of projects there is greater participation of men on the user side, correspondingly there is often a higher number of local women on the volunteering side. This aspect of projects with and for TCNs is ambiguous in the sense that it brings people together but also increases the need to raise awareness within the initiatives.

### **Helping approach vs sharing approach, vertical vs horizontal**

In successful initiatives, the areas of responsibility are distributed among several responsible persons, which are self-organized within specific working groups. The main challenge is to build a structure where such groups can evolve, supported by resources such as mentors, coordinators and translators to facilitate community building and growth. Labelling the employees as coordinators for

\* See description of the 35 selected initiatives, Germany, 4. Buntes Meißen Bündnis Zivilcourage e.V. (Meißen)

these purposes already breaks the barriers between the volunteering, user and management parts of the project.

### ***Scale of project to small, local and disconnected. Think global, act local***

The local actions must go hand in hand with a global vision, not only connecting the different projects between each other but also with social sectors, administration and fields of work. A shared vision brings together different stakeholders and by doing so, it opens spaces for intersectoral cooperation not only on a local and national, but also a European level.

At several European workshops of this project, especially the one held in Milano June 2019, the need for more European exchange between initiatives and organizations involved in the issue of food and TCNs became evident. In which form this could happen (e.g. funded through Erasmus+ Programs fostering the dialogue and experience exchange between organizations) remains to be seen.

### ***Labels "intercultural", "refugees"...- exclusives vs open for all***

In some cases, "intercultural" label restricts the participation of the wider public. Depending on social and cultural contexts, some initiatives decided to use other terminology like "together" or "for all" to emphasize the inclusive vision of the project. To prevent limiting factors, some initiatives even refrain from the label "refugee" to describe the main users of the project. It clearly makes a point when reasoning about the expertise and specializing on a certain group of people, but sometimes it hinders a real social and cultural mixture between the users and volunteers.

### ***Cultural differences, stressing differences vs foster dialogue***

Obviously, the potential for conflicts and misunderstandings is higher, when different cultural, religious and social backgrounds are mixed. Some of the successful initiatives handle this challenge by having an open space and providing certain groups or thematic events focused on different countries of origin or cultural backgrounds. By doing so, the potential first-time-visitors from the local community are narrowed to their individual interests, but a chance to direct the attention to a certain country, religion or culture also brings benefits like a more secure space to interact for the newcomers and the host community. Knowing about the differences, accepting the diversity but also facilitating direct contact between all sorts of backgrounds is crucial in fostering intercultural dialogue.



# RECOMMENDATIONS PER SECTOR

## *Recommendations for Restaurants/ Catering*

- Using the gastronomy of the countries of origin of TCN participants is an attractive format which appeals to both TCNs and the people enjoying the respective menu. Trying to involve professional chefs of TCNs countries enhances the visibility of the initiatives and helps to open up society. For instance, Kamba invites African haute-cuisine chefs and takes an important step in awareness raising since African high-cuisine is very unknown in Europe. Of course, this must be adequately communicated.
- In Germany, the catering sector, in particular, suffers from labour shortages. It is likely that many service providers are interested in training TCNs and hiring trained people.
- Special events like neighbourhood feasts, gastronomic week, gourmet events and so forth can be used to make the project visible.
- Offering vocational training to promote the participation of TCNs is a basic part of these restaurant projects. Fair and flexible prices make the Zusammen Kaffee restaurant in Freiburg attractive for TCNs as guests – not only as cooks!
- Networking with social enterprises to create new work access opportunities is important since not all vocational training participants can find work through the project.
- Successful initiatives focus on local and organic products, giving the projects added value, social and environmental sustainability.
- Connecting with other integration initiatives which produce food at a local level is a good idea to link different TCNs groups.

## *Recommendations for community cooking / private dinner events*

- It is recommended to selectively choose dinner hosts, e.g. invite journalists, sociologists, artists.. - in order to make the opportunities for exchange as broad as possible. It is important for TCNs to meet inspiring and strong personalities, also TCNs who integrated successfully are important hosts for these dinners.
- The regularity of these events will help to maintain the project's dynamic.

## *Recommendations for community gardens*

- There should be a knowledgeable trainer to teach gardening.
- In order to foster intercultural exchange and to avoid splitting up into different small individual groups within the project, it is recommended to organize group work or activities with different nationalities and the local community.
- The composition of groups should be changed often, in order to avoid the creation of hierarchies within the group or that members become stuck in a role which adversely affects them, or makes them feel irrelevant within the group. Changing roles is also a powerful way to learn to cope with change, that is learning to deal with unexpected or unfamiliar situations, looking at situations from different angles, becoming empathetic and collaborative.
- Fun activities like music, dance and food of the origin countries are a medium to increase participation, motivation and fun. Especially, since gardens provide the perfect facility to host such events.
- Growing vegetable varieties from the origin countries promotes a learning exchange between TCNs and locals and can help TCNs feel at home.
- Installing a garden kitchen enables the participants to cook together. A fireside too! Both are used in the Weltgarten-Tunsel with high added-value!
- Creating community-garden products (given for donation).
- Involving kids in activities and using the garden as a tool for environmental education.

## *Recommendations for farms / professional gardens*

- Visualizing the necessity of professionals in this sector as work opportunities for TCN.
- Offering vocational training programs demand support from public authorities.
- The added social value of employment and training of TCNs in enterprises and initiatives in the food sector is well appreciated by the consumers and should be communicated.
- Some TCNs are from a rural and farming background which has been valued by farmers.
- There is an important awareness and educational work that needs to be done: breaking with the slaving role of TCNs in the field of agriculture in Europe and giving them dignified working conditions and fair wages.
- The inclusion of TCNs in agriculture can help to reduce the abandonment of rural areas, which is a problem everywhere in Europe. This argument can be useful in the search for land and funding. LEADER is a perfect funding opportunity, which has been used by initiatives focusing on the inclusion of TCNs in rural areas.



## Recommendations for education projects

- Having small groups of learners.
- Exchange with professionals.
- Not too theoretical.
- Varied educational settings.
- The body is a sentient source of knowledge allows one to value informal information (knowledge gained through informal learning processes), activate memory and personal experience, and bridge knowledge gaps (especially with reference to lack of formal education).
- Highly heterogeneous groups.
- Actively involve participants in the process of knowledge construction.

### **Cross-sector issue:**

#### **How to promote ecological sustainability in the initiatives**

This report would not be complete without addressing the environmental sustainability and quality of food. Some of the projects found are already including this aspect into their community gardens, catering and restaurant concepts, as well as agricultural production - but not all. Therefore, this section aims to provide guidance on how to realize practices in initiatives.

As food brings people together, it can also be a great way to introduce new ways of cultivation like agroecological farming<sup>7</sup> without chemical pesticides and fertilizers and organic food ingredients in the kitchen. The biodiversity of plants, like introducing new vegetables in community gardens ( e.g. Bosnian women with okra seeds) or different plant varieties (e.g. Syrian tomato varieties) are already something that has been a result of migration since ages. Some TCNs are also much more connected to traditional food and farming practices - but not all!

Using sustainable products in cooking initiatives can be challenging because they can be more expensive and some participants are more keen on using processed food. A solution is to start your own production or to establish connections with businesses or initiatives that provide organic ingredients. This could be urban gardens or professional farms that sponsor community projects with free products or special prices (excess production, good vegetables with optic faults, etc). Finding a good location to grow vegetables, fruits and herbs can be a difficult endeavours in the city but there are ways to do it.

---

7 See e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ab82gAfh554>

It also makes sense to include this aspect in the budget and ask for the support of sustainable food for the initiatives.

Another important point is to promote new food habits towards less fat, less sugar and more healthy ingredients. Synergies evolve by combining local ingredients with recipes from TCNs countries, many of the ingredients grow in Northern Europe like coriander or peppers.

