



FROM
LIFE SOIL

Guidebook of best practice



Erasmus+



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Erasmus+

Life from Soil introduction

The Life from Soil project, funded by Erasmus + is a collaborative approach by a partnership of organisations from across Europe. We all have a passion and commitment to work with the planet in a sustainable and renewable way. We use activities and skills required for organic and sustainable land management in social, caring, therapeutic and educational ways to positively benefit individuals and/or communities as well as sustaining the natural environment.

We want to show different organisations, potential funders of activities and project beneficiaries the multiple benefits of these projects, what the challenges might be and what projects or activities other organisations have innovated and developed for outcomes for individuals, communities and the wider environment.

The partnership represents all geographical parts of Europe and include non-formal and formal educators. There are 9 organisations involved that all have different experiences, all have a common theme of using the land and environment for social and therapeutic benefits. Across the partnership we support people to develop; a sustainable lifestyle, positive health and well-being, skills for employment, community engagement, and resilience in supporting those with disadvantages.

The organisations and countries involved;

1. Agora, Romania, a cooperative partnership between small, local producers and consumers in urban areas.
2. Inspi-Ráció, Hungary, an organisation with a strong reputation in developing and delivering training.
3. Garden Organic, UK, the national charity for organic growing providing a range of programmes to enhance individuals, communities and the environment through organic growing.
4. Biotechnical Centre Naklo (BC NAKLO), Slovenia, an educational, research and developmental institution with an educational estate of 22 hectares of agricultural land for organic food production.
5. Pirkan Helmi, Finland, a Leader Local Action Group that encourages its rural residents to develop their own home communities, improve amenities and create new jobs and enterprises.
6. SOSNA, Slovakia (lead partner), an eco-centre that demonstrates the practical use of alternative energy solutions.
7. SPLAV, Czech Republic. Educational and training projects with employment opportunities.
8. The Centre of Agro-Ecological Research “Enrico Avanzi” CiRAA is a research centre of the University of Pisa. Main research topics of CiRAA include: cropping systems, soil tillage, cover crops, organic farming, agricultural mechanisation, animal husbandry, food quality, biomass and bioenergy, environmental and economic impacts. Since 2007, CiRAA works on social farming in agreement with the local public health.
9. Uni San Antonio, a private university based in Murcia, South Eastern Spain.

The project runs from September 2015-September 2017 and includes several activities including this guidebook.

Getting started with a project

There are many strategic and operational considerations when starting an agricultural or horticultural projects that is going to be used by the community. These include:

Location/access – where are you going to have your project – is it going to be easy for the people who should benefit to get to it. If not how will you address this?

Resources - Often projects are able to attract 'in kind' support of donations of tool and equipment – however if you don't need them or don't know how to use them they are not useful. Make a list of the things you need and which of them you need to learn to use.

Stakeholders – who do you need to be involved to make the project a success, how do you get them involved and how do you keep them involved. Are there skills you need or is it the amount of people working on a task?

Laws and regulations, health and safety/risk assessments - are there any environmental, health and safety policies and regulations which apply to you, can your local authority help or another similar project? What do you need to do to meet these regulations?

Communication and engagement – who do you want to engage? Why? And how are you going to do that? Do you have a willing volunteer who could help with a communication plan?

Management /committees – how is the project going to be managed, who will have the final say on decisions?

Leadership and support – Do the investors and decision-makers support your project/idea – if yes great, but plan how you are going to keep them engaged, keep data and report on how the project beneficiaries are getting on. If no, what do you need to do to convince them? Is it about showing how costs can be reduced in areas such as health? Emphasise the benefits, find examples of successful projects – this guidebook can help with that.

Learning form others – what do you need help with, what projects are already succeeding – how can they help you?

Case studies

The collection of case studies in this guidebook address many of the key questions above but a summary of the key considerations from our project partners are:

- Be realistic but remain enthusiastic!
- Pilot your idea.
- Have a strategy from the start.
- Plan your space well.
- Ensure that financial investors and decision-makers are supportive of the project.
- Work hard to build positive/trusting relationships with all involved.
- Have clear roles and responsibilities for all involved.
- Communicate well with your community and intended beneficiaries so they know something is going on and that they are engaged in the project from the start.

Categories:

1. Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.
2. Agricultural initiatives – care farming, community supported agriculture, rural farming, local food etc.
3. Community projects – Living Villages, Eco villages etc.
4. Cultivation – sustainable skills.
5. Education and training –sustainable use of land.
6. Entrepreneurship – agricultural, horticultural, sustainable examples.
7. Medicinal/herbal – projects where crops of grown for their beneficial qualities.

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Definitions of terms used

We have included some definitions for the types of therapy that may be referred to in the case studies. These may vary slightly in different countries or circumstances:

Animal-Assisted Activities (AAAs) - are informal interactions/visitations often conducted on a volunteer basis by the human-animal team for motivational, educational and recreational purposes. There are no treatment goals for the interactions. AAAs are generally facilitated by individuals who do not have a health, education or human service degree. Human-animal teams have received at least introductory training, preparation and assessment to participate in informal visitations.

Animal Assisted Interventions (AAI) - is the general term used for a variety of ways of utilising animals in the rehabilitation or social care of humans (Kruger and Serpell, 2006). This could involve pure therapy or including the animals in various activities.

Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) - is a type of therapy that involves animals as a form of treatment. AAT includes deliberately planned pedagogic, psychological and socially integrative interventions with animals for children, youths, adults and senior citizens with cognitive, social-emotional and motoric disabilities, and behavioural problems, and for focused support (ESAAT- European Society for Animal Assisted Therapy). It also includes health-promoting, preventive and rehabilitative measures. AAT takes place individually and within a group setting and is based on the relationship and process structure within a triangular relationship between the client, animal and therapist. (Berget et al, 2008).

Bibliotherapy - an expressive therapy that involves the reading of specific texts with the purpose of healing. It uses an individual's relationship to the content of books and poetry and other written words as therapy.

Care Farming - is the therapeutic use of farming practices (CFUK, 2013). They provide health, social or educational care services for individuals from one or a range of vulnerable groups. Provide a supervised, structured programme of farming-related activities. The term has been applied in the UK context since 2005 and represents a direct translation of the other phrases used to describe similar activities.

In fact, the activity is most commonly described in the European context as 'social farming (SF)', but the following alternative descriptors are also sometimes used interchangeably: 'farming for health', 'green care in agriculture' or simply 'green-care farming' (Hassink and van Dijk, 2006; Hine et al., 2008a; Sempik et al., 2010; Hassink et al., 2012).

European SF consists of a rich variety of practices, to offer co-therapy, social inclusion, education, vocational training, job inclusion, and civic services for a broad range of users (from people with mental and psychiatric disabilities to various categories of less empowered people, addicts, elderly people, children and families) (Di Iacovo & O'Connor, 2009; Dessein, Bock, & de Krom, 2013; Sempik, Hine, & Wilcox, 2010). SF works in a grey zone among agriculture, social sector, education, justice, work inclusion and the health sectors (Di Iacovo et al., 2014).

Eco therapy - is a union between the ideas of ecopsychology and psychotherapy. Fundamental to ecotherapy is our connection to the natural world and the environment we live within. Ecotherapy uses a range of practices in order to help us connect with nature and ultimately with our 'inner' nature. (Mind., 2007) describes ecotherapy as a free, natural, accessible treatment for improving mental health.

Ecotherapy is the exploration of relationships between oneself, nature and others; this may be carried out by meditation, directional walking or spending time alone in a natural setting.

Green care is an inclusive term for many 'complex interventions' for various groups of vulnerable or socially excluded people (Sempik et al., 2010). What links this diverse set of interventions is their use of nature and the natural environment as a framework in which to create these approaches.

Green exercise- refers to physical exercise undertaken in natural environments. Physical exercise is well known to provide physical and psychological health benefits. (Hine et al., 2011) comments that social contact and interaction with the environment are the attractions to outdoor exercise, and better physical health leads to a more positive mental health state. With nature and wilderness therapy the aim is to incorporate a third party into the therapy situation creating a client, therapist and nature relationship (Berger, 2009).

It is important to remember that green care is an intervention i.e. an active process that is intended to improve or promote health (physical and mental) and well-being not purely a passive experience of nature. There are many types of green care. In fact it is an umbrella term for many different therapies. Here below we can explore and define some specific green care approaches.

Hippotherapy - usually involves an occupational therapist, a physiotherapist, or a speech and language therapist working with a client and a horse. Different movements of the horse present challenges to the rider to promote different postural responses of the rider.

Orthotherapy- a complementary and holistic form of health care that works to restore a balance in the body by a multi-disciplinary approach to therapy, including: Swedish massage. Kinesitherapy / joint mobilization. This is also known as exercise therapy.

Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH) - is the process of using plants and gardens to improve physical and mental health, as well as communication and thinking skills. It also uses the garden as a safe and secure place to develop someone's ability to mix socially, make friends and learn practical skills that will help them to be more independent.

By creating a green space, clients can form a sense of belonging and identity, whilst integrating and interacting with the local community (Sempik et al, 2005). Starting and finishing a task with a tangible output gives increased self-efficacy and coping ability (Sempik et al, 2010).

Therapeutic Community (TCs)- is a participative, group-based approach to long-term mental illness, personality disorders and drug addiction (Hine et al., 2008). The approach is usually residential, with the clients and therapists living together, but increasingly residential units have been superseded by day units.

During the 1940s several TCs were established in rural, farm settings, where the benefits of nature were recognised as being integral to the therapeutic experience. TCs first came to existence in the UK during the Second World War and now exist in a variety of settings, such as the National Health Service, the educational and criminal justice systems and the voluntary sector (Association of Therapeutic Communities, 2009).

Wilderness therapy- Wilderness programs are an innovative approach to treating the problems of adolescents with a range of conditions and needs (Hobbs and Shelton, 1972; Bendoroff, 1989; Russell, 1999; Russell and Phillips-Miller, 2002; Caulkins et al, 2006; Russell, 2006a; Bettmann, 2007). Often they are residential over a significant length of time and involve challenging outdoor activities and situations.

Although the term 'wilderness therapy' is a relatively new concept in Europe, it has been in existence in the US for many years. Programmes typically provide healthy exercise and diet through hiking and physical activity, individual and group therapy sessions, educational curricula, primitive skills, group-living with peers, opportunities for solo time and reflection leadership training and challenges resulting from 'back-to basics' living.



Shared work lunch

Community garden for therapy and to increase employability skills

A case study by Sdruzeni SPLAV, Czech Republic

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.

Brief summary of the project

Community garden 'U SPLAVu' was established through a European Social Fund (ESF) in 2013/14.

The main idea was to introduce horticultural therapy as a method to help the unemployed by providing them with social contacts and work opportunities in community market gardens.

The project had four phases:–

1. Motivate the participants;
2. Establish the community garden, then add horticultural therapy, education and overseas visits;
3. Retraining courses;
4. Creating employment in the garden, including; maintenance, event organising, processing products and final conference.

Organisation/project dates

2013 – 2014: ESF project

2015 – Ongoing: community garden of Sdruzeni SPLAV

Location

Doudleby nad Orlicí, East Bohemia, Czech Republic; small town in rural area; by the renaissance château.



Organisation/project funding

Initial investment was from the European Social Fund. It included the establishment of the garden itself, purchase of tools and machinery, international practice, training of the target groups and maintenance for two years (2013, 2014). The total budget was €240.000.

At present, Sdruzeni SPLAV covers the basic expenses (seeds, petrol etc.), the maintenance of the garden is achieved with the help of the Employment office, which provides a few full time workers.

The project

Sdruzeni SPLAV is an NGO, founded in 2004. Its aim is to work within rural development (financially supporting a chosen project from its area, bringing together local communities) and helping disadvantaged groups of people especially unemployed ones (educating and retraining, providing jobs, psychological and social help). Sdruzeni SPLAV is being financed by various national and EU funds as well as by membership fees.

Target audience

The project was originally tailored for unemployed people over 50 and unemployed people after parental leave and/or with small children. These target groups struggle to get back in to employment and often are unemployed for a long time.

They also have to deal with psychological aspects of their current situation in their lives – losing a job, children leaving their homes, returning to work after parental leave, taking care of small children etc. These target groups were participating in the project.

However, the community garden has always been open to anyone who wanted to contribute and who were happy to get involved – from the local community to schools and senior clubs. Now there is wide range of people benefiting from the community garden – local schools and kindergartens, people with additional learning needs, foreigners from refugee camp as well as the local residents.



In general it is very difficult to attract people to community gardens in Czech Republic, especially in the rural environment. People have their own gardens and are still quite sceptical about the 'let's do it together' idea.

Sdruzeni SPLAV tries to reach out to the people via Employment offices, centres for people with additional learning needs, hobby clubs and social media. We also use a monthly farmers market as a way to promote our work.

Therapeutic and/or social benefits of the project

The project had very strong benefits for its participants, both therapeutic and social. Primarily, participants were offered regular sessions with coaches and psychologists, who helped them to start to be positive and active again.

Secondly, the garden promotes a focus on working together on the garden from its planning to the planting and maintenance. This has been the true horticultural therapy – people were positive about their work, they created strong bonds with each other seeing they all have similar problems, they had a common goal and future ahead, they were able to see the outcomes of their work on a daily basis.

Thirdly, there were two very inspiring international partners – Juankoski Heritage Society (Finland) – they run a therapeutic community garden and Riverside Market Garden Association (Wales, UK) who have community supported agriculture projects and community gardens.

Partners were coming over to visit and help out with all phases of the project and 12 participants had the chance to go and experience and get involved with gardens in Finland and Wales. For the participants, being able to see that people from far away have the same worries and troubles was extremely therapeutic in itself.

The next step available to participants was access to retraining courses (gardener, general agriculturist, dietitian), which gave them back their confidence and made them more competitive in the labour market.

As well as this, there were/are therapeutic and social benefits for other target groups – there are regular days for people with additional learning needs, schools and kindergartens and regular social and educational events for the general public.



Tomato harvest!



Growing area

Continuously the garden is being developed into an open space where people meet at regular events. These are either private events or open for the public to attend.

Most importantly the people who attend are getting closer to nature and each other.

Community involvement

Most of the people involved in the project and garden are people with an interest in a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

Many of those who attend the project are from the local area, but there are others who attend from larger settlements further away and have second homes close to the project.

It is difficult to get local people, who permanently reside within a close proximity to the garden, involved on a regular basis.

Sustainable land management

Composting, permaculture, processing of all plant parts.

Outcomes

The project has helped most of the participants by creating a focus in their lives, to find out what they are good at and to do something valuable.

Often, the reason why unemployed people struggle to find a job again is because they fear they have no value as a person.

The project helped people to get rid of their fears and to stand on their feet again. Some of them were offered paid work for one year as part of the project, others just wanted a new hobby.

Everyone gained a lot of knowledge and experience. About 80% of the participants are presently employed.

Our project was one of the first of its kind in the Czech Republic. It received positive publicity and the final international conference, celebrating the project, was very successful.

The project introduced a range of beneficial activities including; horticultural therapy, community gardening, social horticulture to the region.

A personal story

'Horticultural therapy and community gardening have recently been for many of us completely strange words. Now we know what to imagine under these names. We have personal experience with horticultural therapy; work on cultivating the garden helps us to forget that we are unemployed, that we have problems. We are part of a community which helps us to solve problems that may appear in job searches, but also in family situations.'

What were our expectations? Learn something new, but also to meet new friends who share the same fate. Get optimistic thoughts and be able to realise that even an unemployed person can create something beautiful and interesting and become useful to society.

Lectures, seminars and field trips have enriched us a lot – we have much more new information about gardening, but also we got to know some secrets of our souls. This led to changes in our behaviour – we are starting to have more faith, we are enjoying the success and positive feedback from public for our efforts, and many plans for the future.'

- Bozena Kovarikova, a project participant.



Lots of vegetables to be enjoyed

What were the challenges?

The biggest challenge was setting boundaries and managing time between being a friend to the beneficiaries as well as the person managing the project, who at times has to mediate during heated discussions. This also involved lowering expectations whilst still remaining positive.

Other challenges have included;

- Attracting people from rural areas into gardening.
- Getting people to engage in something when in return they get nothing but (hopefully) positive emotional benefits and/or a bunch of carrots in return. These benefits do not always appeal to the masses.
- Selling organic vegetable to generate more money.

What have been the biggest successes?

- Establishing a beautiful garden on a brownfield site near the historical buildings of the nearby château.
- The physical outcomes – amazing vegetables, herbs, flowers and goods like herbal salt, herbal teas, soaps, chutneys, mustards and many more.
- The contribution made by all people participating in the project.
- The friendships and relationships made.
- The international conference and the opportunity it gave us to talk about the benefits of horticultural therapy and community gardens.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to start a project like this?

- Have realistic expectations.
- Have a pilot project.
- Prepare the project plan with experienced partners.
- Try to ensure the project is sustainable and will run even when funding finishes.
- Get a Strategy or Business plan.
- Get inspiration from abroad.
- Have good psychologists in the team.
- Have a full time manager.
- Do not think everyone is like you.

It has been very effective to cooperate with the right people – lecturers, partners, and inspiring people. Enthusiasm is contagious.

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All photos have been taken in the community garden, please credit: Kristina Garrido



Restorative Forest Trail.

A case study by Natural Resources Institute Finland/Forest Trails - Network of densely-wooded regions in Europe, Finland.

Category: Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.

Brief summary of the project

The “Forest Trails” project’s aim was to explore a completely new concept of forest therapy trails and the multiple uses of forest in Europe. In Ikaalinen (Finland) a special concept of a wellbeing forest trail has been developed and its psychological and physiological effects on beneficiaries studied at university level.

The trail contains several exercises which must be done with certain times in the forest. The effects are measurable directly in the human beings physiological resilience (cortisol level, stress level, immunological level of cells).

Organisation/project dates - 1/5/2012 to 31/12/2013.

Location - Parkano (Finland) + Sunne (Sweden), Nommern (Luxemburg) and Brouvelieures (France).

Organisation/project funding - Total project budget €502.238,00, primarily funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development - LEADER.

Project description

Seven LEADER action groups in four EU-countries (Finland, France, Luxembourg and Sweden) established a common project “Forest Trails - Network of densely-wooded regions in Europe”. The initiators of the project were senior researcher Eira-Maija Savonen from Natural Resources Institute Finland and Kalevi Kivistö from Tampere University Psychology department.

The 2-year long project was divided into two sub-projects: 1) a forest seminar – aiming to learn from each other’s best practices in forestry and forest related entrepreneurship and 2) a forest trail – the main aim being the restoration and enhancement of forest trails in each partner country and the promotion of these to make people aware of the beneficial effects of green spaces on human well-being.

To our knowledge, the world’s first forest trail with predesigned activity to alleviate stress was opened in Finland (near Ikaalinen Spa) in 2010. It was assumed that simple exercises in relaxing and observing the features of the natural surroundings would further strengthen the positive effects of nature.



Although many studies have shown that the natural environment reduces stress, improves mood, concentration and performance, this knowledge had not earlier been brought into practice in forest trails.

For this purpose, the University of Tampere and the Finnish Forest Research Institute (Metla) co-operated in creating the first forest trails with Instructions on the signposts that aim to induce relaxation, improve mood, induce cognitive reflection and attention restoration and enhance the search for a favourite place which can be socially shared.

During the project corresponding forest trails with the same psychological exercises were built in four EU partner countries. The first of the four “Wellbeing Trails” was opened to the public in Sweden in Sunne in September 2012, and the second one in Luxemburg in Nommern in April 2013.

The Finnish trail in Parkano was opened in June 2013 and the French trail in Brouvelieures in September 2013.

All trails use existing networks of trails in ordinary, managed forests with easy access for visitors. In Sweden, the trail is close to a spa near the town of Sunne and in Finland it is connected to a leisure centre. Also the first private “Wellbeing Trail” for the use of guests in a rental farmhouse has been established in Finland.

Target Audience

Everyone. The restorative forest trails are made for the public to use for free and they are accessible round the clock and round the year. Especially for people benefiting the most from the positive health impacts of the forest trails; for example people suffering from high stress levels.



A group following a forest trail

Therapeutic benefits of the project

According to the user survey carried out, 79% of the visitors (N=167) reported that their mood was more positive after walking the trail than before walking. Over two-thirds (69%) reported that after the walk they were calmer, more alert and energetic, and more away from everyday worries than before the walk.

Almost all (90%) were willing to recommend the trail to friends and acquaintances, especially to reduce stress and to enhance mood after a stressful day/week at work. It can be concluded that exercises intended to enhance mood, relaxation were successful for the majority of the respondents.

For instance put simply moving for the same time and length in a town environment doesn't release the same effects as moving with these exercises and timing in the forest (human cortisol levels are reduced in forest, but in town environment they doesn't reduce, but remain high).

Community involvement

There have been many stakeholders involved in this project starting from forest owners, tourism entrepreneurs, bigger units like Spa's, different associations, universities, research centres, Metla Finland and respective stakeholders in other partner countries.

The extension of the track concept is innovative and entrepreneurs can use the findings from this project and extend the range in their service supply with the own unique wellbeing tracks.

Outcomes

- Use of forest resources in sustainable way for the complimentary economical profit for instance in private agritourism enterprises etc.
- Regional level publicity on the new use of forest resources and promotion of public health



Path through section of a forest

- First Wellbeing Trails in the world constructed in every partnership country
- Shared knowledge and use of this kind of trails
- Health effects on persons using trails (anti-cancer effects and anti-stress effects, increased immunity – possible to have the material on scientific research made on the thematics)
- First public “Wellbeing tracks” in Sweden, Luxembourg and France
- Scientific data collected (Universities and researchers need)
- Possibility to establish with very small cost other tracks when the concept starts to diffuse more (however must be adapted to suit each individual site)
- Economical advantage in regional level (new paths to be explored in natural tourism sector)
- This Finnish-origin innovative concept has been starting its diffusion. The concept has started to live also by the private entrepreneur's side and more public tracks have been identified and one constructed within the project in Parkano Käenkoski where it will serve also the local association of sport, one of the most popular Finnish dancing halls (Käenkoski), some tourism enterprises and Parkano areas inhabitants as well nature tourists. The health aspects of using of this are very important (reducing of public costs; incentivise of persons to move in the middle of nature).
- Moreover, because the forests are not transferable to city centres in order to obtain this kind of wellness – one must spend free time or holidays in the countryside, better said, better opportunities for countryside tourism enterprises to have supplementary clients.

Lessons learnt

- Transferring the trail concepts was easier than expected. Improving health affects everybody, for instance cancer is a continuously growing threat for public health; forest therapy paths can be used in the prevention of this.
- The multiple use of forest areas are important for the economy, for countryside and it's enterprises as well for the public health.
- The tracks can be used also for reintroduction of persons in nature as they contain mental exercises in order to identify a favourite place in the middle of the nature. Many persons are afraid of moving in the middle of the nature and the forest nowadays (the town living has abolished the former contacts with the nature and forests) and these paths can be also in therapeutic use in this sense.
- The interest on paths when making them a bit more known are great, but the concept must be explained.

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The farming family

Polyán Association

A case study by Polyán Association, Hungary.

Category:

- Agricultural initiatives – Care Farming, community supported agriculture, rural farming, local food etc.
- Cultivation – sustainable skills

Brief summary of the project

Polyán is a complex economic development programme focussed on local resources. Its aim is to establish a production and consumption system which works with nature. The purpose is to provide structure to the farmers of the region and to become a key player in local sustainable economic development.

Organisation/project dates - The project started in 2008 and there are no plans to end the project currently.

Location - Polyán is based in Mikóháza, a tiny village in the Zemplén Mountains, close to the Slovakian-Hungarian border.

Target audience

The project is aimed at supporting:

1. Members of the Association (the community)
2. Farmers who are interested in the project
3. Farmers who are open-minded and participate in our backyard cattle rearing
4. Professionals interested in indigenous farm animals
5. People who are open to rural life and production and consumption of local healthy food



Swiss brown cattle family



The Association's website, Facebook page and blog are the basic communication platforms, most of the interested people get in touch via these routes.

Additionally, the project has excellent media communication; it has appeared in the largest professional and gastronomic magazines.

