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The Food Club: A European Network for Social Inclusion

Project 101053363 — TFC — CERV-2021-CITIZENS-TOWN

PROJECT HANDBOOK





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1. CONTEXT

PROJECT ABSTRACT

The EU migration crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic and the resurgence of intolerance and racism brought together a partnership focusing on increasing awareness against discrimination and promoting social inclusion. The Food Club (TFC) uses food and local gastronomy to promote intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and to fight against racism and discrimination. The aim is to build knowledge and share best practices between partner municipalities, using food to reintegrate and promote sociality, especially after a period of forced social distancing. TFC also promotes sustainable behaviors related to food. Target groups include inhabitants of partner municipalities, encouraging the participation of natives, TCNs and people with different cultural backgrounds. Gender balance and non-discrimination will always be observed; total direct beneficiaries will count 1430 people, indirect beneficiaries will be 300000 people. Activities include workshops and study visits focusing on social food; intercultural dinners and exchanges will be promoted in each partner municipality; online events will contribute to the promotion and dissemination of results. Each event has been designed upon the specific characteristics of each municipality, their social environment and opportunities for the inclusion of all. Expected outcomes are Improved knowledge on the use of food to foster social inclusion; Increased awareness on diversity as a benefit for society; Increased understanding on environmental issues; Stronger and long-lasting connections between partner municipalities; Increased and widespread social inclusion, integration and acceptance; Higher participation of local populations to municipal events; Lower numbers of racially motivated crimes at the municipal/ country level. The outputs produced will include periodical reports, a cookbook containing the recipes produced during the activities, articles, blogposts, social media content and a handbook on best practices experimented by the partnership.

PROJECT PARTNERS

- **COMUNE DI CASTELNUOVO DEL GARDA, ITALY**
- **MESTSKA CAST PRAHA-KOLOVRATY, CZECH REPUBLIC**
- **ASOCIACION BUILDING BRIDGES, SPAIN**
- **MUNICIPALITY OF ALBA IULIA, ROMANIA**
- **COMMUNE DE SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE, FRANCE**
- **ASOCIATIA DE DEZVOLTARE INTERCOMUNITARA MOTII TARA DE PIATRA, ROMANIA**

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2. INTRODUCTION

This document is intended to stand as a project handbook, showcasing all the experiences and best practices collected and developed during the implementation of The Food Club, through the inputs of all project partners and of the local communities involved in the process. As it is the main message of the project, food has been used to understand and promote social inclusion, with a focus on all the specificities that each European region can count on when it comes to welcome foreign people and combat discrimination. Each implemented activity focused on a specific topic or ingredient, unveiling a common thread between partner municipalities and between people from all over the world, as Europe is now a highly multicultural and international society. Common challenges and brilliant solutions came up during the process of sharing and learning from each other, taking inspiration from already existing inclusive projects and developing further actions to be used at the municipal level.

As TFC was conceived during the Covid-19 pandemic emergency, a special focus has been put on the mobilities that allowed project partners to meet in person, visit each partner municipality and understand first-hand how social inclusion and civic cooperation are managed and promoted in each region. The outburst of the Russian-Ukrainian war only reinforced the urgency and importance of such projects, highlighting how working on and promoting mutual understanding and acceptance is fundamental to maintain just, equal and welcoming societies, not only for people moving across Europe but also for every global citizen in search of shelter and safety. It is the duty of the European Union and of all its citizens to welcome and support people in need for whatever reason, especially now that extremist governments are on the rise globally, and wars are escalating at the expenses of civilians and displaced communities.

A second important topic addressed by The Food Club is represented by sustainability in the framework of food production, conservation and consumption, again highlighting its social powers: multiple techniques to avoid food waste and to reuse food produce have been presented during project activities, showing that all the involved communities deal with such topics effectively, even though with different techniques. The tight bond between food, inclusive societies and a sustainable use of natural resources strongly emerged, showing that municipal bodies are constantly searching for new approaches, with the involvement of emerging technologies, highlighting the common need for extended fundings and finances dedicated to the promotion of sustainable practices in agriculture and farming, which are reflected in higher levels of employment, more just societies and cohesive communities at the European level. This common trend is especially visible and urgent in rural areas, while more urban spaces are demanding for greener areas, cultivable plots and civic action to preserve nature.

A presentation of the implemented activities follows, together with the inputs and main findings provided by project partners, showcasing the achieved impact and results and suggesting further development on the topic of social inclusion through food at the municipal level, all over Europe.



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3. IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES

Online Opening Event

An opening online conference was held in July 2022, with the participation of all project partners and a total of 260 people. The main venue was set in the offices of the Municipality of Castelnuovo del Garda, lead partner in charge of this activity, with the direct participation of the Mayor Giovanni Dal Cero and other municipal representatives following the implementation of this project. The agenda of the event included:

- Presentation of the project, its objectives, expected results and activities that will be organized by project partners in all the involved countries
- Description of the target groups addressed by this project
- Presentation of the communication strategy and related communication activities
- Presentation of the website and project logo
- The floor was given to all project partners, who could introduce themselves, their municipalities and their role within this project

A special focus was dedicated to the theme of social inclusion and the opportunity to use food as a tool to overcome boundaries. An interactive discourse was encouraged, through questions and remarks from all partners. The Municipality of Castelnuovo del Garda involved local associations dealing with food, wine, volunteering and social issues. Several young people attended, interested in the subject addressed in a new way. On the Italian territory the topic of food and wine has always been linked to tourism, and the project is instead addressing the subject in an innovative way with a participatory, inclusive, sustainable and supportive approach. The project's method also received positive feedback in the interlocutions following the meeting. This conference was also the occasion to present and kick-start the brand-new project website: <https://www.foodclub.blog/>, on which all project activities are presented, news is updated, and the achieved results are available for consultation. A section is also dedicated to the recipes cooked and tasted by project partners in all the municipalities involved. An extract of the online presentation is provided here.

What's the project about?

TFC is a European project that promotes food sharing as an element that unites communities.

The aim is to build knowledge and share best practices between partner municipalities, using food to reintegrate and promote sociality, especially after a period of forced social distancing.

What are the target groups?



Inhabitants of partner municipalities, encouraging the participation of natives.



TCN:
Any person who is not a citizen of the European Union



People with different cultural backgrounds

Gender balance and non-discrimination will always be observed

What will be the activities?

- ✓ Workshops and study visits focusing on social food
- ✓ Intercultural dinners and exchanges will be promoted in each partner municipality
- ✓ Online events will contribute to the promotion and dissemination of results.