Innovations in agriculture such as Community Supported Agriculture<sup>8</sup> can be very useful on the one hand to involve communities without big spending power and on the other hand enable entrance into fairly paid farm work. Going for good clean food is not a luxury but should be part of food rights for every citizen. As a reaction to the scandalous treatment of TCNs and in order to build alternatives to conventional exploitation-based agri-food chains, various new innovations are emerging. The aim is to create fair income and work-conditions, social inclusion opportunities in rural areas and different consumer-producer relationships. Challenges according to the research done in Italy by Alessandra Corrado, University of Calabria, are however the temporariness and precariousness connected with the administrative status of asylum seekers, the fact that sometimes the TCN continues to live in unacceptable living arrangements or that they have different expectations, objectives and needs or they feel pressure from their bond of solidarity (families in their home countries). Concerning other difficulties in the management of these activities, the research highlighted a weak control of resources, difficult access to the market and sometimes a lack of long-term sustainability of the projects.





# food relations





# DESCRIPTION OF THE 35 SELECTED INITIATIVES

## Germany

### 1. *Über den Tellerrand.e.V. (all over Germany)*



*Über den Tellerrand* ('Beyond the Edge of Your Plate' in English) is a commonly used German expression for open-mindedness. The project was founded in 2013 and is based in Berlin. What started out as a student initiative has become an enriching and inclusive international community where 'people on the move' come to find a sense of belonging and experience care and

compassion. At the same time, it provides avenues for 'people on the move' to enrich their host communities by sharing their own knowledge and unique skill sets. By bringing newcomers together with locals in their host communities, a sense of belonging can be created and stereotypes and prejudices can be reduced on both sides. People are brought together via common interests – be it sports, singing, storytelling, theatre, language cafés or whatever activity the volunteers design and implement. Food is the most important community and integration tool. During the cooking events, people would prepare recipes from their own cultures. The meal is prepared collectively with the participants and while dining there is room for exchange and connection. Food is therefore used as a medium of communication that transcends traditional language barriers. It allows the participants to share with one another something of their culture, history and identity. As a model project, *Über den Tellerrand* inspires and motivates encounters and exchanges between cultures. The so-called satellite-network of subsidiary projects already includes intercultural communities in over 30 cities.

*Kitchen on the Run* is the mobile integration concept from *Über den Tellerrand*. With the blue kitchen container, they carry the idea of an open and diverse society to new places. The mobile kitchen allows them to reach places without the infrastructure for such initiatives, in terms of a critical mass of volunteers or the material resources. Mostly, small cities in rural areas are visited by *Kitchen on the Run* over a period of some days. Sometimes, an active group of locals starts

an *Über Den Tellerrand* initiative as a result. Last but not least, *Über den Tellerrand* also develops programs to meet the needs of TCNs beyond the social aspects. The Job Buddy programme is a specially developed mentoring programme, which supports newcomers upon their arrival in Germany. Matching two individuals by vocational interests and forming a tandem, where locals and established citizens help newcomers with the application process and provide an orientation to the German labour market which is the main goal of the Job Buddy-Programme.

## 2. Zusammen Leben (Freiburg)

*Zusammen Leben* e.V. (Living Together, since 2015) is a non-profit organization based in Freiburg that aims to create meeting spaces and communality between refugees, migrants and people from Freiburg. They develop programs to alleviate possible anxieties and enable direct contacts between these social groups. The activities are supported by private and public funds. The organization has four different internal projects, which are a weekly lunch-café, a community garden, a potato project and special arts and cultural events combined with food.

On three weekdays, *Zusammen Kaffee* (Together Coffee), the weekly lunch café, opens its doors to offer an internationally diverse lunch menu. The guest cooks come out of the *zusammen leben* – community as well as out of migrant organizations comprising many who have sought and found asylum.

Some have been professional cooks in their home countries, and others are fabulous hobby cooks. They cook with regional and organic Fairtrade ingredients with the exception of a few culinary rarities for which there are no regional or organic purchase possibilities.



*Zusammen Garten* (Together Garden) is an intercultural and inclusive community garden which has been developing since July 2016, to promote working and learning from each other and to have fun in a respectful environment.





*Zusammen Kartoffeln* (Together Potato) is a project which provides training in organic agriculture through potato-growing. Different plots all over the city are used for cultivation and training. From the harvest they prepare French fries which are cooked in a mobile kitchen and sold at local festivals/markets etc.

Finally, the initiative uses their café and community garden to host different events in the field of art and culture. Art is another excellent vehicle to enable direct contact between people from different backgrounds without the need for language. They create intercultural encounters via music, performance and dance by making music, dancing or singing. At the same time, cherishing a performance can further lead to respect for each other. In their music-theatre stage productions they thematize current topics like the reasons for flight, the challenges of a diverse society or the meaning of migration.

### **3. Annalinde gGmbH (Leipzig)**

The non-profit *Annalinde* gGmbH (Limited Company) runs a multifunctional urban agriculture project in the city of Leipzig. Founded in 2011, it aims to provide places for exchange and learning about organic cultivation of food, biodiversity, sustainable consumption, responsible use of resources and community building as well as urban development.

One community garden, two urban gardens, and a meadow orchard comprise the fields of action. The educational formats (socially, culturally and biologically) are coordinated by the *Annalinde* academy. Working days in the community garden, workshops, cooperation with schools and primary schools are methods used to foster cooperative and practical learning. The intercultural garden which started in 2016 serves as a part of the community garden that is funded through

the European Social Fund. As of 2019, over 1300 individuals have participated in the program, approximately 10 to 15 TCNs are involved every Thursday from 12-7 pm. Two paid positions for coordinating are supported by official volunteers. The community garden is leased from the city. Apart from the open garden days, workshops in culture, mobility and needs, handcraft and work are organized for newcomers. Regular visits to local companies and employers connect newcomers to potential working and training opportunities.

Participants, according to their backgrounds, also act as workshop organizers whenever possible. Through the other projects of *Annalinde*, participants also benefit from a wide range of volunteering and training possibilities in the field of urban and peri-urban agriculture and gardening.

#### **4. Buntes Meißen Bündnis Zivilcourage e.V. (Meißen)**

When a demonstration by the far-right Reichs Citizens movement was announced in 2013 many people and organizations came together to counteract this development. They formed the *Bündnis Buntes Meißen* (Alliance for a colorful Meißen). Besides many other activities, they started an international garden in April 2016. A fallow field of 3.5ha, which had been abandoned for 15 years and which is 500 m away from the city, was transformed into a garden and recreational site for families, kids and, most importantly, asylum seekers and refugees. The municipal property is secured through a "Permission for use" contract for five years. Two thirds of the users of the garden are newcomers to Meißen. In 2018, 15 to 20 families were regularly gardening together and individually, so about 100 locals and mostly Afghan and Syrian people, enliven the place.

Individual plots of 44 m<sup>2</sup> as well as the big community-garden-area provide many opportunities for horticulture and social interaction. Two permanent employed staff members and one person doing Federal Voluntary Service provide a stable infrastructure for the approximately 70 refugees, who visit and work in the garden regularly. During the main season, the garden is open every day and staff is present from 9am to 5pm. Every second Saturday, a garden café is organized, and once a month a bigger joint cooking event is held. Four to five times per month, a mutual work effort builds infrastructure such as the compost toilet, drainage or paths. Over the years, several workshops have attracted a wider range of participants to learn about the pruning of fruit trees, insect monitoring, watering, recycling and so on. As a focal point for meeting friends and respective peer groups, five bigger festivals play an important role in the annual agenda.



They occur on New Years, in April for the start of the growing season, in June to celebrate Eid, the summer celebration and finally Harvest. Some of the main events brings between 300 to 500 people to the garden, to visit and have a good time.



