

Stakeholder Exchange Program

May, 2014 - February, 2015

An exchange between 47 professional key stakeholders in order to further deepen the concept understanding through peer-to-peer theoretical exchange and practical implementation.



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Summary

The stakeholder exchange program including kitchen staff, food experts and civil servants from all partner cities has been an important part of this project. An important aspect of the exchange was getting the opportunity to work and practice your skills in kitchen canteens in another city. Other features of the exchange were going on study visits, and peer-to-peer exchanging of ideas and experiences. The exchange program, which has been mainly practically oriented, aimed at increasing the competence of the practical implementers of the Diet for a Green Planet concept. Södertälje's good practice shows that there must be concept knowledge on high political level, but also in the kitchens where the food is prepared, if the implementation will succeed.

This exchange program has further strengthened our conviction that the grass root level is as important as the decision making level when it comes to promoting – and actually implementing – change.

The exchange program consisted of 5 occasions, and all in all 47 people have been part of it in one way or another; 12 from Molétai, 3 from Lomza, 19 from Mollet del Vallès and 13 from Södertälje. 10 people participated in 2 or more occasions, 37 participated in one occasion.

One of the aims of this bilateral stakeholder exchange was to achieve – at some level – personal development. Not only has the Diet for a Green Planet concept been transferred via formal meetings and presentations by and for politicians and civil servants. It is also a concept that speaks to each person individually. We wanted to examine if some personal development could be accomplished in this short time. In short the answer is yes. In the testimonials from the participants we clearly see that many of the participants have been enriched by this experience – either on a personal level, or on a professional one.

However, the exchange program was somewhat handicapped by 1) the difficult start of the whole project with tight deadlines and lack of time for the project representatives to elaborate on the details of the exchange program, and 2) the difficulty to explain the idea to the partners from the beginning.

A real exchange needs both more preparation work and more time than we had. Afterwards we have learned that the exchange was appreciated to the extent that partners wish to continue with a new project. An ERASMUS+ application that is a continuation of this exchange experience has been submitted with Lomza as one partner, a Lead Partner in Lithuania and other partners in Sweden and Hungary. Another lesson learned is that the roles of the participants – from the giving city or from the receiving cities – could have been better defined and the purpose of each visit could have been clearer. Points that have been considered in the ERASMUS+ project application.

On the other hand, the exchange did manage to touch peoples' lives, and it did contribute positively to the project as a whole. A few examples of this we found in the written evaluations that were made. Some appreciated the concept's focus on vegetables and environmental protection, others valued the fact that they got the opportunity to meet with peers from other countries. Still others found new ways of improving their daily work, e.g. by seemingly simple things like starting to measure the food waste and display the results so that everyone can see it.



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The participants

Lomza:

- Hanna Bukowska, Chef, teacher of food's technology
- Przemyslaw Ciuchnick, Chef, teacher of food's technology
- Dorota Miarka, Instructor of food's technology in University (PWSiP)

Molėtai:

- Rimutė Guobienė, Head of gymnasium
- Sigita Valeikienė, Dietist of "Saulutė" kindergarten
- Irena Paukštienė, Dietist of "Vyturėlis" kindergarten
- Laima Pranskienė, Molėtai progimnasium
- Jolita Sideravičienė, Alanta vocational school
- Nijolė Mackonienė Kindergarten "Vyturėlis"
- Sigita Valeikienė, Kindergarten"
- Eugenija Jasiulionienė, Molėtai gymnasium
- Felicija Steiblienė, Guest house " Senoji užėiga"
- Vita Vaitonienė, Molėtai gymnasium
- Jūratė Statauskienė, Molėtai gymnasium
- Nijolė Kimbartienė, Head of education department of municipality administration

Mollet del Vallès:

- Marina Duñach, local cook from Gallecs
- Isidre Molist, local producer and "Black Radish" Collecti
- Santi Olive Duñach, Local producer and cook
- Núria Duñó Esteve, Manager of the Education Institute of Mollet
- M^a Isabel Cuscó Barceló, Principal of Pinetons Public Kindergarten
- Mireia Oliva Valledorola, Principal of Can Besora Primary School
- Maria Carme Moré Ramon, President of the Ecological School Canteen Association
- Nani Moré Ramon
- Vicenç Ridorsa Araño, Member of the Ecological School Canteen Association
- Montse Tarrés
- Andreu Ollé
- Joan M. Ribas, Manager of the private company Ecomenja
- Maria Cervelló, Manager of the private company Ecomenja
- Alicia Lomba, Headmaster of the public kindergarten La Filadora
- Marta Pons, Headmaster of the public kindergarten La Xarranca
- Anna Duñach, headmaster of the primary school Joan Abelló
- Núria Ripoll, Manager of the private company 9Natural Cuina
- Joan Vides, Manager of the private company 9Natural Cuina
- Alicia Domínguez, Political representative of the Education Department



