

Transnational conference in Mollet del Vallès, Spain

Diet for a Green Planet: Policy

16–20 September, 2014



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Transnational conference in Mollet del Vallès, Spain. Diet for a Green Planet: Policy

September 16-20, 2014

Main responsible for conference program and execution:

Albert García Macian, project manager, Mollet del Vallès

Sara Jervfors, project coordinator and head of the Diet Unit, Södertälje

Responsible team from Södertälje, the giving city:

Sara Jervfors, project coordinator and head of the Diet Unit, Södertälje

Daniel Dworetzky, communication and project leader support

Christine Strandberg, strategic advisor

Hans von Essen, financial support

Helena Nordlund, lead expert

Local coordinators from receiving cities:

Miglè Bareikytė, Molėtai

Daria Lutrzykowska, Łomża

Agnieszka Buckowska, Łomża

Participants

In total 31 persons who formed the “main” participants. In addition, about 40 participants from the city of Mollet del Vallès participated in parts of the conference. See attached list of participants.

Södertälje: 9 persons.

Łomża: 8 persons.

Molėtai: 3 persons.

Mollet del Vallès: 11 persons.

Objectives for the conference:

The goal of the conference was to boost the work towards a Diet Policy – or other relevant policies/development towards a greater focus on sustainable public meals – in the receiving cities. The conference program contained reviews of receiving cities progress so far, exchanging of experiences and study visits. Special attention was directed to areas such as public procurement and monitoring issues.

Program

See attached documents (full program and summary) for more detailed information.



Summary and process status

The second transnational conference in the Diet for a Green Planet Pilot Transfer Network was held in Mollet del Vallès on September 16-20, 2014. Södertälje Municipality is the Lead partner and the "giving city". Its Diet Unit has implemented the concept Diet for a Green Planet since 2010. The process started already in 2001 with a political decision and in 2006 the development of a Diet Policy began.

The criteria for Diet for a Green Planet concept are:

- Good and healthy food
- Organically grown
- Less meat, more vegetables and wholegrain
- Seasonal food
- Locally produced
- Reduced waste



While the purpose of the first transnational conference in Södertälje in May was to transfer the Diet for a Green Planet concept to the receiving cities by deepening concept understanding in order to prepare for local adaptation, the main goal with this conference was to facilitate the part of the concept transfer that relates to political processes and management of public services. In the Södertälje practice, this has a lot to do with the creation of a Diet Policy – a high level policy decision that guides the implementation work in all public kitchens throughout the municipality. But it also refers to very practical work, such as public procurement procedures and audit services.

A way of achieving the goal with this conference was by strengthening awareness of the concept and the project among participating policy makers and civil servants, some of which had not been very involved so far in the project.

During this conference we focused on what has been done within the policy area, and what will be done in the future from a policy making perspective when it comes to sustainable public meals. For example, some key topics during the conference were

public procurement, audit and monitoring – these are all vital in order for the transformation into more sustainable public meals successful.

It is evident that the different participating partner cities have different possibilities and preconditions when working on policy level. While Mollet del Vallès has managed to both initiate and implement substantial action on policy level (although the responsible public administration in Catalonia for this kind of services is the Catalan Government on regional level), Molétai has very little space to operate on policy level – there are great challenges in involving policy makers in the process. And in Łomża there is an upcoming election in November, which has hampered the commitment from political level so far in the project.

A lesson learned is that there are a lot of factors that influence the politicians' will and capacity to engage; some of which can be influenced (costs, cross-party agreements, level of cooperation with suppliers and producers etc.), some of which there is little opportunity to have impact on (national regulations, internal hierarchies and decision-making procedures that are well-established, municipal budget rules and regulations etc.).

The evaluation of the conference shows an overwhelming satisfaction with the program and an increased knowledge of both the concept itself, and also – in particular from partner cities Łomża and Molétai – of Mollet del Vallès' way of adapting and implementing it.