Besides the gardening-community aspects, the international garden also acts as a place where a wide range of support measures are offered in Meißen. Through the umbrella organization *Bündnis Buntes Meißen* counselling and contact with lawyers are facilitated. A Family-Tandem-Program brings newcomers and locals together to support each

other. All money comes from grants and an annual fee for the individual plots provides resources for tools and infrastructure. The international garden was the target of the far-right wing political party AFD (Alternative für Deutschland) when they were campaigning for elections. Surviving this defamation, the project is now well accepted and attracts a constantly growing number of locals and newcomers.

## **5. Cookin' Hope (Wuppertal)**

*Cookin' Hope* is a trainee-restaurant. Asylum seekers and refugees go through six months of training to gain experience in gastronomy. This intensive internship can lead the way to apprenticeships and jobs or prepare participants for self-employment. *Cookin' Hope* is a real restaurant with real food and real guests, one chef (also a former refugee from Syria) is employed to train the six trainees. Apart from the restaurant business, it also acts as a focal point for asylum seekers and local community members interested in intercultural dialogue and/or willing to support newcomers. The first pioneer group finished the internship in April 2018, and all of them are now either employed in other restaurants or in vocational training. Two to three days a week they join the regular restaurant business, the trainees not only learn the gastronomy side of the business but also about legal and entrepreneurial topics. The starting point of *Cookin' Hope* was a master thesis about job visions of Syrian refugees. It showed that the majority want to work in gastronomy (most of them already gained experience in the field). The first idea was a business incubator project to train several TCNs so that they could start a business together when they finish.

However, in the end, a permanent training restaurant was established due to the fact that a group of individuals, randomly thrown together, does not necessarily generate a successful future start-up team.



The restaurant already existed, so there was no need to find a new place to set up the infrastructure. Crowdfunding allowed the team to start the trainee program and advertise the concept to a wider public. One of the trainees was a victim of an unexpected deportation to Italy due to Dublin III, so not only happy moments accompanied the all in all successful trainee phase.

The main criteria to choose the trainees was based on their motivation, visions and what they wanted to gain from the internship. Due to good networking and public relations, many local businesses approached the project to get into contact with the trainees in order to find suitable employees. The restaurant is not only a focal point for the trainees, but acts as a place where people meet and support each other. It is very well-known not only among refugees, but is also recognized by the job agency. In the future *Cookin' Hope* wants to become a network for restaurants (businesses in gastronomy) who work with asylum seekers and migrants. Another vision is to act as a quality label for other restaurants. The restaurant wants to further evolve into a social hub, where asylum seekers can connect to a wider network of support organizations and the internship could expand to an officially recognized training course with a qualification in gastronomy.

## Portugal

### 1. *Associação Pão a Pão (Lisbon)*

*Pão a Pão* (Bread to Bread), founded in 2016, is a Middle Eastern restaurant which gives training and jobs to young female and male refugees from the Middle East and the opportunity to share a very important part of their identity - food - with the host community. *Pão a Pão* employs 17 people and organizes workshops and conferences around Arabic culture. One of their successes is their contribution to changing the local communities' image of refugees. They work together with other initiatives like SPEAK (Culture and language exchange), PAR (Plataforma de Apoio aos Refugiados) and ACM (Alto Comissariado para as Migrações) and use different funding sources like donations, funding from the city council of Lisbon, ACM and the US Embassy in Lisbon.



## France

### 1. Food Sweet Food: Refugee Food Festival (Paris/ various places)

The *Refugee Food Festival* is a project from the association *Food Sweet Food* which started in 2016, financed by the UN agency for refugees- UNHCR. Once a year, participating Gourmet restaurants in different cities of the world open their kitchen to refugee chefs and invite them to cook for their visitors. For the first time in 2016, 11 Parisian restaurants invited eight refugee chefs to cook for more than 1000 Parisians and introduce them to the cuisines of Iran, India, Syria and Chechnya.

The two French initiators believe that food is a form of language which can bring together different groups of people. The vision of *Refugee Food Festival* is to change the citizen's perception of refugees and show that they have skills and qualifications. The goals are to create an exchange between French and foreign chefs, empower the participating refugee cooks and create job opportunities for them. The refugee chefs gain self-esteem and receive an excellent reference for their CV. Some found work while others found an apprenticeship place or continued other studies. Apart from the festival, the association houses different activities at their main seat "La Residence" in Paris, which enables the professional integration of refugees through food.

For the festival, the cooks, who must have refugee status (asylum seekers cannot apply), get a temporary contract. Since the project specifically targets gourmet and high-end places, one of the challenges is to find professional chefs who can cook for many visitors, such as 200 persons per restaurant, as well as meet the standards of the restaurant itself. This is hindering the expansion of the project to involve more restaurants and TCN. However, the festival is strong in reaching a broad and important audience, e.g. 1000 visitors in the first edition in Paris in 2016.

Moreover, it is a citizen initiative which aims to show that civil society has a fundamental role to play in the way refugees are welcomed. The festival is only organized and coordinated by volunteers who receive professional training by the main organization *Food Sweet Food* and are provided with precise guidelines. *Refugee Food Festival* is still a quite new project, but distinguishes itself with a very creative concept, extremely positive feedback from the visitors and the people involved and its link to the UNHCR.

## 2. *En.chantier*: La Cantine du Midi (Marseille)

*La Cantine du Midi* (The Lunch Canteen) is a restaurant in Marseille run by the association *En.chantier* which was founded in 2006 with the vision to promote socialization through food. In 2008, they started the forerunner restaurant project *La Cuisine* which was changed into *La Cantine du Midi* in 2013 when a new team took over. The concept of the restaurant is to offer lunch menus cooked by three to four voluntary chefs who change on a daily base. The restaurant is in a multicultural and poor neighbourhood with high percentage of TCN. The cooks are migrants, refugees or locals and generally lay cooks who suggest the recipes themselves. Everybody can come and volunteer on the same day if they register in the morning. The lunch menu costs 8€ and is prepared with local and, as much as possible, organic and Fair-trade products, supplied by their associated shop *L'épicerie*. This is a small serve-yourself shop which is also run by *En.chantier*, selling organic, fair and regional food products at affordable prices. This is made possible by buying products at high quantities which are then shared between *L'épicerie*, *La Cantine du Midi* and *Cantine nomad*, the latter being a catering project of the association.

Currently, *La Cantine du Midi* has three full time employees and 120 volunteers. *L'épicerie* has 50 volunteers who work for a period of one to one and a half years and are compensated with food products equalling 7€/working hour. There are also opportunities for internships for a period of one to four weeks, where TCNs are accompanied by a social worker.



There are many more activities related to the project, for instance, once a week they hold workshops on health and nutrition, which include field trips to local producers.

In the same locality there is a women's journal club and language course with whom they collaborate. In the future, they would like to create a cookbook with recipes from *La Cantine du Midi*. Other future goals are to establish a pedagogical garden and to produce more food.



## Spain

### 1. *Asociación por ti mujer (Valencia)*

*Asociación por ti mujer* (Association because of you, woman) was founded in 2014 by a group of immigrants from different countries together with a host population from Valencia. All together, the group encompasses around 40 people and more than 12 nationalities. However, more people are involved sporadically in the activities.



The coordinator and the president are also immigrant women with a high participation in the design process of the association and projects. There are several nationalities involved in the project, most of them from South America, but also from Africa and Europe.

Public financing (city council) supports the infrastructures (gardens) and training. They also receive private donations from the members of the association, like seeds, tools and more. All the people involved in this project are volunteers, there are no employees. The main objectives of the initiative are to create a space for coexistence, gender equality and integration through sustainable practices and to make the role of immigrants working in local agriculture in Valencia visible. Other objectives include growing quality food and to exchanging knowledge and resources from participants' home countries.