What are the expected results?

- ✓ Knowledge on the use of food to foster social inclusion
- ✓ Increased understanding on environmental issues
- ✓ Stronger and long-lasting connections between partner municipalities
- ✓ Higher participation of local populations to municipal events

The outputs produced will include periodical reports, a cookbook containing the recipes produced during the activities, articles, blogposts, social media content and a handbook on best practices experimented by the partnership.

Workshop in Italy – Castelnuovo del Garda



A first in-person event was organized in July 2022 in Castelnuovo del Garda, Italy, with the participation of 80 people in total. It was the occasion for reflecting on how local supply chains and the valorization of local products is a key element in empowering communities under social and economic aspect. The discovery of local foods and of all the economies that could rely on them could also engage foreigners residing in Castelnuovo in a deeper comprehension of the communities they are living into. Participants (including host delegations) shared their own experience with a “round table” approach. Long term goal of this sensibilization activity was also to promote a renewed and strengthened lake fish supply chain, which is currently suffering low interest and investments, thus menacing a local economy. In the territory of Castelnuovo del Garda, the event was particularly well received as it is enhanced through careful media activities and dissemination by direct contact. The municipality prepared the territory for hospitality in a widespread mode. Local operators from both the voluntary world, trade associations,

individual citizens, food and wine enthusiasts, local administrators also from other local municipalities, as well as representatives of the Province, Region, Italian and European Parliament were involved. There was much involvement of the public present. The final questionnaire also produced excellent feedback.

Intercultural cooking experience in Italy – Castelnuovo del Garda

A Cooking class and an intercultural shared dinner also took place in Castelnuovo del Garda, with a total of 65 people. The target groups that participated in this event include representatives of partner municipalities (traveling delegations), citizens of Castelnuovo del Garda including foreigners/people with different cultural backgrounds, political representatives of the Veneto region and professionals of the restauration sector. Partners participated in a cooking workshop where they had the opportunity to prepare the food excellence of Lake Garda, the Province of Verona and the Veneto Region led by the Associazione Cuochi Scaligeri di Verona with products from local producers and companies. Participants have been divided in 6 Working Groups and mixing nationalities in order to boost communication among participants while cooking. Each working group cooked a national typical dish.





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All food plates have been then served during the first THE FOOD CLUB picnic, with a traditionally new formula for sharing food and wine excellence, being together and preventing food waste. Organized together with Mayor Giovanni Dal Cero, Councillor for the Budget Gianfranco Gugole, and MEP Paolo Borchia with the support of MEG Mercato Enogastronomico megmarket.it, MEG & PARTNER. Opening the evening was the host, Mayor of Castelnuovo del Garda Giovanni Dal Cero, followed by the Honorable Paolo Borchia, MEP. The Associazione Cuochi Scaligeri di Verona with its President Paolo Forgia, together with his colleagues Paolo Pampanini, Nicola Andretto and Giulio

Montesor, presented the evening's menu, which was delivered to those present in a picnic bag that was much appreciated. A project brochure and paper menu were produced for the occasion. The goal was to build knowledge and share best practices among the partner municipalities, using food to reintegrate and promote sociability, especially after a period of forced social removal. The presentation held during the pic-nic served this purpose, focusing on topics such as integration at the regional level and an insight on the communities of foreign people that established in Castelnuovo del Garda and in Veneto region. Representatives of such communities were present during the event and were invited to share their experience of social integration as new local citizens. Then each cooked dish was presented, highlighting the ingredients that could reinforce the concepts of social inclusion, as they are present in many cultures in Europe and around the globe. Another important focus was put on food waste, as all the ingredients' scraps were used for different purposes during the cooking workshop, thus giving examples of best practices that can be replicated in households.



The event was very successful. The people present represented: the world of voluntary work, trade associations, individual citizens, food and wine enthusiasts, local administrators also from other local municipalities, as well as representatives of the Province, Region, Italian and European Parliament. There was a lot of involvement from the audience present who spoke throughout the evening. The food and wine experience was also about knowledge and sharing among people. The final questionnaire also produced excellent feedback. A short video of the event is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jw_BNo7Zxn0



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Event in Romania - Alba Iulia

In October 2022 65 people gathered in Alba Iulia, Romania. They were representatives of partner municipalities (delegations travelling), relevant local stakeholders (NGOs, public institutions, producers, restaurants, etc.)

In order to define the problem of discrimination and racism and to identify creative solutions at the level of Alba Iulia, all the partners were involved in the elaboration of a questionnaire, under the coordination of the Alba Iulia City Hall. The questionnaire was applied online through the Municipality's platform for Community Barometer surveys and disseminated through all available social media channels of AIM. The activities carried out were promoted both in the local media and in the online environment through:

- <https://www.facebook.com/ErasmusPlusAlbaIulia>
- <https://www.facebook.com/primariaalbaiulia>
- <https://www.foodclub.blog/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/@thefoodclub6886/videos>

The questionnaire can be accessed within the link <https://barometrucomunitar.apulum.ro/chestionar-privind-discriminarea-si-rasismul-la-nivelul-municipiului-alba-iulia/>

In 2 weeks, the questionnaire was completed by 47 representatives of local entities.

The workshop then aimed to combat discrimination and racism at aim and partnership level, facilitate cooperation between project partners and develop sustainable food waste management. During the workshop, the analysis of the questionnaires applied online was presented, and all partners prepared and presented several examples of good practices from their countries in the field of discrimination and racism, in order to discover the most appropriate solutions to the problems identified by AIM through the questionnaires.

In the second part of the meeting, participants visited the "GARDEN FROM THE CITADEL", an open space located in the heart of the Alba Iulia Citadel, an urban garden open to the community, for the prevention of COVID-19 infections, as an alternative form of civic participation. Given the bad weather, the contest on the most creative solution in terms of combating food poverty was no longer organized within the Citadel Garden. At the end of the workshop, evaluation questionnaires were applied among the participants.



Event in Romania II – Alba Iulia

The event was attended by 41 people from 5 countries, representatives of partner municipalities (Delegations travelling), relevant local stakeholders (NGOs, public institutions, producers, restaurants, etc.). Specifically, the target group of this activity included representatives of partner municipalities and locals representing various associations working in the field of social inclusion, together with local stakeholders working in the field of food production and distribution, all invited by the Mayor of Alba Iulia. Volunteers from the Association of the blind in Romania – Alba Iulia branch – also participated in the event, learning important aspects of TFC project, improving their knowledge on EU fundings and opportunities and helping blindfolded participants to navigate the room and deeply experience the meal in blind people's shoes.