The participants

The conference hosted 20 participants from the partner cities of Łomża in Poland, Molėtai in Lithuania and Södertälje in Sweden. From Mollet del Vallès, the host city, the “main” delegation consisted of 11 people, but also a large number of people that partly participated. All in all, about 50 people from Mollet del Vallès took part in the conference.

Political representation

From all countries – except for Lithuania – there was political representation in the conference. From Molėtai two civil servants and one NGO representative participated.

From Södertälje a representative of the opposition participated (Mats Siljebrand, leader of the liberal party in Södertälje). This was on the one hand not enough – the objective was to have broader political representation. On the other hand, the fact that the governing parties “allowed” for a member of the opposition to represent Södertälje is a clear sign of the political consensus that is present in Södertälje when it comes to ambitions regarding the quality and sustainability of public meals. The reason for this situation is that there were elections (national and local) on September 14th (two days before the conference) in Sweden, and the massive success of the Swedish Democrats (a right wing, xenophobic party) created some turmoil all throughout Sweden, which had to be handled in the week succeeding the elections.

Molėtai in Lithuania has had difficulties in engaging politicians in the process, which has been further complicated by the fact that internal rules have made it difficult for relevant stakeholders to participate in project meetings and conferences abroad. Added to this, the main project manager in Molėtai, Loreta Štelbienė, had to stay home due to personal circumstances.

Stakeholder representation:

The main group, 30 people from all partner cities that attended the entire conference, consisted mainly of civil servants (mix of sectors and responsibilities) and politicians added with NGOs and experts agriculture and education.

In addition, relevant stakeholders from Mollet del Vallès participated in parts of the conference; policy and decision makers on municipal level, high-level civil servants (for example the Manager of the Personal Services Area and the Manager of the Education Institute), farmers and agriculture advisors, NGOs, business representatives, school representatives (principals, teachers, kitchen staff etc.) and others.

Gender representation

Out of the 30 main participants, 17 were women and 14 men.

- Molėtai: 1 woman, 2 men.
- Łomża: 5 women, 3 men.
- Södertälje: 4 women, 5 men.
- Mollet del Vallès: 7 women, 4 men.



Program and activities

Day 1. Tuesday – official reception with the Mayor of Mollet del Vallès

All participants arrived to Mollet del Vallès during September 16th, met up at 18:15 in the hotel lobby and went for a joint 45 minute walk to the City Hall. Local Project Manager Albert Garcia Macian gave the group insights in Mollet del Vallès architecture, history and culture along the way. A much appreciated start of the conference.

At the City Hall, the Mayor, the councillor of the Public educational department and other city representatives welcomed the group at an official reception. The work being done in Mollet del Vallès enjoys form support from both the mayor and other key stakeholders within the municipality.

After the formal reception, the group went for a more informal reception and dinner at Centre Cultural La Marineta. Dinner was prepared (according to the Diet for a Green Planet concept) by students of the Occupational Center Al Bosch (center for disabled people).

Day 2. Wednesday – focus on local context

The conference was officially inaugurated in Centre Cultural La Marineta by Joan Daví, leader of CIU, the national liberal party of Catalonia, in Mollet del Vallès City Hall and Mats Siljebrand, leader of the Liberal party in Södertälje. The first day of the conference focused on the local context of Mollet del Vallès and how the concept has been implemented. The work in Mollet del Vallès has led to a present situation where the three public kindergartens now have canteens working according to the Diet for a Green Planet concept.

A number of presentations were made, including topics such as:

- Audit of the public school canteen services in Mollet del Vallès.
- Mollet's first step in the transformation of the public school canteen services.
- The agricultural project of Gallec's Consortium: ecological production and its distribution to school canteens.
- School canteens: State of art in Catalonia.
- 9Natural Cuina: a private company offering a public school canteen service.





After an intense morning, lunch was served at the La Xarranca Public Kindergarten.

The lunch was prepared according to the Diet for a Green Planet concept and it was presented by representatives of 9Natural Cuina, the company that won the tender to offer the public school canteen service.