The initiative has developed two kinds of projects: an urban garden (*huertas urbanas en clave de género*) and a catering project (*catering social*). The garden is around 1200 m<sup>2</sup> big, divided into 14 plots, and is located in the surroundings of the council garden *Sociopolis*. Each plot is cultivated by a group of people, always from different countries, to foster the intercultural exchange. There are also family plots, where children take part in the activities.

The participants of the project have access to an "Organic Agriculture Vocational Training", with courses taught by professionals in the sector. As a result of this two-year training, a member of the project together with other farmers founded an organic cooperative *Tot al Natural* (all natural), which produces organic fruits and vegetables outside of the city. To visualize the project, they organize frequent activities with other initiatives, residents and neighbourhood

associations, they also participate in local markets, seeds exchange activities and more. They also participate in research about the adaptation of home country varieties of vegetables to the growing conditions in Valencia.

The second project, *Catering Social* was founded in 2011 and aims to integrate immigrant women aged over 45 into society and the labour market. More than 100 women have participated in this project since the beginning of the training. Some of these women have suffered from domestic violence.

There is a work methodology with four working groups: administration and events, waitresses, kitchen assistants and public relationships, marketing and protocol. *Catering Social* is an integral project, with information, education, guidance and counselling. Both projects are connected, they exchange products and knowledge.



## 2. *Integraschool (Lleida and other cities)*

Under the project name *Personal Itineraries for Integration for People Aged Over 45: Farming Mentor, Integraschool* promotes the autonomy and equality of opportunities of migrants through training in order to realise the principle of equality and achieve greater social cohesion in rural areas.

*Integraschool* organizes internal workshops on topics such as online job hunting (active Job-Hunting Resources), work in the farming sector, communication skills (farming vocabulary: types of farm work, types of fruit, tools, etc.), DAFO, immigration law, forklift usage, food handling and animal welfare. They are supported by *The Fundación Agricultores Solidarios* (Foundation of solidarity farmer), which has been working since 2001 on socio-labour insertion projects in agricultural sectors with the aim to improve the quality of life and to raise awareness on the migratory phenomenon in rural areas. They also receive funds from the EU and the national government.

## 3. *COOPE/Central Parc (Sant Boi de Llobregat, Barcelona)*

Since 2016, this cooperative works for social- and employment integration through farming in abandoned fields. The most important activities are vocational training in organic agriculture and the selling of the products.



They also work on the recovery of “unsalable” products, together with the association *Espigoladors*, and later donate the money to social enterprises. With 10% of the unsalable vegetables, *Espigoladors* produces vegetables and fruit preserves, sold under their own brand name *Im-perfect*. All

proceeds are reinvested into the social project. They also receive support from the municipal council and different public entities. *Central Parc* is working 7ha of land and they are trying to increase the surface to 10ha. The biggest challenge is finding new fields and the accessing the local market. In 2017, they offered vocational training in organic agriculture with ten people of an immigrant background. They also organise, together with other local initiatives, awareness campaigns about food waste.

#### 4. Mescladís (Barcelona)

Since 2008, *Mescladís* (Melting Pot) has provided vocational training, employment and internship opportunities for people at risk of social exclusion, and intercultural exchange through cooking and language. With the incomes from the Restaurant (*Espai Mescladís*), they support the rest of their projects, such as the cooking school and community development projects, and promote responsible and sustainable consumption (using local and organic products). They participate in different markets and events in addition to organising cooking and catering activities with different collectives and enterprises. *Cuinat Oportunitat* (cooking opportunities) is a three-month cooking course in catering, which involves approximately 70 people each year.



During the training, *Mescladís* provides the participants with psychological support and includes some activities like theatre and artistic therapies, in order to facilitate the integration process. After the training, *Mescladís* provides internships in enterprises and labour orientation. Recently, they published the book *Regalo Para Kushbu* which tries to visualize the difficulties of immigrants during the process of integration with real stories of beneficiaries from *Mescladís*.

### Greece

#### 1. Nan (Mytilene, Lesvos island)

*Nan*, was founded in late March 2018 by four women already involved in *Lesvos Solidarity – PIKPA*, at the moment five refugees and five locals run the program. The project started with donations alone from organizations and friends (e.g. infrastructure) and the help of volunteers after the EU/Turkey agreement which stranded refugees on the island. *Nan's* vision is to raise awareness and



create positive impact among the local and international community about the political and social issues related to refugees by breaking down the stereotypes produced by the mainstream narrative around them. The project offers a positive example of creating normalization through job opportunities with dignity, also in the context of social- and solidarity economy both for locals and refugees in the context of the Greek economic crisis, which produces victimization, misery and precarious working conditions. Through access to a dignified job, refugees stop being stuck in the role of passive beneficiaries, and they adopt more active roles through this type of employment. The project exists within a wider context of the city of Mytilene. It includes people (local & refugees) and activities (workshops, language learning, cooking and upcycling trainings, legal and psychological support, womens' empowerment and more) connected to *Lesvos Solidarity – PIKPA* and the *Mosaic Support Center*, as well as the local agricultural cooperative *Modousa* from where they buy local oil and other products. Apart from the aforementioned context, it is difficult to estimate the enormous impact produced by the project since *Nan* has been highly promoted by local, national and international mainstream and social media. *Nan* is directed to develop and promote environmentally friendly solutions. Also, food that is left over is distributed to those refugees and local people who are in great need. *Nan* restaurant, is legally registered as a Non-Profit Making Company, its financial burden comes from the lack of a national legislative context for a social and solidarity economy. Further activities are planned to be included in order to support the environmental and financial sustainability of the project through catering and agricultural production.

## **2. Options FoodLab (Athens)**

*Options FoodLab* was born as an experimental form of occupational therapy/ mental health and wellbeing project for vulnerable individuals. After a series of meetings with *Babel*, a day center for refugees and migrants, the idea was to start food-based events in Athens. Of course, the most attractive part for the beneficiaries was to earn some extra money while inadvertently going through the integration process, but most people realised the value was much more than just financial. *Options FoodLab* acts as a facilitator for people trying to achieve their goals. Together with industry professionals, a program was created which gives members the opportunity to grow as individuals, gain autonomy, improve their professional skills, and finally to set up their own businesses to support themselves and their families with salaries negotiated on their own terms. *OptionsFoodLab* creates a space to nurture and to resist the unpredictable vicissitudes of life in a place where the context is changing on a daily base. The project's space, both figurative and actual, creates a foundation for people to grow, and, if they choose, to grow roots.

The initiative works with community building, creation of job opportunities, improvement of lives, expansion of horizons, learning of new skills, building a network and appreciation of one another, in a Peer2Peer way. One of the skills which *Options FoodLab* offers, is getting acquainted with new technologies which can lead to greater employability further down the road. They also teach culinary skills, management training, language skills, budgeting, and basic accounting.

They network with political and religious groups, and a list of their partnerships can be seen online.

An interesting interview can be found through this link - <https://www.siceurope.eu/sic-themes/migration/options-foodlab-how-food-making-and-sharing-supporting-migrant-integration>



### **3. *Pervolarides of Thessaloniki (Thessaloniki)***

*Pervolarides of Thessaloniki* is a self-funded grassroots group that established itself in 2014, consisting of mainly ten locals and ten refugees who have been active in the neighbourhood of Toumpa in Thessaloniki for one and a half years. They have a very important local impact and relations with other initiatives inside and outside of Thessaloniki, as well as with the municipality. The initiative is also the facilitator for the neighbourhood initiative.