Journey to the unseen:

To better understand the needs of the blind, AIM hosted a "table in the dark" for the participants (partner representatives and relevant local stakeholders). Each person involved was blindfolded and led to the table where he would eat. In this way, they have experienced the replacement of vision with the sense of touch, using cutlery, glasses, identifying food by smell and taste, listening to what is happening around, but without seeing what they have and who they have in front of them or around them.

The workshop was attended by representatives of the association of the blind in Romania – Alba Iulia branch, including a blind person. She explained to the participants how the blind identify the products on the plate, using the watch face method as orientation. She also explained to participants how she functions in her everyday life, highlighting all the regular actions she can perform alone and the ones she needs assistance to accomplish. It was very interesting for participants as they learned how they can improve blind people's life and tasks by doing some small gestures when meeting them on the streets, so they can ease their path and help them be totally independent even outside their own house. Questions were asked to this representative, to make sure all the concepts of social inclusion towards blind people were clear and understood by all participants.

When guests were able to see again, they shared their lived experience and impressions. Participants were asked to describe their experience while blindfolded: everyone expressed different emotions, like fear of being unable to eat, impossibility of taking food from the plate and strange feeling to talk to people without seeing them. This experience was overall evaluated by participants as very positive and instructive, as they managed to really understand the struggles that blind people face when interacting with people who can see. They also learnt how to facilitate blind people in public spaces, which is very important in terms of full social inclusion and



understanding of diversity, conceived as a strength for society, and not as a default. The association of blind people and its representative were also very satisfied with the activity, as they perceived a very good and stimulating response from participants, who showed great interest in the topics addressed.

Overall, the activity ran smoothly, with a positive and

very appreciated outcome from both parts (organizers and participants). No problems were encountered during the event.

Throughout the activities, multimedia materials were made, which were materialized in a final film presenting activities: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUV2Cx-5IGU>

Workshop in nature - Zlatna

In October 2022 project partners also visited the municipality of Zlatna, Romania, through the assistance of Motii Tara de Piatra Association. The target groups of this event included the representatives of partner municipalities and associations (the traveling delegations), citizens of Zlatna and of the surrounding villages, including some foreigners who relocated to the municipal area of Zlatna and are currently living and working there, with direct implications on food agriculture,



production and transformation. During the “Workshop in nature” event, all participants were briefed on site about the activities, by local facilitators, at the beginning of the local event. All participants have scouted a designated area to observe the collected ingredients and to observe how local farmers are sorting the raw food.

During the workshop, the facilitators explained to participants about:

- traditional grazing systems in Europe;
- rotational grazing system and its benefits;
- ways to protect wildlife herds;
- soil nutrients depletion problems in the mountain areas;
- the importance of biodiversity in mountain ecosystems;
- the archaic European self-sustaining farm concept;
- the role of fungi in the transfer of nutrients from nature;
- the dangers of poisonous wild plants;
- connections between plants/fungi/animals in the wild.

The first part of the workshop was dedicated to agriculture and to the production of food with sustainable techniques; participants visited a local farm producing organic vegetables and fruit and learnt how to harvest such products and how the sustainability of agriculture is ensured at the local level. A second part of this workshop was dedicated to farming, with a focus on the fundamental role of animal agriculture for the maintenance of local biodiversity, especially in rural and mountain areas. The rotation of fields and cattle feeding was explained and demonstrated to participants, opening the discussion to future joint projects on sustainable agriculture and farming for the creation of a European network of organic farmers and producers. A third section



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of the workshop focused on the ingredients and products that can be found in nature, like mushrooms and edible roots, highly used in Romanian cuisine. Participants learnt how to recognize the most common types of mushrooms (including the poisonous ones) and contributed to the collection of such ingredients, later used for the preparation of a dinner with the local community. The event can be considered highly satisfactory, as participants deepened their knowledge on local sustainable techniques in agriculture and farming, and also learnt how nature represents a fundamental ally for the nourishment and growth of humans and animals. They witnessed how these topics are rooted in Romanian culture and represent a staple for social inclusion and cultural development in rural and mountain areas. Local ingredients are always used to prepare shared meals for the entire community, especially among people working in the fields, as they gather to share their produce, also inviting many other members of the local community. No problems have been encountered during event implementation, as the final feedback and response collected among participants outlined the positive impact of this activity and the achieved expected results.



Dinner with local ingredients in Zlatna, Romania

The second event in Zlatna was a cooking experience, dedicated to preparing local traditional dishes for all participants from the workshop in the morning. The target groups of this activity included representatives of partner municipalities (the traveling delegations which also participated in the morning workshop), citizens of Zlatna and of the surrounding villages and foreign people with different cultural backgrounds, political representatives from local municipalities and media representatives.

The same fresh produce used during the previous workshop was used to prepare this dinner; specifically, cooks from different countries (Romania, Spain and France) gathered to prepare international dishes from the countries of the participants to the Project, to be served for local population and project partners and to promote towards them the multiple options and various international cuisines and cultures. All the ingredients used offered insights about their origin and were compliant with bio rules under the Green Deal guidelines.



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Participants had the opportunity to exchange thoughts and impressions, discuss about their traditional food and learn from their respective cultures. Each prepared dish was presented to participants, with insights on the ingredients, especially highlighting the use of local ones, as a demonstration of food as a global value, with regional and country aspects that are valid and important for many different countries, even though highly different. Once again, food demonstrated how differences must be perceived as positive and unifying aspects, which should be applied in all

aspects of social life within communities.

Moments of collective traditional Romanian dances were promoted, as an insight on the Romanian culture. All project partners participated in this specific and highly social cultural moment, manifesting great appreciation for it and enjoying dancing together. Participants from partner municipalities also presented themselves and their cities, in order to build knowledge and sharing of traditional cultures, fostering further future cooperation. The event was particularly dedicated to the participation of local young people, as a mean of their inclusion within local communities and as an opportunity to meet other Europeans. Their presence helped project partners understand young peoples' need of representation at the European level, together with their very high potential as highly skilled global citizens, speaking multiple languages and, at the same time, being promoters of their own local culture.