The afternoon was spent visiting local producers:

- The Ecofarm Salgot: processor of high quality pork meat for gastronomic uses.
- The Tavella: an organic vegetable garden with strong social commitment offering vegetable boxes to people in Catalonia mainly located in Barcelona city.



Another visit – to a farmhouse who recovers ancient way of making beer with Gallecs Spelt – was cancelled due to lack of time.

In the evening, dinner was served at Mercat Vell (the old indoor market of Mollet del Vallès), prepared by 9Natural Cuina.

Day 3. Thursday – focus on organization, political document and participation

The morning of the third day was started with a focus on Södertälje's good practice: the political process, participation and organization – from Diet Policy and participation to organization and management. The content of the Diet Policy was presented, as was the background to the consensus driven process. Roger Svanborg,

Head of the Sustainability and strategy Unit in Södertälje, presented Södertälje's organization and management structure that promotes participation, how to get decisions made at the right level and thereby reach efficiency.

This session also featured Mats Siljebrand, Leader of the Liberal Party in Södertälje, and it clarified the relationship between politicians and civil servants in Södertälje. Politicians decide what to do and the civil servants figure out how to do it. Politicians do not interfere in the daily work.

After this introduction a thematic workshop was held, led by Sara Jervfors, Head of the Diet Unit in Södertälje. National working groups (each partner delegation formed a group) were created and discussed the following tasks/questions:

How can your municipality develop a Diet Policy according to the Diet for a Green Planet concept?

- Who should take the initiative?
- Who will be involved?
- How does the decision making process work and which challenges/obstacles are there?
- Who is the prime mover?
- National and other regulations to consider
- Other important aspects to take into account

How can organization and management be structured?

- Existing framework to consider?
- Who can make decisions and who are the relevant stakeholders to involve?
- How to create an organization, which catches the creativity of all involved and affected.

After lunch, all participants joined for an afternoon of getting to know the Gallecs Agroecological project. Gallecs is a rural protected area due to environmental reasons, which covers an area of 750 hectares (almost 50% of Mollet del Vallès territory as a city). Gallecs is being run by a consortium, which aims at increasing the use of organic agriculture in the area. Today more than 200 hectares are organically grown.

Three ideas have formed the objectives for the work:

1. Protection of the natural values.
2. Diversification and ecological agriculture.
3. Public use (leisure).

Creating job opportunities has also been important.

This already established work combined with the Diet for a Green Planet concept has made the very quick transformation process possible.

The session was organised as a "walk & talk" and it included visits to:

- Gemma Safont, Manager of Gallecs Consortium
- The organic vegetable garden and the renewable energies



- Isidre Molist, local producer
- Núria Gascón and Joana González, “Black radish” Collective
- Gallecs’s farm shop and workshop

The evening program, which was voluntary, included a trip to Barcelona with a short sightseeing and dinner at the Restaurant Gat Blau, which operates according to the “KM 0” concept¹.

Day 4. Friday – focus on public procurement, audit and monitoring

The first part of the day was spent on a thematic workshop focusing on public procurement, audit and monitoring, areas where Södertälje has done work that is of interest for the other partner cities in their efforts to adapt and implement parts of the Diet for a Green Planet concept. This part of the program aimed at giving a short description of what public procurement is and how Södertälje uses it to get organic and local products at reasonable prices. Different methods on audit and monitoring were also presented.

Elin Waltersson, Manager at the Södertälje Diet Unit and responsible for the public procurement in cooperation with Telge Inköp (the municipal company that is formally in charge of all procurement in Södertälje Municipality) was in charge of the thematic workshop. The workshop aimed at analysing the use of public procurement in each country. What is already working and what can be improved? How can public procurement be used to get more organic and locally produced food?



The workshop showed where we stand in the respective cities and put our weaknesses and strengths on display when it comes to in terms of knowledge, experience and ability to perform a good management through public procurement. The Polish and Spanish groups had fruitful sessions, while the Lithuanian group struggled to find motivation for these matters, as the local abilities to influence policies are limited.