Their main activities comprise of community urban gardening and garden training, agro-ecological farming and farm training and apiculture and training for apiculture. They run a community/social kitchen for homeless locals and refugees. Another activity is food waste management which is done by collecting and processing food, like producing tomato sauces and solidarity collection of olives from abandoned olive lands. *Pervolarides* wants to create a common space for community engagement, language learning, knowledge and skills transfer.



## Italy

### 1. *Orient Experience, Africa experience, Venice and Padua*

The founder of the restaurants which opened in 2012 is Hameed Karim Ahmadi, an Afghan refugee who wanted to use food as a medium for social inclusion and economic development; all the recipes are the outcome of the migrant's encounter with other cultures during her/his journey, and they are adapted to the country where they are proposed. The restaurant's interior design is carefully made by artists according to the staff's home country style. The restaurants therefore follow different routes and are called accordingly: Orient Express, Africa Express and Balkan Express.



Through vocational training for asylum seekers and migrants in cooking and the provision of workplaces, this concept has helped many people in their professional career. Food is seen as a channel for personal storytelling and sharing of experiences, when preparing dishes and serving food in restaurants and catering.

The project was initially self-funded (capital provided by friends), then it was sustained through the catering activities and restaurant revenues and later, public funds were acquired.

Now there are several restaurants with this concept in Italy and even in other European cities and in Kabul, Afghanistan (there, the food served is Italian).

### 2. *Maramao, Canelli (Asti)*

*Maramao* is a social cooperative which started to work with refugees by using abandoned land to produce vegetables, nuts, saffron, cereals, wine and more. All production is organic. Further processing is being done as well in special processing rooms. The products are being sold in a shop in the centre of town. The project is situated in Asti, in the Piedmont region of Italy. After a start-up phase from 2014 onwards, the social cooperative was officially launched in 2016.

*Maramao* is a slang word for stranger/people in the Piemont dialect. The agricultural production of refugees from Africa and other regions of the world together with Italians is at the heart of the project; it happens on land which is leased for free, all together 25ha.



The area of Asti is suffering from the restructuring of agriculture and the loss of small farms, family-farm succession is an issue. It is interesting to note that the project is not only a place for training and work for refugees, but is now also partly run by refugees, who are also represented on the board together with the Italian social activists who started the initiative. The working has been described as non-hierarchical.

*Maramao* is part of a network of cooperatives in the region called *CO.AL.A.*, which, from the beginning, has provided important support for *Maramao* on many levels. From this network the *Coop. Soc. Crescere Insieme* (organic agriculture cooperative) is the coordinator of this project. The financial sustainability of the initiative is secured through the sales of their products as well as other products from other local cooperatives. Furthermore, funds from the city of Alessandria's *Fondazione Social* (27.500 €) and *SPRAR Network* (15.000 €) have helped.

Refugees are connected to *Maramao* through the partnership with public institutions (Comune di Alice Belcolle, Provincia di Alessandria), and 100 people have gone through agricultural training so far. For most of them (about 80%) this has helped to find work afterwards, some even at *Maramao*. The team consists of six people now.

### 3. *APS Barikamà. Rome*

*Barikamà* is an initiative which started out of a particular story in the agricultural area of Rosarno in Italy. In this area, working conditions in the fruit farms are bad and migrant/refugee workers are poorly paid and discriminated against on a social level. This situation exploded when riots took place receiving nationwide attention.





The workers, about 200 people, were moved to Rome where they took shelter in a social centre. Afterwards, one of the workers, Cheik Diop, took matters in his own hands and started a different form of food production – one, which

is fair to the people and the environment. *Barikamà*, which means resistance in the Bambara language of West Africa, started to produce curd. The concept had and has fair wages, organic resources, recycling and sustainable transportation with bikes and electric cars as top priorities. Eventually, it was registered as a social cooperative. Now, this initiative which was initiated by refugees, has become successful and even employs Italians.

#### 4. *Kamba* (Milan)

*Associazione Kamba* (Kamba Association) is situated in Milano and started informally in 2015 until it became a legally registered association in April 2016. It hosts four food-related projects: (1) a training project which offers vocational training and workshops for TCNs in their kitchen-lab, but also team building workshops for local enterprises, guided by the refugee cooks. (2) The second project is a catering service, where participants from the kitchen lab trainings can get further working practice. (3) The third project is the initial project with which *Kamba* started, namely social dinner/lunch events at the private homes of locals, for TCN. (4) This year they started with their fourth project, a very big public food event *Milano Recipe*, which united 10 000 people, 200 organizations and 600 refugees on a 3km long table in the city of Milano, with the idea to bring along and share everybody's favourite childhood recipe. The idea of *Kamba* started at the World EXPO 2015 in Milano with private dinners at home and despite the evolution of new products, the social dinner/lunch events are still a very important activity. One vision of *Kamba* is to work on active citizenship and provoke a change in mentality: They want to create a more positive idea and stereotype about "intercultural" and "migration", remembering that in Milano, the majority of the families, when tracing back to their grandparent's generation, are themselves migrants. The second vision is the concrete integration of TCNs through job opportunities, realized by the network *Kamba* has established with several enterprises.

Since 2016, *Kamba* has involved around 5000 people and 120 TCNs in their cooking trainings while 40% of them are working at the moment. The association is run by two employees and many volunteers and sustains itself completely without public grants. The training projects are financed through a partnership with a training-organization which pays the staff for trainings at *Kamba*. The teambuilding courses are paid by the participating enterprises, and some self-financing comes through the catering service. To increase the sustainability of the initiative, *Kamba* aims to expand their catering service. In the future, they hope to have a stable team of five people- three of them refugees (their best students) -and to have a café where people can come and where they can combine food and cultural events. They also wish to develop a training manual for illiterate TCN. Another dream is to develop a toolkit to make *Milano Recipe* replicable in other cities around the globe.

### 5. *Salus Space (Bologna)*

On the premises of the old clinic *Villa Salus* and funded by the European Regional and Development Fund through the Urban Innovative Actions Initiative, a new home for refugees and other vulnerable groups was established.



Around 80 TCNs and people in housing transitions live together in the houses. There are also more spaces used by the local community such as for co-working, cultural activities and artistic workshops. The garden spaces will be designed as Community gardens, training gardens (to learn and experiment with cultivation techniques, replicable in different contexts, also taking into consideration the refugees home countries) and an inclusive garden (to promote integration and welcoming practices). Both newcomers and the local neighbourhood are invited to learn about gardening and to find new fields of professional activities.

The main idea is to foster synergies of different stakeholders by offering opportunities to a broad range of users. TCNs interested in self-employment have the chance to promote their skills through vocational training. They can also get support, counselling and individual contact to other entrepreneurs via the co-working space.



## 6. Food For inclusion (Pollenzo)

This project<sup>9</sup> has been recently founded by the University of Gastronomic Sciences of Pollenzo with the support of the UNHCR. The scientific coordinator of the Project is Prof. Maria Giovanna Onorati. The Project offers a training pathway focused on food and gastronomy targeted to refugees and asylum seekers hosted in the reception system (SPRAR and CAS) of the Piedmont Region in Italy. The project aims at enhancing refugees' employability in the labour market, especially in the Hotel/Restaurant/Catering sector, and to foster their empowerment and social inclusion in the welcoming process.

The project is based on an innovative and highly qualified training model in the professional field of gastronomy, that combines different educational approaches and didactic strategies based on experiential learning. The project also offers on-the-job learning by providing opportunities for three-six months internships with selected restaurants and farms that belong to the network of the Pollenzo University. In addition to specific sectoral competences, the course also aims to develop relational, social and communicative skills in an intercultural perspective, in order to increase their inclusion in the host society.