Social benefits of the project

As part of the project, 40 households were given livestock; to learn how to take care of. This is a long term, better way to tackle poverty than aid alone.

Community involvement

In terms of community involvement there are two main groups:

1. Members of the Association, the community whose involvement is detailed in the personal story below.
2. Farmers participating in the 'placement project'.

Involvement in the 'placement project' started with an announcement on our website, Facebook, in media and by word of mouth. We held forums in locations where people expressed an interest. All the necessary information was displayed at these forums.

Farmers who wanted to be involved completed a pre-selection process (criteria was specified in the announcement), applicants were visited personally.

Where they were able to meet the requirements of technologies and it was seen they could fulfil the obligations of the project, contracts were made and pregnant cows placed in their care.

As a result of the selection process, only 10 % of the cows were not taken or returned.

Sustainable land management

The Polyán project is working to demonstrate the positive effect grazing has on ecology and biodiversity. For this, they did a botanical survey on the ground before grazing started. Based on the result of independent research, grazing has a clear positive effect on biodiversity.

Outcomes

The Polyán project has been based on harmonious cooperation with nature and managing the landscape. The project uses Carpathian brown cattle within the breeding programme.



Cow carriage at agriculture trade fair

After four years 150-200 breeding animals are now tracked in Hungary, they have an individual breeding code and research is done on the breeding success from a scientific angle.

More importantly, this breed of cattle has become popular amongst farmers who are thinking of independent, sustainable farming.

In the framework of the research programme we started a placement project in Borsod and Szabolcs counties rather than the Hungarian State as a whole. Approximately 60-70 cows are placed with 30-40 farmers and there is clear evidence of the benefits for the farmers.

A personal story

Clearly the farming community are benefiting from this project; the townspeople have more access to healthy, local food. Local people are immediately benefiting from the project; the farms are able to employ locals due to increased production of a variety of food items made on the farms.

Local people work with the farms to spread the word about the products, they work together to find new ways to sell the produce to increase profit on the farm.

Some EU funding has been used by farm staff to invest in new

“Despite our differences, this project is about how we can work together.” - project participant

tools to ensure work on the farm is more efficient and also set aside to cover the costs of unexpected events such as machinery breaking down. This financial buffer is a benefit to the farmers as it allows them to worry less about uncertainties which may occur.

By having more stability, farmers have more time to rest, tend to the animals and do the obligatory daily routines. They can take their families on overnight breaks away which has been impossible for many years for most farmers.

What has been the biggest success?

Polyán's biggest success has been getting people from urban and rural areas communicating with one another. It was founded by the members (Gusztáv Vágvölgyi, Tamás Cselószki and Tímea Ilyés) of two NGOs (E-misszió Association and Inspi-Ráció Association) and a farmer (Rudolf Miklós) and his family from Mikóháza.

The two NGOs worked together for 10 years using the framework from Bokartisz to start Bodroghöz Landscape Management Program. Our aim was to find farmers interested in cooperating and working with nature.

What has been most effective?

People from the city Nyíregyháza have no intention to move out of the city as a result of this project. From the beginning they believed that urban-rural cooperation can bring better results than relying solely on a village community to provide business for the farms.

Therefore, when Polyán was founded, they worked out the role of townspeople (from surrounding cities), villagers and the host farmer. There was a consensus that urban people will work on fundraising, project management, financial and other administration while the villagers are responsible for management and operation of the farm.

It was agreed that during peak times of activity on the farm, townspeople help the farmer and his family by gathering the necessary data used for administrative or financial purposes needed for the project.

As a result of this project, people have been working together, cooperating with one another, and contributing what they can based on their individual skills and knowledge.

This project has highlighted the importance of having quality relationships between different community groups.

Communicating with each other, sharing a common goal, assisting with monitoring progress, building trust and managing conflict has played a central role in working as a team.

The people involved in the project claim that their efficiency and success was created by their willingness to improve the quality of the community.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to start a project like this?

The most essential lesson is that the quality of relationships with one another. If we can work together, the problems and difficulties can be solved.

Therefore, we advise everyone who is going to start something similar to build trust so that the society can work together on sustainable projects even if certain groups within the society do not have much knowledge about how to live sustainably- people can learn from one another and work to each other's strengths.

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Team work on the farm

Horticulture, Economy, Technique and Innovative Social Inclusion.

A case study by Orti E.T.I.C.I., Pisa- Italy.

Categories:

Social and horticultural therapy, Agricultural initiatives, Cultivation, Education and training, Entrepreneurship

Brief summary of the project

The project started in 2008 with the aim to promote inclusion and well-being through a multifunctional approach of the agricultural system, whilst making a link between urban and rural areas.

Organisation/project dates

The pilot phase of the project was completed in 2010.

Currently we are establishing 'Orti E.T.I.C.I.' as a project which will run until the end of 2020.

The future plans of 'Orti E.T.I.C.I.' will be to develop the relationship with the surrounding area. We will try to improve the commercial aspect of the project through direct sales which will enable users* and consumers to meet with one another.

The project will also aim to achieve an accreditation of the training activities that can be recognised. Currently an agreement is in place with local farms to develop and provide seasonal courses delivered by 'Orti E.T.I.C.I.' for the project participants.

Once undertaken local farmers would be reassured that the project workers were of a certain standard and would offer more placements for project participants.

¹ Health Society is a local assistance organization working for the integration between the health system and the social welfare.

² External penal execution Services

³ Service for alcohol and drugs addiction

*Users are direct beneficiaries of 'Orti E.T.I.C.I.'



Location

The project was developed in San Piero a Grado, a peri-urban area 7 km away from the city of Pisa (Italy). The project highlights several potential uses for the land in relation to emerging urban needs regarding healthy, fresh and safe food, and positive environmental management.

Organisation/project funding

'Orti E.T.I.C.I.' is an innovative project organised on 3.5 hectares of public land belonging to Pisa University where horticulture production is linked to the inclusion and well-being of less empowered people. At the beginning 'Orti E.T.I.C.I.' didn't gain any external funding but the project was self-sustained through the sale of agricultural products.

The social and therapeutic activities developed for the project are now financed by the Health Society of Pisa¹ (SDS). Since 2015 the SDS funded the 'Orti E.T.I.C.I.' project for three years.

Target Audience

Direct beneficiaries of 'Orti E.T.I.C.I.' are identified and defined as users of the social farming initiative developed by the project. They are vulnerable and disadvantaged people generally within the margins of society. Although categories of vulnerability vary, at 'Orti E.T.I.C.I.', the users include those with;

- Additional learning needs;
- Physical disabilities;
- Drug & alcohol addiction;
- Ex-offenders;
- Long-term unemployed;
- The socially excluded.

Thus, the users are identified through public programs of social/occupational inclusion. The local social and health services (Uepe², SerT³, local Social Services) support the initial placement of a user in the project with help from grants.

Project partnerships

'Orti E.T.I.C.I.' is a collaboration between the private, public and third sector, which involves the following key organisations;

- Pisa University (CIRAA and Dept. of Vet. Sciences) – provides expertise, networks, farmland and buildings for project space if required);



- Two social cooperatives (Arnera and Ponteverde) – provide training and the rehabilitation of beneficiaries, in accordance with the public social and health services;
- A farm (BioColombini) - a private organic farm responsible for the economic and technical agricultural activities.

The role and responsibility of each project partner is regulated through a formal agreement defined as Temporary Association of Enterprise (TAE). Agricultural production is managed by CIRAA. Commercialisation of agricultural products is carried out through direct sales, Purchasing Groups and also through large-scale retail distribution channels.

Therapeutic and/or social benefits of the project

Since 2008, almost 50 people have joined the project: 22% of people joined as part of a therapeutic-rehabilitative program, 14% were minors who had committed crimes, and 64% of people joined the project via work inclusion schemes. The latter group went on to employment or further training.

Community involvement

The project has developed a good relationship with local stakeholders. Improved communication with local health authorities has been fostered and new activities are being developed too.

The goal has been to build greater awareness of the need to support those socially excluded in the Pisa area, enlarge the network for these community groups and increase opportunities for them to participate in.

Getting more farmers involved will help to broaden the possibilities for more users to take part in the project. At present, the local community in the area of Pisa is involved through a Purchasing Group that is mainly active in the urban area.

Sustainable land management

The 'Orti E.T.I.C.I.' project promotes responsible land use and environmental management based on the principles and techniques of organic agriculture.

Outcomes

The project has been built and tested on a model based on collaboration between the welfare of the users

and business production. It promotes social welfare through innovative activities, addressing social inclusion policies. It also looks at quality agricultural production.

Regarding the beneficiary outcomes, the project has promoted social inclusion. Tutor support along with help from the Social Services have played an important part in developing a successful model of integrated training in which the formative and working experiences meet with the individual needs of the users.

A very important result is the beneficiaries developing their skills which can be transferred to a work place, Increasing the opportunity to get a job in the future.

The difference the project has made and how it addresses the needs of the individuals involved

The project has been crucial in promoting an alternative and successful model to decrease social exclusion based on the real needs of the individuals involved. Their needs were addressed thanks to the collaboration between the Social Services and the University tutor. For each individual participating in the project, information, regarding the health and welfare of each user, are collected.

The information is required to identify the best route for each user in regards to education and rehabilitation. Potential difficulties that the user may face are also considered. A trial period of 30 days takes place to evaluate the users needs. Then the working phase starts.

During the active phase of the project, regular audits are performed by Social Services in order to evaluate the effect of the activities on the users.

At the end of the users time with the project, their individual evaluations are added to a final evaluation which looks at the overall experience, any problems which emerged and all skills acquired.

A further plan of activities (e.g. job placement, therapy etc.) for each individual is noted as part of the final evaluation.

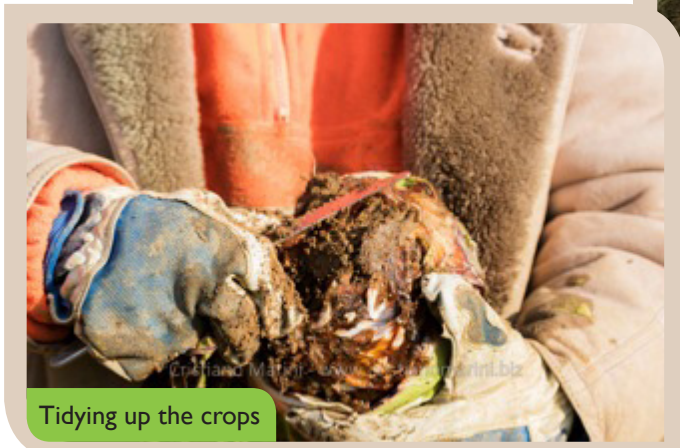
What does a typical day/ session look like?

'Orti E.T.I.C.I.' activities run for five days a week, with a typical working day lasting for 4 hours. However the working time varies depending on the season and organisational needs. During the winter months, the working time is generally from 8.00am to 12.00pm, while during the summer months, changes to 7.00am to 11.00am.

The activities are planned every week by the tutor and also agreed by the agricultural manager.



Work on the farm



Tidying up the crops

The activities can be summarised as follows:

1. Users meet with the tutor;
2. The daily activities are organised and users divided into teams. Basic activities are dependent on the season- sowing seeds and planting out, hand weeding and harvesting. Packaging up vegetables for the Purchasing Group is an important task.
3. The tutor ensures there are regular breaks to talk to users and monitor their work.

A personal story

This is an important story about a person with both physical disabilities and psychological conditions that led to a breakdown in family relationships and led to him becoming socially excluded.

In addition this person was homeless for several years after he lost his job. His journey to social inclusion with the help of 'Orti E.T.I.C.I.' started 4 years ago and continues today.

'Orti E.T.I.C.I.' was able to change his status and to improve his interpersonal relationships. With the help of Social Services he gained accommodation and then he was ready to start to reconcile with his family.

Currently, he is looking for a job and to develop new relationships outside 'Orti E.T.I.C.I.', which to date have offered him a safe environment. In 2016 this person will be recruited to a paid position supporting the project, this will allow him to earn an income whilst independently looking for other work.

It is important for him to leave the comfort of the project and make his first steps to a new life with his own independence.

What were the challenges?

'Orti E.T.I.C.I.' has faced many challenges. The project was founded with the desire to experiment with the relationship between three different sectors: agricultural, social and University (research). One challenge was to believe that a social farming inclusion programme could symbolise a new model and a new opportunity, both for users and to develop new welfare programmes.

What has been the biggest success?

The greatest success has been to raise public institutions interest in social farming as a way to promote social inclusion and rehabilitation. Because of this, public institutions decided to invest in the development of social farming in the region.

What has been most effective?

The project is particularly effective in improving the quality of life for the users. This result has been observed and verified through the observations of and discussions with users. It has also been monitored using a specific tool to assess subjective perception of quality of life.

The reasons for this success are linked to the interpersonal dynamics developed during the working groups, characterised by an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual respect, and thanks to the activities developed according with the needs of each users.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to start a project like this?

To start a project of social farming like 'Orti E.T.I.C.I.' it is important to achieve the collaboration of different partners and to define their specific roles and competencies in the project. It is important that activities are carefully planned due to the individual nature of people (i.e. physical disabilities and additional learning needs).

In addition, it is particularly relevant to involve local stakeholders and the local community in recognising the value of social farming to promote a sustainable agricultural system and inclusive society.



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All photos credit: Cristiano Marini, www.cristianomarini.biz

Community Supported Agriculture in Romania

A case study by ASAT, Romania

Category:

- Agricultural initiatives – care farming, community supported agriculture, rural farming, local food etc.

Brief summary of the project

ASAT delivers community supported agriculture initiatives which consists of partnerships between producers and consumer groups. This project was founded with the aim of supporting local farmers and their farms, whilst practicing sustainable forms of agriculture within a fair economy.

Organisation/project dates

The first Community Supported Agriculture group in Romania was started by ASAT in 2008, in Timisoara (Western Romania). A couple of years later in 2010, a few other partnerships were added to the ASAT network, all three in the western part of Romania. In 2012 a couple of partnerships were started in Central Romanian (in Transylvania).

The most significant growth took place in 2013 when 5 new partnerships were started in different regions of Romania – basically covering most of the country; West, Central and Southern. Since then an additional 5 partnerships have been initiated with more planned for this year.

Location

Currently there are ASAT partnerships in the following Romanian cities: Timisoara, Bucharest, Cluj, Arad, Sibiu and Odorheiu Secuiesc. The producers live in rural area, and consumer families mainly in cities and towns.

Organisation/project funding

Most of the ASAT development is driven by the consumers. Usually environmentally conscious consumers from urban areas pool their resources, identify potential farmers and possible consumers), and explain what CSA is and how it works.

It is quite common that long-time consumers from the ASAT network get actively involved, on a voluntary basis, and help with new initiatives. A crucial role in the development of ASAT was the CRIES association (the Centre for Ethical and Solidarity Initiatives) which actively supported the CSA movement in various ways over the years and continues to do so.



Between 2008 – 2014, the ASAT network had no legal status and functioned as an informal association of consumers and producers guided by its charter. In 2014 the ASAT network was registered as an NGO. Nevertheless ASAT continues to see its functioning as a horizontal grassroots movement.

Over the years the consumers in the ASAT partnerships have invested around 30,000 Euros to support the farms. The investments have gone into training for farmers and most investment in farming equipment; machinery, building greenhouses, irrigation systems, acquisition of heirloom seeds, and various smaller tools.

The investment for training was focused both on agricultural training (teaching farmers new methods in ecological agriculture) and on marketing training to develop the necessary skills to interact effectively with present and future customers.

ASAT's budget is covered solely by membership contributions and donations.

Target Audience

There are two target groups; small scale organic farmers in the local area and citizens from an urban area (responsible consumers of agricultural products). The ASAT partnership support local small-scale food producers, recognising that this is an alternative market to mainstream food growing so has certain risks involved.



Farm visit near to Odorheiu Secuiesc, June 2013

The partnership wants to preserve social and environmental assets to guarantee healthy and independent lives. ASAT aims to increase opportunities for small food producers to sell their products at a fair price, which ensures them a decent living.

Often Romanian smallholders involved in small-scale farming (subsistence and semi-subsistence agriculture, with an average of 2 hectares) are living on the poverty line, sometimes below it.

However, they are not recognized in official statistics as disadvantaged people. The rise of poverty in rural areas is evident, with consequences including; migration of workers, increased school dropout, decrease in home/personal insurance being taken out and poor access to public services.

Therefore, support for these smallholders, who have a small amount of income, may represent the transition from a precarious situation to a decent life.

Therapeutic and/or social benefits of the project

ASAT aims to ensure that consumers can buy quality food at a fair price, choosing to opt in to purchasing food which has been produced in a certain way. Each ASAT partnership brings together a group of consumers and producers local to each other, formalising the partnership with a contract.

Consumers commit to buy future produce through an advanced payment made before the first distribution. The producer, in turn, is committed to deliver quality products grown in a socially responsible and environmentally friendly manner.

Community involvement

The ASAT partnerships are commonly managed by the producer and the group of consumers. At the beginning of the year they plan the agricultural year together; negotiate and calculate the yearly budget, the price of the weekly basket, the list of products to be delivered, plan the crop and establish a distribution calendar.



Diversity of organic vegetables grown

The crops from the farm are equally shared among the participants in the partnership. By committing to a yearly subscription, consumers receive a weekly basket of seasonal products from the farm.

The risks, responsibilities and rewards of the farm are shared between the group of consumers and the farmer. If due to pests or weather issues (or other factors beyond the powers of the farmer), the yield of the farm is lower than expected, consumers pay the same amount even if the quantity of products delivered is lower than expected/planned.

If, on the other hand, the yield of the farm is larger than expected/planned the farmer freely shares the surplus with consumers.

Consumers take an active part in the partnership together with the producer, sharing some of the management responsibilities such as promotion of the partnership, organisation of distributions, accountancy and communication within the group.

Sustainable land management

ASAT promotes environmentally friendly practices (use of manure and ecological farming instead of industrial fertilizers, treatments and synthetic pesticides), encourages local biodiversity and production of healthy products obtained in partnership with nature.

Although all products are grown using organic methods, most ASAT farmers lack official organic certification. Instead, the participative guarantee system is used to ensure the organic origin of the products.

Outcomes

ASAT partnerships:

- Provides food producers with guaranteed product marketing and a contract with the consumer which includes a list at the beginning of the agricultural season with the crops which will be provided throughout the year.
- Limit time for selling produce, allowing smallholders to have structure by selling their crop one day a week at a certain time and within a 2-3 hour time-frame.
- Ensures that food producers receive a fair price which covers all costs of production and allows a secure and steady income.
- Support local organic small-scale agriculture.
- Supports the development of employment in agriculture- each partnership looks at the capacity of the smallholding and supports professional development with current employees and recruitment of new workers in order to work at full capacity.



Distribution of organic vegetables in Timisoara, August 2012

Participants in direct partnership with smallholders improve their eating habits, incorporating more seasonal and local ingredients, with higher quality nutritional impact.

In time, the general consumption behaviour of the ASAT member's change, as they become increasingly aware the role of responsible consumption has on supporting the local economy and the disadvantaged.

What does a typical day/session look like?

The period of vegetable basket distribution varies but it usually takes place weekly between May and November. Consumers volunteer each week to organise the distribution.

The producers harvest crops with their helpers each week, bring them to the city or town and in a two hour period they meet their consumers, give them the healthy vegetables and talk about problems they are experiencing, ways to deal with these and the results. On one or two occasions farm visits have been organised.

Outcomes

In summary, the main reasons ASAT was developed has been to impact on the smallholders and consumers:

- To increase the ability of smallholders to cope with the general impact of agro-industrialisation (changing patterns of food consumption, the massive increase of food imports for domestic consumption, international trade which promote intensive agricultural production etc.)
- The continuing decrease of smallholders as a result of lack of ability to market local food products.
- General low levels of income for small farmers, which leads to precarious living conditions, impacting future opportunities of the rural population.

- Poor access to health, education and social protection for smallholders and seasonal workers.
- Lack of information among consumers about the quality of agricultural products and the benefits of local organic food
- Lack of awareness of the impact of everyday choices: what we eat, how we support the local economy etc.

What were the challenges?

ASAT has faced challenges in relation to both target groups:
Related to consumers:

- Low level of information, awareness
- Non-participation for organising duties
- There are relatively few initiatives similar to this project which means a lack of networks in which we can tap into
- Maintaining interest and participation
- ASAT occasionally perceived to be something that is not achievable.

Related to producers:

- Reticence of testing the model
- Lack of knowledge and experience needed to get involved
- Difficulties in communication with customers
- Lack of competencies in the field of budgets/financial planning

What has been the biggest success?

The main indicator of success is the number/percentage of renewed contracts. A producer who started her partnership in Odorheiu Secuiesc in 2013 still provides for the same families 3 years on, none of her consumers have left the programme.

What has been most effective?

Organising consumer groups, identifying interested producers and mobilising our own networks has been most effective.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to start a project like this?

In order to start a similar project, the following would be required:

- Information dissemination and awareness campaigns on the importance of healthy local food, and the importance of supporting sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation.
- Public meetings to present ASAT including media appearances.
- Advice and support for consumers on how to develop their own ASAT partnership.
- Support to vegetable growers to initiate ASAT partnerships and to manage annual cropping plans and collective budgets.
- Training exchanges for small producers on communication skills, financial planning, and natural farming practices.
- Encourage groups to experiment with growing and saving heritage seed varieties. - Stimulate healthy local food production with respect for the environment and local biodiversity.



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Collecting of medical herbs



The 'Romano Barardo' programme

A case study by Svatobor Association, Slovakia.

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc
- Agricultural initiatives – care farming, community supported agriculture, rural farming, local food etc.
- Education and training –sustainable use of land
- Entrepreneurship – agricultural, horticultural, sustainable examples

Brief summary of the project

Svatobor turned an abandoned piece of land into a beautiful farm, with help from around 15 part-time staff and 150 Roma volunteers. This was successful due to the help with gardening work, including growing; vegetables, fruits, medicinal plants as well as making and selling compost and traditional crafts which we also produce.

Organisation/project dates

Svatobor was established as an open-ended project in 2006.

Future plans are to support the development of soil cultivation activities among Roma in other regions of Slovakia. There are already some small examples of these activities in 21 villages.

Location

This project is based in Rudlov village, locality of Ďurďoš, remote rural area near Vranov nad Topľou town in North-East Slovakia.

Organisation/project funding

The average annual budget is €100 000.

Activities are financed by several foundations: Ashoka Foundation, Carpathian Foundation, Orange Foundation as well as the Ekopolis Foundation.

Another supporter includes the Labour Council of Slovakia. The project has also been supported by some grants: UNDP – GEF, OSF and Ökobank Switzerland. Other funding has included individual donations.

We also fund the project by selling produce from the farm, including; fruits, vegetables and seeds.

The project

Altogether, there are 12 employees on the farm, including 3 Roma people whose roles cover; management, accounting, PR, composting and other activities. The Roma people act as ambassadors in the local community.

Due to the support of the Labour Council, workshops have been established at the farm, providing work opportunities for disabled people who help with gardening activities which has therapeutic benefits for them

Other activities include an educational programme for schools. There is also a training and counselling centre at the farm which can be used by anyone who attends the project.

The main problems are connected with complicated administration (up to 80 % of time is spent on administration). Another problem includes the expensive rents for fields (€30 000) and orchards (€40 000).

Target audience

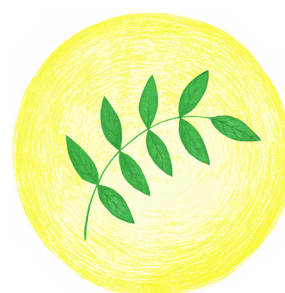
Socially excluded Roma groups and disadvantaged people with physical challenges and learning differences.

Therapeutic and/or social benefits of the project

Benefits of the project include supporting users to achieve a meaningful life. The project also promotes social development including inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation. The garden acts as a bridge to overcome differences amongst the people.

Due to this approach, in the local communities it is now apparent that the Roma community are gaining more respect.

The majority of the wider community have started to offer seasonal works or even permanent employment to members of the Roma community. Cooperation has led to a mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence.