The event aimed at sharing information on interculturality and social inclusion in Romania. Sharing local and international food based on the same local raw ingredients offered different insights and perspectives about the same common goal that all countries have, related to social inclusion and the development of sustainable food management, reducing food waste, food recycling and overall health benefits and concerns. All partners confirmed that these goals have been reached and the objectives achieved. The overall evaluation of the event has been very positive, with participants really enjoying dining together, discovering about local ingredients in a European perspective and diving into the local culture through dances.

A short video of the events in Zlatna is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=016-3BW2mWc>

Workshop event in Spain – Soto del Real

This event in Spain has been organized with a first online meeting, attended by one representative of each participating municipality. During this meeting trainers from ABB and the municipality of Soto del Real introduced the actions and events that all participants would have experienced later in person, in the Spanish community of Soto, in February 2023. This meeting included a presentation of the TFC project, of the area concerned and of the local practices used to promote social inclusion and for the sustainable production of food.

The Event proceeded with in-person activities in the community of Madrid, in the municipality of Soto del Real. The target group of this activity included representatives from all partner municipalities and associations,



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together with representatives of the Spanish municipality and of local associations working in the fields of sustainable agriculture, education, social inclusion and culture in the area of the community of Madrid.

The main objective of this event was to showcase sustainable practices in a rural setting, such as the urban orchard, in order to foment these amongst its inhabitants as part of the way of life of the community. Of particular interest were the showcasing of newly established DOPs from the region (which traditionally has not enjoyed a label such as this) in which the municipality is located, which has been an ongoing effort by the community for the past three years, with products such as wine (traditionally more associated with Rivera del Duero and La Rioja regions), goat cheeses, and, more recently, trying to obtain a label for their meat production.

Within the framework of The Food Club (TFC) project, we developed a workshop where we dove and worked within the urban garden in order to experience what the users do, while learning about responsible soil usage, rehabilitation and organic composting, which is a crucial part of the sustainability of this local project and of our workshop. The urban shared garden of Soto del Real represented the perfect location for this workshop, as it is widely used by the local community as a source of fresh and healthy produce, but also as a meeting place to organize collective meals and community activities, with the aim of promoting solidarity and sustainable lifestyles within the municipality. Partners and people participating in this event had the chance to learn about shared practices to grow food, with a specific focus on food preservation and techniques to avoid food waste. Trainers thoroughly explained how the shared garden is managed, as an example of best practice at the local level for the active engagement of inhabitants and for the promotion of shared activities open for the entire community.



Lunch for that day was cooked using exclusively produce from the urban garden, from each of the neighbor's plots which contributed for it to be made. Some of the people currently growing plots in the shared garden also joined the group for lunch, bringing their direct point of view and talking about their experience as active users of this community service and opportunity.

Overall, the results achieved during this event are considered highly satisfactory, as from a final moment of sharing and dialogue it emerged how this garden represents a specific best practice, due to the high involvement of the local community. Participants raised their level of knowledge and awareness on sustainable agricultural practices and on techniques for the promotion of social inclusion and active citizenship at the municipal level.



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Culinary event in Spain – Soto del Real

The Event in Spain took place in the community of Madrid, in the municipality of Soto del Real, in February 2023. Within the framework of The Food Club, special attention was paid to the topic of inclusion and integration, as such, the organizing partners (Asociación Building Bridges), in conjunction with the municipality of Soto del Real, included during the days in Soto del Real, members from each of the partner countries, who shared in the experience along with the representatives of the partnership, to share and speak as to their experience in integrating in the rural community of Soto del Real.

The target groups of this activity included representatives from partner municipalities (traveling delegations), citizens of Soto del Real and foreigners/people with different cultural backgrounds who relocated in Soto and are now an important and highly integrated part of the local community and of the region. This second event of the visit in Spain was done within the framework of the local “tapas festival” in Soto del Real, where the project members promoted EU awareness by showcasing the project with the local communities and the local producers. Within this event we took part in the official launch of the event, which highlighted “Tapas”



developed exclusively using local produce and ingredients from the region. During her kick-off speech, Mayor Noelia Barrado highlighted the crucial contribution of The Food Club in determining this to be the theme for their yearly tapas festival. In presence were the neighbors of the town, local business owners, and the users and collaborators of the Urban Garden, all of which contributed and aided The Food Club visitors, in providing food, shelter, facilitated workshops and delivered personal experiences and their passion for their rural town. The activity proceeded then in organizing a shared meal prepared only with national and regional ingredients, which resulted in dishes from every country participating in the action. Foreigners relocated in Soto



participated in this meal, sharing their experience as new Spanish citizens, and highlighting how the local community warmly welcomed them, offering support and multiple occasions of gathering, giving them the opportunity to know local people and to tell their story, making Soto del Real a highly multicultural town. The cooked national dishes have been then tasted by the whole group, with specific focus on each nationality and description of the cooking process; examples of how these dishes are used to promote social inclusion have been provided during the tasting, highlighting the great social power of food in all the countries around the globe.



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A special focus was also dedicated to food waste, highlighting how these dishes are conceived to create little or no waste at all, and participants discussed on how to repurpose food waste for agricultural practices, alternative cooking or compost practices in homes. A final evaluation of the event was carried out in a plenary session: the achieved results have been confirmed as satisfactory by ABB and by all partners municipalities, as the event helped them to deepen their knowledge on the culture of “tapas” (globally famous) and on the respective dishes with the same purpose from other countries. Once again, the social power of food showed its impact on local communities; in this

case, specifically, the Tapas festival in Soto del Real has always been an important occasion for new foreign citizens to join the local community and start their process of integration, getting in touch with local gastronomy and knowing people from the various neighborhoods of Soto.

Intercultural cooking experience in ITALY II – Castelnuovo del Garda

In March 2023 project partners returned to Castelnuovo del Garda, in Italy, to participate in an intercultural cooking experience dedicated to them, to the citizens of Castelnuovo including foreigners/people with different cultural backgrounds, third-country nationals and minorities. The first part of the event was dedicated to the visit of Distilleria Scaramellini in Sandrà (VR), a real-world leader in the production of liqueurs, where owner Andrea Scaramellini showed them the transformation process from the raw material to the final product. At the end of the visit, there was a small tasting of artisanal grappas accompanied by local products. This was followed by a walk along the shores of the beautiful Lake Garda together with the Mayor of Castelnuovo Giovanni Dal Cero.