As migration is a two-way process which requires change in both newcomers and the host society, the project also includes a learning pathway called *Training of Trainers*, addressed to groups of educators, trainers, restaurateurs from different parts of Italy who work with refugees (some of them are themselves refugees) and use gastronomy as part of their education/training. To date, the project reached 40 TCNs (Asylum-and protection-seekers) and 32 Trainers (many of them refugees working in different parts of Italy).



9 To learn more about the Project: [www.foodforinclusion.it](http://www.foodforinclusion.it) <https://www.unisg.it/ricerca/food-for-inclusion/> <https://www.facebook.com/foodforinclusionIT> Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6AXSq6e7Cw> Email to: [foodforinclusion@unisg.it](mailto:foodforinclusion@unisg.it)

## 7. Le Galline Felici (Sicily)

*Le Galline Felici* (Happy Hens) is a Consortium consisting of 38 members - farms and social cooperatives - and more than 40 employees, aimed at selling its products directly to organized purchasing groups. Organizing an efficient and respectful supply chain for the environment and people is an effective way to build an alternative economic model, in which migrants like other disadvantaged actors can naturally find a place. Along Gallini Felicis supply chain, there are many projects and practices aimed at work inclusion, both on the producers' and on the consumers' side:

- Arcolaio and Terramatta, two social cooperatives working in pastry and agriculture with a special focus on work inclusion of disadvantaged people (prisoners and migrants), and

- *Il Giardino delle Biodiversità* (Biodiversities' Garden), an attempt to create a meeting place for a new way of cooperation for human development, starting from a few hectares of land owned and managed together by a group of sicilians, european and migrants.

Le Galline Felici has also been committed itself in a financed project together with the NGO CESVI (2018), "Integrazione è futuro" (Integration is future), organizing trainings in agriculture for 20 migrant minors and internships for 5 of them. Subsequently, there were job placements in members' farms and in the consortiums shop for 3 boys (Sadjo, Aziz, Rabbi).

Moreover, together with purchasing groups Le Galline Felici have been able to participate in other interesting **local projects**:

- **FIERi** (Fabbrica Interculturale Ecosostenibile del Riuso: Eco-sustainable intercultural factory for re-use), born in 2015 when many associations in Catania came together to find a place where creating training and work opportunities for newcomers, through activities connected to objects recycling and re-use (for example sewing with recycled materials);

- **RisOrti Migranti** is an association where locals and migrants are committed in agricultural work with the objective to create regular jobs guaranteeing a dignified life to disadvantaged people; to put into production uncultivated lands using ecological techniques; to involve consumers in the production phase, bringing them closer to the countryside and activating solidarity relationships with producers to favor an intercultural exchange also thanks to the cultivation of vegetables and fruits typical of different countries and traditions;



- **Lo Faccio Bene** ("I make it well"), an association working in education and culture, launching thematic video-courses in the schools, and organizing social events, connected with inter-culture and social change.

## Austria

### 1. IGOR, Vienna



Situated in Vienna, a former retirement home with a big vegetable garden used for therapeutic purposes was transformed into a home for refugees in 2015. Together with the newcomers, the place was set up as an emergency shelter. In peak times, about 1000 TCNs found their first home there, supported by many volunteers. Especially, the former garden crew, who already knew the place and had lengthy experience in using garden work as a healing and supporting activity, started to engage with the newcomers to revive the garden again. The Project *IGOR* stands for *Integrationsarbeit und Gesundheitsförderung im Öffentlichen Raum* (Inclusive Work and Health Promotion in Public Space). Around 30 to 40 TCNs engage in working the garden, the food is used and consumed in the shelter home. People helping to care for the 30-hectare surrounding terrain are supported by a small salary organized through state funding. A close cooperation with the neighbouring university for environmental pedagogy helps to get professional input and support for the psychological dimension of well-being through practical work in the garden.

## Switzerland

### 1. HEKS Neue Gärten beider Basel, Switzerland

The HEKS/EPER *Neue Gärten* (*New Gardens*) programmes are projects aimed at the social integration of asylum seekers and refugee families through joint gardening. The aid organization of the Swiss Protestant Churches (HEKS) leases allotment gardens and thereby provides access to gardens for the project's participants. The programme enables migrants and their families



to produce their own food and to exchange with the programme team and other people from the gardening community. It also enables them to take part in public life and to feel grounded in their new home. The participants get support from professional gardeners who teach them organic gardening methods and they are in exchange with the HEKS programme coordinator who assists and connects them to local organizations which facilitate integration. This project is funded by the Otto Erich Heynau-Foundation, cantonal funds, contributions from further foundations, private and church donations and by HEKS. Participation is open to migrant women and men with residence permits N (asylum seeker), F (provisionally admitted foreigners) and B (refugee). They may participate alone or as a family, with or without children. The programme was designed and launched in 2006 at *HEKS Basel* and is now offered all over the country. After visiting one of the programs in Basel, it was clear to see the program's positive impact on a Pakistani family.

### 2. Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk SAH Landwirtschaft und Garten

Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk (SAH) Landwirtschaft und Garten (Swiss Labor Assistance Association, Agriculture and Garden) Situated in central Switzerland, the national worker's fund created a training project especially designed for people with difficulties in accessing jobs or training. Two days per week, participants visit the sites to learn and work together. Many refugees use the program because they cannot apply for normal jobs due to their state of residency, language skills, or health issues. The three-phase program starts in a garden of an old monastery, where the participants learn basic skills such as gardening, teamwork, working routines and language training.



Professionals take roles as mentors to establish a positive learning environment. The second phase is about qualification and vocational training.

The third and final phase is about integration into the labour market (finding work). The program is state funded and is open to everybody receiving the social benefit. The costs are covered by the responsible social services. Likewise, farms and farm businesses are invited to employ refugees for the maximum duration of one year through simplified paperwork and working permits.



## Sweden

### 1. *Gastronaut (Stockholm)*

Gastronaut is a social catering enterprise founded in 2015, which offers specialty food cooked by immigrant chefs with recipes from their home countries. Gastronaut Catering was founded by five immigrants who did not have any previous experience in the food sector, but who all commonly struggled to find good, authentic food from their native country within their new home country. The initiative brings together groups of people who do not cook for tourists, food critics, reputation or for the 'average customer' s'sake.



They cook to meet a special need in their community for extraordinary food. In these international communities there is a strong food culture which means that homemade food is always high-quality food in terms of ingredients, expertise, cooking methods and passion for cooking. This way *Gastronaut* offers TCNs a space for intercultural exchange, interaction, acquirement of business skills and job opportunities. The initiative offers a platform for chefs that may have difficulty finding a traditional job in Sweden due to cultural differences.

All chefs take a hygiene and regulations course through the Swedish Food and Health administration (Livsmedelsverket); they take their cooking very seriously, attaching their reputation, name and deep engagement to every dish delivered.

*Gastronaut* runs an app with the same name, which allows people to set up a shop in their own kitchen, allowing people who might not have the chance to express their culinary passions in a professional to give it a try from home.

## Netherlands

### 1. *A Beautiful Mess (Amsterdam)*



*A Beautiful Mess* is a restaurant initiated by Refugee Company in 2017 and run by locals and people with a refugee background. The restaurant is located in a former prison in Amsterdam and was

chosen to be established there as had previously been a temporary refugee shelter.

*A Beautiful Mess* offers a three-month long internship for around 20 people at a time, to learn and gain skills as cooks, baristas or floor managers. Apart from being a platform for job integration, the restaurant sees itself as a safe place for newcomers to arrive, build relationships, learn the language and gain work experience. It is a place where refugees can feel safe and think about what they want to do. *A Beautiful Mess* is open to all newcomers from day one, which means even before getting refugee status. Newcomers are offered psychological support, taught how to write a portfolio and day trips to related partners like Heineken Brewery are organized to learn about other food related working opportunities. They have seven employees including a psychologist who supports the newcomers and the floor manager. Trainees are paid 150 € per month and their social security is covered by the Dutch welfare system.