The second part of the day was spent in Can Besora primary school, which offers a 100% organic school canteen and works according to the Diet for a Green planet concept. After enjoying lunch together with students, Can Besora’s organic school garden and a number of environmental projects were presented, followed by a

¹ A **km0** dish is one where the majority of the ingredients come from local breeders, farmers and fishers within a 100 km radius. The majority of the ingredients have to be organic. Food which has been genetically modified or is from an unknown source is avoided.

presentation of Ecomenja, a private company and member of the LSG in Mollet del Vallès. Mireia Oliva, principal of Can Besora, then led a discussion and Q&A session on the management of the school canteen service and she offered a visit to the kitchen facilities.

After a full day, most delegates had a chance to get some rest. The project managers and coordinators seized the opportunity to arrange an IRL Project Steering Committee meeting. During a conference like this, there are many things happening and many people to communicate with. During the transnational conference in Södertälje in May, we lacked an opportunity to sit down with the “core group” to discuss practical, administrative and organisational matters in the project. This time we made room for such a session.

The evening of the third day marked the end of the “internal” part of the conference – now it was time to disseminate the project.

Thanks to fantastic arrangements by the project manager in Mollet del Vallès, Albert Garcia Macian, we had the opportunity to showcase our work in the Artisans Fair (“Fira d’Artesans”), a major festivity taking place on the streets of Mollet del Vallès, gathering thousands of people, showcasing local food of all sorts, local craft work, performances etc. The project had a chance to have a stand during the entire weekend.

During the evening of day 3 and day 4 we all shared the responsibility of staffing the stand, handing out brochures, discussing with by-passers etc.

Day 5. Saturday – disseminating the project

During the day, the four country delegations took turn in staffing the stand to disseminate information about the project. The stand was located in the food section of the fair, next to the stand of the Agroecological Association of Gallecs.

There was time for a brief study visit during the day – the delegation visited a local charcuterie, Can Brunés.

The different delegations left Mollet del Vallès during the Saturday and Sunday. There was no formal summing up, but since there was plenty of time during the final day, there were many informal discussions taking place, which has proven to be valuable for the continuation of the project.



Analysis and conclusions

Methodology

The main structure and components of the conference were:

- Tuesday: **Arriving and welcoming.** The highlight was the official reception and meeting with the mayor.
- Wednesday: **Local context.** The delegates got to know the host city and the work being done there. The local context is key to understanding and implementing a concept like the Diet for a Green Planet.
- Thursday: **Organization, political document and participation** – active work during thematic workshop.
- Friday: **Public procurement, audit and monitoring** – active work during thematic workshop.
- Saturday: **Dissemination** of the project.

The methodology in this transnational conference differed from the one in Södertälje, due to the fact that this was a more homogenous group – the topics and themes were the same for all delegates. We find that the methodology worked well, based on the evaluations where the delegates claim to have both:

- gained a good knowledge and sense of the city of Mollet del Vallès and its preconditions to adapt and implement the Diet for a Green Planet, and
- found the time and space to discuss these matters within their national delegations. This was the first time when some of the delegates from the same cities actually met and spoke with each other.

The presence at the Artisans Fair was deeply appreciated, not only thanks to the festive atmosphere, but also because it offered lots of room for informal conversations. It is sometimes difficult to digest and analyse information during a jam-packed conference where one session/workshop/seminar is immediately followed by another one. The Saturday offered a much needed space for reflection and relaxation.

Content

We attempted to offer a balanced mix of one-sided information about practices, dynamic work in thematic workshops, peer-to-peer discussions and Q&As, study visits and free time.

And, as the icing on the cake, the whole delegation had the opportunity to participate in the Artisans Fair – Mollet's annual fair which is arranged by the Neighbourhood Association. Thousands of people took part of the festivities and the Diet for a Green Planet project used this remarkable event as a dissemination point to showcase its goals and ambitions. We are convinced that the Artisans Fair was a good arena for dissemination, but at the same time, one should not exaggerate the results. After all, the main attractions of such an event are the local products and performances that are on display.