Another benefit, seen by the wider population, is the decrease of crime and vandalism.

One of the important benefits of farming food is the strengthening of food self-efficiency in poor communities, which is enabling people to survive even with small financial support for the unemployed.

Community involvement

Each person involved in farm activities gains some benefits: vegetables, fruits or fire wood for households. Most skilled people work on public green areas in Vranov nad Topľou city, Eastern Slovakia. Up to now 20 Roma people have been given a job through recommendations.

Sustainable land management

To start farming, 2 large waste dumps had to be removed by an external organisation. Soil is cultivated by hand, and only organic manure and compost is used. Some compost is sold as a farm product.

Apples, walnuts, pumpkins, onion, garlic, potatoes and other products are grown without any chemicals. Some is sold to restaurants via a 'basket system'.

To ensure necessary supplies of fresh water to fields, system of small ponds have been built to collect surface water. This pond also serves as the place for rest and recreation.

Outcomes

Since 2006, Svatobor association has achieved the following successes:

- Provided jobs and income for 63 Roma and 73 other people.
- Recruited 151 volunteers.
- Trained and educated more than 1000 people in 21 locations, mostly Roma, on organic gardening.
- Removed 2 large illegal waste dumps and restored the areas to organic gardens and playgrounds.
- Built 3 ponds with drainage for surface water collection used for the irrigation system.
- 3000 kg of organic waste has been turned into organic compost.



Gypsy farmers from Hanušovce collecting their yield



Only simple mechanisms are used for cultivation

- More than 100 tonnes of vegetables and fruits supplied to poor people.

A typical day on the farm in summer starts at 6:00am; starting early to avoid the midday heat. Work then continues in the late afternoon to the evening. Farming and composting activities are adjusted depending on the season and weather. Part of the work includes packing and distributing the products.

A personal story

Janka Bužová from Rudlov is one of the Roma women working on the farm. Here is her message:

"Many people think that Roma people have no interest on cultivation works. It is not true. Yes, we have been nomads in the past, but during the socialistic period we had to settle down and start to build our homes. It was the same in my family.

Me and other members of family have no job and sometimes we had nothing to eat. Because of that I was very happy when Svatobor offered to me opportunity to learn garden works. Even now I am not wealthy, but I am happy that I can produce vegetables and fruits around my home and that I can beautify the surroundings of my house. I can say that gardening is my hobby."

Another strong story is about one man with paranoid schizophrenia, who has healed, found a wife and now has a child. The progress which has taken place in this man's life is thanks to 10 years of gardening.

What were the challenges?

The main problems are: huge administrative work, expensive rent for fields and difficulty in finding reasonable fields.

Message for those, who wish to start something similar:

“You have to encourage your family, that you will do something good, that will also bring in some income.”

Because also beneficiaries have to be convinced, that these kind of activities are necessary.

What has been the biggest success?

The big success is that thanks to the shared work of Roma and Slovak people to restore fields once devastated, they now provide food, recreation opportunities and beauty. The Svatobor project and its people have left positive footprints in the landscape throughout its journey.

Another big success is the change in the people, who through the project have found a sense of joy. And now they are creating a community of people, connected by interest on garden works.

What has been most effective?

One of the most important aspects of the project has been trusting people with responsibility. The Roma people have been segregated from the white majority for a long time and giving trust has changed the Roma community as they now feel that the majority respect them and that they are a part of society.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to start a project like this?

- Think it over seriously
- You will need enthusiasm at the beginning
- Consider the risks especially as others may not be aware of them
- Building relationships with partners who will help.

Then it is necessary to find a place, function and a role for everyone. The project needs to run like a family – it is important to cater for different abilities, skills, and find a way to have discussions and cooperation.



Watering of seedlings



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All photos, credit: Štefan Straka, Vlastimil Slávik

Biotechnical centre NAKLO (BC NAKLO); linking sustainable agriculture, environment protection and quality food processing

A case study by BC NAKLO, Slovenia.

Category:

- Cultivation – skills for a sustainable agriculture
- Education and training – secondary, higher vocational college and adult education for environment protection, sustainable landscape management and horticulture
- Entrepreneurship – Socially responsible entrepreneurship

Brief summary of the project

Biotechnical Centre (BC) NAKLO is recognised as a quality educational, research and developmental institution, devoted to nature, healthy food production and sustainable landscape management.

The Centre acts as rural development body that fosters sustainability through collaboration with local authorities, enterprises, NGOs and local communities. Many projects led by BC NAKLO researchers and professionals have a significant impact on sustainable development of the region.

Organisation/project dates

The Centre has celebrated its hundredth anniversary and has a long tradition as an educational institute for the protection of the environment and agriculture programmes.

The centre originates from the foundation of the Dairy school in 1907 and then turned into the Specialised School for Agriculture in 1926. In 2006, the centre was erected in today's wonderful rural site, named Biotechnical Centre NAKLO and it is further developing its educational programmes at secondary and tertiary level.

Location

BC NAKLO is located in the village Strahinj, Slovenia, in the lowland rural area of Slovenian Gorenjska region and it is integrated in the territory.

Gorenjska is an Alpine region with a diverse mountainous landscape (70% of the region is mountainous, while only 30% lies in depressed/lowland central Slovenia).



Triglav National Park, the only national park in Slovenia, is located in the Alps, quite near to BC NAKLO. Slovenian towns and urban settlements are small compared to European cities. Medium-sized and small Slovenian towns, for example the city of Kranj in Gorenjska region, have a comparative advantage in terms of quality of life, combining the natural and urban environment, and links with the rural hinterland.

Organisation/project funding

The majority of the funding is public, since 75% is funded by Ministry of education, science and sport of the Republic of Slovenia and only 25% by commercial activities and international projects.

Target audience

The target audience are mainly youths and adults from rural communities and nearby cities. Indeed, the Centre, as a provider of research and training, is connected to the green economic sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), institutes and local authorities.

The Centre tries to increase the target audience to all of Slovenia and transnational areas of Austria and Italy where Slovenian minorities reside.

BC NAKLO create new connections with the international environment through international and cross-border cooperation projects.

Commercial products (vegetables, herbs, seeds, ornamental plants, milk and other dairy products, honey, flowers compositions), produced by students, are sold in the Centre's shop that is frequently visited by people from the local community.



Social benefits of the project

We believe sustainable landscape management and agriculture are key to assure a food secure world for future generations. With educational, research and project activities, BC NAKLO supports the link between organic food production and ecosystem protection that leads to combined social, economic and environmental benefits.

BC NAKLO delivers socially responsible activities which are focused on;

- a) promoting responsible eating habits
- b) shortening food supply chains,
- c) creating new alliances between producers and consumers,
- d) helping small organic farms to survive,
- e) educating the new generation about traditional and sustainable farming practices to conserve the natural and cultural heritage of the region.

The aim is to achieve multiple social benefits for rural and urban communities, assuring higher food quality and contribute to address climate change, to improve conservation of soil, water and other precious natural resources.

Community involvement

Our training and educational programmes include experiential and community based learning approaches, we create good connections with stakeholders including local communities, municipalities and commercial farms.

Mostly our educational programmes are focused on gaining practical knowledge with particular emphasis on student internships. These 'practical educational collaborations' are integrated with research activities, technology transfer, outdoor activities and environmental activism and volunteering.

Students' internships at secondary and tertiary educational levels play a vital role in education but also for the inclusion of youths in community life. We noticed that the integration of all these alternative aspects influenced the quality of our programme and raised students' employability.

We also include volunteering and environmental activism. This has a positive impact on students' pro - environmental behaviour and social skills.

We focus on the creation of an equitable and inclusive learning environment, that permits educator and student to understand and be engaged in the issues of diversity, equity, and multicultural understanding and tolerance.



BC NAKLO from the air



BC NAKLO school

Examples of best practice include:

a) Intergenerational help - "Elderly people actively explore beneficial organisms" creating the conditions for horticultural occupational therapy at local nursing homes for elderly through the installation of;

- 1) raised beds for plant cultivation and,
- 2) hotels for beneficial organisms and pollinators.

The project contributed to the quality of life of nursing home residents.

b) Volunteering at abandoned landfill sites, local waste clean-up actions and mapping illegal dump sites to improve and return the locality to a natural state.

We collaborated with NGOs, communities and the Municipal service for waste, wastewater and environmental management in Kranj. This resulted in;

- 1) green zones that are going to be opened for people,
- 2) update of local registry for illegal dump sites and,
- 3) removal of illegally dumped waste from the natural environment.

c) Outdoor activities and guided tours for visitors promoting the importance of protected areas, local cultural and natural heritage.

This project was delivered with volunteering work and students' internships in collaboration with Triglav National Park (TNP) and the Centre for sustainable rural development Kranj.

d) Sustainable landscape management, performed in collaboration with local municipalities and the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation with the aim to prevent spreading and eradicate invasive alien plants in the local natural environment and farmlands. This included;

- 1) training and workshops,
- 2) activities for raising awareness and concerns,
- 3) mapping invasive alien plants and,
- 4) eradication of invasive alien plants in some local degraded ecosystems.



Outdoor environmental education at BC NAKLO

Sustainable land management

We believe that organic and traditional farming practices contribute to a more sustainable management of the landscape and in particular to conserving biodiversity in agro-ecosystems.

We take an active role in promoting sustainable management, raising awareness in the community and identifying solutions to limit the propagation of invasive plants at a local scale.

Lectures for different stakeholders including youths in schools and elderly people in nursing homes were organised, using an active approach with self-produced video and didactic games regarding invasive alien species propagation and impact on the environment. Local communities were also involved in field work to eradicate some invasive plant in the zone.

Outcomes

As a socially responsible institution we include stakeholders (communities, enterprises, NGOs, students, staff etc.) in our developmental strategies. We access and address the needs of stakeholders in a holistic way.

Our aim is to contribute to sustainable rural communities. People from rural areas have a very strong connection to nature, since most of them live on farms or near protected areas and are used to spending their free time in the natural environment.

Our activities offer new alternative solutions and opportunities for local rural communities to address their need for a prosperous life but without harmful effects to ecosystems, soil and human health.

We create empowerment for many individuals and communities' through education for sustainable development, green job creation, networking, research activities, ecological settlement design, development of individual skills and capacities.

Our outcomes include:

- National and international projects that are driving the field of sustainable rural development, organic agriculture, landscape management and environmental education.
- Large number of participants in educational programmes, courses and training.
- Increased number of new green professionals and creation of new green jobs.
- Pilot projects and research results, eco-innovations and technological transfer to agro-food industry, new applications of biotech knowledge for plant breeding.
- Awards and quality certifications for organic food products and recognition as a qualitative and innovative organic producer.
- Contribution to sustainable landscape management, preservation of natural and agro-ecosystems biodiversity.
- Recognitions for our work and contributions in building sustainable communities and a shift to a more sustainable way of living on the planet.

What we have learnt

We have learnt that our ethical core and values define us. We approach nature and humans' needs in a holistic, integrative way, consider their interconnection and adapt to needs with socially responsible, innovative and qualitative solutions. This is also our biggest challenge.

The holistic or also 'humanistic' approach is important to catalyse communities for encouraging creative and proactive individual development and to speed up the transitional process to low carbon society. The essence of our caring includes:

- Socio-cultural dimension; caring for individuals – personal and professional development of students, employers and local community.
- Natural dimension; caring for all living organisms and the environment that contribute to the ecosystem dynamics and support global ecosphere.

We learned that good relations are very important since we need people that embrace our values and work with us. Sustainability needs specialisation but also integration, and consensus that we have tried to include in this innovative approach. Without our community and without sharing knowledge and values, it is quite difficult to have an impact on the environment and society.

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UCAMPACITAS

A case study by the Universidad Católica de Murcia (UCAM),
Guadalupe, Murcia, Spain.

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.
- Cultivation – sustainable skills
- Education and training –sustainable use of land

Brief summary of the project

In 2012, the Universidad Católica de Murcia (UCAM) founded a programme called UCAMPACITAS aimed at students with additional learning needs. There are two groups of students (1st year and 2nd year) who participate in eco-environmental activities for educational and therapeutic purposes.

Organisation/project dates

This programme has progressed over the last few years from an occasional activity to part of the regular programme for the students throughout the whole year.

Location

This project is run from the UCAM campus in Guadalupe, a small town of approx. 2000 inhabitants near the urban center of Murcia. The Region of Murcia is known as the garden of Europe and the use of land for agriculture is quite extended in this area.

Organisation/project funding

The UCAM is a privately funded university. There is no outside funding for this programme.

Target audience

The students in the UCAMPACITAS programme undergo a selection process. There are general criteria for candidates to be selected for the programme:

- The student must be over 18 years of age and under 30 years of age.
- Students must be recognised as having additional learning needs.
- Students must be reasonably comfortable with being in social situations.
- Basic writing, reading and calculation skills.
- Able to travel and partake in daily-life activities.
- To show interest in study and work.

Social benefits of the project

The project is beneficial on several levels. The students get physical exercise, learn to work with their environment and acquire horticultural knowledge.

Community involvement

In this project, the seeds come from an organisation in Murcia which is dedicated to the preservation of local varieties.



The university maintenance personnel have also helped with maintaining the garden during the non-academic periods of the year and by supplying compost.

Sustainable land management

In the programme students are engaged in practical activities on the following:

- Preparing the land
- Planting seeds and saplings
- Making utensils with recycled materials
- Maintenance of crops
- Learning about biodegradability
- Composting
- Recycling

One of the main ideas behind the activities is to promote responsible use of the land with techniques that respect the land. All the activities use recycled materials.

Outcomes

There are two general outcomes of the project.

The first is the improvement of the physical and mental health of the participants. Students become more aware of their bodies and develop their coordination skills in the garden as well as getting more general exercise. As the activities are done in a co-operative manner, in many cases students develop improved social skills.



UCAM
UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA
DE MURCIA



Students involved with the project

The second is the acquisition of knowledge regarding the environment for example:

1. Interest in the environment through eco-environmental education;
2. The understanding of the inter-relationships that exist in an ecosystem.

What difference has your organisation/project made, how does it address the needs of the individuals involved?

This programme at the UCAM serves the needs of students on several levels. The use of land for agricultural purposes is part of the culture of the region, thus working with students on activities allows them to participate to a greater degree in the social fabric of the community.



Watering plants

It also allows them to contribute in the creating and maintenance of an eco-garden. These activities also motivate the students to spend more time outdoors which leads to more physical exercise and improved health of the students.

The acquisition of knowledge about eco-environmental issues (sustainability, recycling, etc.) contributes to the overall integration of students in their environment.

What does a typical day/session look like?

The timetable of the UCAMPACITAS programme is from 9:30am-1:30pm from Monday to Friday. The programme runs for a full academic year (from October to June). The classrooms are close to the area where the different activities are carried out. Most of the activities are done in groups of three students; this reduced group size is due to the differences in abilities among the students.

On the days where eco-environmental activities are planned, the students are accompanied to the space nearby (20-25 metres) where the sessions are held. Sessions always begin with a review of the previous activities related to the session of that day and then the new topic is introduced.

As students put on their protective clothes, gloves and hats, any questions or doubts are resolved and the groups are organised.



Enjoying the outdoors

As the activities in the garden are different according to the season of the year the following are examples of tasks; composting activities, preparing the soil, planting, crop maintenance, monitoring for pests, documenting the growth cycles of different fruits and vegetables, etc. Other activities are carried out as well, such as: a study on biodegradability, how ecosystems work?

At the end of each session, there is a general recap with an emphasis on the learning objectives of that session.

A personal story

One particular case is of a student, a 31 year old boy, who has participated on the programme for two years. This student has a nervous system disorder. At the start of the programme, he had some difficulty in social relationships and hyperactivity which caused him great difficulty participating in the planned activities.

As the first year progressed, his participation began to be more regular. Certain activities caught his attention, such as planting and composting.

This led to a gradual change in attitude and a new interest in other activities like maintaining the garden. His social skills took longer to develop and it wasn't until the second year that he began to collaborate much more with his group. This was noticed by other classmates and also by his family.



Working together on tasks

At the end of the two years, the degree of anxiety and nervousness shown initially had decreased notably and it was evident that he enjoyed the eco-environmental activities enormously.

Learning

What were the challenges?

This project has had many challenges. The first was the creation and maintenance of the garden. The next challenge was adapting the programme to first year and second year students as each student has different degrees of additional learning needs.

What has been the biggest success?

The biggest success has been the gradual development of a programme that incorporates physical and social benefits as well as the development of knowledge about eco-environmental themes.

What has been most effective?

It is important to work on a project of this nature step by step to be able to incorporate all of the objectives.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to start a project like this?

It is important to have plenty of space and very well planned activities for a programme of this nature.



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Growth garden, Ryton Organic Gardens



Organisation/project dates

We have provided 'Growth', an overarching social and therapeutic horticulture (STH) programme, for over 20 years at Ryton Organic Gardens.

The service was set up for adults with additional learning needs and mental health conditions and has expanded to include provision for young people from local special schools and colleges, including pupil referral units (PRUs) and during school holidays we deliver day sessions for young carers.

During the past year we have been providing sessions for adults living with dementia as part of the programme.

Specific client groups attend the project on different days so that individual needs can be catered for.

Location

Our sessions are delivered at Garden Organic's Ryton Organic Gardens in Warwickshire, UK, within ten acres of established organic gardens which are open to the public.

Our horticultural therapy groups maintain dedicated areas which include a specially designed, accessible therapy and sensory garden.

The site is surrounded by rural farmland and is a haven for a wide variety of wildlife.

We are 6 miles from the centre of Coventry and 8 miles from Rugby, both areas with wide diversity in population demographic.

Organisation/project funding

Our adult clients often have personal budgets, provided by a range of health and social care organisation.

We are a registered provider of adult social care services for the region.

Young people attending through schools or colleges are funded by charitable grants and trusts which Garden Organic has succeeded in applying for.

We deliver sessions for people who have the early stages of dementia in partnership with The Carer's Trust, who sourced funding to support the project and we also receive funding for young carers sessions from a Children in Need grant.

Growth project

A case study by Garden Organic, UK

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.
- Cultivation – sustainable skills
- Education and training – sustainable use of land
- Entrepreneurship – agricultural, horticultural, sustainable examples

Brief summary of the project

Garden Organic is the national charity for organic growing. With 60 years of experience, our focus is to get more people growing.

We work collectively with people, schools, communities and organisations irrespective of their backgrounds or challenging circumstances. We cover all areas of the country delivering learning experiences on a formal and informal basis.

At Ryton Organic gardens, our headquarters, we design and deliver organic, social and therapeutic horticulture activities in our specifically designed gardens.

We develop life skills including; team work, communication, building confidence and positive relationships as well as tackling social isolation and educating about organic horticulture.

Our current sessions are for groups and individuals with a wide range of learning disabilities, those with the early stages of dementia, and young carers.



Target Audience

- Adults with additional learning needs, lifelong health conditions or mental health difficulties- through our local social care services.
- Young people with additional learning needs, challenging behaviour or disability- through our networks with local special schools, colleges and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs).
- Young Carers- through local young carers support service accessing funding from Children in Need.
- Older people living with dementia- through The Carer's Trust, who have commissioned Garden Organic to provide services.

Therapeutic and/or social benefits of the project

- Better physical health through exercise and learning how to use or strengthen muscles to improve mobility.
- Improved mental health through a sense of purpose and achievement.
- The opportunity to connect with others – reducing feelings of isolation or exclusion.
- Acquiring new skills to improve the chances of finding employment or build confidence.
- Just feeling better for being outside, in touch with nature and in the 'great outdoors'.

Community involvement

Most of the sessions are supported by volunteers, who find out about our work through our website and social media, publications, reports and events. We hold monthly drop in sessions for those looking to find out more about our services.

Sustainable land management

The whole site at Ryton Organic Gardens is managed organically and we aim to demonstrate organic best practice to our visitors.

The gardens are certified organic by The Soil Association. All of our activities promote sustainable, organic horticulture and we believe that this benefits not only the health of the environment, but also the health of the gardeners.

Growing crops, that are often taken home by clients, encourages healthy eating and promotes the sharing of knowledge and skills with friends, carers and families.



Growing Enterprise students.



Tom working in Ryton Organic Gardens

Outcomes

What difference has your organisation/project made, how does it address the needs of the individuals involved?

Individuals, staff and volunteers often remark about how they rely on their time in the gardens to help them relax and feel good. They enjoy learning new skills, taking responsibility and have a huge sense of achievement and pride when they are able to take home, or sell, crops and plants that they have grown.

What does a typical day/session look like?

Most school or college students attend weekly sessions, lasting for 2 hours in small groups of approximately 5 students, led by a qualified horticultural therapist and supported by school or college staff and volunteers. Typically groups will take part in blocks of at least 6 or 12 sessions.

The length of sessions depends upon the needs of the clients and their abilities. This can be 2 hours to a whole day. All of our activities are designed to be specifically client focused and the needs of the garden, in terms of maintenance and planting are planned as appropriate.

The garden is designed to be a high maintenance space to allow for a wide variety of tasks. The garden is intentionally not immaculate and there are often weeds.

In our therapy garden an informal approach is taken, not only to support biodiversity in wildlife, but also to encourage a relaxed, stress free atmosphere where people feel comfortable to 'have a go' and learn in an inclusive and safe environment.

A personal story

Tom, a student at a pupil referral unit, was very difficult and disengaged at first. By his own admission he “*only came with the group to get out of school*”, and he “*thought gardening was for losers*”. As the sessions progressed he became more interested and by the end of the term he was independently fundraising for the project in the holidays.

He begged his teachers to keep him in the group at the end of the year and even caught up on his English and Maths in his lunchtimes so he could stay in the group; something that surprised all of his teachers.

He completed his Year 10 work experience our gardens team and impressed so much that he was taken on as a paid apprentice gardener for 2 weeks in his summer holidays.

His exam results at the end of the year were sufficient to allow him to start at a local college, where he is continuing to study for qualifications including horticulture and he has plans to set up his own gardening business for his neighbours, using a specially made cart on his bike to transport tools.



Harvesting lettuces



What were the challenges?

Challenges have been sourcing funding to support the sessions, building effective partnerships with schools, and recruiting new clients for the adult sessions.

To fit in with school timetables we often have to accommodate shorter sessions than we would like, larger group sizes and wide differentiation which can pose a real challenge to actively engage all individuals.

What has been the biggest success?

Success has very much been measured on an individual basis, but groups have also been seen to bond and develop their skills together. You can see from the below the type of feedback we receive, which is really inspiring:

“The pupils have gained in confidence due to the enterprise as they have had to communicate with the public, and their peers, when selling the products. They are now working as a team, rather than as individuals, throughout the school day” (staff feedback).

What has been most effective?

When designing our programmes we work closely with individuals, carers and school staff (where appropriate) to plan relevant and interesting activities which promote learning and development which meets client needs.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to start a project like this?

Advice to anyone setting up a project is to build a support network of projects and people who are working in a similar area or with a similar group of clients and visit as many as you can.

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All photos, credit: Elaine Hibbs, Garden Organic



Restoration of a displaced village as an opportunity for people with additional learning needs.

A case study by Neratov Association (Sdružení Neratov), Czech Republic.

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.
- Community projects – Living Villages, Eco villages etc.

Brief summary of the project

A displaced and disappearing village, Neratov, has been restored thanks to the hard work of a community of people with additional learning needs. There are number of sheltered working areas including a social farm and a garden centre.

Clients also maintain the green public spaces and take care of fruit orchards containing historical local varieties.

Organisation/project dates

The project is not time limited; it has been running continuously since 1992. Currently it is a stable, well established project, which is financially 50% self-sufficient. It provides work to about 110 people, of whom more than 80 have a recognised disability.

The future plans include connecting with the Polish state via a footbridge. We also want to work with other organisations to take part in other activities such as bee breeding. We also want to establish a tourist centre, care home for the elderly and a brewery.

Location

This project is located in the village Neratov, which is part of Bartosovice v Orlických horách, region Rychnov nad Knežnou, Kralovehradecký district, Czech republic.



Rural mountain location in Protected Landscape Area Eagle Mountain (Orlické hory), close to Czech-Polish border, formerly displaced Sudet region.



