

# Transnational Innovation in Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture in the Mediterranean region

White Paper



Project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund



# White Paper

## Transnational Innovation in Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture in the Mediterranean region

### Table of contents

1.	Introduction.....	3
2.	What is transnational innovation in metropolitan agriculture?.....	3
3.	How to foster transnational innovation: lessons, challenges and recommendations.....	4



# 1. Introduction

**Transnational innovation practices, mostly in the form of multi-partner projects and networks, play an important role in the consolidation and progress of sustainable and resilient metropolitan agriculture.** This document discusses its characteristics and point towards some recommendations on how to make best use of this kind of initiatives.

This report has been prepared in the context of **MADRE, a capitalization Interreg Med project that addresses urban and peri-urban agriculture in 6 metropolitan areas** (Barcelona, Montpellier, Marseille, Bologna, Tirana and Thessaloniki) with the objective of sharing good practices and creating a Mediterranean network of cooperation. Building on local participatory diagnoses, a series of transnational meetings were held in order to discuss different aspects of this issue. This report is one of the 6 'white papers' deriving from these meetings. In particular, **the transnational innovation dimension was addressed in a workshop held in Bologna on 14 and 15 December 2017 with the participation of about 30 participants** from different stakeholder groups of the 6 metropolitan areas: farmers and business sphere (15%), academia and research (45%), civil society (15%) and public authorities (25%). The contents of the document are related to the 'Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture Best Practice Catalogue', a collection of 36 key initiatives from the 6 MADRE metropolitan areas. The analysis presented here also complements a more succinct policy recommendations report. All these documents can be accessed through MADRE's website.

The review of the topic and recommendations that follow aim to address all Mediterranean metropolises. As they emerge to a great extent from the discussions held in the context of the project's participatory meetings, their relevance and comprehensiveness might be somehow limited by the diversity, expertise and geographic scope of participants. Nevertheless, they pursue a regional dimension of the issue.

The report consists of a general description of transnational innovation in the context of urban and peri-urban agriculture, after which the most relevant networks and organisations are listed. The following section presents a specific analysis in the Mediterranean context and a list of recommendations for the development of successful transnational projects and networks.

## 2. What is transnational innovation in metropolitan agriculture?

Many projects on urban and peri-urban agriculture led to some kind of transnational innovation practice. Adding to many long-established initiatives that link countries from the Global North with others from the Global South, over the last two decades metropolitan agriculture has received a renewed interest in industrialised countries as well, becoming a central issue in national and regional networks. Such structures aim at **raising awareness of the importance of local food systems, exchange best practices between metropolises and advocate for better policies at all governmental levels.**

A number of NGOs and other associations are working at world or macro-region level to help frame the understanding of food issues. Some international level networks are dedicated to a specific type of stakeholders, while others are open to various categories. European projects, especially in the field of territorial cooperation, are also interesting opportunities for local authorities and other stakeholders from different regions and countries to learn from one another.

Some of the most relevant examples of institutions and networks that focus of transnational innovation in agriculture and food systems are the following:

Institutions and networks with a broad thematic approach:

- **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO):** specialised agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat world hunger. It aims at achieving food security for all societies, ensuring regular access to sufficient high-quality food.
- **IFOAM - Organics International:** international umbrella organisation for the organic world, uniting a diverse range of national stakeholders contributing to the organic vision of agriculture. It is composed by 1000 affiliates of more than 130 countries and it facilitates the transition of farmers to organic agriculture, raising awareness and providing support for the creation of a favourable policy environment.



- **ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability:** leading global network of more than 1,500 cities, towns and regions committed to building a sustainable future. The aim of its members is to protect the climate, biodiversity, air quality, and freshwater resources. Its joint collaborations include a number of food-related projects.
- **C40 Cities:** network of the world's megacities committed to addressing climate change. It supports the collaborations between cities to share knowledge and drive measurable and sustainable action on climate change. The organisation includes the Food Systems Network, which supports city efforts to create solutions for climate adaptation throughout the urban food system.

Institutions and networks centred on urban and peri-urban agriculture:

- **Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP):** transnational agreement supported by the United Nations' FAO. It represents the first international protocol aimed at tackling food-related issues at the urban level. Its more than 100 signatory cities are committed to cooperate internationally by sharing good practices and developing sustainable local food systems.
- **International Network for Urban Agriculture (INUAG):** network that provides recognition and philanthropic support to urban farming innovators and leaders through an annual awards programme and funds for urban farming projects.
- **International Urban Food Network (IUFN):** research and cooperation hub on sustainable food systems, campaigning for the promotion of city-region food systems as a relevant driver for the construction of resilient and sustainable territories.
- **RUAF Foundation:** organisation that seeks to contribute to the development of sustainable cities by facilitating awareness, knowledge generation and dissemination, capacity development, policy design and action planning for resilient and equitable urban agriculture and urban food systems. It is a leading partnership formed by strategically selected expert institutions with a significant track record in urban farming or work on urban food system solutions, and consists of cities, research institutes and NGOs.