We feel that we succeeded in our ambition with a dynamic and interesting content, although it had its price. The whole conference, including travel, took six whole days for most delegates, which is quite a lot.

A few extracts from the evaluation of the conference testify to this:

One of the most well designed and executed international conferences I have attended. It provided opportunities to discuss the concept at all levels, from a political and international policy level, to what kindergarten children eat for their morning tea. This holistic view and presentation is quite rare and the organizers should be commended for their work.

- Member of the Södertälje delegation

We were very impressed by the Gallecs Consortium, the fact that the farmers are so united, they really cooperate. We would like to adopt this in our region, I think that we have a potential to do this. Visiting the Can Salgot pig farm was also very interesting, we could see at close quarters how the eco-farm functions. Six people from our delegation are former teachers, and they very much appreciated the visit to Can Besora primary school. They gained a lot of knowledge on how the Spanish school works.

- Member of the Łomża delegation

Policy work

When it comes to progress being made, Mollet del Vallès is the partner city that has come the furthest. One of the main achievements is that the city has – during a very short time – worked together with the Ecological School Canteen Association members to create a new public procurement that will allow the city to improve the quality of the school canteen service. The Diet for a Green Planet criteria have been included in the new public procurement model and as the most important change, it should be highlighted that 90 out of 100 points concern food quality. In the former public procurement model 90 out of 100 points focused on economy.

The work made by Mollet del Vallès has already gained recognition in other parts of Spain. In October, the city was invited as a good practice to the Ecological School Canteen Congress in Madrid arranged by Ecologists in Action.

Early on in this project, Mollet del Vallès Municipality signed an agreement with the Ecological School Canteen Association of Catalonia to give advice in every step of the transfer process. The partnership has been very useful. In fact, it has worked so well that the association decided to organize the 1st Ecological School Canteen Congress of Catalonia in Mollet del Vallès.

All in all, Mollet del Vallès has made great progress both when it comes to the concept transfer (knowledge) and the policy transfer.

In the other partner cities, the process is slower.

When it comes to affecting policy making in Łomża the aim within this project is to start a process that will eventually lead to the creation of a municipal Diet Policy. The process is slow, but there is some progress. Earlier in the project, there have been discussions with politicians about creating a Diet Policy. The response has been hesitant. But after this conference in Mollet del Vallès, where some important policy makers participated, there are some changes in attitude. The project team in Łomża testifies that the decision makers – after the conference – realize that this change



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doesn't have to be very expensive and that there are other benefits that come with it; job creation, promotion of the region, increase in local economy, etc. Most importantly there is an increasing will from policy makers to address this issue of sustainable food in schools and kindergartens.

But, the upcoming elections in Łomża that were held in November prevented any concrete and substantial steps to be taken immediately after the conference. However, the main goal – to awake the interest of the politicians of the project and of the issue – was achieved.

When it comes to the status of implementing the Diet for a Green Planet concept on policy making level in Molétai, it is a very slow process. The aim of the project team is to get the politicians more involved; it is their attitudes and decisions that will determine the efficiency of the implementation of the concept.

However, the political interest has been vague, and coupled with this; the project team has struggled with internal rules and procedures, which resulted in poor representation in conferences and meetings. This was very evident in this conference, where the ambition was to have people in policy making positions as participants.

However, one has to make the best out of every given situation, and the project team members in Molétai will continue their efforts to raise interest in the political sphere during the remainder of the project. This conference gave the team members lot of new and valuable insights and experiences to be used for that purpose.

Partner cooperation

The partner cooperation has functioned very well, both in the preparation and implementation phase. The team in Södertälje (LP) was deeply involved in designing the program so that relevant topics were addresses, and the local project manager in Mollet del Vallès made a fantastic job in setting the whole program together.

The other partner cities also had a chance to come with input during the monthly project steering committee meetings that take place within the project.