In the afternoon, thanks to the help of the Associazione Nazionale degli Alpini of Verona, the Partners prepared a typical dish of their country that was served in the evening at a dinner at the Baita degli Alpini in Castelnuovo del Garda, attended by local and European authorities and the Alpini themselves, who livened up the event with music and traditional songs. The menu: Bigoli with Duck Ragù (Italy), Mămăligă (Romania-Alba Iulia), Paella (Spain), Bramboráky (Czech Republic), Sarmale (Romania- Zlatna), Apple Cake



(Romania-Zlatna), Cheesecake (Romania- Alba Iulia), Cake Saint Germain (France). All these dishes were prepared using local ingredients, with insights on sustainable agriculture and food waste, and with cultural insights on the countries represented. The presence of the Associazione Nazionale degli Alpini of Verona helped project partners and participants in the shared dinner to understand the importance of the European Union as a unique political entity, as every national army is



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also part of the UE army, fostering the unity of our territories and helping protect and safeguard the Union as a whole.

For the preparation of the dinner project partners used a shared kitchen, while the venue was organized with a unique and long social table, allowing people to share food and get to know each other, talking and telling stories and curiosities about their own countries.



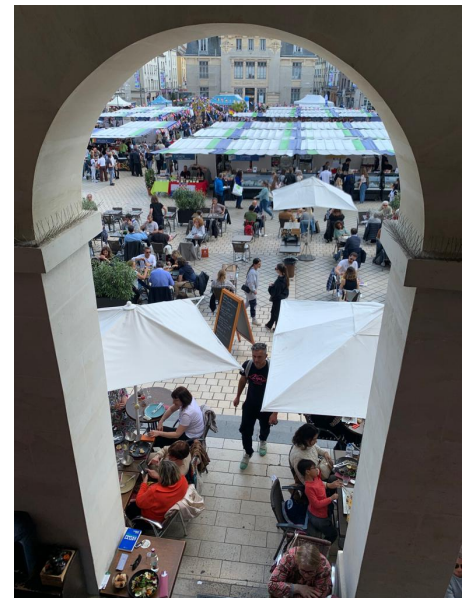
On the morning of Wednesday 22 March, after a short briefing, the Partners got to know the territory through a guided tour of Castelnuovo del Garda organized by the Mayor and Budget Councillor Gianfranco Gugole.

The event has been considered highly satisfactory by project partners and participants in general, as they mainly appreciated the insights provided by former members of the Alpini group, understanding how security and times of peace are not to be taken for granted, especially in light of the current geopolitical situation at the European borders.

European food festival in France: Saint Germain-en-Laye

The European festival of St Germain en Laye is now institutionalized annually in the activities carried out by the city. For this 17th edition and in connection with The Food Club program, it was envisaged as part of this event, to involve the various stakeholders in the European market on the notion of food and sharing as a vector of solidarity. Specifically, the target groups of this event included local organizations participating in the event and in the organized discussions, representatives of partner municipalities (traveling delegations) and citizens of SGL including foreigners/people with different cultural backgrounds. People from all over Europe gathered in one of the main squares of the city to participate in this food festival, getting in touch with the messages of TFC and participating in the process of sharing food and discovering its great social potential.

This led to a visit to the European market by the delegations on this theme where it was noted that the various European countries present had highlighted the diversity of the specific products of the countries represented.



The European market hosts every year in May about 4,000 to 5,000 people who are aware of Europe and its variations. This event therefore made it possible to place particular emphasis on the possible exchanges between countries, to compare the different approaches to the inclusion of multicultural populations, where indeed, the heritage brought by the angle of food very quickly becomes a key to entry into the debates on these sensitive subjects.



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After this visit, the delegations were invited to meet with local merchants, including the GIBERT JEUNE bookstore which, for the event, put forward collections of recipe books, particularly from European countries, with discussions with the Director. The organization of the European market from this angle complements the more specific approach at the level of the most popular neighborhoods by opening up the issue of food and inclusion to the whole of the city and neighboring towns.

The city of St Germain en Laye of 48,000 inhabitants has a large international population and a large student population of around 20.000, which allows for strong awareness. Still in the spirit of the project, delegations were offered a Creole breakfast which aimed to show that France also included DOMs and TOMs, by also opening the discussion on the inclusion of different cultural strains in the same territory. A restitution session took place at the end of the day between the various delegations at the Maison de l'Europe in Yvelines, a point of identification for European actions.



Collaborative roadmap for social inclusion through food in France - Saint Germain en Laye

All the European delegations of the Food Club program went to St Germain en Laye on May 12 and 13, 2023 to participate for two days in various collaborative events set up so that they can appreciate the work carried out around the inclusion of different communities in the international city of St Germain en Laye with, as the main vector, food.

The day of May 12 was devoted to the inclusive approach led by the city in a popular district and to the demonstration including food, as a vector of solidarity and sustainable development around uses. The target groups of this event included local organizations working on the topics of social inclusion and the representatives of partner municipalities (traveling delegations). Citizens of SGL also joined in some parts of the activity. After an overall presentation of the City of St Germain en Laye, a city that is both historic and modern, the various speakers were able to appreciate the bipolarity of the city between working-class districts and historic districts.

This first day focused on working-class neighborhoods and the population composing them, with a strong social mix, in neighborhoods where the concentration of social rental housing remains high. The delegations then went to one of the most popular districts of St Germain en Laye, about 5,000 people on 45 hectares, or about 2,000 social housing units.

The AXIOM project of the city of SGL was presented to project participants, as the addressed topics are in line with ones of TFC. It is based on three pillars, namely:

1. a charter of republican commitment which is signed by all new tenants for their social rental housing.
2. ambassadors of "better living together" who volunteer their time or their skills for the benefit of residents in difficulty.



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3. an experimental laboratory, with several third places including educational accommodation, a project house, a shared garden.

As well as in this context, various events for the benefit of families, young children, adolescents, seniors, highlighting multiculturalism and intergenerationally as vectors of innovation and skills, for the benefit of a district, to demonstrate that this angle of analysis can also be imagined with greater universality.

The delegations were more particularly made aware, through this project, of the component of systems around food, as a strong vector of inclusion, solidarity and sustainable development and on this point more particularly, through the uses of reduction of the carbon footprint of the inhabitants.

Thus, on the theme of food, the notions of short circuit were approached, with the various associations which allow a reception of people in difficulty, to benefit from access to meals, the description of the shared garden set up where the inhabitants share both growing spaces and harvests, with learning workshops on permaculture. This last point is very important since it also makes it possible to green a district again, through the appropriation of balconies, while allowing a better understanding of biodiversity, in districts where "concrete" has been legion (last ZUP of 'Ile de France – 1970 – Area to Urbanize as a Priority).