### 3. How to foster transnational innovation: lessons, challenges and recommendations

Transnational innovation on metropolitan agriculture is taking the form of many projects and networks across. In the context of MADRE, a participatory analysis with local stakeholders from the metropolitan areas of Thessaloniki, Tirana, Bologna, Marseille, Montpellier and Barcelona highlighted a number of elements that hamper and foster such initiatives. The following table presents the **most relevant common factors from each local analysis**, which can be adopted as a first approach to the situation of this issue in the Mediterranean area.

+	-
<p><b>Strengths and opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>strong link between metropolitan agriculture and many issues that are priorities in EU policies and programmes</b> (such as the environment, sustainable urban development and social and territorial cohesion), which facilitates funds, political commitment and interest for transnational projects on this issue.</li> <li>• The proliferation of <b>international treaties or pacts</b>, such as the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, which promotes the contact between its members and the formation of new projects and networks.</li> <li>• The existence of <b>collaborative tools that facilitate transnational coordination</b> and the exchange of information, such web platforms and online seminars.</li> <li>• The opportunities that such projects and networks provide for involving new stakeholders and <b>creating tighter local communities</b> around a particular issue.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses and risks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties to achieve significant <b>presence and participation of stakeholders from civil society</b> in transnational projects (because of a lack of resources, language barriers, inappropriate regulations, etc.).</li> <li>• <b>Limited access to European funding</b> for transnational cooperation by many public and private institutions due to excessive paperwork and little initial resources.</li> <li>• Lack of <b>long-term commitment, strategies and funding</b> in order to ensure the continuity of specific projects.</li> <li>• <b>Little awareness of the benefits of transnational projects and networks</b> due to weak dissemination of the outcomes in previous initiatives.</li> </ul>

The combination of these factors opens up a number of issues that are highly relevant in any effort to initiate or participate in networking initiatives. In order to further develop this issues, representatives from the MADRE metropolises developed a transnational analysis which led to more in-depth discussions around how to best develop an inter-metropolitan project. The outcomes of this exercise is presented here as a series of recommendations to ensure the sustainability and replicability of cooperation projects and networks. The following 8 recommendations can be applied to agricultural initiatives and to other projects as well:

### 1. Build on previous experiences

It is important to **start a new project with a comprehensive mapping of all the relevant experiences that have been undertaken so far**. The outcomes of these experiences should provide the base for the construction of the new project, and be fully taken into account. If any of these experiences are still going on, it may be positive to reinforce them rather than create a new parallel, disconnected process. Contributing to the international relations side of existing processes not only helps support them, but can also be more fruitful for the new initiative than starting from scratch. Interreg horizontal projects can be amongst the most relevant ones in the context of the EU, even though they engage with a diversity of topics, not only metropolitan agriculture.

### 2. Engage in transnational networks from existing local clusters

A first and necessary step before getting any partner involved in a fruitful transnational network on metropolitan agriculture is the **consolidation of a local cluster or group of stakeholders centred on this issue**. This cluster should comprise all relevant actors and be properly articulated, and consequently designate who can best represent it in a transnational network. The coming together at a local level of many institutions and organisations gives the cluster political leverage and it can also contribute to find resources for local stakeholders to participate in knowledge-sharing meetings and processes.

### 3. Participate in networks that match local stakeholders' needs

The creation or participation in networks is most effective when it matches the needs of the stakeholders that are involved in it. If they are able to collectively identify what is most interesting for their local context and then **organize and set up the network in a way that they can feel ownership over it**, then everything that is relevant for them is on the table, and the viability of the network becomes reinforced. This kind of procedure enhances the odds that the stakeholders themselves animate the network, thus reducing the need for external facilitation.

### 4. Create a facilitating environment for participation

Building trust between participants of any transnational initiative is essential. Personal values, ethics, relations and confidence are some of the aspects that have to be addressed right from the start. It is important, therefore, to enable spaces for different types of discussions that can tackle facts and procedures, but also personal situations, feelings, perceptions of negative and positive aspects of the project, etc. This **facilitating environment can empower the participants**, make them feel more comfortable and lever their relational power, thus promoting active engagement. Discussing and **agreeing upon a language that is commonly used and understood** is equally important to this aim.

### 5. Focus on expectations

Making sure that everybody expresses their expectations regarding the outcomes of the project is a key element for successful projects. **Being transparent about the priorities of every partner conduces to greater understanding of each other**, thus making the network advance process or network advance more fluently.

### 6. Ensure the continuity of projects

When a project or a collaboration ends, whether it leads to an established network or not, it should always leave behind something for stakeholders to do afterwards. It can be a specific job, a plan to develop, a new project to create, or anything else. In order to ensure the continuity of networks, this is just as important as building from previous experiences. If the project ends without generating something for the future, it may generate a feeling of uselessness in the partners and those who have participated in it. Having a **tangible result for every local partner** (and thus viewing the utility of participating in transnational experiences) could also facilitate their involvement in other networks.



## 7. Allow for a flexible participation

When setting up a network or a project, it can be useful to **allow for different forms of participation for the stakeholders and partners**. If they can adapt their involvement to what suits them best in terms of resources and interests, they will be more likely interested in the collaboration. Not taking part in every single action developed through a network should be tolerated and welcome as normal.