Organisation/project funding

The annual cost of the entire project is about 26 million CZK (about 960 000 Euros). Half of the costs are covered by selling services and products of the association. The remaining half is covered by state grants, contributions and donations. The largest part of the project costs (about 50 %) are personal expenses – wages of employees.

Individual involvement

The people working in horticulture and agriculture (but also in other sheltered work areas) are mostly people with additional learning needs – some with learning difficulties, others with physical disabilities and some with mental health conditions. The specific activities depend on the individual's condition and abilities and everyone contributes as much as he/she can.

Clients work together with assistants who are present throughout the day and are ready to advise and help. The garden centre is partially adapted to improve accessibility for those with reduced mobility, for example with raised beds and an electric wheelbarrow.

Community involvement

The garden centre is beneficial for the whole community. It provides work to some residents, harvested crops are partially consumed in the local canteen and partially sold at the local store which generates income. Gardeners maintain a local cemetery and public flowerbeds, mow grasslands, maintain an orchard and in winter take care of roads and paths. Products are not certified as organic, but all crops are grown within the ecological principles.

The social farm is located in the neighbouring extinct village Vrchní Orlice. Cattle, sheep and pigs are kept in cooperation with Protected Landscape Area Eagle Mountain management.

Clients/residents also work in craft workshops (pottery, basketry, processing of wool), services (shop, pub, cafeteria, housekeeping and laundry services), minor assembly work, and administration. Some of them are involved in organising cultural and social events in Neratov (theatre festival, concerts and fairs).

Outcomes

Impact on the site: Neratov village is alive again. It has about 60 permanent residents and it has become a tourist destination (about 25-30 thousand visitors per year). It has a wide range of services for both residents and newcomers, the network of public transport and hiking trails have improved and many old houses have been restored, including a famous pilgrim church.

The impact on people with additional learning needs: Neratov association provides home and work to people with additional learning needs (around 30 of them live here permanently), home to disabled children in local foster families, accessible holidays for people with additional learning needs (family holidays, school trips) meaningful job opportunities and the possibility of natural integration into society.

Recently, a grammar school for children with disabilities has been established with the potential for a practical education centre to follow.

The impact on the local wildlife: orchard restoration, increase of flora diversity (and the possibility of bees breeding), maintenance of mountain meadows, cooperation with Protected Landscape Area Eagle Mountain.

Impact on society as a whole: the opportunity for visitors to meet people with special needs in their own familiar and safe environment, observe their work and be able to support them without feeling sorry for them by using services, buying products and participating in cultural events.

A personal story

Eva's story

'My name is Eva and I am 36 years old. I spend my childhood in orphanage and with a foster family. I was happy there with other brothers and sisters, but my stepmother started to behave strangely and when I was fourteen I witnessed her committing suicide.

After her death, my stepfather remarried with a women who was fostering nine more children. We didn't get along with each other and I was obliged to take care of my siblings. Eventually I hit my new

stepmother and I almost set fire to our house and this was the first time I was hospitalised at a psychiatric clinic. I was diagnosed with aggressive behaviour and I started to use heavy medication.

When I returned to my foster family, I tried to commit suicide. And then again and again. Meanwhile I graduated and I met Vitek. We started to live together, but also used drugs and built up debts. I tried a couple of jobs, but I suffered with depression and anxiety and eventually I ended up in a psychiatric clinic again.

There I met Jirka. We got married and lived happily for five years until Jirka died. My world was in pieces and again I was hospitalised. I was helped by Silesian sisters and they recommended Neratov Association to me.

Here I have a stable job and place to live and I am trying to put my life together. I get a big support from therapists and from the staff here. Together we started to solve my problems and my debts – they paid some part for me already.'



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Therapeutic garden

Individual involvement

The therapeutic garden has two parts – the open one and the closed one. The open part is meant for patients from other departments of the hospital and for the patients with physical disabilities – wheelchairs, crutches, and walkers. Relaxation and sensory stimulation are

both aims of the garden. The garden has raised flower beds, a herb spiral, water features and pathways with various terrains for walking on.

Horticultural therapeutic garden.

A case study by the Department of Psychiatry in Brno Faculty Hospital, Czech Republic.

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.

Brief summary of the project

The therapeutic garden belonging to this Psychiatric Clinic is an active and welcoming space which offers horticulture therapy.

One part of the garden is open to the public and patients from other hospital departments. Patients in the post-acute phase of treatment use the closed part of the garden.

Organisation/project dates - The therapeutic garden has been open since 2013.

Location

- Brno city, Brno region, South Moravia district, Czech republic.
- Urban location.

Organisation/project funding

The establishment of the therapeutic garden has been financed within the project 'Horticulture Therapy – social integration and inclusion through horticulture-therapeutic measures and activities' supported by the European Regional Development Fund under the 'European Territorial Cooperation Austria – Czech Republic 2007-2013'.

The total budget was 48 670 Euros. Currently, the maintenance of the garden and the therapeutic horticulture activities are financed from the resources of the University Hospital Brno.

The closed part is designed for patients who cannot move freely and it is accessible from the building. There is an area for active gardening (growing herbs, fruits and vegetables) and a spacious place to relax and play (garden chess, skittles). Around the garden itself, there is a large hospital park where further therapeutic activities such as art activities, animal assisted therapy, physical therapy, etc. take place.

Horticulture therapy at the University Hospital is a long-term part of rehabilitation for patients with mental health conditions. Therapy in the garden is focused on alleviation of the functional deficit, which is common in psychotic illnesses and influences the field of both fine and gross motor function, of thinking, feeling, emotions, daily routines etc. It is important to use the therapeutic activities tailored to individual patient's abilities.

Target group

The target group is patients, including children, with mental health conditions in the acute and post-acute phase. The needs of patients determine the garden equipment used and facilities required as well as the direction of therapeutic techniques. Usually the method 'group mixed therapy' is used, which puts together patients of different diagnoses and skills. Patients can cooperate and inspire each other, but they also have their own space and are fully respected.

Horticulture therapy consists of wellness activities and a rehabilitation programme. Wellness activities have relaxing effects. They are focused on experience – some of the patients are looking for activities, others are more passive and enjoy observing. Gardening can be also inspiration for how to spend free time after being released from the hospital and can support the patient's integration into the society.

The rehabilitation programme includes activities designed to acquire new skills that can prompt patients to get a job in horticulture. During the therapeutic activities patients can test their work potential in a sheltered environment – they can find their strengths and weaknesses and therapeutically go

through possible failures in order to manage expectations. The rehabilitation programme further covers work with:

- Motor functions – dyskinesia, muscle stiffness, fine motor skills, gross motor skills, hand-eye coordination
- Cognitive functions – memory, attention, orientation, problem solving
- Social skills – cooperation, verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy, sharing, taking responsibility, being together, remembering, observing and being surprised, fantasy development
- ADL (activity of daily living) – dressing according to weather conditions, food and drink preparation, harvesting and processing the fruits, functioning in the group, decision making, creativity, etc.

Possible activities:

- Horticulture activities – planning, seed planting, growing, weeding, taking care of plant
- Harvesting and processing of herbs and fruits – teas, juices, syrups, honey, salads etc.
- Art and craft activities with natural materials – willow branches, maze peels, flowers etc.
- Relaxing in the garden, thematic walks, horticulture diary
- Sport and games in garden – petangue, table tennis, skittles, badminton, chess, ball games
- Land art activities
- Indoor activities in potting shed and training kitchen
- Mobile flower bed for indoor patients

All activities of applied horticulture therapy are clearly structured, have a defined goal and more complex activities are organised for those longer-term users of the garden to ensure they stay engaged. An important part of the sessions on the garden is group reflection.



Grow bags in the garden



The garden is being maintained as much as possible within environmental-friendly principles in mind –compost is made in the garden, straw or cardboard mulching takes place, nettle fertiliser is made etc. The wildlife is supported by piles of branches and woods, packs of straw are made into insect hotels. Companion planting also takes place in the garden.

Outcomes

This project creates social and therapeutic benefits. Patients benefit from the change of environment – the garden is different from other parts of the hospital, it has different colours, smells, shapes and atmosphere. They benefit from physical movement in the garden, which supports muscle strength and stamina, they feel better physically in general, and this has a positive impact on the psychical condition. And most importantly horticulture therapy offers an opportunity to communicate during joint activities and creates plenty of new themes to explore.

A personal story

Patient xxx with diagnosed 'mixed personality disorder of severe degree':

The profession of the patient is biologist – entomologist. The reason for his hospitalisation is problematic communication with other people, which influences the quality and manner of his speech – the patient speaks with difficulty, whispers, breathes heavily and speaks very fast. He sees himself as a lonely, shy and unsociable person, excluded from the society.

He has started the horticulture therapy during his hospitalisation. He was choosing activities apart from the group and he needed to have his own garden tools. He slowly began to communicate with others through the natural processes and with the help of conversation about beetles, dragonflies and insects, which he knew and was able to identify. Others appreciated his knowledge Mr. xxx started to be better accepted.

As part of this therapy, the patient got the opportunity to socialise and learn – he started to cooperate with other patients and accept joint activities, practiced decision making and problem solving, learned to receive compliments, but also criticism. Movement and physical work in the garden has continued to improve his physical health conditions as well as support his emotions and feelings. Horticulture therapy showed Mr. xxx new ways to cope with stressful situations and problematic areas of his life and offered him a chance to become active and enjoy himself.

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Work on the farm



Project funding

There are several sources of funding. One part is the income generated by selling the farm products, another part is gained through social services for the Camphill members. We

also receive funding from donors. Also important is EU grant funding; grants are used especially to finance reconstruction work and to establish new activities.

Individual and community involvement

Camphill is a community concept, where healthy people live and work together in a family atmosphere with people with special needs. Camphill České Kopisty runs a daily care centre and provides sheltered living.

Camphill residents are usually recommended by social services and the length of their involvement varies from a couple of months to years. There are people with different diagnoses, generally with psychical illness or disability.

They help several times a week on the fields and contribute according to their individual abilities. There are also other therapeutic workshops – textile, wood processing and ceramics. The system of farming is based on human labour.

There are two employees, seasonal workers and Camphill members, in addition there are also volunteers, who come for the summer work camps or work on regular basis. During two seasons the land use grew to 6 hectares and Camphill became financially independent; until then the agriculture work was actually a burden. Now there are 11 hectares being cultivated.

A huge variety of mainly vegetables, but also fruit and herbs are grown – including pears, apples, melons, strawberries, cabbage, spinach, turnip, earth artichokes, several kinds of pumpkins and squashes, salads, beets, radishes, tomatoes, cucumbers, broccoli and much more.

The vegetables and fruits grown are consumed by the community, sold directly on the farm, delivered straight to the consumers by vegetable box scheme (in this case there are 'veggie bags') or sold to a number of shops.

Some of the goods are exported to Germany. 2016 is the first season where people have had the option to become shareholders in the system of community supported agriculture.

Very important activity at Camphill and on the farm is horse keeping. Horses are a big help in the agricultural activities – working with soil and hoe, pulling and ploughing; and are used for hippo-therapy.

Camphill - farming and living with people with additional learning needs.

A case study by Svobodny Statek, Czech Republic.

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.
- Agricultural initiatives – care farming, community supported agriculture, sustainable skills, rural farming, local food etc.
- Community projects – Living Villages, Eco villages etc.
- Entrepreneurship – agricultural, horticultural, sustainable examples

Brief summary of the project

Association 'Svobodny statek na soutoku' is part of Camphill Ceske Kopisty and was founded in 2012 with the vision to follow up and professionalise the agriculture activities of Camphill.

Biodynamic farming supplies the Camphill community and at the same time brings financial independency, work opportunities and therapy to the community members.

Project dates

It is not time limited project. There are many future plans, which should provide more secure job opportunities and finances – these include the establishment of an organic bakery, herb drying, vegetable processing/manufacture. It is planned that the ruined farm building will be transformed into accommodation.

Location

The project is located in Ceske Kopisty near Terezin, Litomerice region, North bohemian district, Czech Republic.

The location is a small village with 500 inhabitants; It is in a rural location but is well connected with bigger settlements.



One of the recent projects which has been successfully introduced, is the manufacture of candles. There are number of bee swarms on the farm producing honey and beeswax.

“Bee as a friend of humankind and a flame as a tool for illuminating darkness.”

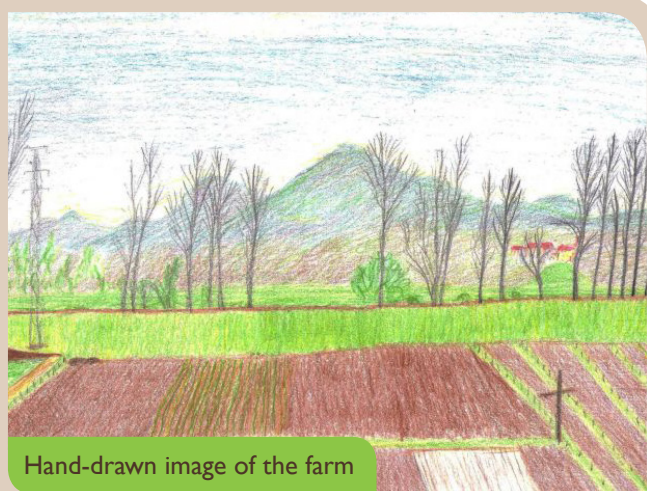
Candles are hand made in a sheltered workshop and they are sold through our e-shop.

Camphill social and cultural events are a key activity, they are open to the local community and wider public.

On a regular basis there are organised theatre plays, concerts, exhibitions, harvest festivals etc.

Objectives:

- Recovering the landscape, society and the position of farmers in these.
- Fulfilling the principles of biodynamic agriculture.



Hand-drawn image of the farm



Greenhouse and surrounding planting

- Creating an inspiring space for work, education and social contacts.
- Creating and shaping with a sense of beauty and truthfulness.
- Following ideas and work of Rudolf Steiner and Karl Koenig and agriculture heritage of Eugen Kraus.

Outcomes

The Camphill concept brings an alternative way of taking care of people with special needs. It is very beneficial, because the clients/users live together as ‘family’ with roles, parents and other family members – children, clients and co-workers. Days have clear order with daily routines and time to relax; clients feel safe and they know they are an integral part of the functioning ‘family’.

Agriculture and horticulture activities help clients to improve their social skills and they have positive influence on both their psychological and physical health; moreover it gives them meaningful work. They can better understand the life cycle and maybe for the first time to really take care of something by themselves.

The work and lifestyle of the Camphill Ceske Kopisty is based on the belief that life flows with the rhythm of the year, as it is shown in agriculture, and has beneficial effects on the human soul.



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Bravely into Nature

A case study by Metsähallitus, Finland.

Category: - Social and horticultural therapy- organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.

Brief summary of the project

Bravely into nature – a project that aims to ensure equal opportunities for all visitors to reach outdoor recreation areas and develop methods of describing the destinations.

It aims to meet the accessibility needs of all kinds of hikers and nature lovers, including families with young children, the elderly and the physically challenged. The project will also develop the methods for designing hiking facilities in order to ensure the suitability for user groups with special needs.

Project dates - 1/4/2015 to 30/6/2016.

The project is run by Metsähallitus with close cooperation of the Finnish Federation of Adapted Physical Activity (SoveLi).

Metsähallitus is a Finnish state-owned enterprise that runs business activities while also fulfilling many public administration duties. Metsähallitus administers more than 12 million hectares of state-owned land and water areas. Metsähallitus has the challenging responsibility of managing and using these areas in a way that benefits Finnish society to the greatest extent possible.

The Finnish Federation of Adapted Physical Activity (Soveltava liikunta ry, SoveLi) is a national cooperation, expert and service organisation. SoveLi offers services in education, professional expertise and communication. The aim is to offer people with disabilities and chronic illnesses improved opportunities for an active lifestyle and to take part in health-enhancing physical activities.

Location - Outdoor recreation areas in state-owned land and water areas in Finland.

Project funding - Total project budget €106.000,00, funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Individual and community involvement

The outdoors is an environment that is used significantly for leisure-time and physical activity in Finland. Nature is also a diverse source of health and well-being. State owned forests and waters offer great experiences for all ages throughout the country free of charge. Metsähallitus promote the wellness effects of outdoor activities by offering hikers services such as trails, campfire sites, signposts, maps and information on Finland's nature destinations.

About one million Finns (1/5 of the population) need to adapt their physical activity, either permanently or temporarily.



The new methods of describing the natural destinations and their accessibility have emerged from customer feedback, stakeholder cooperation and previous development projects.

During the project Metsähallitus has arranged inspections and audited the hiking trails and facilities. During these outdoor inspection visits the participants with different special needs evaluated the destinations' accessibility, signage and the information available beforehand. After each visit, there has been a workshop for collecting the remarks and development proposals. The general remarks of the inspection visits have been that the importance of foreknowledge can not be emphasised too much when the aim is to increase the amount of physical activity in nature surroundings of people with higher needs of the infrastructure.

“SoveLi strongly promotes the equality of physical activity. Our target is that every Finn, regardless of long term sickness and disability, have the opportunity to participate in a suitable and healthy type of physical exercise. Promoting the accessibility of natural surroundings is meaningful for increasing the emotional well-being. Through this innovative project, we will be able to increase the participants movement and to allow exercising in nature more and more. We are passionate about promoting nature's physical activity opportunities” emphasizes the SoveLi executive director Anne Taulu.

The key objectives of the project:

- Take into consideration the people who need to adapt their physical activity more closely when planning hiking facilities and services of outdoor recreation areas in future.
- Ensure visitors to the outdoor recreation areas have an equal opportunity to plan and implement a safe and diverse trip.
- To increase the range of different user groups for example, health and social services, sports and recreation, organisations, businesses, individuals and families, as well as other groups, such as pensioners can take advantage of a wide range of outdoor recreation areas in Finland

Results, practices and recommendations of the project are openly available and will be used by different organisations, municipalities and nature tourism entrepreneurs.

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Looking at building materials.

Healthy House - Models of Ecological Construction and Housing.

A case study by Luomura Ry, Finland.

Category:

- Education and training –sustainable use of land

Brief summary of the project

The project collected examples of and studied organic, ecological and healthy building and housing expertise. A model of an ecological and healthy demonstration detached house was developed for promoting new ways to build organically while respecting the modern building regulations and the Nordic climate conditions. Experts also examined the housing and home concept in general.

By promoting community housing models they found answers to some of the key concerns of decreasing public services while population is ageing.

The building project using local construction materials maintained its competitiveness, development opportunities for rural employment and for business activity. In addition a national network related to ecological housing and sustainable communities was strengthened.

Project dates -The Centre for Ecological Construction, Luomura Ry. This project ran 2010-2012, activities are still ongoing.
Location - Village of Luopioinen, Pälkäne, Finland.

Project funding - Total project budget €98.000,00, primarily funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development - LEADER axis.



Individual and community involvement

Luomura Ry offers unbiased information that conveys the experience of organic, ecological and healthy construction. The aim is to promote a holistic way of thinking about housing, with regard to the construction, but also the effects on the environment, as well as the physical and mental well-being of a population. Long-term work highlights the range of options for building and supporting the idiosyncratic and self-construction.

Luomura's project "Healthy House - Models of Ecological Construction and Housing" collected evidence and expertise about organic and healthy construction into a web database open to public for free of charge.

This documented information about 40 already built detached houses as a healthy and natural building solutions, collected expertise and ideas from other parts of the world and developed a model house, a Healthy House concept, for regular home builders.

During the project experts helped explore how communities can function with reduced infrastructure, in particular in rural areas. Beside the basic services the rural housing communities could take care of the construction and maintenance of technical networks, energy production, and the care and welfare services.

During the project, 11 workshops were arranged. Subjects included ecological building methods and community housing models. A further two seminars combined with the national sustainable building exhibition Healthy House fairs. This event has a few thousand visitors and about 100 exhibitors, from the largest enterprises in the world to tiny organisations.

Outside the actual project a model house based on the Healthy House concept, Villa Marjala, was built in Luopioinen. The house was built by Mikko Tuononen, the executive manager of the association, at his own expense. The building process itself was well documented for the project purposes.

Outcomes

The results of the project can be used to support architects, builders etc. to consider how to minimize the use of building materials, promote the use and recycling of organic, local and secondary materials, and to improve energy efficiency in the construction of a building in an environmentally friendly way.



A building project in process.

The knowledge collected will serve not only enthusiasts of natural buildings but also “ordinary” builders and developers who want to pick up ideas. Information about the range of solutions is readily available, builders can choose the one that suits them best. They will require more ecological and safer building materials which will encourage an increase in this market.



A model of a building.

The project aims to spread the results of the practical construction activity as widely as possible. The database built during the project still has an average of 200 visitors a day. In addition, information is also distributed in various workshops, meetings, seminars as well as Luomura's Healthy House magazine.

For example, a clay construction workshop and venting seminar was attended by about a hundred people each. The interest in organic and ecological construction is clearly growing all the time.



Inspecting building works.



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Browsing natural products.

Wellbeing, employment and income out of nature.

A case study by Urjala 4H association, Finland.

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy- green exercise, mindfulness etc.
- Agricultural initiatives- sustainable skills, local food.
- Entrepreneurship- sustainable food, horticultural.
- Education and training- sustainable use of land.

Brief summary of the project

The project called 'Wellbeing, employment and income out of nature' is a 2.5 year practical training project promoting the possibilities of natural ingredients, Wild Food and the sustainable way of life as a source of personal well-being, employment and income. The target group is the rural residents of the Urjala municipality focusing on the rural youth and people with less opportunities.

Organisation/project dates - 1/4/2016 to 31/12/2018

Project location - Urjala, Finland

Project funding - Total project budget €50,131,00, primarily funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development - LEADER axis.

Project description

This is a training project whose main working methods are practical short courses focusing on different themes as well as open sharing of course material for all those interested.



The courses are free of charge for participants, this is so they are particularly attractive to the unemployed, youth and the disabled rural residents. The groups listed above are expected to benefit the most from the information shared during the project.



For example the following short courses will be included in the programme;

- collecting and processing wild herbs for sale, collecting and handling wild berries for sale,
- bee-keeping and honey production,
- catching lake fishes and commercial exploitation of them,
- small scale animal production (especially chicken/eggs),
- hunting and commercial exploitation of game meat,
- food hygiene,
- mushroom picking,
- traditional crafts from natural materials (birch bark, willow, root and brush wood, wool, stones, twig),
- insect breeding for food,
- eco-tourism and hiking,
- fabric dying with plants,
- production of wood products for sale (log buildings, lumberjack candles, traditional wooden toys etc.)

The aims of the project are;

- to help project participants to see the potential in their immediate environment,
- to raise awareness of the positive effects of healthy living and natural well-being,
- to provide knowledge, skills and enthusiasm for the exploitation of natural ingredients and thus the opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship,
- to get different people to work together and to create new partnerships and opportunities for collaboration,
- inspire co-operative activities and other productive co-operation,
- to get people to come together to learn new skills,
- to give children and young people information and knowledge of issues relating to nature and thus strengthen their relationship with nature and the emotional bond to their home region.

At the final stage of the project all the participants involved will be invited to a final seminar which aims to inspire the individuals involved to carry on common meetings for building productive and employing partnerships. The Urjala 4H association will also follow the participants beyond the project to evaluate the long term impacts of the project.



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Market day

Basket community.

A case study by Future Near Home Society, Hungary.

Category:

- Agricultural initiatives – community supported agriculture.

Brief summary of the project

There is an estimate that 90% of the food supply of Nyíregyháza is not local. As a result, 38 billion HUF (Euro) is spent on food from outside of the city every year. This community initiative is trying to change this situation to create a short food supply chain.

Project dates - The basket shopping community project started in 2013 after 6 months of preparatory activities.

Location - Nyíregyháza (the county seat of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county), Hungary.

Project funding

The project was started with donations. This was followed by some small grants which ensured operational activity and facilities for market days.

Weekly activities have been organised for more than three years between local producers and consumers. Producers support project operation but it is not a self-sustaining initiative yet.

Community involvement

The work of Future Near Home Society consists of voluntary based commercial and farming activities. Local producers are connected with local consumers. In order to develop a local economy a common internet platform and a weekly market day have been started.