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Södertälje:

- Bengt Åke Andersson, Result Unit Manager, Diet Unit, Södertälje Municipality
- Kerstin Sjölin, Result Unit Manager, Diet Unit, Södertälje Municipality
- Adam Fridlund, Chef, Diet Unit, Södertälje Municipality
- Magdalena Kondratowicz, Diet Unit
- Violeta Filipzak, Diet Unit
- Krystyna Andersson, Diet Unit
- Pelle Höög, Result Unit Manager, Diet Unit, Södertälje Municipality
- Ursula Larsson, Kindergarten administrator, Södertälje Municipality
- Lotta Pettersson, Teacher, Fornbacka primary school
- Wivi Wikström, Teacher, Fornbacka primary school
- Maria Sandqvist, Teamleader Igelsta primary school
- Tomas Österman, Kitchen manager and Chef, Diet Unit
- Benny Åkesson, Kitchen manager and Chef, Diet Unit

Meetings: program and activities

The exchange program consisted of five meetings:

1. Södertälje, 21-22 May 2014

Kitchen professionals from Mollet del Vallès, Lomza and Molétai practiced in School canteens in Södertälje municipality.

The exchange was part of the first transnational conference in Södertälje. There were numerous sessions, of which some formed part of the exchange. Most importantly, there was a practical workshop in the restaurant school in Moraberg. The workshop was about preparing a full meal (salad buffets, hot meals and desserts) according to the Diet for a Green Planet concept, which was offered to the big group of delegates participating in the conference.



The following day the kitchen experts were divided into three groups, visiting 3 different school kitchens. Thanks to the fact that many of the kitchen staff in Södertälje come from abroad, we could offer work/practice with staff that speak Spanish, Polish and Russian.



There was also a theoretical session forming part of the program, where managers dealing with food related issues met for a peer-to-peer discussion.



In addition to the sessions above, the participants of the exchange also took part in the "regular" transnational conference program, which included study visits to:

- A pedagogical school garden
- A garden specialising in providing occupation for people with special needs
- Local businesses Saltå Kvarn and Molstaberg
- Skillebyholm Garden and Biodynamic Training Centre
- Schools and homes for the elderly

Even though these sessions were not exclusive to the exchange program participants, they of course contributed to the participants' overall understanding of the Diet for a Green Planet concept.



2. Mollet del Vallès, 9-11 June 2014

Experts and stakeholders (kitchen staff, civil servants) from Södertälje visited Mollet del Vallès to follow up on the conference in May and to deepen the relations.

The main components of the bilateral exchange were:

- A Walk & Talk visit to the agricultural park of Gallecs and a study visit to an organic vegetable garden (The Black Radish Collective).
- A practical workshop: preparing lunch with local products from Gallecs. Menu according to Diet for a Green Planet concept.
- A study visit to Can Besora's Primary School, where the headmaster showed the school facilities and introduced a number of environmental projects that the school is engaged in.
- Presentation of the private company Ecomenja, the company that manages the school canteen at Can Besora.
- Lunch at Can Besora's 100% Organic School Canteen and menu according to Diet for a Green Planet concept.

3. Lomza, 16-18 June 2014

Experts and stakeholders (kitchen staff, civil servants) from Södertälje visited Lomza to follow up on the conference in May and to deepen the relations. This exchange was mostly practical, and it was a very strategical one placed in the midst of a high level conference entitled "Healthy Diet in Educational Institutions" at PWSiP University.



More than 100 people participated and took part of the following program:

- Performance by children from Kindergarten no 8.
- Diet for a Green Planet, political and scientific background, concept and implementation, Sara Jervfors and Helena Nordlund, Södertälje.
- Do you know what you eat? – Quality of ecological food, Professor Ewa Rembialkowska, SGGW Warsaw.
- Diet influence on children's physical and mental growth, dietician Radoslaw Majewski, centre of Diet Bialystok

The deputy mayor, civil servants and members of the city council and headmasters of educational institutions all took part and made the conference a huge success.



The genius arrangement – both for the impact of the concept transfer and for the exchange program participants to really feel valuable – was that the newly formed team of Polish and Swedish chefs properly prepared the lunch for all participants according to the Diet for a Green Planet concept. So after all theoretical seminars and talks everybody could see and taste the result of the concept in action. This was very positively received and created interest among persons who had been hesitant in advance. It also created a feeling of genuine pride among the kitchen professionals.