The eco-neighborhood approach was also described with its 4 challenges and its twenty performance indicators: on sobriety – inclusion – value creation – resilience, which today makes it possible to position the neighborhood on the label 3 out of 4 in eco-district, thus enhancing the image of the inhabitants through their participation in improving living together. More particularly, the delegations were led to discover the food of different countries and cultures representative of the district, with a workshop for making bissap African non-alcoholic drink, the tasting of a lamb tiep (stew) and a multicultural discussion with a group of inhabitants and ambassadors of the district who



came during this time to share their experiences (Congo – Cameroon – Senegal – Martinique – Portugal – Japan...). About fifteen people from different cultures, inhabitants of the district, participated.

The afternoon was devoted to the collective production, by the delegations, of the cover of a small recipe book, with a recognized illustrator from St Germain en Laye (Pierre CORNUEL), where the main vector of identification was chosen as being rice, that transcends both European and international cultures. The title of this little cookbook will therefore be "Rice in all its forms".



The day ended with a homestay meal for each delegation, having taken care to determine representative families of inclusion in such neighborhoods, a Japanese family, an Indonesian family, an African family, an Ecuadorian family, a European family. The 5 delegations thus experienced a time of sharing immersed in families, with their children around a meal specific to the rice-based culture.

To sum up, the topics discussed during this event included the presentation of specific projects of the city focusing both on social inclusion and on the sustainable use and production of food, the presentation of municipal tools and techniques to favor the integration of different neighborhoods populated by citizens with different cultural backgrounds and the presentation of different associations working in these areas. Participants experienced a workshop on the making of a typical African beverage and tasted African food, with insights on the different African cultures and how food is used there as a vehicle of inclusion and of the concept of community. Rice, as an international ingredient used in many cultures, was discussed through the use of artistic means, promoting the understanding of different cultures and also with insights on the sustainable production of it.

This experience made it possible to validate the establishment, within the framework of the AXIOM project, of homestay meals in order to offer everyone the opportunity to share, through food, the culture of a country, and the approach to integrating a family into French society.

Overall, the event was perceived as highly formative and interesting by all participants, who particularly enjoyed the shared meals, the interaction with local associations and the use of art to promote concepts of social inclusion. No problems or issues were encountered during the organization or the implementation of this event.

Restaurant Day. Tour de table: gastronomy and good practices – Prague Kolovraty

113 people participated in June 2023 in a public event in Kolovraty (Prague). Project partners firstly enjoyed a four-course lunch featuring Czech cuisine from a local restaurant. At the municipal office, they engaged in discussions about their experiences, findings, and potential for future cooperation. The day concluded with a lively public happening in Kolovraty, showcasing live music and food stalls offering Czech festival dishes and international street food, symbolizing cultural integration and diversity, particularly among Vietnamese, Indian, and Turkish communities.

The target group of this event is represented by the representatives of partner municipalities (traveling delegations), policymakers and citizens of Prague-Kolovraty including foreigners/people with different cultural backgrounds and third-country nationals. They all participated in the event, tasting food from different cultures, deepening their knowledge about the social potential of food and finally enjoying a food festival all together.



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All the consumed food has been locally catered and cooked, both the Czech lunch and the street food during the festival. In both venues each dish has been presented either by the cookers or by explanatory notes, in order to make all the information on local and foreign food traditions available. Moreover, volunteers from Prague-Kolovraty accompanied project partners during this experience, favoring their participation and understanding.

The fulfilled objectives of this action include:

- The organization of a local, inclusive and culturally sensitive event in Prague-Kolovraty, promoting food as an element to build social cohesion, combat discrimination, and advocate for intercultural acceptance.
- The use of Czech gastronomy to promote inclusion of all individuals into social activities.
- The engagement of all target groups in a food-oriented event with

the purpose of raising their awareness and also provide a convivial time together enjoying food from CZ and from different cultures.

A private session was also held with project partners, to discuss about the achieved results of this event and to focus on further means of cooperation and future shared possibilities. This meeting (tour de table) focused on the best practices showed by Prague-Kolovraty in managing such big public events including different cultures for the promotion of local territories. Data have been collected by the Czech partner to allow a more precise assessment of project results. Future options of cooperation and ideas on how to expand the TFC project have also been discussed by project partners, setting the base for further work together as a cohesive partnership. A short video of the event is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEqWwsdOlbQ>



Workshop: Brewing friendship. Beer as an element of Czech culture - Prague Kolovraty

During the same timeframe project participants went to Břevnov Monastery in Prague, the oldest male monastery in Bohemia. With a rich brewing history dating back to 993, the monastery held the oldest written proof of beer brewing in the Czech lands. The participants enjoyed a guided tour of the brewery, a museum visit, and a beer-tapping workshop. A historian and social researcher joined them, leading informative discussions on the social, historical, and cultural significance of beer in Czech society.

The visit to Břevnov Monastery provided insights into the deep connection between beer and Czech cuisine. The monastery's brewery, established in 993 and closed in 1889, holds historical importance as the oldest documented brewing site in the Czech lands. The participants engaged in discussions with a historian and social researcher, exploring the role of beverages in different cultures. A beer degustation session allowed them to savor various Czech brews and appreciate the craftsmanship behind the country's beer-making tradition.



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This event thus combined historical exploration, cultural appreciation, and gastronomic experiences. Břevnov Monastery offered a glimpse into Czech brewing heritage, while the presence of a historian and social researcher fostered discussions on the societal impact of beer. Through brewery tours, museum visits, and beer degustation, the participants deepened their understanding of Czech beer and its significance in shaping Czech identity and community. The target groups of this event included representatives of partner municipalities (traveling delegations), citizens of Prague-Kolovraty and of the greater area of Prague, including people with different cultural backgrounds.

The achieved objectives of the activity are:

- the organization of a beer workshop in Prague, with the purpose of discussing the socio-cultural value of beverages, with the role of beer in the Czech society as conversation driver.
- the provision of an informed and comprehensive point of view through the participation of a historian and social researcher, providing insights on the historical, social, cultural, and economic role played by beer in the Czech society. Further focus was provided on Czech beer as an element of national identity and item for international branding, especially as a fundamental driver of tourism for the entire Czech Republic.
- a debate among project partners on how beverages in their communities are used to bring people together, represent their country abroad, etc.