The basket scheme is a community mediator between producers and consumers.

The authorities do not know what to do with this system since it is an unregulated area.

Outcomes

The project seeks to establish the basis for a community-oriented local economy operating system.



This is a form of community-supported agriculture. The first three years were about establishment and maintenance.

The society has been operating for more than three years and has many volunteers and is often asked to share experience with people from other cities who would like to do something similar in their own community.

The main results are; development of logistical systems, organising volunteers and improving human relations, finding producers and gaining their confidence, the development of the web shop on the internet and organising visits to farms.

In addition to the weekly food sales, new crowd funding tools have been introduced. They have created a 'Golden Egg Company', which is an investment aid for farmers.



Conference on self-sufficiency

The cost of development of a new egg producing building is paid for by customers in advance. They will get back their investment in vegetables and eggs from the supported farmer. By the end of first two weeks, 25% of the required funds had already come together.

Personal story

One of the producers realised that he can save time spent going to a traditional market by joining the basket system. He structured his entire production according to the needs of the local community. He has already planned his growing based on the needs of local consumers.

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Photo Credit: László Zalatnay



Building a straw house

Straw bale building – Energy and Environment Fund

A case study by Future Near Home Society, Hungary.

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.
- Community projects – Living Villages, Eco villages etc.
- Education and training – sustainable use of land

Brief summary of the project

The straw bale building is an environmental technology within the green building industry. They use the new tools of economics, which described it as a sharing economy. They strongly focus on building community cohesion.

Project dates

The first straw house in Hungary was built in 2002. Until 2012 there were only two or three houses built from this material per year. Later on, as a result of intensive educational campaigning the number of new straw houses increased to 15. The future is more interesting, now that they have an address book containing data of 550 people who would like to build straw houses.

Location - Across Hungary, the organisation itself is located in Nyíregyháza.

Project funding

The organisation uses both domestic and EU grants to start and implement projects. However, they would like to be an independent and sustainable enterprise which doesn't rely on funding.

Involvement with other organisations

They work with several other organisations, mostly from the social field but there are also green NGOs and municipalities involved as well. At the beginning, we collaborated with people by talking about straw building related issues.



Later we started to deal with aspects which were important for our cooperating partners in order to keep them engaged. Because of this, we achieve much greater willingness to cooperate. Now we are working with the Hungarian Anti-Poverty Network, which brings together a number of organisations.

Outcomes

Even though this society is a small rural organisation, they now have the third largest Facebook fan community amongst Hungarian environmental organisations, with fans showing an interest in the focus on sustainable housing.

Housing is a basic need at the bottom of the Maslow pyramid and many people are interested in solving housing requirements with potential straw buildings. They have produced a guide to support the development and construction of straw bale building which is free to download and use. It brings new enthusiasts and supporters to the society.



Presentation on building from straw

Personal story

One of the members of the foundation has helped shape attitudes for many years and held multiple straw architectural presentations. When he started his family there was no question that he would build a straw house. Nowadays he uses his own experience to advise others and has become one of the country's most admired straw bale building expert. During these advisory visits he has gained lots more experience, which further strengthens his expertise.

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Photo Credit: László Zalatnay, Tímea Ilyés



Harvest in Krishna Valley

Krishna Valley in Hungary

Category:

- Community projects – Living Villages, Eco villages etc

Brief summary of the project

Krishna Valley was founded in response to realisation that we all have a responsibility for social problems. It is a village community that is able to address the problems of today's globalisation. In order to remedy the situation, a solution is needed, people need to take responsibility for themselves.

An excellent alternative is to create a self-sufficient farming community, where people take opportunities offered by nature and the environment, so they can lead healthy, environmentally and socially responsible lives.

Project dates

Krishna Valley was established in 1993 as a priority program of the Hungarian Krishna-conscious community of believers (MKTHK) and the International Organisation for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in Somogyvámos.

Today they farm 275 hectares. The community is made up from missionaries (approx. 150), volunteers and supporters.

Location - Somogyvámos village, Somogy county, Hungary.

Project funding - Funding is from self-sustaining activities and fundraising, which includes tourism services.

Community involvement

The community consists of missionaries (approx. 150), volunteers and supporters. They combine work and spiritual life. Volunteers and missionaries offer their work to the church, so the church takes care of them and provides resources to support them. Mostly they are dealing with self-sufficient agriculture.



Outcomes

Krishna Valley is not part of the national electricity network, the electricity for people living in the houses and using the offices is produced by solar panels and windmills.

Water supply for the community is from wells near the houses and by a common, 330-meter-deep well. Processing of sewage is done through a zero chemical and zero energy reed-bed zone system. Households use environmentally friendly green detergents for washing, such as acetic acid and washing soda.

The community has an organic garden that provides vegetables and fruits for the Church and households. The production and storage of produce is important.

In 2008 they built a 150 square meter cellar for storage, this contributes significantly to sustain winter months. Conventional storage and conservation methods are used and also dehydration without additional preservatives.

Children's education is carried out by the teachers of Krishna Valley. The local school was accredited in 2009 by the Government.

In addition to the National Curriculum, students learn Vedic sciences, organic gardening, self-sufficiency, ecological lifestyle, drama, music, arts, craft-work and much more.

Their children collect herbs and cook jam from them. They are taught to esteem the treasures of nature, animals, people, because all of them belong to God Krishna.



Community event

Personal story

Krishna Valley can be considered as a good example in a lot of ways, even if because of its religious organisation it is thought to be well working. If anyone would like to see well-functioning community systems, it is definitely worth visiting them.

Additionally, you can learn a lot about land management based on ecological principles, including working with animals (oxen) where they achieved outstanding results. They can provide essential experience for organisations dealing with self-sufficiency.

From the community point of view, it is important to mention that they could really create the culture of smiling, which is not a false claim but actually a visualisation of inner peace of people living there and through them is reflected the peace of the whole place.



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Photo Credit: Pártha Prabhu



Cooperative 'Agricola Calafata'

A case study by Calafata, Italy.

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.
- Agricultural initiatives – care farming, community supported agriculture, sustainable skills, rural farming, local food etc.
- Education and training – sustainable use of land
- Entrepreneurship – agricultural, horticultural, sustainable examples

Brief summary of the project

Agricola Calafata is a social agricultural co-operative. Main activities are viticulture, olive oil production and bee-keeping. Main objectives are preserving land from abandonment and rehabilitate disadvantaged people through social inclusion activities.

Project dates

The co-operative started in 2011 thanks to ESF funds, in particular thanks to the Esprit project for social co-operatives. Since 2011 many projects have begun. Most of them were aimed at including and training disadvantaged people.

As a future goal, Calafata wants to build a partnership with the Union of Municipalities of the Lucca Area with the aim of establishing projects of work tutoring disabled people, (Regional Operational Programme - ESF).

In future Calafata aims to employ 3-4 users who currently volunteer on the project and receive a work bursary from the ASL (Local Health Unit).

Location - Calafata is located in a rural area near Lucca in Tuscany Region.

Project funding - Calafata created many social farming projects. These projects were supported by three ESF funds, private foundations, local banks and Caritas.



Individual and community involvement

We work with users who are: ex-alcoholic and drug-addicts, prisoners and ex-prisoners, unemployed people, immigrants, refugees, people with mental health problems or physical disabilities.

The agricultural production is carried out on lands at risk of abandonment; the co-operative is also certified as organic and biodynamic.

Outcomes

Users usually come from social care or are ex offenders. Thus, the work in agriculture is for them a "second chance" to have a job and be socially included. The co-operative does not support users with a social assistant during their working activities. However there is an internal resource that acts as an intermediary with social services, reporting any progress and/or problems encountered by each user.

A personal story

Within three years at Calafata, three refugees were employed, they came from Ghana, Nigeria and Burkina Faso. They arrived in Italy in 2011, and were introduced to a cooperative welcoming immigrants to Calafata. The three boys had experience in agriculture because in their countries they cultivated land for their livelihood.

In Calafata they started working through a stage* but now they are effectively hired as working partners. Today they specialise in viticulture (the cultivation of vines), a purely local production and thanks to their work they can help their families, still residing in their home countries.



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*stage in Italy: working period of 4-6 months, paid with regional funds.



Field work

BioColombini organic farm

A case study by BioColombini, Italy.

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.
- Agricultural initiatives – care farming, community supported agriculture, sustainable skills, rural farming, local food etc.
- Education and training – sustainable use of land.
- Entrepreneurship – agricultural, horticultural, sustainable examples.

Brief summary of the project

BioColombini is a social and organic farm producing vegetables and fruits. The farm, over the years, with the help of social services, institutions, and other local services, started projects of social inclusion and horticultural therapy for socially disadvantaged people (i.e. physical disability, psychiatric, drug addiction and justice problems).

Project dates

BioColombini was a pioneer of social farming projects. In fact, it started working in such a field before social farming was formally identified.

Current projects are evolving and having more and more attention from the public authorities and recognition from the community. This is partially due to the recent Italian law on social farming.

Location

BioColombini is located in Crespina in Tuscany region, in the Valdera area.

The Valdera area is famous for the intense activities of social farming which have brought to develop a "Social farming table" where stakeholders (i.e. farms, social services, local authorities etc.) work together with the aim to promote social farming activities and involve an increasing number of farms, cooperatives, associations and services.



Project funding - The farm receives regional funds from Giovanisì project (employment grants of € 500 per month for 32-38 hours per week)

Individual involvement

Users are people with mental health issues and physical disabilities, alcohol and substance misuse issues and prisoners sent from UEPE (Office for external criminal enforcement).

BioColombini is an organic farm for almost twenty years. It produces vegetables both in greenhouses and open fields. They are reinstating and modernizing ancient agricultural techniques.

Outcomes

Ortho-therapy projects, and social agriculture in general, allow the users to fulfil themselves both personally and professionally. This offers also a possibility of growth for the farm. In this sense social farming produces well-being for the community with the creation of new jobs and alternative methods of rehabilitation. Thus the agricultural activities are therapeutic and support the local economy and the development of the local area.

A personal story

X was suffering from severe depression since she was young. She started working with BioColombini. At the end of the project, she was hired in the farm and she works there since 15 years. Although she was angry and frustrated at the beginning, she got considerable benefits thanks to being part of a team, by having specific responsibilities and working in the open air and being in contact with nature.

Currently, although still in social care, she is much improved and is able to carry out tasks of great responsibility including the management of private orders and for shops.



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Website: www.biocolombini.com



"Il Giardino di Filippo" Social and Sports Association

A case study by Il Giardino di Filippo, Pisa- Italy.

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.
- Agricultural initiatives – care farming, community supported agriculture, sustainable skills, rural farming, local food etc.
- Education and training –sustainable use of land

Brief summary of the project

This is a social and sport association that carries out projects of social farming and in particular projects of animal assisted intervention (AAI) with horses, donkeys, dogs and small farm animals. This association aims to offer people a place of growth with animals in the natural environment.

Project dates

Since 2008 the association cooperates with schools (elementary, middle and high schools), families, local social-health systems and hospitals, to develop educational and rehabilitation therapy projects with animals and plants.

Location

The association "Il Giardino di Filippo" is located in the countryside near Viterbo in the Lazio region.

Project funding

For its social farming projects the association receives no funds. Projects are implemented in partnership with the social and health services and private funders.

Individual involvement

Users are non-disabled and disabled people, both children and adults.

The association follows organic methods and the Orto-therapy activities take place in a synergistic garden.



Outcomes

The working team of the association ensures the highest professionalism, especially in therapeutic activities.

The team consists of:

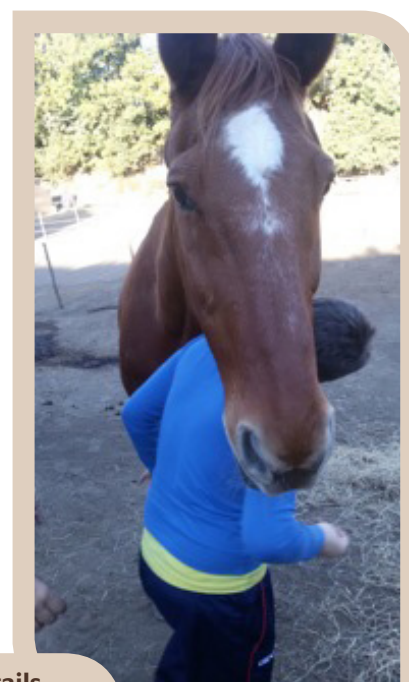
- A psychologist specialised in equestrian rehabilitation activities which coordinates and plans the activities, and which supervises and communicates with the various health services;
- An equestrian specialists for assisted animals intervention;
- A professional educator.

The activities developed by the association provide benefits to the users by improving their quality of life and social inclusion.

A personal story

The garden has enabled several projects including "Progetto Filippo: un cavallo per amico" (Project Phillip: a Horse for a friend) carried out at the Paediatric Oncology Department of the Umberto I Polyclinic in Rome.

"Giardino di Filippo" was created in memory of a child who regularly visited the site. The garden acts as a reminder that we should all try to find the courage to face the experiences of life.



Project contact details

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Fruits of traditions

A case study by FRUTRAD, Romania.

Category:

- Entrepreneurship – agricultural, horticultural, sustainable examples

Brief summary of the project

The project tried to achieve two main goals:

- Safeguarding and adding value to old varieties of fruit trees, promotion of its long term maintenance.
- Increase the profitability of the fruit growing activity by producing high added value products.

Project dates

The project was developed and delivered between 1st May 2009 – 30th April 2011. In the last few years the fruit processing function has an open kitchen for not only the members of the Sekler Fruit Association, to whom it provided preferential processing and marketing possibilities, but also for other orchard owners in the region.

Location

Odorhei Region: 23 communes and 3 cities integrating 127 settlements. The subregion's total population is around 120,000 inhabitants, from which 55% live in traditional rural areas.

Project funding

The FRUTRAD project was supported by a grant from Norway through the Norwegian Co-operation Programme for Economic Growth and Sustainable Development in Romania.

Community involvement

In the first phase the project involved experts and a previous research project around traditional orchards and creating a database of local varieties. The second phase included training for farmers and women who became users of the fruit manufacturing facilities.



The project also provided chances to offer professional assistance, advertising and publicity for producers. Community events were organised in order to engage local stakeholders. The Fruit Festival is repeated every autumn.

The fruit manufacture contributes to maintaining traditional orchards and local fruit types. By processing fruits farmers rediscovered healthy fruit juices for their families and potential customers.

Outcomes

The project has six interrelated results:

1. Collecting information:

- Recipes.
- Traditional conserving methods.
- Possible uses of fruit.

2. Training of farmers:

- 1 year of accredited formal training.
- 28 farmers - future 'trainers' in the communities.
- Vocational trainings for processing the fruits.
- 91 female farmers - future users of the fruit processing unit.

3. Marketing and developing Business Concept Packages:

- Marketing possibilities.
- Market prices.
- Consumers' behaviour.
- Costs, efficiency.
- Technological requirements.
- Supporting financial resources.



4. Professional assistance:

- Establishing and running a small agriculture enterprise.
- Assistance for processing and marketing the local raw materials.
- Identifying and supporting the use of financial resources.
- Networking activity among farmers.

5. Community mobilisation activities:

- Small grants for involvement of third partners' innovative publicity actions.
- Community meetings in 35 local communes of the Odorhei region.
- Leaflets, brochures, information materials.
- Fruit festival.
- Participation in fairs.

6. Establishing a fruit processing plant.

Expanding the project

After a few years experience, another fruit processing manufacture was established in another village near Odorhei, by the local Forest Association together with Sekler Fruit Association. The second manufacture processes also forest fruits, mushrooms.

Recently several fruit processing units were set up in the region with different legal backgrounds. Some of them were started by local governments, others by entrepreneurs.



Project contact details- The project was initiated by Civitas Foundation and is now run by Sekler Fruit Association.

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Conference on the future of agriculture

LAM Foundation – for the people from rural areas.

A case study by the LAM foundation, Romania.

Category:

- Agricultural initiatives – care farming, community supported agriculture, rural farming, local food etc.
- Education and training –sustainable use of land
- Entrepreneurship – agricultural, horticultural, sustainable examples

Brief summary of the project

LAM foundation started in 1991 as an organisation for providing practical training to farmers. Later educational and training programmes were added. In early 2000, the Foundation had three educational courses: professional plant cultivator, professional agricultural worker and livestock-breeder.

From 2010 they have broadened the education offer with tourist guide, game-keeper, human resources manager, project-, process manager, entrepreneurial knowledge, and the latest is ecological farmer.

Project dates

The LAM Foundation activities are not time limited. Each year they organise training with practical opportunities, they sustain different agricultural activities, research, and offers micro-financing.

Location

The activities are focussed both in the city and villages of the following counties of Romania: Harghita, Brasov, Mures, Cluj, Bihor.

It has branch offices at Miercurea-Ciuc, Gheorgheni, Tg. Secuiesc, Odorheiu Secuiesc, Brasov, Tg. Mures.



Project funding

The Foundation is an NGO founded by the Swiss Evangelic Church and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Beginning in 1996 the Swiss state, through DEZA, became HEKS's partner in providing funds for the Foundation, which meant a much larger size capital to assist numerous agricultural workers from Covasna county.

This finance was mainly for the establishment of new businesses, such as: dairies and meat-processing factories, flour mills and bakeries. Interest-free loans were given to finance the acquisition of agricultural machines.

As time went on, donations stopped and so new sources of financing were needed. This was done by applying for refinancing first from HEKS, then from other international financing institutions. In December 2005 the LAM Foundation founded LAM Microfinance PLC., with €205.900 share capital. In 2005, the new company took over a credit portfolio in amount of €2.3 million.



Cheesemaking course

During the twenty years of work, the foundation has had several projects with different financial opportunities, such as EU funds (Grundtvig, Leonardo, TAMOP, etc.).

Since 1992, the LAM Micro-finance has given loans in amounts totalling \$45 million (USD). After 2005, every year loans in amounts of €3,5-4 million.

Details of the project

The Micro-finance Programme is a development-oriented, non-banking financial institution that mainly supports small entrepreneurs from rural areas focusing on sustainability. The loans are designed for the following activities: micro-loans for small and medium size enterprises, individual and family businesses; micro-loans for farmers and micro-loans for individuals.

The educational programmes offer the following accredited courses: entrepreneurial knowledge, competitive marketing, agricultural worker, livestock breeder, tourist guide and agro-tourism, gamekeeper, women's school (tailoring), ecological plant cultivation.

All these courses help farmers and people from rural areas to face new challenges and to learn the new professional way of the sustainable land management.

Outcomes

Since 1992, the LAM Micro-finance has given 350 new businesses and 6000 new loans, and after 2005 approx. 300-350 small loans are given each year.

Each year from 2005 this has gradually increased the number of the graduate students from 50, up to 190 (2015).

The Foundation gives support on different levels to the agricultural workers to produce and to sell goods with a high quality, thus supports the small-scale farmers from the rural areas to earn decent incomes.

A personal story

Four young people from a village situated in Covasna County participated in one of the training sessions provided by the LAM Foundation. They also had the opportunity to take part in a four month Bavarian work experience.

The young men were learning new agricultural technologies in different Swiss regions. During that period they were paid for their work and after the practice has finished, they were all invited to work in Switzerland.

After one or two years they returned home with a lot of experience and enough money to establish their own agricultural business. They were also given agricultural machines, so everybody returned with useful equipment ready for the seasonal land works.



Project details:

www.lamilieni.ro

All photos, credit: www.lamilieni.ro

LIA Foundation and Friedrich –Wolter Foundation for disadvantaged children and youth



A case study by the LIA foundation, Romania.

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.
- Agricultural initiatives – care farming, community supported agriculture, rural farming, local food etc.

Brief summary of the project

The aim of the foundation is to help and support disadvantaged children and young people especially those who are living in children's homes. Children who are from socially deprived families and suffer from different disabilities who are living in family housing provided by the foundation are getting practical support, different assistance and special programmes for their health.

Project dates

The foundation 'L.I.A.' (Lókodi Ifjusági Alapítvány – Jugendstiftung Lokod) was established at the beginning of 1995.

The village Lokod has less than 100 inhabitants, houses have been bought, renovated and provide apartments for family housings, advisory centres, assisted living and sheltered workshops.

During the years the foundation's infrastructure has been increased, agricultural areas, fruit orchards and vegetable gardens, a livestock farming for self-supply and horseback therapy were added.

Approx. 60-70 children, young people are benefiting from the foundation's projects.

Location

Lókod (Locodeni) and Bikafalva (Taureni) villages where the centre of the LIA-Wolter network is based, county: Harghita, Romania

Project funding

After two German students visited the region, they decided to stay and help to improve the living conditions for the children. They have found some sponsors and donations to support their work.

The foundation's family houses are being operated in cooperation with the child welfare service. The government covers the costs for the foster families. The young people also produce and sell the products at their centre.

Individual involvement

A special school for children with behavioural and mental health issues is located about 15 kilometres from Lokod. The foundation takes care of these children in order to prevent them living in children's homes provided by the government.

The teenagers attend the Special-Vocational School of the Government. During their school days they come to Lokod for two weeks. Here they can acquire different skills, such as:

- Farming and gardening,
- Building craft, concrete and wood products
- Gas- and water installations,
- Sewing and weaving,
- Clay – and woodwork.

Since 2009 speech therapy has been part of the course programme in Lokod.

At Bikafalva village there are some buildings, which are providing space for the office and workshops. Here, young women with mental health issues are learning to write and gaining new skills for work: small carpentry, weaving and candle-making. Visitors can buy their products; this makes them very proud and gives them self-confidence.

Social workers and specialists are helping these young people through work therapy, animal care, and agriculture to be able to lead an independent life.

Another house that has belonged to the Foundation for more than ten years can be found at Odorheiu Secuiesc city. This house provides a home for young people who have lived in state orphanages and have nowhere to go when they grow up.



Concentrating during pottery lesson

Outcomes

For more than ten years a lot of young people have been helped by one or more of the on-going projects of the Foundation.

Those children, or young people who were considered disabled and who were taking part at the Foundation's programmes, have obtained visible changes in their health both physically and mentally.

A personal story

The house from Odorheiu houses nine young people. They work and share the cost of the house. Some of those who lived in the house were able to get integrated into the wider community and gain their own independence and move in to a home of their own.



Horse therapy



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Credit: Marcel Antal

Alter Nativa, non-government organisation

A case study by Alter Nativa, Slovakia

Category:

- Agricultural initiatives – Care Farming, community supported agriculture, rural farming, local food etc.
- Community projects – Living Villages, Eco villages etc
- Cultivation – sustainable skills

Brief summary of the project

This project looks at testing ideas to see what works and what doesn't work in an eco-village setting. The things we tried out included; community farming, bee keeping, breeding of domestic animals and restoration of historical orchards.

Organisation/project dates

Alter Nativa is a public association, founded in 2002. In 2004 Alter Nativa moved to Brdárka and established a small cooperative called; 'Community of Brdárka'.

Since 2004 small sustainable projects have been carried out by this group including; eco-housing projects, organic food production, and crafts. These projects are continuing and we have plans for further development.

Location

The community is located in South East Slovakia in 'Brdárka' – a small, remote village surrounded by unpolluted nature which is also traditionally an area which grows fruit. This village is situated in the mountainous district of Rožňava in the Košice region (Eastern Slovakia).

This area is also currently faced with a high level of unemployment.



Organisation/project funding

Our main stream of income is received from the European Voluntary Service (EVS). EVS is the European Commission's



programme which allows young people (aged 18–30) to volunteer in another country for 12 months. On average, 3 – 4 of our volunteers are taking part in this each year.

Additional funds are raised through selling farm surplus, mostly honey and products made from our milk.

Finally we gain income from delivering training workshops at the weekend including permaculture course. We also sell books and craft items such as pottery, woven baskets, canvas bags, wax-batik, hand-made decorated cloth dolls, pouches for herbs, spruce shingles and birches.

Individual involvement

Important individuals involved in the project are those who come as volunteers via the European Voluntary Service programme. These young people come from different countries across the EU and bring new skills, information and energy to this remote region.