The project is almost entirely self-financed and has grown from a budget of €110,000 in 2016 to € 1.1 million in 2017, with nearly half of it generated by their own restaurant, events and commercial assignments.

*A Beautiful Mess* has received very positive reviews, acceptance from locals and newcomers, and is fully booked every Friday. The location of the restaurant is conveniently in a popular neighbourhood of Amsterdam, but the restaurant itself is also a very attractive meeting point where people want to come and spend time. The people like the food, the barista coffee and the aesthetics of the place: A part of the restaurant has been created as a concept store where artists and designers display their furniture and handicrafts.

## 2. Oost Indisch Groen (Amsterdam)

*Oost Indisch Groen* is a Dutch NGO which was founded by three friends in Amsterdam, in 2011. Their vision was to bring nature into society and communities through universal values like gardening, enjoying being in nature and food. Since then, seven community gardens each with 20 plots and several pedagogical projects about healthy nutrition have been created.

They also published two recipe books. The NGO is funded by the local government and extra municipality funds. *Oost Indisch Groen Community Garden* is one of the NGO's projects, and is an intercultural community garden which was built on a formerly squatted area. The vision of the garden is to foster social interaction through gardening. All plots are community shared. Two times per week there are open gardening days and gardeners are welcomed with tea prepared in the garden kitchen using herbs from the garden's big herb spiral. They have a pizza clay oven for their pizza party events and weekly dinner-club. Besides, there is a bicycle-run smoothie maker which is used at events and parties. The garden also hosts beehives, a Mandala Garden and mushrooms.



They hold workshops, international cooking and spring, summer and harvest festivities. For the last two years, *Oost Indisch Groen* garden has become autonomous and sustains itself through donations from cooking events, parties and through the selling of seedlings. The garden is visited by other NGOs and social workers who bring refugees and migrants to get to know the place.



## Bulgaria

### 1. Tandem Europe/ Multi-Kulti Collective (MKC): New Roots (Sofia)

Multi Kulti Collective (MKC) has been working since 2011 in a community development and civic participation building, solidarity, integration of migrants/refugees and human rights. It is based in Sofia and became a franchise in 2015 in six of the major Bulgarian cities. MKC has extensive experience in awareness raising campaigns, organizing cultural events, training courses, research, monitoring and political analysis. Their projects have been awarded honours for being among the best practices of social innovation at the local and national level.



In 2014, MCK was a national partner of the EU Policy Network on the theme «education of migrants» and in 2016 it became one of the co-founders of the NGO SIRIUS, which is based in Brussels. A few years ago, it was among the main partners of one of the largest research projects linked to integration into the EU, called NIEM.

## United Kingdom

### 1. Comfrey Project (Newcastle upon Tyne)

Set up in 2001, the *Comfrey Project* began as weekly jour fixe for TCNs to get together with a trainer on several allotments in Newcastle. The main aim and motivation in starting the project was to build up a structure for recreation and voluntary work for refugees and asylum seekers through horticulture and connected activities. Over the years the project grew in terms of users as well as sites and staff.

Now there are two allotments, one for therapeutic gardening to support the well-being of victims of torture and traumatized asylum seekers, the other one for people with advanced gardening skills and the will to focus on training horticultural skills and cultivating food more professionally. The core element of the *Comfrey Project* is a community garden in Gateshead on a plot of land rented from the city. 2000m<sup>2</sup> of garden and community house, a part-time employed therapeutic horticulturist and a full-time project coordinator provide the structure for over 25 volunteers and up to 50 project users (TCN, but also disabled people, families living in precarious situations >> e.g. holiday hunger). Many activities are offered, mostly connected to gardening or cooking. The garden is open for users and volunteers every weekday, of course joint cooking and lunch is standard procedure. The community garden is open but coordinated by a horticulturalist with the help of the users and volunteers. The underlying concept is self-steering and self-organization of the users and volunteers. People come to relax, talk, chill, work and meet; children come to play, families to have picnics. There will be no constraint to join gardening activities, the users are free to participate in joint activities, or just do what they want to adapt to the place and the people at their pace.



The vision (and with such a long experience also in many ways a reality) is to open spaces for people to meet, feel needed and useful, build a community with a family feeling, and offer asylum seekers volunteer work to cope with the waiting time for asylum and to have something to show in their CV, if they apply for jobs. Users in need will get the ticket costs for public transport refunded, if this is a barrier that prevents them from joining the activities. Gardening is seen as a possibility of non-verbal communication while working the land, which is something very common to human nature, but still language can develop in a practical way, while doing the things you learn to talk about them. Regular language cafés and an orchestrated mixture of native speakers and learners in the respective groups helps to ensure progression in language skills.



Pedagogically speaking, the activities are designed from a situational approach, taking the interests of the involved people and working with their intrinsic motivations to do and learn. Users are taken seriously in this respect, but also get responsibilities over certain areas, so they are empowered to work with groups, and learn how to organize certain processes.

The project is financed through private donations (both individually and companies) and grants from trusts and foundations. The food used for the many cooking events comes from the garden but also from donations of supermarkets and the food bank. Over the years *the Comfrey project* experienced many ups and downs (most recently in 2017 all the staff had to be made redundant due to a lack of funding, volunteers and trustees maintained the project over winter and managed to raise funding to start again with two employees) but maintained its relevance for asylum seekers and migrants looking for meaningful engagement and a focal point to get support, whatever the situation. Besides the health aspect of the work, signposting and connecting individuals with each other but also with supporting organizations in the local area, plays a big role in the motivation of the users to participate.

## 2. Mazi Mas (London)



A Roaming Restaurant. The employees of *Mazi Mas* are female TCN struggling to find work or having issues with the work permit. *Mazi Mas* and the women behind it have offered catering for weddings, private events and galas since 2012. Sometimes, if the chance arises, a pop-up restaurant is opened. The stories of the chefs are shared online, and the menu always reflects the current mixture of cultures and origins of the staff. By doing this, the project not only tackles prejudices but also helps women who are newcomers in the UK to find their place in society. The products used are mostly from organic farms of the local area. Cooperation with other places like social centres, theatres or restaurants provide a more secure base for the social business.

## Czech Republic

### 1. *Ethnocatering*

This project is based on the concept of social business. The cooks working in *Ethnocatering* are female migrants aged over 50 who, for various reasons (political, social, economic) have come, often from a lot of turmoil, to find a new home in the Czech Republic.



These women are in a difficult life situation, and their integration is more gradual. It comes practically with zero material wealth, but with enormous mental benefits - the perfect knowledge of one's home countries cuisine. This natural know-how of *Ethno-catering* makes use of, and at the same time provides, fair work that is close to them. These women have the opportunity to further develop and expand their qualifications. In over 10 years of their existence, they have organized more than 1,500 events for 500 customers from companies, non-profit organizations, individuals and state institutions.

## Finland

### *Immigrants Villages*

Immigrants Villages is a LEADER project, which operated from 2011 to 2015 in the rural town Punkalaidun, Finland. The aim of the project is to integrate and encourage TCNs to stay in rural areas. Since Punkalaidun is affected by population decline and shortages of agricultural labourers, work integration of TCNs in the agricultural and local sector was found to be the best solution. First, partnerships with 29 local businesses were developed, which contributed financially to the project and gave TCNs the opportunity to train and work in their businesses.

During the first step, in coordination with the employment office, a training phase is organized in one of the collaborating businesses. During this phase, people can get an impression about the working field, acquire their first skills and practice the language. So far, internships for 80 refugees have been created, from which six permanent positions have been created for TCN. The opportunities of work integration have led to an economic uplift in the town since more TCNs stay in Punkalaidun, investing their earnings or allowances to buy whatever they need in the local shops.



