

Thematic interim output:

Good Practice Transferred:

Łomża

March, 2015

Background

The transfer process of the Diet for a Green Planet concept has been on-going during the course of this project. There have been several bilateral and transnational meetings and based on those, interim reports have been made to continuously follow and "measure" the process.

This thematic interim output report serves to summarize the progress in each receiving city. This version of the report brings up Łomża in Poland.

The account brings up the following aspects:

- Short description of the process
- Project results
- Future challenges

Short description of the process

This has been the first international exchange project in Łomża, and it has opened many doors and created a will to participate in new international projects. Many people got to know each other and a good Local Support Group was created. At first the kitchen staff were the most interested, while the headmasters who decide about the canteens were not very interested.

A kindergarten headmaster and a creative conference

Agnieszka Buckowska, headmaster of Kindergarten nr 8, had already taken an important step for the canteen in her kindergarten. They were already contacting and buying produce from local eco-farmers. Agnieszka also took an initiative to arrange a big local conference on the topic of "Healthy Diet in Educational Institutions" at the University PWSiIP in Łomża in June 2014.

During this conference there were presentations both from Polish scientists and from the Södertälje team. At the entrance there were expositions from local eco-farmers. Children from Kindergarten nr 8 opened the event with a theatre on the importance of an environmentally friendly living, and chefs from Södertälje prepared a Diet for a Green Planet lunch together with local chefs and kitchen staff.

When the conference was finished all the participants were offered a big lunch buffet prepared according to the Diet for a Green Planet concept. All this together



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created a great success for the conference. After this the involved Polish kitchen people felt very proud and also got a lot of recognition from others in Łomża.

As a consequence of the conference, more headmasters started to be interested in what was happening at Agnieszka's kindergarten. The rumour was spread and many parents wanted to put their children in her kindergarten. This implied a competitive situation which led to an opening for the Diet for a Green Planet concept among the other headmasters, who felt they had to improve.

This created a need to offer Diet for a Green Planet training for all kitchen staff and headmasters of Łomża, which was held in January 2015.

Local and national networks have been extended

The farms in the Łomża municipality are generally very small and run by old farmers. The young people leave the countryside and there is not much entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector. Nevertheless, there was a positive attitude from the farmers towards the project. Thanks to the newly awakened interest from the headmasters the project could now create a link between the existing eco-farms and the headmasters of schools and kindergartens. It was also possible to promote eco-farming to farmers in general, through cooperation with the Podlaskie Centre of Agriculture Advisory that was established at the beginning of the project period. Parents also began to ask where to buy eco-products, and the farmers started to distribute to parents through the kindergartens. Farmers now see a possibility to cooperate and start a business together as the demand for eco-products is increasing a lot. At the end of the project a strong connection between farmers, headmasters and kitchen staff has been established.

Agnieszka has also received a lot of attention from other parts of Poland. She describes it as a volcano eruption of phone calls and interest. Łomża is now connected to the Slow Food movement and a strong partnership with other URBACT cities in Poland has also been developed. Łomża has promoted their work at the above mentioned conference, through their website and in the Polish URBACT info-days.

The learning process of the Diet for a Green Planet concept was described as easy by the project coordinator. It has been appreciated that the practice transfer presentations were pedagogically structured with few words, so that the English language did not become an obstacle to understand the concept. The handbook production involved many of the headmasters and the kitchen staff and it gave a lot of recognition to those who contributed with recipes. It led to an extended local network for the project coordinators and a better knowledge of what is going on in their own municipality in the food and agricultural sectors.

To educate the population in general a "6-year academy" was arranged to teach children about an eco-friendly lifestyle and healthy meals. This created a lot of interest for the handbook and parents started to phone asking where to get it.

Local elections slowed down the political involvement

The political level has been the most complicated to work with, even though there was positive interest. Local elections that were held in November 2014 paralysed the political involvement. The old local government did not want to



change anything, and at the end of the project the new government and the new mayor had just started their work. However, the new political leadership is very interested and has expressed intentions to spread the concept to all the headmasters in the municipality. There is now an opportunity to create a planned cooperation between municipality, headmasters and farmers, and the new government has as a goal to create a diet policy that will be included in the municipal strategy for the period 2014-2020.

The biggest problem in the project cooperation has been language issues. The English knowledge is not very high in Poland and the project initiator, Agnieszka Buckowska, does not speak English at all. The coordinator has had a great job to translate and sometimes the communication has been complicated due to difficulties in understanding each other.

Also the URBACT financial system and the late signing of the project contracts created a resistance from the city administration in Łomża. In the beginning they did not want to follow the instructions and there were a lack of trust towards the project. Nevertheless, after half of the project time these things were solved, and the administration learnt how to deal with this first international project involvement.

Project results in Łomża

- A Local Support Group has been created and has worked very well. It is now functioning as a network for the future work of the Diet for a Green Planet-concept.
- Organized contacts between eco-farmers and headmasters of educational institutions are now established and there is a mutual interest of continuing.
- Environmental awareness is rising amongst the youngest members of the local society.
- Three canteens implement the practice: Two kindergartens and one school are now more or less implementing the Diet for a Green Planet concept in their canteens.
- Increased interest for eco-farming from small and medium farm owners.
- Demand for eco-products is quickly increasing and the farmers are now motivated to cooperate in the marketing area.
- A Diet for a Green Planet handbook is published in Polish with local recipes and concept explanations. It has promoted the city of Łomża, which now meets a lot of interest both from the local population and from other parts of Poland.
- Increased Polish networks and cooperation: Łomża city has developed cooperation with other organizations and networks like Podlaskie Centre of Agriculture Advisory, Slow Food movement and Polish URBACT cities.
- An inquiry has been carried out concerning the preparation of a set of recommendations and plans to formulate a Local Action Plan for the implementation of Diet for a Green Planet.



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- Application possibilities: Łomża now sees a possibility to apply for external funding for the period 2014-2020 for projects in connection with the implementation of the "Diet for a Green Planet", co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and URBACT III.

Future challenges for Łomża

- To get a diet policy created, approved and implemented in the municipality.
- To secure the continuation of good practices exchange among the municipality's kitchen staff.
- To establish a marketing cooperative among the local eco-farmers.
- To get a place where the city inhabitants can buy eco-products. To set up a "Department of Soft Projects" in the city administration, to develop the capacity to apply for new EU projects.



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