For these individuals, this placement provides them with a challenge but also offers a chance to gain lots of experience over the year and an insight into a different culture.

Community involvement

Unfortunately, there is limited involvement from the local community. There is seen to be a gap between the 'native' villagers and members of Alter Nativa, who are from outside of the village.

At the early stages of the project, the local people, many of whom are unemployed and poor, had unrealistic expectations that Alter Nativa would create more financial stability to the village. As this has not happened, their attitude towards the project has become negative.



Credit: Marcel Antal



Credit: Štefan Szabó / SOSNA + archive of OASIS

OASIS organisation - hope for a new life

A case study by OASIS organisation, Slovakia.

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness.
- Agricultural initiatives – care farming, community supported agriculture, rural farming, local food, etc.
- Education and training –sustainable use of land

Brief summary of the project

This project is one of the very few examples of Care Farming in Slovakia, established by a Christian charity with support of Košice City Council.

The project is based on abandoned agricultural fields from socialist times. Homeless people are working in glasshouses and fields to produce vegetables, herbs and flowers.

Organisation/project dates

OASIS organisation was established in 2006 as a shelter for people without homes.



In 2008 the Municipality of Kosice provided OASIS with the following facilities in Bernátovce village: About 4 hectares of abandoned agricultural land including large greenhouses (mostly heavily damaged), stables and pens for animals as well as administrative buildings of the former agriculture cooperative.

The project, which started in 2012, focussed on renovating the greenhouses in order to try and make them usable. Since then, OASIS has become a registered farm. The project is under development and gradually improving all the time.

In 2016 OASIS continues with new plans:

- To restore other greenhouses and to set up a heated greenhouse for growing.
- To start production of cheese made from cow's milk.
- To extend production of plants and flowers.
- To create new jobs for clients.

Location

OASIS is located in a rural area on the outskirts of Bernátovce village, near to Kosice city, Eastern Slovakia.

Organisation/project funding

The organisation is financed partly by the Košice Municipality, and by the Ministry of Finance. It is also sponsored by companies and not-for-profit organizations, as well as by other projects.

Social benefits of the project

In the OASIS facilities, we have housed about 200 clients - the homeless, alcoholics, clients with mental disorders, cancer patients and disabled people. A significant portion of clients are Roma people.

When working in the greenhouses and the fields there are around 10 homeless people working with one professional gardener. Several clients help with animal farming (chickens, sheep, goats, donkeys, heifers, cows). They also have a shelter for dogs, which are also part of their therapy (co called canistherapy).

Production in the greenhouses is focused mainly on cucumbers, pumpkins, tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, as well as roses. The greenhouses have been derelict since the end of the socialism period so most need complete restoration, currently only a few are used. The plan is to heat some greenhouses over the winter production period.

In 2015, more than 4 tonnes of vegetables were produced, about 3 tonnes of this was vegetables which were then distributed to poor beneficiaries. The rest was sold or consumed in OASIS.



© Tomas Halasz / Greenpeace

Farm 'Na háji' & the Food Community

A case study by farm 'Na háji', Slovakia.

Category:

- Agricultural initiatives – care farming, community supported agriculture, rural farming, local food etc.
- Community projects – Living Villages, Eco villages, etc.
- Cultivation – sustainable skills

Brief summary of the project

Main activities of this organic family farm include: orchard, fruit production, making products (from fruit, vegetables and herbs), keeping sheep, wool processing, traditional crafts, beekeeping, cultivation of grafted fruit trees, old and regional varieties of fruits and hosting field trips for schools and kindergartens.

Organisation/project dates

The farm was established 13 years ago, the Food Community was created a few years later. The whole project is still in progress and hopefully it will continue in to the long term horizon.



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Location

The Farm is located in a rural region, in Devičany village, based at the foot of Štiavnicke hills, on the border of lowlands and hills in Western Slovakia.

Project funding

Some of the farm income comes from activities such as selling produce. The priority is not to make financial profit, but to ensure the livelihood of the members of the Farm.

Due to a rather difficult situation in Slovakia, where the legal environment is not very pleasant for small farms, the incomes are unpredictable and frequently fluctuate.

Social benefits of the project

This family-run organic farm is focused primarily on the production of food for two families that established the farm.

Aside from that, this farm also produces food for members of the Food Community, a network of producers and consumers who enjoy local organic food. This food is shared using the principles of the 'basket system'.

Community involvement

The Farm has created the Food Community network, interconnecting small organic farms in the region with people looking for local organic food.

This gives local people a chance to support their local farm. With the Food Community there are consumers provided with local fresh organic food from small farms.

It is not exactly the 'Community supported agriculture (CSA)' system, which is not functioning in Slovakia at present, but rather a simple model of the 'Basket' scheme.

To develop CSA system is the long term vision of the Food Community and it requires a lot of work on mutual trust and cooperation.

Sustainable land management

Farm 'Na háji' cultivates the soil in a strictly organic way, without any artificial fertilisers and produces food without any chemicals or additives.

Despite the fact that the farm does not have an official organic farming certificate (due to the cost) they strictly respect the principles of organic production and have done since the beginning of the farms existence.

Outcomes

The farm acts as a representative for other small, family-run farms to showcase how it is possible to farm in the conditions found in the Slovak Republic. The farm has inspired a number of producers and consumers to live in a more ecologically respectful and responsible way.

As a result there has been an increased interest in the provenance of the food and its quality; the distance it has travelled as well as a rising demand on local healthy, organic food with a low carbon footprint.

The farm provides consultancies for people interested in organic food and its production. It is actively cooperating with volunteers from abroad (through WWOOF network) as well as from the local region. Most volunteers are students and/or young people.

A personal story

The farm's success has been due to the efforts of two families who wanted to be self-sufficient and self-supported with food. The decision for a strictly organic way of production has been done due to some health problems of one of the children.

Consequently, this approach has been accepted and applied by all members of both families, and both have observed the positive effects of organic food on their health.

In order for the Food Community to ensure a financial income, the farm has expanded from supplying food for just the two families, to create a surplus supply of food which can be sold on.



Project contact details

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All photos, credit: Tomáš Halász / Greenpeace



Window view

Sustainability Park Istra

A case study by Park Istra, Slovenia.

Category:

- Agricultural initiatives – care farming, community supported agriculture, sustainable skills, rural farming, local food etc.
- Community projects – Living Villages, Eco villages etc.
- Education and training – sustainable use of land

Brief summary of the project

Our motto is “sustainability in practice”, encompassing social, environmental, economic and cultural aspects. We are applying good ecological practices, resource management, agriculture and social dynamics.

Project dates

This year we will be closing the first phase (a two year period), where we set up the basic infrastructure for our work; renovating a big house and starting agriculture projects. We plan to broaden our activities and start to monitor how well the project is running and introduce some scientific follow-up of all our practices.

Location - 25 km from Koper, Slovenia, in the hamlet Hrvoji, 200m from the Croatian border; it is a rural, abandoned, scarcely populated area.

Project funding - Most of the funding came from our own investment, donations and contributions. A small part came from the educational programmes that have only just started. We are testing the application of gift economy – participants share the expenses of the programme, in-kind contributions are welcome too!

Wider involvement

In the last 2 years we had 500 volunteers from 35 countries helping us with the renovation of the house and other work. We have assisted farmers in the region when they needed many hands (mostly planting and harvesting).

Being well connected with the local community we were involved in the forming of the Network for Revival of Istra which unites 25 organisations from the region, among them many organic farmers; these farmers established a new organic cooperative.



Trajnostni park Istra

The network strongly influenced the CLLD (Community Led Local Development) strategy and represents the interests of rural areas in the managing board of the LAG (Local Action Group).

We are starting with regenerative agriculture and permaculture on the first hectare of land we acquired. So far we planted around 100 fruit trees, and cleaned many old ones of thick undergrowth and pruned them; we've sown spelt on a small field (expecting the first yield of approximately 400 kg), we have ca. 3000 m² of organic gardens. We are experimenting with biochar (terra preta) and with urine usage for fertilisation. We have only compost toilets.

Apart from this we are currently involved in an Erasmus+ project Sustainable Community Incubator Partnership Programme. One of our founders is council member in ECOLISE (www.ecolise.eu), European Network for Community-Led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability.

Outcomes

Park Istra ties together wide-scale sustainability strategies and their concrete local implementation. It is becoming an important hub of best existing practices and an experimental field for the promising new practices.

Last year we supported the regional project, with a vision to create local development strategy with rural inhabitants in the villages, hearing their needs and problems, instead of preparing the strategy from the office by statistics and projections (which was the practice previously).

The project was a big success, participation was beyond expectations. The first Istrian Rural Parliament (the first regional rural parliament in Europe), was attended by more than 100 representatives of local communities, government and non-government organisations and institutions.

Personal stories - Our volunteers have amazing personal stories, we have created a journal of these which you can access via our website: <http://parkistra.com/en/journal/volunteers/>



Enjoying a break!

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Photo Credit: Andrej Firm



Through intergenerational cooperation participants will learn traditional sustainable management techniques through growing local organic food. This will improve and rebuild traditional cultural landscapes and their ecosystem on which organic agriculture is depended on.

Land sharing

A case study by InTerCeR, Slovenia.

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.
- Agricultural initiatives – care farming, community supported agriculture, sustainable skills, rural farming, local food etc.
- Community projects – Living Villages, Eco villages etc.
- Education and training – sustainable use of land
- Entrepreneurship – agricultural, horticultural, sustainable examples

Brief summary of the project

“Land Sharing” is an eco-social initiative for sustainable development of rural areas with intergenerational cooperation and sharing of land between elderly owners of farms and unemployed people in towns for the improvement of their economic and social situation.

Location - Town of Maribor and surrounding rural area.

Project funding - The organisation receives private donations from Austria, municipality of Maribor. We are applying for funding from EU and national funds. Individuals donate in terms of voluntary work, agricultural land, tangible and intangible assets.

Community involvement

Our project is in first stage developing/delivering services for people, society and the state:

- Elderly owners of farms cannot work on the land due to their age and cannot earn additional income from farming. Small pension is barely enough to cover their monthly costs. Usually they also are socially isolated.
- Unemployed and social disadvantaged people in towns who would like to work; at least they want to grow their food to reduce costs of buying food.
- Municipalities have high costs for providing social services for elderly people in the countryside and high social contributions for social endangered and unemployed people.
- The state has high costs for social and health contributions for unemployed and social endangered people.



This will strengthen the community connections in rural areas and in towns and directly connect people for cooperative growing of organic food. The aim is to establish traditional common practices of cooperation between people and generations which are being lost in modern times.

Outcomes

Our project is reactivating abandoned and overgrown agricultural land and providing new development and employment opportunities in rural areas which are facing negative, demographic trends. For individuals this will improve their economic and social status with work skills for future employment. The community and state will have reductions of costs for providing social services for people suffering from social and economic pressures.

Therapeutic benefits will also include improvement of psychosocial health of participants and encourage better social reintegration into society. Work on the land will have positive health benefits, through physical fitness, mindfulness and opportunities for green exercise.

Personal stories

The question we are working on is “Is it possible to preserve multifunctional traditional cultural landscapes with its biodiversity and improve economic and social existence of people living there and unemployed people through intergenerational cooperative work?”

We have proven this in pilot project and confirmed that “Land sharing” model is not only possible but obligated for Slovenian society, which is facing huge demographic, social and agricultural problems on a national scale.



Photo Credit: Andrej Firm

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Photo Credit: Prof Ddr. Ana Vovk Korže

Teaching area for self-sufficiency Dole- Permaculture and Ecoremediation.

A case study by IPVO, Slovenia.

Category:

- Education and training –sustainable use of land

Brief summary of the project

The focus of the educational project is to identify the possibilities of using natural resources for self-sufficiency, which is closely related to learning about the soil, humus, organic material, water condition, climatic properties, biodiversity and cooperation with the local community.

Project dates

The project started in 2009. It is intended for the purposes of education on a self-sufficient supply, from preschool level of education to lifelong learning of adults.

Location

The polygon is located in the village of Dole in the municipality of Poljčane, Slovenia, and covers 1.2 ha. Hamlet Dole got its name after the surface, which is in the shape of "dol", a small valley in the U letter shape.

Project funding - It is supported by the municipality of Poljčane, EU and national funds. The formal status is an NGO.

What the project involves

The aim of the educational project for self-sufficient supply is to present the possibilities of an individual's self-sufficiency in view of available resources, and simultaneously to explore new possibilities of an economical relationship towards nature and environment in innovative ways.

It offers various examples in the field of permaculture and natural way of living.



The key objective of the education on self-sufficient supply is to connect – through experiential learning – the contents of natural sciences with those of social sciences, which is also connected to health.

Preparation for the project included developing training modules for all generation levels from kindergarten to faculty and lifelong education to learn about environmental issues (www.ucilnicavnaravi.si):

1. The ecological farm and sustainable development (module: sustainable development).
2. The forest learning path (module: environmental tour guiding).
3. Chemical analysis of water (module: ecological analysis and monitoring).
4. Composting (module: organic waste processing and maintenance of biological and vegetal purifying plants).
5. Wood biomass (module: getting wood biomass).
6. Designing space for a vegetal purifying plant (module: ecosystems, implementation of activities in space and eco-remediation).
7. Natura 2000 (module: sustainable development).
8. Forest decline (module: ecosystems, implementation of activities in space and eco-remediation).
9. Vegetal purifying plant (module: ecosystems, implementation of activities in space and eco-remediation).
10. Herbs in the organic farm (module: sustainable development).
11. Recognise soil and soil analysis (module: ecological analysis and monitoring).
12. Permaculture (module: how to get to own garden).
13. Self-sufficient-supply (module: eco-village as a new life style).

The space offers various examples in the field of permaculture and the natural way of living. The key objective of the education on self-sufficient supply is to connect motivation, innovation, care for environment and health.

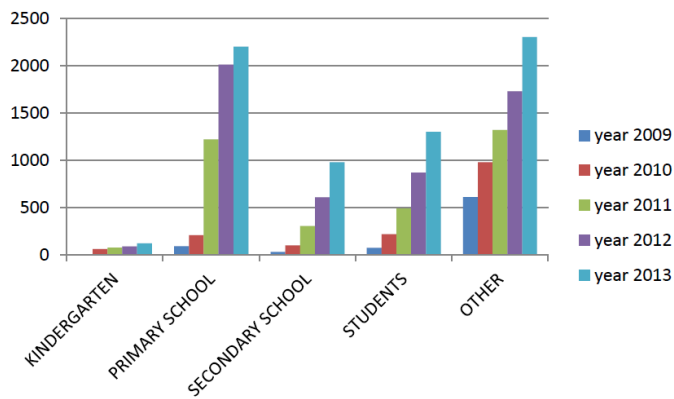
Outcomes

From 2009 to 2013, we tracked the number of visitors (Graph 1) to the site who learnt about permaculture and the responses of young people to use permaculture practices in everyday life.

With the aim of obtaining quantitative data on the number of visitors and the relationship to permaculture, we systematically monitored students' population and their relationship to permaculture. In four years, we collected data on the number of students and their interest in visiting the site and learning.

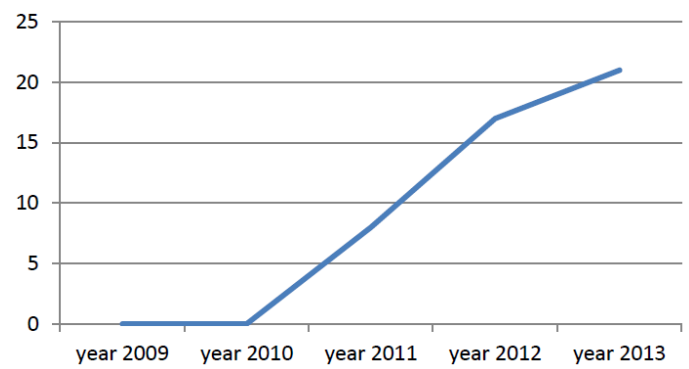
In a period of four years the largest number of visits was between April and October each year, during the main growing seasons and when permaculture arrangements look very attractive. At this time polygon visited 87% of all visitors, the total number of the visits totalled 6941 visitors, of which 42.5% were students.

Graph 1. Number of visits on the learning polygon Dole.

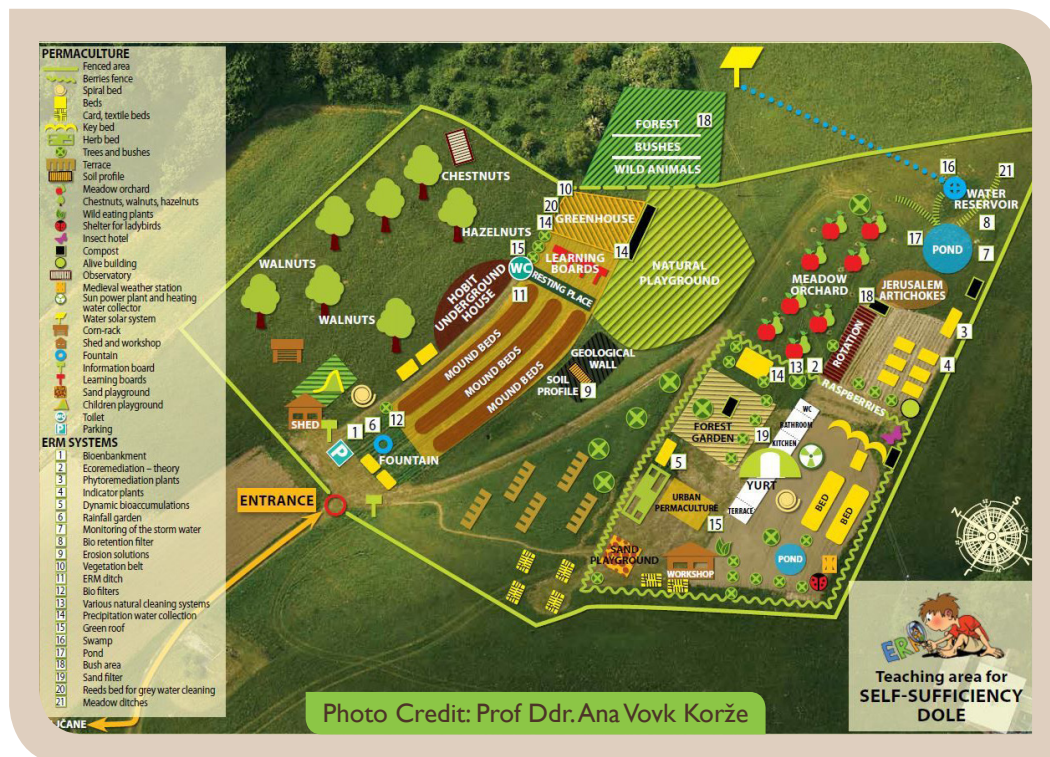


In order to monitor the relationships of the student population on the educational programme to permaculture we are conducting guided interviews (Graph 2) During the implementation of the education we recorded motivation for the visit, with the aim of monitoring the transfer of knowledge into practice.

Graph 2. Visitors' interests on permaculture polygon Dole.



It is important to realise that in Slovenia permaculture means a new opportunity for self-sufficiency, self-employment, service industry and many of the survival modes. Therefore, we can claim that permaculture for the younger generation means a new opportunity.



Project contact details

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Camposeven

A case study by Camposeven, based in San Pedro del Pinatar Murcia, Spain.

Category:

- Agricultural initiatives – care farming, community supported agriculture, sustainable skills, rural farming, local food etc.
- Entrepreneurship – agricultural, horticultural, sustainable examples

Brief summary of the project

The company which is located in San Pedro del Pinatar (Murcia), produces and sells organic and biodynamic products. Our mission is to improve the health of people by growing organic produce whilst respecting the environment.

Project dates

The company was founded in 2007. The company has been DEMETER certified to cultivate and sell biodynamic products, as a result of this we are currently cultivating biodynamic produce. In two additional projects we are;

- a) helping to identify pests in greenhouses and in open fields, and;
- b) using technology to inform the consumer about all the processes of the product from the field to the consumer. This includes the use of drones to give consumers a bird's eye-view of the fields and cultivation processes.

We like to be innovative in selling and production processes through the use of data and University projects which help in the search for and creation of new production techniques, plant varieties, systems, etc.

Location

We are located in the Campo de Cartagena, next to the Mar Menor and the Mediterranean Sea. The climate is warm and humid, but in the summer the temperatures are very high.

Agriculture, tourism, commerce, salt and fishing are the main activities in this area. The population of San Pedro del Pinatar is approximately 20,000 inhabitants which can increase to 100,000 in the Summer. The climatic conditions are perfect for growing citrus fruits, vegetables and greenhouse produce.

Project funding

The company receives financial grants from the OPFH (Organización de Productores de Frutas y Hortalizas), and these vary according to the annual turnover.

Currently, we are participating in another project with a company called Plant Response Biotech, S.L. based in Madrid. This project is focused on reducing water use and on plants that can tolerate higher salinity in water.



Involvement with wider organisations

We collaborate with: Monsanto, Syngenta, Smurfit Kappa, Cartonajes Unión, Ifco, Steco, Europool, Interempleo, Cartonajes Bernabéu, Bejo, Vilmorin, Distribuidora de Agroquímicos, S.L., Gifadi, S.L., Insur, S.L., Oprilab, Ecosur, Analitic Alimentari, S.L.

A high number of workers are immigrants from Ecuador, Romania and Morocco. The company is a Special Centre for Employment which provides jobs for people who would otherwise have difficulty finding employment.

The culture of growing biodynamic crops helps value the use of land for agriculture. We have returned to crop cultivation of the 1950's and 60's without the use of chemical treatments. This process has allowed the land to regain its natural fauna.

Our products are mainly for export, 95% of our produce goes to Germany, Switzerland, England, the Nordic countries, etc. Unfortunately, there is not a culture for the consumption of organic produce in Spain.

Outcomes

The way the land is used for crop cultivation contributes actively to the renewal, awareness and social responsibility of the land that is cultivated.

Regarding the sales of our products, we are contributing to the awareness of consumers towards healthier food through a greater consumption of organic and biodynamic fruit and vegetables.



Team working on the project

The consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, the importance of the consumption of organic and biodynamic products for our bodies, the respect for the environment and the importance of modern organic/biodynamic farming are all key outcomes to this project. We have contributed to the interest of young people in agriculture as a potential career.

Many of the workers have changed their eating habits. Two years ago, we started weekly sales to our employees where they could select fresh produce. Since 2012 we have sold our products online (Freshvana.com) to anywhere in Spain, fresh from the field to the consumer.

A personal insight- the farmers

The associates of Camposeven were previously farmers who cultivated using conventional methods. Camposeven has helped these farmers change to organic farming methods and to biodynamic methods. This group has also encouraged the consumption of organic fruits and vegetables through the online site (Freshvana.com).

Our Foundation Ingenio has worked with the research group Gesplan to help a group of Aymara women in Puno (Perú) with a project on sustainable development. We have also developed a project with researchers from UPM-Madrid to develop plants that need a low water consumption and a high tolerance of salinity.



People involved with the project



Project contact details

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Environmental education programme-nature classroom.

A case study by The Nature Classroom, based at The Sierra Espuña Regional Park, Murcia, Spain.

Category:

- Education and training –sustainable use of land.

Brief summary of the project

The programme Nature Classroom was developed for every education stage. The activities are designed to make participants aware of the natural and cultural values of the environment in order to foster new attitudes towards conservation.

Project dates

The Nature Classroom 'Las Alquerías' has been operating since 1994, and over 70,000 students at all levels of education have participated. Since 2013 the management of the educational programme has been carried out by two associations one of which is 'UTE-ECOESPUÑA-LA HOJARASCA'.

Location

Sierra Espuña is part of various municipalities in Murcia and the Nature Classroom is located in Las Alquerías (Totana, Murcia). The Nature Classroom is in an exceptional location for environmental education.

In this area there are fir tree forests, unique flora, mountainside brush, ravines, streams, crags, an interesting steppe zone and glaci in a foothill area as well as cultivated land. It is close to the medieval town Aledo, the hamlet El Purgatorio, the natural enclave of los Pozos de la Nieve and the Bronze Age site la Bastida.