The overall results achieved by this activity are considered satisfactory by project partners, as they deepened their knowledge on social implications of beverages, which in many cultures are considered fundamental for the promotion of local traditions and mostly, for the inclusion of foreign people into local culture.





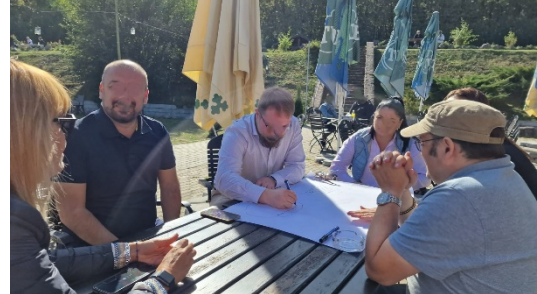
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Final Event in Romania – Alba Iulia

A final in-person event was organized in Alba Iulia, RO, on October 7th 2023. The organized event aimed to highlight the results and impact of the project, how it will continue to raise awareness on the benefits of diversity, to intensify intercultural relations.

It was divided into 3 main stages:

1. Project activity impact assessment workshop, during which the generated results and potential ways to continue this initiative were highlighted.
2. Cultural workshop during which 3 local dishes were presented, specifically the recipe of eggplant salad was reinterpreted by using ingredients specific to each country.
3. The community lunch during which the reinterpreted recipes were evaluated and appreciated, the project results were promoted, but also the challenge of the participants to develop new contacts to generate thematic activities/projects. More than 123 representatives of NGOs, institutions, local companies and citizens were invited to this action.



The event was attended by 123 people from 4 countries, representatives of partner municipalities (travelling delegations), relevant local stakeholders (NGOs, public institutions, producers, restaurants, etc.). Specifically, the target group of this activity included representatives of partner municipalities and local people representing various associations working in the field of social inclusion, together with local stakeholders working in the field of food production and distribution, all invited by the Mayor of Alba Iulia.

During the final event, a series of beneficial activities were organized both for the representatives of the municipality and for all the participants in the event.

A workshop that aims to highlight the results and impact of the project, how it will continue to raise awareness of the benefits of diversity, to intensify intercultural relations but also to contribute to intensifying the attitude of tolerance and acceptance of people around us.

A culinary workshop where the partners participating in the event were presented with 3 variants of Romanian food, having to choose a star dish. All those present chose that the dish to be reinterpreted by each country is eggplant salad. They reinterpreted eggplant salad using ingredients specific to their country.

As a final moment, also during the event was organized a community lunch attended by representatives of NGOs, institutions and local companies but not only aimed at promoting the initiatives developed within the project and initiating a closer link to support community development.





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Online closing event

The organization of this event included some preparatory activities, performed in the month of September 2023, preceding the online closing event. These included:

-Technical settings for the main venue at the offices of the Municipality of Castelnuovo del Garda. Technical arrangements for the correct and smooth stream of the online event, ensuring strong connection and visibility for all international participants.

-Press release and invitation of local and national press and of organizations active in the field of social inclusion from each participating country.

-Communication of the event in local communities and through the online channels: promotion of the event to ensure a strong participation from all the countries involved for citizens and local communities.

The target groups of this event included: policymakers, representatives of partner municipalities, Representatives of local media/press, citizens of partner municipalities, general public.

The event was held on October 13th, 2023 and it was developed as follows:

The main venue was set in the offices of the Municipality of Castelnuovo del Garda, with the direct participation of the Mayor Giovanni Dal Cero and other municipal representatives who followed the implementation of this project. Project partners and participants from other countries participated via online connection, via an online meeting platform.

The agenda of the event included:

- Greetings from the Mayor of Castelnuovo del Garda, with his insights on the project and a focus on the impact on the lead municipality
- Project recap with a brief description of each implemented event
- Partners' roundtable, with their contributions and perspectives on the impact achieved in each municipality
- Presentation of TFC handbook
- Q&A moment, with a focus on future cooperation
- Final greetings

The achieved results and impacts of TFC have been presented to the audience, thus evaluating all together the social and environmental impact generated on the addressed communities. The roundtable approach allowed project partners to explain which were the most positive (and negative) aspects of the experience and how they are currently using them in their local territories and communities. The handbook produced in the context of this project was presented to the audience, and it will soon be available for free on the project's



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website. The Q&A sessions highlighted the important results achieved by the partnership, as all municipal representatives showed great satisfaction about the implemented activities and the concepts learned along the way. All partners, and also local participants in previous in-person events, said that TFC was an incredible occasion for friendship and strong

relationships at the European level, to learn about different European cultures and also about third-country nationals' cultures that are now part of the EU. All partners highlighted that differences are a strength for their communities, as they learned through the use of food and through the participation in all the implemented events. They all feel like the EU is now more united and more approachable as a cohesive big community, without cultural barriers, which have been broken by the sharing of food, local cultures and sustainable approaches. All partners consider each other as friends, with whom they wish to build more actions and expand this partnership to keep working on the social and environmental aspects of food, to enhance brotherhood and sisterhood at the European level.

Topics for a possible second project developed by this partnership have been proposed and include: sustainable and replicable agricultural practices in rural areas, social inclusion of young people with dedicated and youth-led activities, the inclusion of schools in the partnership, to involve youth and develop educational paths centered on the social powers of food.

The total number of participants amounted to 203.

Some follow-up activities have been implemented in the last month of the project:

- Social media and website interactions to encourage media coverage and dissemination of project results
- Online coverage through the web&social channels, to engage the public in the use and promotion of TFC handbook.

Results & Impact

5

Countries
involved

15

Events
organized

5.109

Participants



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4. PARTNERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

As shown in all the implemented events, project partners deepened their knowledge and awareness on the topics of social inclusion, non-discrimination, and tolerance using food as vector of cultural differences in an enriching and stimulating perspective. The final result achieved by the partnership as a whole is a higher awareness on the multiculturalism of Europe and a stronger perception of the need to promote social inclusion at the European level. Another remarkable result achieved by this project is the creation and consolidation of a strong and cohesive partnership, not only in terms of municipal work-oriented relationships, but also and mainly in terms of European friendships and long-term shared goals. In fact, all project partners expressed great satisfaction about the relationships built along the way, and willingness to keep working together on the same topics addressed by TFC.

The experiences lived during this project include different types of events, many people from different cultures and even more typical dishes, all of which are the expression of an open-minded Europe; participating in this project helped project partners to be more united and to break down all barriers, including language barriers. As a matter of fact, language has sometimes been an issue, especially in the first months, but all partners and participants committed to find a common way of communication, succeeding in creating relationships and strong connections. This is one of the signs according to which Europe is undergoing a huge change, becoming more united and, mostly, a whole entity encompassing many different cultures.