## 8. Develop adaptable calendars and plans

The context in which a project is being developed can be very different to that of the moment of its inception. New and unexpected partners can also join in after its start, or suffer significant internal changes. These factors demand that the **calendars and planned actions are adapted as the project is developed**. The regulations and other external conditions (for example, those that apply to EU cooperation projects) often constrain this flexibility but it is necessary that, when possible, the design of such initiatives is not taken for granted but, on the contrary, it can be amended so that all partners keep feeling it useful and attractive.

### Example 1 Agri-Urban

Agri-Urban is an European network for the promotion of employment in the agri-food sector in small and medium-sized cities. The network emerged from an EU URBACT project lead by the municipality of Baena (Spain). Five other cities partnered during the first phase of the project (September 2015 - March 2016): Fundão (Portugal), Marchin (Belgium), Cesena (Italy), Södertäje (Sweden) and Pyli (Greece). The second phase (May 2016 - May 2018) incorporated another five municipalities: Abergavenny (United Kingdom), Mollet del Vallès (Spain), Jelgava (Latvia), Mouans-Sartoux (France) and Petrinja (Croatia). The focus on small and medium-sized cities is one of the main characteristics of the project, which aims at the creation of a stakeholders' network in order to provide a permanent table of discussion to enhance connections, transfer needs, develop project proposals and disseminate relevant information.

More info on MADRE online catalogue ([link in the last page](#))

### Example 2 URGENCI

Since 2004, the International Network for Community Supported Agriculture (URGENCI) brings together citizens, small farmers, consumers, activists and concerned political actors at global level through an alternative economic approach: Local and Solidarity-based Partnerships (LSP). This type of engagements between producers and consumers is aimed at maintaining and developing family-scale organic farming and achieving local food sovereignty. The network is focused on Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) as a way to solve the problems associated with global intensive agricultural production and distribution.

More info on MADRE online catalogue ([link in the last page](#))

### Example 3 ResCUE-AB

The Research Center in Urban Environment for Agriculture and Biodiversity (ResCUE-AB) was established in 2013 by the Department of Agricultural Sciences of the University of Bologna. As part of its efforts to analyse the phenomenon of urban gardens, the centre created a transnational network of experiences in urban agriculture and ecology which supports debates and research initiatives and brings together a number of academic institutes and public institutions. Its mixed approach between a local leadership from Bologna and wider network of collaborators is a very interesting example of transnational innovation.

More info on MADRE online catalogue ([link in the last page](#))



#### **Example 4** **URBAN GREEN TRAIN**

This Erasmus+ project, Urban Green Education for Entreprising Agricultural Innovation (URBAN GREEN TRAIN), was designed to encourage pioneering business-oriented initiatives in urban agriculture through knowledge exchange and mutual cooperation between small and medium-sized enterprises, policy-makers and higher education institutions. The project developed a prototype and model for a collaborative development of curricula and courses covering urban agriculture and entrepreneurship. The end of the project resulted in the creation of an international and interdisciplinary Cluster on Entrepreneurial Urban Agriculture (URBANAG), which continues to develop discussion forums, meetings and newsletters.

More info on MADRE online catalogue ([link in the last page](#))

#### **Example 5** **SICID-MED**

SIGID-MED (Social and Intercultural Dialogue through Governance for local development: Mediterranean urban and peri-urban agriculture) was an European cross-border cooperation project developed from November 2013 to December 2016. Its partners included a variety of public authorities, private actors and civil society organisations from Al-Balqa (Jordan), Rome (Italy), Mahdia (Tunisia) and Barcelona (Spain), who worked together to find innovative ways to fight social exclusion and poverty through urban and peri-urban agriculture. The project focused on improving governance and enhancing dialogue between local stakeholders, and developed interesting models based on low cost tools and minimal inputs. The mixture of EU and non-EU Mediterranean partners makes the project a very interesting example of transnational innovate in metropolitan agriculture.

More info on MADRE online catalogue ([link in the last page](#))



See the catalogue on-line at the following links:

[goo.gl/Qs2LFi](https://goo.gl/Qs2LFi)

[www.agri-madre.net](http://www.agri-madre.net)



[m.dieny@avitem.org](mailto:m.dieny@avitem.org)

[ricerca.innovazione@cittametropolitana.bo.it](mailto:ricerca.innovazione@cittametropolitana.bo.it)

[madre.interreg-med.eu](http://madre.interreg-med.eu)



@madremed



@medMADRE



medMADRE

Project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

This publication has been produced within the framework of the MADRE project - co-financed by the Interreg MED Programme 2014-2020 - with contributions from all project partners and a wide array of stakeholders from the six metropolitan cities involved and the technical support of Llaurent Barcelona.

The content of this report does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Responsibility for the information and views expressed in the document lies entirely with the authors.

2018, Interreg MED Programme 2014-2020, MADRE project, White Paper on Transnational Innovation in Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture in the Mediterranean region.