The biggest problem is the one that has been already addressed – the situation in Molétai. Due to rules and procedures – and restraints when it comes to expenditure – it was difficult to form the Lithuanian delegation, and Södertälje and Mollet del Vallès shared the travel and accommodation costs for Molétai.

Local Support Groups, LSG

The Local Support Groups in the different partner cities have been formed. Due to different preferences, the partners have chosen different ways of setting up their LSGs. The LSGs in Mollet del Vallès, Łomża and Molétai are fairly stable when it comes to number of members etc. The LSG in Södertälje grows during the course of the project. This is due to the fact that the Diet for a Green Planet is a dynamic concept, which develops all the time. And thanks to this URBACT pilot transfer network, more relevant stakeholder representing more sectors and competences join the work along the way in Södertälje.



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Diet for a Green Planet transfer process

The concept transfer process was not the main focus of this conference, but it is easy to conclude that it had a positive effect on that process as well. The conference gave good insights in how Mollet del Vallès has adapted and implemented the concept, which had a twofold effect:

- It strengthened the participants' knowledge of the concept itself.
- It gave them inspiration on how to work in their own regions.

During the months following the conference, there will be bilateral meetings focusing on deepening the concept transfer. They will be treated in separate reports.

Roadmap for Applications

The Roadmap for Applications is a project output that was not part of the "official" program, but there were numerous discussions among the project teams about future project ideas and collaborations.

Translation

During the second day of the conference (Wednesday – focus on local context) simultaneous translation was used, due to the fact that there was a fairly large group of people present (30-40). During the remainder of the conference, translation was handled by the coordinators from the partner cities (Albert Garcia Macian for Mollet del Vallès, Daria Lutrzykowska for Łomża, the Lithuanian delegates all speak English). Mollet del Vallès' project coordinator Albert Garcia Macian made a big contribution by translating all study visits to English, allowing the other participants to follow.

Logistics

The logistic arrangements of the first transnational conference in Södertälje in May were challenging, although it worked out very well in the end. This conference program were not as "spread out", most sessions took place within walking distance from the hotel.

All in all, the logistics worked out very well during the entire conference.

Appendix 1: Conference participation list

Appendix 2: Full conference program



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Comments from the participants:

"Very informative, interesting and so well varied that I believe there was something for everyone."

"This activity was like drinking from a fire-hose. There was so much information to take in and process during a short period of time. However with the help of simultaneous interpreting, a well-planned schedule (working from large scale patterns to small scale details) I was able to gain a solid understanding of the context of Mollet and how the concept relates to it."

"I received a warm welcome; the staff was very helpful and willing to share their experiences."

"This was a very informative insight into public procurement. It is important to lift these areas of "dark matter" in such projects– by dark matter I mean policies, structures and institutions behind the physical manifestation of our urban life. Without an understanding of how we purchase food within the municipality, we cannot make educated decisions on how to design complimentary areas of policy and public space."

"The study visits were the absolute highlights!"

"The program was all killer and no filler. The tempo remained very high for the entire program. I gave a 9 and not 10 as I feel there was a real need to have an afternoon or an evening free at the midpoint of the conference in order for people to rest up and be fighting fit for the final days. This is my only point of criticism for the program."

"I believe this conference can be taken as a "best practice" standard of how to design and execute a transnational conference."

"My overall impression of the entire conference is very good. My delegation was satisfied because of the variety of activities. Everyone found topics and sessions that were of interest."

"The 'Mollet's local context' session was a little problematic because of the language barriers. It was also difficult to pay attention all the time, as there was sometimes too much information."

"My delegation really enjoyed this workshop; not only that we got to know more about our partners, but also that we had a time to discuss about our own reality."

"Artisans Fair – we enjoyed this event. It was nice to be so close to the citizens of Mollet del Valles, to feel the atmosphere of the city, and see the stands of local craftsmen. It gave us lots of information about the region."

Report author: Daniel Dworetzky, support to LP.