4. Molėtai, 14-16 January 2015

Experts and stakeholders (kitchen staff, civil servants) from Södertälje visited Molėtai to follow up on the conference in May and to deepen the relations. This bilateral meeting combined theoretical and practical sessions.

On January 15th there were lectures given by Dalia Burneikienė, Molėtai gymnasium, and Nijolė Kimbartienė, Head of Education Department of Molėtai

Municipality Administration, followed by a workshop entitled "What would be necessary to change and what we can change in our eating/ feeding habits".



This was actually the first time kitchen personnel was included in competence development. At the end of the lectures there was group work. The participants were divided into groups of four to reflect over the lectures. There were lively discussions in all the groups.



In parallel the Moletai chefs had been working together with the Södertälje chefs to prepare a real Diet for a Green Planet dinner. There were three Moletai chefs, student interpreter and one Södertälje chef in each group. In total 3 groups. The Molètai project team had the excellent idea to include gymnasium students to help with translations – at the same time language training, interpretation help and getting the word out to parents, family and friends!





5. Södertälje, 16-18 February, 2015

Experts and stakeholders from Mollet del Vallès to Södertälje municipality for deepening of relations. This exchange meeting was purely theoretical.

The participants on this exchange mainly consisted of representatives of private companies (catering companies implementing the Diet for a Green Planet concept in Mollet del Vallès) and headmasters of schools. Also, one politician from Mollet's Education Department joined the meeting.

The main components of this exchange visit were:

- Visit to schools and kindergartens (including the canteens)
- Meeting with managers of the Diet Unit in Södertälje
- Pedagogical inspiration by the project "Your 2,000 square meters"
- Informal meetings with local businesses Saltå Kvarn and Biodynamiska Produkter
- Meeting with political representatives of Södertälje

Even though this exchange meeting was different from the others – mainly in the sense that it did not include any practical sessions – it gave plenty of valuable input to the Mollet participants, and it furthered deepened their understanding of the concept and its potential as a pedagogical tool and a business driver.

Methodology

The methodology for the exchange program has offered a mixture of practical work, peer-to-peer reviews, study visits, presentations and workshops.

Each meeting had its own preconditions and the program was designed thereafter.

While, on the one hand, the methodological mixture was much appreciated and gave the participants a diverse picture of the other partner cities, it, on the other hand, may have been to grasp for too much during a short project like this.

Ideally, there would have been more time and more visits. But given the project parameters, maybe there should have been more focus on the theoretical framework behind the concept and the actual practical implementation in the kitchen canteen.

Analysis and conclusions

On the one hand: successful exchanges where participants felt enriched, empowered and valued

The strength of the Diet for a Green Planet concept is its focus on securing know-how and commitment both on top political and civil servant level and on grass root level; i.e. among the people working in the kitchen canteens. A successful change must be come from both directions; top-down and down-up.

Our firm conviction is that had we not included this stakeholder exchange in this project, we would not have achieved the same result. Or rather, the foundation being laid would not have been as solid.

Combining the exchanges with "regular" bilateral meetings or conferences – which was done on 3 of the 5 occasions – was successful. This gave us the possibility to integrate the overall work in the project with the practical work of chefs and kitchen staff – a pedagogically and strategically smart move!

Also, as was done in Lomza and Molétai, it was clever to involve students in the conferences/exchanges for translation services etc. This helped spreading the concept to the younger generation and also generated links to their teachers, friends, parents etc.

Looking at the evaluations of the exchange program, we can also establish that it did touch people's lives – professionally and personally. For some participants, this was the first time ever they got to work in an international environment, for some it was the first time their work was really seen and acknowledged. For some it gave concrete new ideas on how to work in the kitchen (to avoid waste, to change the logistics of the actual serving, to find ways of replacing meat with vegetables etc.), for some it was a great source of inspiration to meet with peers and see how things are done in other cities.

As we mention in the summary above, the exchange program did also inspire key stakeholders in the partner cities to the extent that an ERASMUS+ application that is a continuation of this exchange experience, has been submitted with Lomza as one partner, a Lead Partner in Lithuania and other partners in Sweden and Hungary.

A collection of quotes from the evaluation is to be found below.

On the other hand: room for improvement by more meetings and clearer preparations

In retrospect we can conclude that a real in-depth exchange needs both more preparation work and more time than we had in this project. There were too few occasions and too little time during each occasion. In order to create longstanding relations, people need to meet more than once or twice. This is not to say the exchange did not have an effect at all, please read above for an account of the positive experiences of the program.