All the involved countries and municipalities analyzed their differences and common traits, discovering that multiple solutions can be applied to the same issue; specifically, shared topics and municipal strategies can be found regarding the environment and sustainable use of resources, on valuable local products and on the social and economic development of different European regions.

Multiple trips have been taken by partners in the framework of this project, with the purpose of working together to discover different people, traditions, languages, and cultures. It all turned out to be a great wealth for Europe, as traditions are to be maintained alongside the discovery of the world around them.

Specific contributions and insights from all partners have been collected at the end of the project, and they are presented here.

- This project was a great opportunity to understand common issues and problems for all the involved municipalities, which all have also common solutions and individual best practices that can be replicated and adjusted according to the specificities of all partners. This was a fundamental experience for the entire municipality, as it broadened its European horizons. Great relationships have been established during the implementation of this project and it would be great to develop all the important achieved milestones. The topic of environmental protection and natural development was also very important, as food production and consumption derive from it: for the promotion of social inclusion, it is important to firstly promote a healthy environment and sustainable natural practices. "After this experience, Europe is smaller than one year ago" [Castelnuovo del Garda]
- The Food Club was a special and engaging experience, even though in a very short time; common needs and common visions are now established between project partners, who built a strong relationship and, as such, TFC can be considered as the first step in a path for the creation of new projects. Thus, the established common ground could represent the starting point for a second project all together. [Alba Iulia]



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- This project was a great opportunity to see and to learn about best practices implemented in all partner municipalities, as all of them share the same issues and struggles. It was the occasion to broaden the perspective on how problems can be solved and to take inspiration. Strong friendships have been created during this journey and it would be great to have a second chance, to keep working together: TFC is a good example of functional and active partnerships and relationships, while many other EU projects are more formal and applied at the institutional level. New opportunities can surge from this situation. [Prague-Kolovraty]
- Similar issues can be found in all the involved communities and this exchange of good practices is particularly important and effective because it was presented by people who are directly involved and affected by them: it wasn't only through the work of municipal appointed people, but also through farmers, entrepreneurs, teachers, etc., who showed their passion and commitment in finding solutions and common grounds. This project and its activities were perceived as a shockwave in Soto del real, as it is a very small rural community: people felt heard, seen and represented at the European level. TFC also showed that it doesn't matter what political party or inclination partners have, as in every community people vote for people, and many great people made this project possible. It is also the opportunity to further dialogue, especially during this historical time. [Asociacion Building Bridges]
- The Food Club allowed every participant to learn a lot in the field of social inclusion, food and cultures and sustainable development; it is especially important when it comes to rural areas, where very rich and nutritious products are available. They however are more and more competing with over-processed food products, which is a very urgent topic to be addressed. At the same time, using food to promote social inclusion and understanding was very important, to promote international relationships and also innovation in the food and cuisine sectors. [Motii Tara De Piatra]
- This project was a great opportunity to understand common issues and to present some solutions that have been adopted in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, as many municipal projects focus on social inclusion, multiculturalism and citizens' integration into French society. The topic of sustainable development and sustainable management of food production was particularly important, as the city is trying to find proactive solutions to be implemented in a highly urbanized context. Strong relationships and friendships have been established within TFC, representing the perfect background for other common actions and shared projects. [Saint-Germain-en-Laye]

Some hints for future cooperation and possible joint projects have also been collected:

- schools and students could be involved in a second joint project; their involvement is crucial and social inclusion and understanding should be taught from the early ages. An important topic to be discussed with them also concerns food sustainable and healthy consumption. Students could create recipes booklets or videos, and then participate in exchanges with peers from different EU countries.
- Tourism represents another important sector that could be a vector for social inclusion, multiculturalism and the sustainable production and consumption of food. Slow tourism and local experiences, in particular, should be promoted.
- Young people in general should be involved, their voice should be heard, as they are the most active and suited ones to bring Europe together, especially during this difficult historical time.
- The promotion of European values could also be done through the promotion of historical sites on which the EU was built, in a perspective of rejection of wars and promotion of tolerance, dialogue and mutual understanding.



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5. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude the analysis carried out in this project handbook, the achieved results are presented.

The expected impact of this project, as foreseen in the proposal phase, is now confirmed as achieved:

- The development of larger-scale projects for municipalities, with the creation of a strong and cohesive network oriented towards sustainability
- The development of thematic and policy-related projects for beneficiaries
- The creation of lasting links between partner municipalities and organizations
- An increased awareness of diversity as a benefit for society, tackling discrimination and racism
- An increased mutual understanding and acceptance towards minorities.

The expected outcomes are also confirmed:

- Improved and wider knowledge on the use of food and gastronomy as tools fostering social inclusion, acceptance of diversity, tackling racism and discrimination
- Increased awareness on diversity as a benefit for society as a whole
- Increased understanding on environmental-related issues, such as organic agriculture, local production, waste recovery, actions benefiting marginalized groups with reduced access to food
- Stronger and long-lasting connections between partner municipalities and organizations
- Increased understanding of social policies targeting foreigners and people with different cultural background
- Increased and widespread social inclusion, integration and acceptance of foreigners, people with different cultural backgrounds, minorities, women and girls, people with disabilities, older people and marginalized groups in general
- Higher participation of local populations to municipal events and initiatives tackling racism and discrimination
- Lower numbers of racially motivated crimes at the municipal level and, subsequently, at countries' level

Project partners and participants strongly confirmed the positive impact and the achieved goals of The Food Club, which represents now a great starting point for a second joint project between the involved municipalities and organizations. Multiple options for cooperation will be soon evaluated by the partnership, starting from EU funded programs, in order to maintain a European dimension and a common vision on social inclusion, dialogue, democracy and environmental sustainability.



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6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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It has been conceived as a Network of Towns, and as such a big thank you goes to all partner municipalities that joined this experience and path of growth. Our intention is to keep working together to build stronger European relationships and impactful projects, for the promotion of democratic values and equal societies.

Thank you to all the local stakeholders involved in the implementation of TFC, supporting the project and providing important insights on the topics addressed during all the events organized in five different countries.

Thank you to all the municipal staff who supported partners' representatives in the organization and implementation of events and thank you to all the local participants and citizens of the involved municipalities for joining us and discovering a bit more about the social powers of food.