These are just some of the spots that increase the sociocultural resources that are used as educational tools in the Nature Classroom. This ideal situation provides an unparalleled opportunity to study the relationship man has had with the land over the centuries and aids in the development of greater environmental awareness.

Project funding

The company UTE ECOESPUÑA-LA HOJARASCA pays an annual fee of € 2300 to the Region of Murcia and pays for additional costs such as: insurance, maintenance, uniforms, etc.

The students/users of the programme pay a fee according to activities that will be carried out. The usual fee is 6 euros per student for 1 day of planned activities.



Las Alquerías
albergue turístico y
aula de naturaleza
SIERRA ESPUÑA



UTE **Ecoespuña**
Lahojasca



Involvement with wider organisations

The Environmental education programme of the Nature Classroom is for:

- a) Kindergarden, Primary and Secondary Education students in Murcia and surrounding areas. Vocational education and University students are also welcome.
- b) Associations (Neighbourhood, for disabled people, etc.) and other groups (pensioners, etc.). The activities are adapted to the needs of the different groups.
- c) Youths and adults interested in nature and adventure tourism.

The main objective is developing awareness in students of the need to preserve our environment. The Nature Park is a great resource and the methodology used is experiential and experimental.

Outcomes

The mechanisms to evaluate the experiences of the users allow us to gauge the effective bond that arises when users spend time in a natural environment.

To this end, active participation is encouraged where users value different points of view, debate different environmental issues, or simply observe, touch, smell, listen and learn. These types of activities foster a change in attitude, encouraging a need to preserve the environment in general and the need to become aware that every little action does count when it comes to preserving the environment.

A personal story

There have been cases where students after visiting as part of a day trip, have decided to spend more time in this natural space by coming back and joining one of our summer programme we hold for students.



In one particular case, a group of students, who have attended year after year, have developed strong links to the area and they promote environmentally-friendly activities in their own towns based on the knowledge acquired in the summer programme.

These students return year after year and they have built their own network of personal links in the Region of Murcia.



Ready for group activities!



Project contact details

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La Almajara del Sur

A case study by La Almajara del Sur, based in Cehegín, Murcia, Spain.

Category:

- Agricultural initiatives – care farming, community supported agriculture, sustainable skills, rural farming, local food etc.
- Entrepreneurship – agricultural, horticultural, sustainable examples

Brief summary of the project

This company is an agro-organic nursery located in the north-west of Murcia. It grows plants and potted plants of traditional varieties. The aim of the company is to maintain cultivated biodiversity by contributing health and variety to the gardens and plates of the consumers.

Project dates

The company was founded in 2012. It produces plants for medium to small farmers and other initiatives that encourage self-consumption (social organisations, educational centres, etc.)

Traditional varieties that are no longer part of the commercial circuit have been recovered, and knowledge about the use, value and handling of these plants is shared. This also includes the saving of seeds of these varieties.

The second line of action includes plants for aromatic, medicinal and culinary plants that can also be used as auxiliary/ornamental plants in gardens, including urban gardens. As this is an organic project, the safety of the use of these plants for cooking, eating and drinking, cosmetics, etc. is guaranteed.

Our wish is to involve the public in Agro-organics through informative activities on how to grow fruits and vegetables through environmentally friendly practices. In the future as part of the social aspect of the company, we would like to include groups of workers with difficulties to enter the labour market.

Location

The company is located in the north-west of the Region of Murcia in a rural agricultural area. The nursery is next to a village called El Chaparral with approximately 100 inhabitants. The town of Bullas is nearby with a population of 100,000 inhabitants.

Project funding

We have no public or private funding.

Involvement with wider organisations

We have previously participated in two editions of GROW, a Project focused on the exchange of experiences and the transfer of technologies related to plant genetic resources in Europe.



LA ALMAJARA DEL SUR
VIVERO AGROECOLÓGICO TRADICIONAL



We are also part of the Seed Network in Murcia and have participated in the organisation of the state seed network 'Resembrando e Intercambiando'.

The majority of our suppliers are not local however, the services that we provide are for the most part for local people. There are no special groups of employees at this moment.

Our way of understanding agriculture is based on agro-organic principles. We do not believe it is simply enough to say: "we are organic, we don't use chemicals", we see the land and its biodiversity as a resource that needs to be preserved.

We use various types of compost and humus in the fields. We also recycle our own plant material returning unsold plants to the fields.

Our consumers on the one hand, are small and medium sized local producers and on the other hand we have individuals, social gardens, therapeutic gardens, social and education institutions that work on training users and encouraging self consumption.

Outcomes

There are several aims behind the actions of the Company: to preserve biodiversity cultivated in situ and to make traditional varieties which are agro-organic accessible to the public. Our plants are agro-organic and we use open pollination processes. We help consumers have a healthier diet and also maintain a better environment.

We believe that we have stirred up interest in local varieties which would otherwise be lost as they are not conventional varieties and we have made users more aware of responsible land use. Our production of exclusively agro-organic plants also makes us unique in our area.

As we grow our own plants, any excess is made available to the workers. These organic products have bettered the diets of the all the workers in general.

A personal story

The photo overleaf is of a project called El Encantapájaros.

The idea behind the Project is to create a new relationship between producers and consumers through the development of produce that is more sustainable, healthier, easier and of better quality.

Alfonso and Cristina, (who are brother and sister) have two plots that are nurseries for fruit trees and cultivation of produce. These plots are ideally located next to a river and a mountain. (For more information: <http://spgmurcia.wordpress.com/>)



El Encantapájaros



Project contact details

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Master Gardener programme at HMP RYE Hill Prison.

A case study by Garden Organic, UK.

Categories:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.
- Education and training – sustainable use of land

Brief summary of the project

Gardening & growing have helped to facilitate recovery for prisoners at HMP Rye Hill. Individuals, convicted of some serious crimes and affected by substance misuse are benefiting from this fresh approach to recovery that has been implemented in the grounds of the prison.

Location - HMP Rye Hill, Rugby, Warwickshire - UK.

Organisation/project funding

The project is funded from the core budget of HMP Rye Hill.



Target Audience

The Master Gardener (MG) programme has been delivered to willing participants from the substance misuse wing within the prison since 2013, by a dedicated team from Garden Organic, which headquarters are based at Ryton, Coventry.

The project has recently been praised in the HMI Inspectorate of Prisons Report, and it is seen as an “important asset in assisting prisoners recovering from drug misuse”. The building blocks of the project are based on five key themes as shown below:

1. Building an environment that supports recovery and change
2. Building health and wellbeing
3. Building a recovery Master Gardener community.
4. Building opportunities for learning.
5. The Master Gardener programme in a prison setting.

Within the parameters of this framework, the project participants are asked to keep reflective diaries on a monthly basis, which capture their feelings and experiences.

To further capture a crucial understanding of the offenders' recovery journey, each prisoner has a Portfolio of Achievement outlining their development, skills learnt whilst in the programme, skills and experience that could be directly transferred externally upon release.

These small gains are all recorded and monitored to build self-esteem.



Outcomes

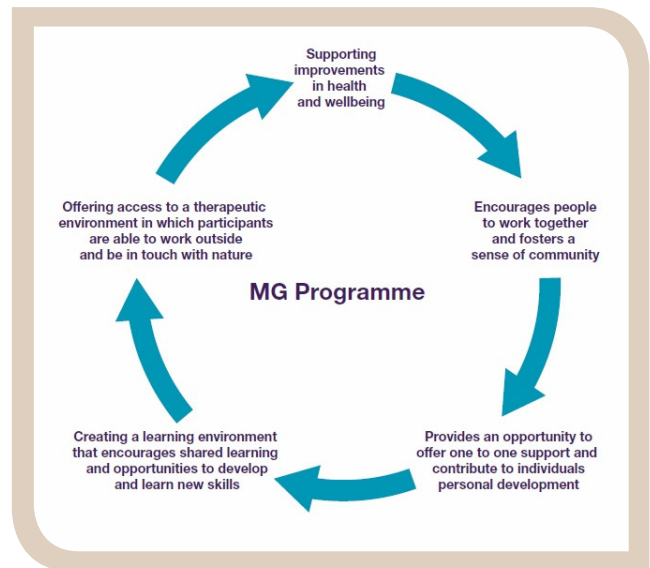
The project provides:

- An environment that supports substance misusing offenders with their recovery.
- A space where participants can work together towards a shared goal.
- Creates a sense of community.
- Facilitates opportunities for learning and peer support.
- Encourages substance misuse offenders to consider making broader behavioural changes both in and outside prison.
- A positive contribution to Rye Hill's strategy to establish a recovery unit.

A personal story

An extract from an anonymous letter from a participant in the programme:

“Although this has been hard work I have immensely enjoyed every second and will be sorry when I am finished. I have found this very rewarding. I was helped mentally and I feel calmer and sleep more. I feel stronger physically and mentally. I feel I can deal with problems in a more positive way. I am looking forward to the next challenge.”



Garden design



Aerial view of the garden



Part of the garden today



Project contact details:

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All photos credit: Garden Organic

The Carer's Trust Dementia Gardening Group.

A case study by Garden Organic, UK.

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.

Brief summary of the project

This project provides social and therapeutic horticulture to older people who have the early stages of Dementia. Clients attend in small, social groups and enjoy a variety of active and passive activities aimed at building social networks, promoting skills development and relaxation.

Project dates

A pilot project of 15 sessions was delivered in 2015 and a further 20 sessions will be completed in 2016.

Location

Our sessions are delivered at Ryton Organic Gardens in Warwickshire, UK, within ten acres of established organic gardens which are open to the public.

Our horticultural therapy groups maintain dedicated areas which include a specially designed, accessible therapy and sensory garden.

The site is surrounded by rural farmland and is a haven for a wide variety of wildlife. We are 6 miles from the centre of Coventry and 8 miles from Rugby, both areas with wide diversity in population demographic.



Sowing seeds



Project funding

The pilot project was funded by The Carer's Trust with a grant received from The Santander Foundation and The Eveson Charitable Trust.

Additional funding has been sought to continue the programme which is being supplemented by one of the individuals who will be accessing their personal care budget, provided by Social Services.

Individual involvement

Living with dementia can have a big emotional, social, psychological and practical impact on a person. Many people with dementia describe these impacts as a series of losses and adjusting to them is challenging.

There is evidence to suggest that as mental capacity changes in people with dementia, some patients will function more on a sensory level rather than an intellectual level, which means that plants and gardening can provide valuable interactions.

Dementia patients often need more time to complete tasks and a calm, relaxed atmosphere as they can become anxious easily. Most people experience memory difficulties and problems with thinking. These in turn may lead to the loss of;

- self-esteem
- confidence
- independence and autonomy
- social roles and relationships
- the ability to carry out favourite activities or hobbies
- everyday skills of daily life (e.g. cooking, driving).

Due to the age of the group, clients often have mobility needs, ranging from needing more time to walk somewhere or without support to wheelchair users.

The garden areas must be accessible and appropriate to their needs, which might include raised gardening areas or table-top activities.

Some medication related to Dementia can make people sensitive to bright sunlight so we make sure there are covered areas available for working in sunny weather.

The sessions are supported by a Garden Organic volunteer who has experience with the charity's other social and therapeutic horticulture programmes.

Outcomes

Clients have enjoyed the programme of activities, learning gardening skills and socialising with others in a similar situation to themselves.

We discovered that while smaller groups of up to 4 clients were ideal for the gardening sessions, everyone enjoyed a larger group for socialising and chatting during lunchtime. We allowed for this with the morning and afternoon groups overlapping for a shared lunchtime.

The activities were carefully selected to meet the needs of the group and with an awareness of generational specific topics, such as gardening during World War 2 and the 'dig for victory' campaign, old fashioned vegetable varieties and scents like lavender. This has assisted in memory jogging and has prompted some enjoyable conversations amongst the group.

Respite for the client's carers while the sessions were taking place was a priority outcome for the carer's trust in establishing the sessions. It is important for the carers to know that their loved one is safe and enjoying a meaningful activity while they have some 'time off' from their caring role.

A personal story

Peter particularly enjoyed the physical tasks, being active and using tools.

During one session, the group sowed pea shoots. Peter took some home and in the weeks that followed he told us about how he had enjoyed eating them. He was able to recall activities done in previous weeks and really enjoyed the social atmosphere of the day.

He enjoyed opportunities to tell the group stories and which included picking fruit in the garden he told us all about 'scrumping' (or stealing!) fruit during the war with his younger brother. He stood watching while his nimble little brother scrumped, and one week they were caught, but Peter managed to get away and so avoided being in trouble!



When the sessions came to an end Peter became quite emotional about the project finishing for the year and made a little speech. He said he had enjoyed every minute of the programme, and couldn't wait for the Spring (when the next sessions would start).

He said it was different to normal gardening, that we made him feel welcome, that we are very patient and loved the relaxing atmosphere of the sessions. Peter has since started with the new group and is looking forward to completing this year's programme.



Project details:

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Stumpery garden features

Martineau Gardens

A case study by Martineau Gardens, Birmingham- UK.

Category:

- Social and horticultural therapy – organic gardening, green exercise, mindfulness etc.

Brief summary of the project

A community garden, just two miles from the centre of Birmingham that offers Therapeutic Horticulture for people with mental health issues and learning disabilities, environmental education for school children, events and lovely place to visit for everyone.

Project dates - We have been providing opportunities for Therapeutic Horticulture for 13 years, five days a week.

Location - Birmingham City, United Kingdom.

Project funding - Charitable Trusts, donations and sales of goods and services

Individual and community involvement

We work with individuals with mental health issues, autistic spectrum disorders, learning disabilities, recovering from strokes and head injuries

How have the community been involved?

- We promote our events and the Gardens as a place to visit.
- Have lots of visits from local community organisations.
- Friends/membership scheme.
- Provide environmental education sessions for local schools.

Sustainable land management techniques

We manage the Gardens organically for the benefit of people and wildlife.

We have woodland registered as a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation.

Martineau
Gardens



Outcomes

Physical health: exercise in the fresh air.

Mental health: purposeful activity, social interaction, lovely environment, seeing things grow, stress reduction.

Learning: horticulture, conservation, other people.

A personal story

Alton came to MG after a severe illness which left him with mobility problems and depression. He had to give up his professional job and is living on his own.

He feels that Martineau Gardens has given him a purpose in life. He feels useful even just one day a week, though he sometimes just pops in on other days.

"It has given me a routine. My mental health has improved I know my physical health has too as there is a lot of walking around. I feel really comfortable and can bring my grandchildren here. It is this place and the atmosphere that the staff have generated and I feel as if I have made some really good friends and I have seen progress in my mobility."



Team work in the garden

Project contact details

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Directory or organisations



Organisation/project name	Location	Theme	Website	Description	Language of website
		Social and horticultural therapy			
		Agricultural initiatives			
		Community projects			
		Education & training			
		Entrepreneurship			
Therapeutic garden, Faculty hospital Brno	Czech Republic	x		Therapeutic garden by the psychiatric clinic of Faculty hospital in Brno has closed part for the patients in post acute stage, part for children and opened part for wide range of clients and public. Horticulture therapy is a part of regular routine and it includes both relaxing and gardening.	Czech, English
Camp Hill Svobodný statek na soutoku	Czech Republic	x	http://www.svobodny-statek.cz/bio-dynamicke-zemedelstvi/information-in-english	Family community home for people with special needs who can work on biodynamic farm according to their possibilities. Wide range of organic fruit, vegetable and herbs is sold on markets or through a vegetable box scheme; production is also processed into the teas, pickles, syrups etc. Camp Hill organises also workshops, workcamps and social events.	Czech, English
Kompot - community supported agriculture	Czech Republic	x	http://www.kompot.cz/	Association based on principles of community supported agriculture. Increasing number of growers supplies themselves with vegetable crop cultivated with the principles of organic agriculture. Community also prepares social program and regular events.	Czech
Lipka - environmental educational centre	Czech Republic	x	http://www.lipka.cz/lipka-en	Educational institution for environmental training focused on children of all ages, teachers and lecturers and on interested public. Lipka organises also number of craft workshops, courses and social events related with nature.	Czech, English
Zahrada - community garden	Czech Republic	x	http://zahrada.liberec.cz/	Small scale community garden project in the heart of the historical city centre of Liberec offers number of events for locals (restaurant day, herb workshops, food workshops) and provides vegetables and herbs or place to grow, but also place to spend time and meet new friends.	Czech
Sruženi Neratov	Czech Republic	x	http://www.neratov.cz/	Community village Neratov was once abandoned place. Now there is a community of people giving the village back its life and offering sheltered housing and a variety of job opportunities for people with special needs - social farming, garden centre, sheltered workshops, restaurant, hostel and more.	Czech
Chaloupky - environmental educational centre	Czech Republic	x	http://www.chaloupky.cz/	Environmental educational centre for both children and adults with 20 years of experience focused mainly on promoting sustainable life style and nature conservation. Chaloupky also offers horticulture and animal therapy programs and since 2012 has been running agriculture farm, where is produced cheeses, milk, yogurts and other dairy and farm products.	Czech, English
Zahrada Smetanka - community garden	Czech Republic	x	http://www.zahradasmetanka.cz/	Urban community garden in the centre of Prague has it all - space for growing, area for workshops, social and cultural events, childrens corner and site to move and chat.	Czech, English
Portál sociálního zemědělství (Portal of Social Agriculture)	Czech Republic	x	http://www.socialni-zemedelstvi.cz/	Web portal of Social Agriculture includes all important information about history, benefits, good practice examples, current legal framework, list of possible partners, education, jobs and practice.	Czech
Komunitou podporované zemědělství (Portal of Community supported agriculture)	Czech Republic	x	http://www.kpzinfo.cz/	Web portal of Community Supported Agriculture provides detailed information about this topic, directory of places in Czech Republic, legal framework, seminars and training options and current projects.	Czech
Svaz PRO-BIO (Association of organic farmers)	Czech Republic	x	http://pro-bio.cz/	PRO-BIO is the only national association connecting organic farmers, processors and eco-food sellers and providing useful guidance for them. Web page contains also directory of places and interesting projects.	Czech
AREA viva - association for ecology and agriculture	Czech Republic	x	http://www.area/viva.cz/	Association supporting sustainable agriculture, social agriculture, rural development and organic farming in Czech Republic. AREA viva is also member of WWOOF movement, organising international volunteer exchange on organic farms and offers educational programs in ecology.	Czech, English
Polyán Association	Hungary	x	http://www.polyan.hu/		Hungarian
Basket Community-Nyíregyháza	Hungary	x	http://www.nyiregyhazioskar.hu/		Hungarian
Energia és Környezet Alapítvány	Hungary	x	http://www.energiakeskornyezet.hu/	This organization is dealing with straw-bale buildings in Hungary. They organize theoretical trainings and practical occasions as well.	Hungarian
Rozsály municipality	Hungary	x	http://rozsalay.hu/ajagitany.php	Sustainable village initiative in East Hungary. Encourage of self-sustainable household farming and cooperative community.	Hungarian
Adacs-Bábony Social cooperative	Hungary	x	http://keksalo.blogspot.hu/2012/11/kitelint-geto-vi-bemutakozik-az-adacs.html	Social cooperative in Kunszállás villages. Established social cooperative for producing paprika. They created their own brand of quality food, and went on with self-healing vegetable farmyard. Community trainings and system of time banking. Also operate family nursery and community laundry.	Hungarian
Alsómoscsolád municipality	Hungary	x	http://alsomoscsolad.hu/	Local enterprises for local people, with involvement of experts. Municipality manages busy initiatives make them profitable and sell it to a local people. Encourage household farming with pigs, rabbits and chicken. Local currency, Rigac.	Hungarian
Gyűrű Foundation	Hungary	x	http://www.gyurufu.hu/	Oldest ecovillage in Hungary operating based on sustainable principles. Strong cooperation for livelihood, without chemicals, special rules but decreasing number of citizens. So one of the children must stay in the village.	Hungarian
Krisna valley	Hungary	x	http://krisnavally.hu/	Biodynamic and cultural centre. Well-functioning community based on religious principles. Smiling community with real inner harmony.	Hungarian
Markóc municipality	Hungary	x	http://www.szepeszepak.hu/Mark%C3%B3C%20telepulese	Community initiative with large orchards, collection of more than 350 traditional species. They are using public employment consciously to prepare locals to be self-sustainable.	Hungarian
Visnyeszéplak	Hungary	x	http://www.visnyeszepak.hu/	Successful living village initiative with generations of secondary and high school students which ensure its survive. Rate of self-sustainability is very high.	Hungarian
Gömörzslós	Hungary	x	http://www.gomorszolos.hu/index.php?content=ho	Ecofarm of ecologist, Iván Gyulai with permaculture and deep mulch cultivation methods to protect soil.	Hungarian

Organisation/project name	Location	Theme	Website	Description	Language of website
		Social and horticultural therapy			
		Agricultural initiatives			
		Community projects			
		Education & training			
		Entrepreneurship			
Banya-Tanya Foundation	Hungary	x	http://www.banya-tanya.hu/	Development of village community in Bátor.	Hungarian and English
Városi Kertek Egyesület	Hungary	x	http://www.varosikertek.hu/uz-kozossagi-kert-a-ill-keruleben-obuden/	Small village initiative in Gömör region. Public employment for all of those who want to work. They are cultivating orchards and make products from them. Part of the involved people are keeping household animals within the project. Organizing local market weekly from local products and festival as well. Creative ideas.	Hungarian
Trizs Telekamra	Hungary	x	http://www.eszak.hu/hu/2015/08/02/tele-kamra-tele-zsak-az-olletek-les-hagyomanyokkal-teli-falu-trizs-eszak	Social cooperative working for social inclusion of disadvantaged people. In partnership with Social Services and with municipal administrations works on social rehabilitation through horticultural-therapy mainly focused on people with psychiatric problem.	Hungarian
Pictor	Italy	x	http://www.cooperativapictor.it/	Agricultural production is performed through organic methods.	Italian
Terre Umbre	Italy	x	http://coopererterreumbre.altervista.org/	Agricultural co-operative that runs two main activities: i) a plant nursery that combines agricultural activities with therapy for people with serious disorders; ii) a horticultural activity that involves people with mental disabilities and/or socially excluded. Terre Umbre works by targeting different kind of users such as children, youth and adults with various levels of mental disorders and/or social exclusion.	Italian
Cavoli Nostri	Italy	x	http://www.cavolinostri.it/	Social co-operative that promotes activities of social inclusion for disadvantaged people; people with mental, intellectual, sensorial and physical disabilities, victims of violence, discriminated and exploited people, asylum seekers and refugees, and other people who have difficulties to enter the labor market. Cavoli Nostri produces fruits and vegetables using organic methods.	Italian
Giardino di Filippo	Italy	x		Social and sport association that carries out projects of social farming and in particular projects of animal assisted intervention (AAI) mainly with horses. Cooperates with schools (elementary, middle and high schools), families, local social-health systems, hospitals, and universities.	Italian
Agripecetto	Italy	x	http://www.agripecetto.it/agricolo/	Multifunctional agricultural co-operative that consists of 20 member farms. Provides training and work inclusion for disadvantaged people (women victims of violence, refugees, people with physical and intellectual disabilities, people with addiction). Develops projects in partnership with local Day-Care Centers and collaborations with agricultural social cooperatives, voluntary and cultural associations.	Italian, Spanish and English
La Somina	Italy	x	http://www.fattoriassonnina.org/portale_sito/index.php	Agricultural social co-operative. Main activities are agriculture, livestock, agri-tourism, restaurant, agricultural food processing, educational and inclusion projects. Social activities are mainly addressed to minors (educational and recreational activities), political refugees, adults with mental/psychological/justice problems (training and social inclusion) and elders (recreational activities).	Italian and English
Biocolumbini	Italy	x	http://www.biocolumbini.com/	Organic farm. With the help of social services, institutions, and other local services, over the years the farm started projects of social inclusion and ortho-therapy for socially disadvantaged people (with motor disability, psychiatric, drug addiction and justice problems). The farm collaborates also in the Orti E.T.I.C.I. project.	Italian
AgriCola Calafata	Italy	x	http://www.calafata.it/	Social agricultural co-operative. Main activities are wine cultivation, olive oil and beekeeping and main objectives are preserving land from abandonment and to rehabilitate disadvantaged people through social inclusion.	Italian and English
Uno, due, tre, frutto project	Italy	x	http://www.onlusfamiglia.org/home/Home.html http://www.lobzoccoloverde.it/	Since 2009 the non-profit Association "FAMILIA" collaborates with the organic farm "Lo Zoccolo Verde" in a social farming project involving especially minors who come from the association. The project, called "Uno, due, tre, frutto", aims to provide benefit to people through occupational and therapeutic activities developed with plants and animals. Users of the project are minor and all people presenting cognitive, emotional-relational and affective problems.	Italian
Il giardino del Lolli project	Italy	x		In 2007, the non-profit association "Mondo Nuovo" activated the project "Il Giardino del Lolli", a project that provides support to all people who have disabilities or are living in poor conditions (the majority are from mental health services). Main activities are horticulture, beekeeping, olive, gardening and food processing. Agricultural production is performed through organic methods.	
Lo Spaventapasseri	Italy	x	http://www.fattoriagarfarnana.it/	Educational farm that offers learning activities for school children and teenagers and kindergarten farm welcoming 1-3 years babies. The kindergarten farm responds to the needs of families living in rural areas, especially in mountain.	Italian
Eco Ruralis	Romania	x	http://www.ecoruralis.ro/	Eco Ruralis was founded in April of 2009 in Cluj-Napoca by small farmers from several regions of the country. It is a grassroots association made up of small farmers who practice organic and traditional farming based on environmentally-conscious principles.	RO/EN
ASAT	Romania	x	www.asociatiastea.ro	ASAT – Community Supported Agriculture in Romania – informal movement	RO
Asociației Stea	Romania	x	www.asociatiastea.ro	The STEA Association is an Romanian NGO that sustains social inclusion of vulnerable children/youth/families (over 90% of the beneficiaries of our social services are Roma), in Satu Mare county (Romania). We fighting against their exploitation, supporting and helping them to become independent through education and getting jobs.	RO
Foundation for Social Assistance and Youth	Romania	x	www.fastromania.eu/	FAST works primarily with families from marginalised Roma communities in Brasov County, in the centre of Romania. The emphasis is on help that promotes self-sufficiency, and echoes the Christian principles and faith that underpin the work of FAST. We run projects that meet educational, work skills and social care needs, together with practical improvements in living conditions for needy families. We work to eliminate poverty, deprivation and discrimination, and to promote social integration in Brasov county, Romania.	RO
Caritas Alba Iulia. "Alaivel" programme	Romania	x		This initiative offers an opportunity for small farmers in Odoheir regions rural areas to sell their products through a semi-online system. Their goal is to develop a network between rural primary producers and the urban consumer population based on trustfulness relationship.	RO/HU