Also, the roles of the participants – both from the giving city and from the receiving cities – could also have been better defined and the purpose of each visit could have been clearer. Each visit had its own "character" and the time



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spent on theory, practice and other sessions could have been better analyzed and defined in beforehand.

Partly the reason for the factors mentioned above is the project had a somewhat difficult start, with tight deadlines and lack of time for the project representatives to elaborate on the details of the exchange program. This is further elaborated in the final report of this project.

In future exchange programs, we will attempt to improve within the following areas:

- Fewer participants, but with a clearer aim and purpose for each one.
- More visits. This would give time for follow-up and reflection.
- More time for the theoretical introduction to the concept, and then more time in the kitchens to have time to practice the skills.
- Clearer roles. Is it a "giving" relationship or a "mutual" exchange? What does that mean for the respective participants?
- More time for preparations.

Comments from the participants:

Most participants have given their feedback on the exchange program. They were asked questions like:

- *Thanks to the project and the exchange, I have already changed my ways of working in the following ways:*
- *Thanks to the project and the exchange, I believe that I will – in the future – change my ways of working in the following ways:*
- *Have you discovered possible new solutions or ideas thanks to this project and stakeholder exchange?*
- *Have your attitudes to food, environment and health issues changed since you became involved in the project and the stakeholder exchange?*
- *Has your participation in this project and stakeholder exchange in any way had an effect on you personally?*

Below we have gathered some of the feedback, grouped into "professional" and "personal" experiences.

Examples of professional development (new ways of working, new solutions):

"Calculation of daily food waste and showing the results officially on the board."

"Wider discussions with parents about the weekly menus."

"Thanks to the project and the exchange I have another point of view of the school canteen management and also some new ideas about how to make some changes in the school management."

"I will try to put in practice what I heard and what I have seen in the kitchen. Thanks, it was very interesting, useful and playful."



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"We should offer new healthy dishes (like legume dishes) that are made more attractive."

"I will change my controlling system (in the frame of existing legal documents) and will pay more attention to the offered project concept."

"After the audit of the service we've introduced almost 80% of ecological products in the three public kindergartens with no increase of the price of the service."

"More fun and new, but well forgotten, old national recipes."

"Involving parents into activities concerning tasty and healthy food."

"Reduce waste of food: accurate technical specifications regarding every meal allow us to cook without generating waste."

"Logistics when it comes to offering a selection of dishes."

"Make changes by buying more food from local producers."

"Thanks to the exchanges, our company is evaluating the possibility to increase the number of schools canteens that we currently manage within a diet based on ecological, local and seasonal food. Thanks to the visit to Södertälje we've realized that with a good organizational structure it is possible to increase the number of menus from the 2000 that we are serving currently."

"We've arranged a seminar for the kitchen staff with different cooking techniques and an introduction about how to work with fresh products."

"Thanks to the exchange I've had the possibility to get to know a brilliant management of ecological school canteens based on the promotion of healthy habits and I've decided to introduce some of these good practices in the canteen of my school".

Examples of personal experiences

"International environment – at the start I was very afraid, but the good atmosphere changed the situation."

"Thanks to the exchange I've got lot of energy and enthusiasm to face the everyday management of public services at home. At the same time I've experienced an openness of mind thanks to having been in contact with people from other cultures!"

"I am happy that attention was paid to kitchen staff."

"I was happy that the project concept very much stuck to what we want to achieve in the nearest future (more organic products, locally produced)."

"I was happy that I was invited to work in the kitchen with foreign colleagues."

"Our school should think about training courses for the kitchen staff."

"The simple fact of taking several employees to an exchange has the benefit of making them feel special, happy and proud of their work. At the same time, when they returned to their work place all of them had renewed energy and enthusiasm to face the everyday issues. The public service management it is not only about money – rather about people. It is important to motivate the civil servants."



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"I was happy to get the possibility to work twice in an international environment and assess my competencies. The project concept pushed me to be bolder in including requirements concerning ecological food into tender documentation."

"It was nice to participate and to hear what is happening in other countries and to discover that we are in some cases better than partners are – still not out of touch with healthy food."

"It was nice to participate in the project to feel like being part of a project group, to work together with colleagues, to feel that we are partners in thinking and not better or worse than each other."

"We were invited as controlling institution for the first time to discuss together with the staff which we are controlling. It was a very positive attitude in the project group."

"First time in my life in an international environment – thanks for that."

Report author: Daniel Dworetzky, support to LP.



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