

Lead Partner visit to Molėtai, Lithuania

Diet for a Green Planet practice transfer

April 28 - 30, 2014

Participators from Södertälje:

Sara Jervfors, project coordinator and head of Diet Unit, Södertälje
Helena Nordlund, lead expert.

Local coordinator from Molėtai:

Loreta Štelbienė, project leader in the City of Molėtai

Objectives of the visit:

1. Continuing Diet for a Green Planet practice transfer
2. Elaboration work plan for Handbook
3. Planning for Lithuanian participation in transnational events in Södertälje and Mollet de Vallès, and for exchange between Swedish and Lithuanian kitchen staff.

Analysis and conclusions

Coordination and cooperation

The Lithuanian coordinator Loreta Stelbienė is a very busy person, responsible for 40 projects in the Molėtai Municipality. She has lack of time and little support from the politicians in the municipality, and she wants a very rapid and efficient handling of all project issues. The politicians give priority to projects "with cement and concrete" and shows little interest for "soft" projects. Anyway it seems as Loreta has succeed to create good interest around the project among many stakeholders.

LSG

The local support group was formed already before the first Lead Partner visit in February. It contains 21 persons including the project coordinator. It includes the Vice-mayor, 6 civil servants, 4 headmasters and the health specialist from primary and secondary school and gymnasium. 4 dietists and heads from kindergartens, the chairman of the Molėtai eco-farmer association, one head of a restaurant, one business association representative and one Municipality council member. We met only seven of them during this visit, but according to Loreta the entire LSG gets feedback on the project activities. The LSG is also used as an advisor group for the project, like the Handbook group we met during the last day.

The forming of the group seems to have been successful and efficient; the only problem is weak support from the politicians. It will be interesting to see how the group will be engaged in the Local action plan, and if there will be more persons



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than the coordinator who can act as prime movers. The English speaking persons Migle and Marius, colleagues to Loreta, are young persons and they assisted her well during our visit. The health specialist of the gymnasium also seemed to be a very interested person, also knowing some English.

Eco-farming has potential in the Molėtai Municipality

Eco-farming seems to have a strong position in the Molėtai Municipality since many years, although economical situation is tough for the farmers. The *Molėtai eco-farmer association "Gojelis"* is an important stakeholder in the LSG. They were one of the first eco-farmers associations that were founded after the independence in 1991. They participated in a biodynamic project with Switzerland 1995-2005 and have now 63 certified farms, but for the moment only around 20 are really active.

The *Alanta School of Technology and Business* is also important as they had the first eco-farming training in the entire Lithuania. All farming activities and farming training have an eco-profile, and their own farm with 230 hectares are ecologically grown. They use their own products in the conference and catering business they have, but it is not enough, so they also need to buy conventional foodstuffs from outside.

The Alanta School also has a kitchen and restaurant course, but without any specific profile. It might be a vision for the future to also get an environmental profile of the kitchen training. The people we met at the school seemed very interested in a future cooperation, and the leadership seemed to be very active. The director was abroad so we did not meet him, but we understood he is a very active person with big networks and he is also a local politician.

Apart from this we saw many private vegetable gardens in and around Molėtai. This is a popular activity that normally is ecological, but without certification.

Diet for a Green Planet transfer process

The started transfer process of the Diet for a Green Planet practice is progressing. Before our visit there was a strong focus on the two criteria, eco-farming and local products. The coordinator expressed that it is too early for Molėtai to convert all food to organic because the economic situation is so difficult. In the different discussions we made clear that all the six criteria are important, and that focus and starting points can vary when you begin to work with the concept. A big interest to start reducing waste from food was shown in our conversations both with Loreta and with the Handbook group.

In the seminar for the farmers there seemed to exist a big interest for the scientific data that give support to eco-farming. Among the school management there obviously exists interest for the concept although we do not know how deep the understanding of the concept is. The Handbook group were familiar with the concept from the last visit, and from Loreta's instructions. It seemed as we came a bit further with them during the Handbook meeting.



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Work plan Handbook

A general plan is decided and according to that all the material will be ready already in August. The plan is to have the Handbook printed in October. The target group for the Handbook are all kind of interested people; kitchen staff, teachers, parents, civil servants, politicians and not only the specialists. The Lithuanian version will be similar to the Handbook of Södertälje with texts in an easy language, understandable for anyone.

The Handbook group is asked to deliver recipes, which will be evaluated after the Södertälje conference in end of May. This is good because we were afraid that they start to work with the recipes before they really understand the concept thoroughly.

We asked who will write the texts. The idea is to translate adequate texts from the Swedish version and Loreta will be responsible. We discussed which texts might be adequate for Lithuanian conditions, and we recommended them to study especially the texts about seasons and meat carefully. Introduction, Criteria, Ecological recycling agriculture, Seasonal food, Meat and resource management are the chapters that are directly relevant. The chapter about the Södertälje conversion can be adapted to the Lithuanian version and the chapter about the Baltic Sea can be changed for one with a more general environmental focus. There is a text in Spanish that has been given to Mollet with this focus and it may serve for Lithuania if translated.

Lithuanian participation in transnational events

Lithuanian participants in Södertälje Conference in May are already decided, six persons including coordinator. Due to Lithuanian legislation the Municipality can only pay for its own employees. Therefore Södertälje will pay for two dietists that are employed by the Kindergarten but not by the Municipality, otherwise there will be no kitchen people coming from Molėtai. No politicians are coming to Södertälje.

Who will be able to go to the Policy conference in Mollet in September? Politicians are important, but people from the committees under the City Council like Health Committee and Education Committee are not so eager to go abroad due to lack of English knowledge. The director of the Alanta School, who is also a politician, might be a possible person. Loreta will look around and come back to Lead partner with suggestions.

Peer exchange for kitchen staff with a Swedish visit will not be possible in August as planned from Södertälje, due to school holidays in Lithuania. Loreta suggests a bigger event in the end of the year (November-December) when the Handbook is printed and the entire Handbook group could be involved.

Organization of Lithuanian public meals

Södertälje has gone from a few central kitchens to complete kitchens at every unit, i.e. a strong decentralisation process, during the last 10 years. In Lithuania



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the trend is the opposite. There is still a lot of decentralized cooking, but the trend for the future is to centralize.

Every unit has a dietist who is deciding all the menus and who does nutrient calculations on every meal. Kitchen staff have no possibility to be creative or take any own decisions. This is very far from the way Södertälje works and it will be a challenge to make these different ways of working meet.

Summary: Process status and actions needed

- Coordination and cooperation functions well, but the Lithuanian coordinator sometimes suffers from lack of time and expects a very rapid handling of project issues. This has to be taken in account in the coming cooperation.
- Local Support Group, LSG, is formed with 21 members. Six of them will come to the Södertälje conference, and big part of the Handbook workgroup consists of LSG members. So far everything is OK. Nevertheless, political support is weak and that may cause problems to create a Local action plan. This will need attention.
- Diet for a Green Planet transfer process is started in a positive way. Needs to continue according to project plan at Södertälje Conference in May and during Lead expert's follow up visits in the autumn.
- Work plan Handbook is now established on a general level. Needs follow up according to project plan with personal contacts local coordinator and Lead expert. Principally to assure that the involved parties have understood the concept and which texts will be included. One text on food and environment from Lead Expert has to be translated into English and sent to Loreta.
- Lithuanian participation in transnational meetings is limited due to national payment rules. This has to be discussed and solved through the Lead partner budget, in order to make sure that the right people will be able to travel.

To find politicians prepared to travel abroad will need more efforts. Loreta will come back to Södertälje project leader with suggestions.



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