Organisation/project name	Location	Theme			Website	Description	Language of website
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LAM Foundation Lokodi Ifjusagi Alapitvány – Jugendsiftung Lokod	Romania	x		x	http://www.lamilien.ro/despre-noi/	The Foundation has begun with different accredited education trainings, focusing on the use of people from villages. Later it had the opportunity to launch the microfinance programme for farmers, small entrepreneurs, and for individuals. 70% of the loans are given for developing, the rest is for starting companies and for individuals.	EN/RO/HU
SVATOBOR Association	Slovakia	x		x	http://www.svatobor.estranky.sk	The ambition of the foundation is to help and support disadvantaged children and young people in Romania in general and especially those living in children's homes.	EN/HU/RO/DE
Alter Nativa	Slovakia	x		x	http://www.alter-nativa.sk	First successful example of community farming with Roma people. Social enterprise with marginalized groups is focused on production of organic vegetables, fruits, biodynamic compost and seeds. About 150 local Roma people as well as several handicapped persons found some work opportunity.	Slovak
Inštitút Krista Veľkíza	Slovakia	x		x	www.ikv.sk	Development of Eco village in disadvanced region. Restoration of valuable historical orchards. Helping to Roma people and cooperation with volunteers. Training courses on emaculture, beekeeping and fruit growing.	Slovak, English
Family farm Mašekov mlyn	Slovakia	x		x	www.fmm.sk	Christian charity, using principles of social farming and farm therapy. Farm is a part of asylum for former prisoners, homeless and drugs addicted people. They are living in this asylum, working and selling their products.	Slovak
Krasňanský zelovoc	Slovakia	x		x	http://www.krasnanskyzelovoc.sk/	Since 1996, started wide-ranging revitalization process in this family farm, whose main objective is to preserve traditional form of economy based on ecological restoration and the overall complex and still evolving relationship between man and nature. Activities of farm, established by FAO expert, include organic production of vegetables and fruits, beekeeping, and livestock breeding. Except of that they are active in popularisation of sustainable farming activities.	Slovak
Sad Lívia - Lívia Orchard	Slovakia	x		x	http://www.sadlivia.sk/	First organic farm in Slovakia, focused on growing and processing of medicinal herbs for products. Except of that they have animal organic farm open for public. Farm Manager is very active in propagation of local and organic food, and she has also established the Slovak Network of organic producers EKOTREND	Slovak
AFRA Obořica	Slovakia	x		x	www.afra.bio.sk	First community garden in Slovakia, established by 27 families in 2012. Garden has been established in the court of apartment block in Bratislava city. Except of production of food, this initiative has a strong social dimension.	
Vypestuj Dobro - Grow Good	Slovakia		x		http://www.vypestujdobro.sk/	Probably the first certified organic orchard in Slovakia, established in 1997. Except of production of fresh fruits (mostly apples and peaches) they produce also organic fruit juices and other products.	
Eko village Zaježová	Slovakia	x		x	http://www.zalezka.sk	First organic farm in Slovakia, focused on growing and processing of medicinal herbs for products. Except of that they have animal organic farm open for public. Farm Manager is very active in propagation of local and organic food, and she has also established the Slovak Network of organic producers EKOTREND	Slovak, English
Patricia Černáková Permaculture designer	Slovakia			x		Project on collection of food (mostly fresh vegetables and fruits) from farms and its distribution to poor people around Slovakia. The first Eco village in Slovakia, established in 1991 in almost abandoned village. Activities include trainings, education, work with volunteers, organic vegetables and fruit production, livestock breeding, keeping of traditional knowledges, food bank and handicrafts.	Slovak
Oáza – nádej pre nový život	Slovakia	x		x	http://new.oaza-nadej.org/	Patricia Černáková is one of the very first Permaculture designers in Slovakia, daughter of founder of Permaculture association in Czech-Slovakia in 1991. She is very active in propagating of permaculture and local organic production.	Slovak
Marcela Nemcova	Slovakia	x		x	www.nahaj.sk	One of the best examples of Christian charity, using principles of social farming and farm therapy. Utilising also principles of community supported agriculture. Farm has been established in abandoned agricultural cooperative, where unemployed people are living, working and selling their products.	Slovak
Bio pre vás	Slovakia	x		x	http://www.bioprevas.sk	Orchard, fruit production, fruit, vegetable and herbal products, sheep, wool processing, traditional crafts, bee keeping, cultivation of grafted fruit trees, old and regional varieties of fruits, field trips for schools and kindergartens	Slovak
SOSNA Ekocentrum	Slovakia		x	x	www.sosna.sk	Probably the best example of Community supported agriculture in Slovakia, based on the "box" system. Delivery of fresh and local bio food from small producers.	Slovak
Garden village Bled	Slovenia, Bled	x		x	http://garden.villagebled.com/en/garden_village/garden.html	Natural / permaculture garden in SOSNA is one of example of organic gardening, with suggestions of medicinal, herbs and vegetables sortiment for selling. Part of work are workshops concerned on organic gardening, healthy food and healthy cooking.	Slovenian, English
Trajnostni park Istria /Sustainability Park Istria	Slovenia, Koper	x		x	http://parkistria.com/en/	The Garden Village is an entirely ecologically and innovatively designed complex, built over an abandoned gardening space, where eco-conscious guests can stay in. Fruit trees are planted throughout the resort and it also has own herb and vegetable gardens. Sustainability Park Istria is currently creating a space of cooperation and innovation, a supportive environment for research, education and active practice of sustainable development. It is forming a model of sustainability in practice with the involvement of competent individuals and organisations. This model will be transferable to other locations in Slovenia and abroad. The Park is growing from amazing potentials of the region in Istria along the border between Slovenia and Croatia. The park relies on the work of many creative people designing a model of sustainable future.	Slovenian, English
Inštitút za trajnostni razvoj in celostne rešitve/ Institute in TeReR Maribor	Slovenia, Maribor	x		x	http://instituteintercer.org/	Institute in TeReR is a private non-profit think-and-do-tank with projects oriented in land sharing for food and social good and integration and empowerment of disadvantaged groups for the local food production. They see a huge opportunity to provide a regional market with locally grown organic food and goods for home needs. With the reintroduction of old farming practices that took place in the past they want to preserve small multifunctional farms. On this type of farms more than one agriculture practice took place. If a farm produces more than one product, the income is not dependent on one product, especially if extreme weather events due to a climate change occur.	Slovenian, English
Urbani ekovrt Maribor/Urban Eco Garden Maribor	Slovenia, Maribor	x		x	http://ekovrt.si/	Association of Urban Eco Garden is a voluntary, independent and non-political association of individuals and legal persons pursued by their own interests and the desire to gardening, socializing, exchange, interaction, self-care and learning organic gardening.	Slovenian

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		Social and horticultural therapy				Education & training		
		Agricultural initiatives				Community projects		
						Entrepreneurship		
UCNI POLIGON ZA SAMOOSKRBO DOLE / Teaching area for self-sufficiency Dole - Permaculture and Ecoremédiation	Slovenia, Poljčane		x	x		http://www.ucnicavnanaravi.si/	At the microlocation Dole near Poljčane they set up a zone with permacultural gardens for educational purposes. More information: http://www.csod.si/uploads/files/PROJEKTIRWL/RWL%20map%20DOLE_EN.pdf	Slovenian, English
NATURE IS TEACHING US – A PILOT PROJECT OF BIODYNAMIC SCHOOL GARDENS/Projekt Narava Nas Uči	Slovenia, Radovljica	x				http://www.irdo.si/skupni-cd/cd/ict-irdo-2015/referati/29-mala-kolar-paperc-dol.pdf	Two school gardens in Radovljica and Kranjska Gora were established within the project. The project aims to actively encourage children in kindergartens, primary schools, young people, unemployed people, and gardeners to produce healthy food with intergenerational cooperation. There were also farmers included in the educational programmes from biodynamic agriculture in order to ensure the production of high quality food and thereby contribute to greater self-sufficiency in the region.	Slovenian, English
Eco - social farm Korenika	Slovenia, Šalovci	x	x	x	x	http://www.korenika.si/	Eco - social farm Korenika is located in Šalovci, in the heart of the Regional Park Goričko. Korenika has become quickly visible in a wider geographical area, and by the expert community, recognized as an example of good practice in the field of social entrepreneurship. Employment of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in society and safeguard employment. They have established a system of organic production and food processing on more than twenty hectares of land producing crops, herbs, fruits and vegetables, berries and mushrooms, which are processed into organic products.	
Briñješka social enterprise - eco farm	Slovenia, Sežana	x	x	x	x	http://www.briñješka.si/	Aims of Briñješka eco-farm are: a) ensure work to groups of people which are harder to employ, b) making a profit, but not at any price; c) rural development and supply of local organic food; d) the development of modern social welfare programs, based on the work in combination with therapy and social integration, e) increase self-sufficiency in food, f) increase marketing of organic production and processing. The purpose of the company is the integration of vulnerable groups into work, providing supply of organic products in the local community and beyond as well as development of other areas such as eco-tourism, supply of local farmers and artisans, community integration, workforce training, production of organic products etc.	Slovenian
Eklo vas Mokri potok	Slovenia, Viskoko (Kobevje)		x	x		http://www.mokri-potok.si/	Background of the project is based on the finding that today's way of life is unsustainable. Eco- villages serve as models of sustainable living. Common elements of all ecological villages around the world are: eco- construction, recycling and reduction of waste materials, organic food production and use of renewable energy sources. Common elements are also different alternative social and economic models, and artistic expression. Living in ecological village is organized so that it can successfully maintain the future generations. Such an arrangement aims towards minimizing the ecological footprint of an individual. The reduction of the ecological footprint is achieved in particular by supplying local needs for food, energy and materials.	Slovenian
Fundación Sierra Minera	Spain	x		x		http://www.fundacionsierraminera.org/	Is a non-profit organization that works on the promotion of training and social integration of people at risk of exclusion, promotion of the recovery of the cultural and environmental heritage of the Sierra Minera, strengthening of the social fabric and promotion of participatory and sustainable local development. They develop, among others activities, the "Huerto Pío" project, designed for the recovery of the local heritage of the area and the promotion of ecological tourism, through the creation of an environmental Park and forestry exploitation of native species. They offer several courses and workshops, such as gardening, plants nursery, ecological agriculture, afforestation, distillation of aromatic plants, etc.	Spanish
Asociación CEOM	Spain	x	x	x		http://www.asociacionceom.org/	Integration of people with intellectual disabilities. "La Integración Natural" project: nature education centre for the environmental awareness of primary school students, managed by people with intellectual disabilities.	Spanish
Comunidad Terapéutica Las Fotas	Spain	x				http://www.centroasfotas.es/	Therapeutic community specialized in the treatment of addictions to alcohol or cocaine, which helps people and families affected by the problem of drug addiction through the process of rehabilitation of the addict, with a personalized therapeutic and re-educational process. In a community of complete admission organized by an interdisciplinary team. Along with La Almajara Association they developed a project on Horticultural therapy aimed at transmitting an agricultural training, learning the maintenance of an ecological vegetable garden, collection and utilization of the collected product and the benefits of ecological agriculture.	Spanish
Asociación para el Tratamiento de Personas con Parálisis Cerebral y Patologías Afines (ASTRAPACE)	Spain	x				http://www.astrapace.com/	Association for the treatment of people with cerebral palsy and related pathologies. They work on improving the quality of life for these people, promoting the full development of their individual and social capacities and helping them develop their quality life project, as well as on promoting their inclusion as full-fledged citizens in the society. Among their activities is the development of a project for training and employment in horticulture and gardening for young people with other capabilities, called "ASTRAPACE Verde", encouraging their working autonomy, independence and satisfaction to be able to carry out a work activity.	Spanish
Asociación de Naturalistas del Sureste (ANSE)	Spain	x		x		http://www.asociacionansea.org/	Environmental and naturalist Association focused on protection, dissemination, research and defence of nature and environment, through courses, projects, campaigns, environmental education, publications, congresses. The organisation also welcomes people for the development of community service as an alternative to imprisonment, a program that can bring remarkable benefits to the convict, the society and the environment, in which they work generally on gardening.	Spanish
La Almajara de Alhama	Spain		x	x		http://laalmajaraalhamia.com/	Association created for the promotion of the ecological development in a local environment, the provision of a system of ecological consumption between producers and consumers of the Association, the recovery of healthy lifestyle habits, and the promotion of ecological gardens. They organize several courses, workshops, meetings, fairs, and so, related to ecological consumption, such as the first fair on initiatives of urban horticulture or handmade soups or kitchen workshops. They also sell ecological products and cooperate with other associations in many activities.	Spanish

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BioMurcia. Del campo al campus	Spain	x			x	http://www.delcampoalcampus.com/	Merge of producers, processors and consumers of organic products, created to promote, encourage and facilitate the consumption of local varieties in organic farming, through a short marketing circuit. It also offers the local farmers the possibility to sell their products in the domestic market, and to contribute to sustainable rural development, as well as to the preservation of the agricultural landscapes. They also organize workshops, conferences, publications, etc.	Spanish
Red Murciana de Semillas	Spain	x		x		https://redmurciandese semillas.wordpress.com/	Non profit association dedicated to prevent the loss of agrarian biodiversity recovering varieties and local traditional knowledge within the framework of sustainable agriculture. It works with any person, group or institution interested in the cultivation and exchange of local varieties. The network is dedicated mainly to collect, preserve and exchange traditional varieties of the Iberian Southeast, although it also retains and exchanged traditional varieties from other regions, collaborating with similar working groups. Centre for agroecology and environment of Murcia, designed as a space for the search and enjoyment of peasant and rural culture, and the research and development of organic farming. They organize traditional activities, such as the elaboration of bread, pastries, the use of medicinal plants, or the realization of compost, among others; sell organically grown vegetables and herbs; conduct training courses, seminars, conferences and lectures; offers environmental education workshops; and has ecological lodgings. Our objective is the conservation of local varieties of plants and we have indigenous breeds of animals. We also have buildings that follow bioclimatic architectural principles using local construction methods. We also have a classroom and four bioclimatic apartments in the garden for agro and ecotourism.	Spanish
Centro de agroecología y medio ambiente (CEAMA)	Spain	x		x		http://www.ceamamurcia.com/	Company carrying out studies, projects and services of education and interpretation of the natural and cultural heritage, consultancy and environmental management and sustainable tourism. Among other services, Ecoespuma manages, to the townhall of Murcia, the network of school gardens. They have a nature classroom, organize camps, etc.	Spanish
Ecoespuma	Spain			x		http://www.ecoespuma.com/	Tourism promotion in the area. "Valle accesible" project: Elimination of barriers, accessible routes, healthy routes, active tourism and environmental awareness.	Spanish
Amigos del Valle de Ricote	Spain	x		x		http://www.amigosdelvalle.es/	Cultivation of healthy food obtained in a way that respects the environment, both for personal consumption and for direct sale to the members of the association.	Spanish
Cooperativa Agroecológica La Revólca	Spain				x	http://www.larevolca.com/	Traditional ecological plant nursery.	Spanish
La Almajara del Sur	Spain	x		x		http://www.laalmajaraelsur.es/		Spanish
BioSegura	Spain				x	http://www.biosegura.es/	Association of consumers, producers and processors of organic products. Agriculture and ecological consumption, courses and meetings.	Spanish, English, German & French
ISOECO	Spain				x	http://isoeco.blogspot.com.es/	Production and sale of ecological, nearby and seasonal products.	Spanish
Antigua Vida Nueva	Spain				x	http://www.antiguavidanueva.com/	Production company of organic food and direct sales to schools and daycare centers, associations of consumers, specialty stores, restaurants, distributors, private individuals, etc. Products certified with the seal of the Council of ecological agriculture of the Region of Murcia.	Spanish
Las Huertas que da la Vida	Spain	x			x	https://las huertasquedavida.wordpress.com/	Production of organic vegetables for subsistence and sale to partners, provision of plots for leisure gardens, advice and training.	Spanish
Ocio Azarbe	Spain				x	http://www.ocioazarbe.com/	Rental of leisure orchards and advice.	Spanish
El Valle. Aula de naturaleza y sostenibilidad	Spain					http://elvalle.naturalezasostenibilidad.org/	Nature and sustainability classroom, organized and managed by the Fundación Desarrollo Sostenible. It is part of the network of nature classrooms of the Region of Murcia and its programming is included among the activities promoted in the natural areas of the Region of Murcia to boost awareness and environmental education in the Regional Park El Valle y Carrascos. They work on environmental education and training and awareness for schools, associations, companies and individuals.	Spanish
Asociación ecoagriculturas de Murcia (EDEMUR)	Spain					http://www.anticuavidanueva.com/	Production company of organic food and direct sales to schools and daycare centres, associations of consumers, specialty stores, restaurants, distributors, private individuals, etc. Products certified with the seal of the Council of ecological agriculture of the Region of Murcia.	Spanish
Foodtopia	Spain				x	http://www.foodtopia.eu/	Technological project that promotes the production of balanced food, 100% natural, environmentally friendly with traditional recipes and excellent taste, at an affordable price and with minimum environmental impact. It uses very innovative cooking and packaging technologies. They promote a balanced meal which favours the consumption of vegetable protein.	Spanish & English
Camposeven	Spain				x	http://www.camposeven.com/	Transformation agrarian society, composed of 10 members, with more than 40 years of agricultural experience, dedicated to the production, preparation and marketing of horticultural ecological certified products.	Spanish & English
Ucampactas	Spain					http://ucampactas.ucam.edu/	UCAMPACTAS is a program that aims to provide intellectually disabled students with training during two years that will increase their possibility of future employability and greater social integration in the community.	Spanish
Vita 21	Spain				x	http://vita21.com/	It is a consultant for sustainability that provides educational services and environmental strategic collaborating with organizations and professionals in various initiatives and approaches to the achievement of social, economic and environmental sustainability through research, planning, education, and the implementation of projects.	Spanish & English
Huerta viva Huertoyou	Spain	x				https://www.facebook.com/Murcia-Huerta-Viva-1626105097667138/	Association dedicated to the protection and recovery of the Orchard, covering cultural, environmental and social and economic aspects. They develop projects such as the recovery of local varieties through a network of custody in private farms, or the restoration of classical infrastructure of the orchard of Murcia, and activities of dissemination, information, complaint, investigation and recovery, collaborating with other entities in various initiatives for the heritage of the orchard of Murcia.	Spanish
	Spain			x		http://www.huertoyou.com/	Rental of orchards, counselling, school gardens and education.	Spanish

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Ecoespuña-La hojarasca	Spain			x			This company provides training activities for environmental education not only for the education sector but also for the community in general. The objectives of these activities is to make people aware of the natural and cultural values of protected natural areas in the Region of Murcia such as: Parque Natural de Sierra Espuña, Reserva Natural Sotos and Bosque de la Ribera de Cañaverosa, el Parque Regional Salinas de San Pedro, or el Paraje Natural de Las Fuentes del Marqués in Caravaca, among others.	Spanish
The Growth Project	UK	x		x	x	https://asalquierias.wordpress.com/	STH services for adults and young people with special needs and/or disability	English
Garden Organic Master Gardener Programme	UK	x		x		http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/growing-enterprises-1704-organic-gardens	Volunteer programme supporting community growing and families	English
Rye Hill Prison Garden	UK	x	x	x	x	http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/communities	Gardening project for prisoners- tackling isolation, drug use and education	English
Maritimeau Gardens	UK	x	x	x	x	http://www.maritimeau-gardens.org.uk/	Birmingham community garden for volunteers with mental health conditions.	English
Thrive	UK	x	x	x	x	http://www.thrive.org.uk/	UKs national charity for STH. Supports people with mental health conditions, learning difficulties, disability and more.	English
Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens	UK	x	x	x		https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/	Federation supporting care farms and community gardens nationwide. Advice and resources.	English
School Farms Network	UK	x		x	x	https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/school-farms-network	Federation supporting school gardening groups.	English
Care Farming UK	UK	x	x	x	x	http://www.carefarminguk.org/	A nationwide network of care farms- providing advice and support.	English
Bridewell Organic Garden	UK	x		x	x	www.bridewellorganicgardens.co.uk	STH for mental health. Organic vineyard, bees, poultry and veg garden.	English
Arkwright Meadows Community Gardens	UK	x	x	x		http://www.amcagardens.co.uk/	Community garden space. school groups. volunteering and apprenticeships.	English
Groundwork UK	UK	x	x	x	x	http://www.groundwork.org.uk	Education and training- mostly for young people. community regeneration.	English
Link Nurseries	UK	x		x	x	http://www.haow.nhs.uk/our-services/link-nurseries/	NHS supported project supporting adults with mental health conditions. Runs a small garden centre open to the public.	English
Livability Holton Lee	UK	x		x		http://www.holtonlee.org	Flourish - therapeutic horticulture to support people with wide range of mental health conditions, learning difficulties and disabilities including pre-employment training and skills development	English
Sturts Community Trust	UK	x	x	x	x	http://sturtscommunitytrust.org.uk	Sturts Community Trust is an exciting venture bringing together a range of social initiatives built around a vision of promoting sustainability. We have our base on Sturts Farm, a 90 acre working organic biodynamic farm on the outskirts of West Moors. As a Camphill Community, Sturts Farm has, for well over 30 years, been offering land-based work opportunities, individualised support and supported living for adults who have a learning disability. With the founding of the Sturts Community Trust we are building on this rich history by opening up our resources and expertise in social work and agriculture to benefit a wider range of individuals within our local community in East Dorset.	English

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