## Belgium

### 1. Collectactif (Brussels)

Collectatif from Brussels is a TCN-driven social catering project that provides great food for people with little income (who are to a large part TCN), as well as income and training opportunities for TCNs. Located in a social center they have the following aims:

- To develop horizontal solidarity structures in Brussels.
- To strengthen the food security of people in a state of economic precariousness.
- To reduce food waste through the recovery, processing and redistribution of unsold surplus food.
- To raise public awareness on topics such as food waste and food security.
- to strengthening the emancipation and citizen participation of people in a precarious administrative situation.
- To work with food waste to reduce the carbon footprint and at the same time the obstacles to economic and social precariousness.

By involving people in a common project like Collectactif, individuals overcome their isolation and become included in a caring community. By organizing host tables, social cohesion is reinforced with a mixed audience.

Through recovery at the vendors, the preparation of food parcels as well as the sharing and the preparation of collective meals, a concrete integration action is implemented, which is one of the main objectives of Collectactif.

The initiative also aims to be recognized as a project of public utility.



## ***2. Atelier-Groot-Eiland (Brussels)***

Combining a productive urban garden with an organic, seasonal and regional restaurant, where people who are unemployed are trained for jobs, Groot Eiland is a remarkable place. Because of the location of the two projects directly next to each other, no transport-logistics are necessary. Residing in Brussel's Molenbeek quarter, the initiative is deeply embedded in the city's social movement and very well connected. The project is not only designed for refugees but addresses the issue of unemployment, bringing people together.







## FINAL REMARK

(translated from the original text of Dr. agr. Josef Heringer, 2014)

*"What we are and what we have we owe in many cases to foreign cultures. Migration was always an essential part of cultural progress. The dreams of many people and religious promises of salvation often refer to "paradise" and gardens. On these grounds let us make the world a garden, so it will not end as a battlefield of beliefs and cultures."*

*"Man was lost and saved in a garden!"* (Blaise Pascal)

In this spirit, we hope to contribute with this report, which has brought together insights from many initiatives in Europe regarding the development and design of projects dealing with TCNs in different areas related to food. This is a huge field of research and in this work and within the given capacities we could not address every aspect in detail but we hope that we have provided inspiration to existing and newly planned initiatives. The work undertaken is highly relevant because it strengthens social cohesion. Furthermore, it is important to note that the approach of food relations projects is to bridge three important topics:

- Inclusion of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and important exchange with local actors.
- Sustainable local production of food; re-connecting people to gardening, farming and nature using agroecological approaches and producing healthy, tasty and diverse cuisine.
- Empowering people to think and act in the spirit of togetherness and solidarity.

These three issues do not necessarily involve the same actors but this is changing; a very important achievement by the initiatives described.



Good food should not be a privilege for wealthy people only, instead there is a right to food, which is defined by the United Nations:

*"It may be defined as the right, alone or in community with others, to be free from hunger and malnutrition, to have physical and economic access at all times to adequate food (in quality and quantity) that is nutritious and culturally acceptable or means for its procurement in a sustainable and dignified manner, while ensuring the highest level of physical, emotional and intellectual development. Moreover, all these dimensions are inseparable from nutritional well-being and health and must be interpreted in the context of food sovereignty, gender equality and women's rights."* (UNITED NATIONS 2018).

There is a great potential to take these ideas further by acknowledging their importance and by providing support and enabling frames for these approaches. The need for more synergies and cohesion in food policies as e.g. proposed by the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems<sup>10</sup> is evident, because of the high added-value for society (health, bringing people together, environment, etc). Before these changes happen on various political, economic and administrative levels we encourage everybody to put aside this report for the moment and go gardening or cooking with good intentions, good ingredients and together with nice people!



## References

- ASYLUM INFORMATION DATABASE AIDA (2019):
- BORN, R. AND M. SCHWEFER (2016): *Institutional dimensions of successful labor market integration of refugees*, CESifo DICE Report, ISSN 1613-6373, ifo Institut – Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung an der Universität München, München, Vol. 14, Iss. 4, pp. 82-84
- BRAY, E. ELDRIDGE, J., RAATH, I., PAPAKONSTANTINOY, A., ANGIOLINI, S., HYDÉN, J., THORPE, E. AND A. LEDAN (2016): *The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. Migrant and refugee integration. Publications Office of the European Union*, Luxembourg.
- EC, in: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/the-european-benchmark-for-refugee-integration-a-comparative-analysis-in-14-eu-countries>
- Euracademy (2014): A CAPACITY BUILDING MANUAL FOR NGOS PROMOTING THE INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN RURAL AREAS. [https://www.euracademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ThematicGuide13\\_eng-1.pdf](https://www.euracademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ThematicGuide13_eng-1.pdf)
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2019): *Migration and Home Affairs: Reception Conditions*. [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/reception-conditions\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/reception-conditions_en)
- OECD (2016): *Hiring refugees - What are the opportunities and challenges for employers?* Migration Policy Debates © OECD/UNHCR, N°10 September 2016
- Onorati M.G. - Bednarz F. (eds.), *Building Intercultural Competences*, Leuven: Acco, 2010
- STEWARD, E. (2005): *Exploring the Vulnerability of Asylum Seekers in the UK. Population, space and place*. Space Place 11, 499–512 (2005) Published online in Wiley InterScience ([www.interscience.wiley.com](http://www.interscience.wiley.com)). DOI: 10.1002/psp.394
- UNESCO (2019): <https://en.unesco.org/themes/social-transformations>
- United Nations (2018): DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF PEASANTS AND OTHER PEOPLE WORKING IN RURAL AREAS

## PROJECT PARTNERS



ACRA, non-governmental organisation, secular and independent, founded in 1968 in Milan. ACRA is engaged in fighting poverty through sustainable, innovative and participative solutions and promotes a culture of dialogue, integration, intercultural exchange and solidarity.



ABD-Association for the well-being and development of Barcelona is a non-governmental organization that defends the rights of people living in situations of social fragility, through projects centred on the person and the community aiming at promoting personal empowerment and social cohabitation.



AGROECOPOLIS, the Hellenic network for agroecology, food sovereignty and access to land. Born in Thessaloniki from the experience gained in years of collaboration with various formal and informal groups, organizations and academic world.



AGRONAUTEN, association for the research and promotion of sustainable food systems and of German regional and local economies, from Freiburg. Since 2014, it has gained experience in the research and spreading of local and organic cultivations and in projects of integration and intercultural exchanges through food and agriculture.



KAMBA, founded in 2016 in Milan with the goal of promoting sustainable activities and initiatives in favour of refugees and asylum seekers, through the implementation of food-based projects, for intercultural dialogue and social inclusion.



SIS, consortium of social enterprises, founded in 1988 in Milan, for a strategic development of the community. Passepartout, has the goal of creating a widespread, innovative and sustainable housing system for asylum seekers and refugees.

[www.acra.it/foodrelations](http://www.acra.it/foodrelations)  
Contact: [foodrelations@acra.it](mailto:foodrelations@acra.it)  
Follow us on Facebook: **Food Relations EU**

# food relations



Associació Benestar  
i Desenvolupament  
Educatiu i Social de l'Àrea de Platja



**DIE AGRONAUTEN**

Forschungsgesellschaft  
für Anze- und Ernährungskultur



AFRIC FOOD & CULTURE



Food Relations is an European project aiming at strengthening spaces for social participation, intercultural communication and integration of citizens from other countries in Europe, through the development and the sharing of experiences that value food as a tool for dialogue and inclusion.



**"Food Relations"** is a project co-financed by the European Union - Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund AMIF-2016-AG-INTE-776182

*This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Food Relations project partners and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.*

# food relations