

Food relations Desk Study

European initiatives to increase third-country nationals' participation in society using food as a key medium for intercultural dialogue - Overview

30 Juli 2018

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Introduction

The topic of refugees and integration has become one of the major issues in Europe. In the AMIF project “Food Relations” this issue is addressed with the special lens of food. With food we mean the whole value chain including a wide range of fields across different sectors (production, transformation, retail, catering, ..) - from gardening, farming, cooking, distribution, restaurants and catering. What is crucial at whatever stage is that food is used as a medium for cultural exchange and advancement of the people involved, be it non-commercial or entrepreneurial or in another hybrid form. The aim is inclusion and empowerment of third country nationals (TCN) as well as the enrichment of the host communities and society as a whole. The term TCN summarizes refugees, migrants (with less than 5 years stay in Europe) and asylum seekers.

In Europe the rediscovery of food as platform for social exchange, education and self-empowerment has gained considerable prominence in the last 20 years, often in urban or peri-urban spaces. Since some time already gardening and cooking have been identified as perfect tools to facilitate intercultural exchange, the first intercultural gardens in Germany e.g. were established 1989 but there are places that have been created with similar intentions long before the word „intercultural“ existed. But there is more than this social dimension of cultural exchange: initiatives and projects have shown that job integration and start-ups of TCN can become a reality through the medium food.

The scope and the details of this marriage of food/integration/TCN has not been sufficiently researched, there is no comprehensive overview about the situation in Europe. This report aims to provide facts to give a better understanding of what is happening. About 300 initiatives were identified and when looking at these initiatives in Europe, the results are manifold: We can see different approaches in different countries, of course also relating to different context (legal e.g.). There is also a considerable difference in the number of initiatives, partly also depending on the number of TCN in the various countries. Finally, a clear need for more networking and experience-sharing has become evident to consolidate/improve existing initiatives as well as give inspiration to the design of new initiatives. Clearly, this research will not answer all questions and will not have found every single initiative in Europe, there were also obstacles to get the information. Nonetheless we think that this report can provide relevant insights.



The research team of the German research organisation for food and farming culture AGRONAUTEN has used its big European network and the hard work of the project partners ACRA (Italy, lead), KAMBA (Italy), Consortio SIS (Italy), ABD (Catalunya/Spain) and AGROECOPOLIS (Greece) to get to the information presented here and will use the same network also to distribute the information. By this we hope to provide valuable information and advance the situation of refugees and all citizens of Europe.

Methodology

To identify the 20 to 30 initiatives in the selected EU-countries a set of different methods was used.

1) Networks/ contact persons

Existing networks of the single researchers were used to contact knowledgeable people in the specific countries to identify projects and initiatives. Since most researchers have been working with agroecology, food sustainability etc. since years on an international level, there were contact persons in many of our target countries. Solely having the names of certain organizations marked often a starting point and made follow-up research much easier. Once we had contact to projects in some countries, usually they could give us hints and information about other initiatives or sources of research in their country.

2) Internet research

We applied basic web research by using different combinations of keywords such as “intercultural garden refugees France” or “refugees jobs catering Netherlands” and so forth. Translation of the keywords into the language of the target country was crucial. Furthermore, it was very helpful to change the country settings in Google search to the target country, for example UK or France etc..

3) Social Media: Facebook

Similar to the basic google research different key terms were put into the search field applying “page” search function and using more filters such as category = “charity” and so on. It was equally helpful to change the country profile into the target country’s. Facebook was especially helpful in the cases where we didn’t have personal contacts to people yet. Many organizations or projects use facebook in these times to announce events and reach a wider audience. Some organizations use only facebook and don’t have a website. In all cases, it was definitely easier to find projects by facebook than by google search. From their Facebook page it was an easier starting point to get to their websites and find further information.

For our research it was a helpful attribute of Facebook that it suggests to its users “similar pages”. Moreover, projects usually are connected to other initiatives and projects they cooperate with and this is visible to the visitors of the Facebook page.

4) Contribution of other researchers from Food Relations

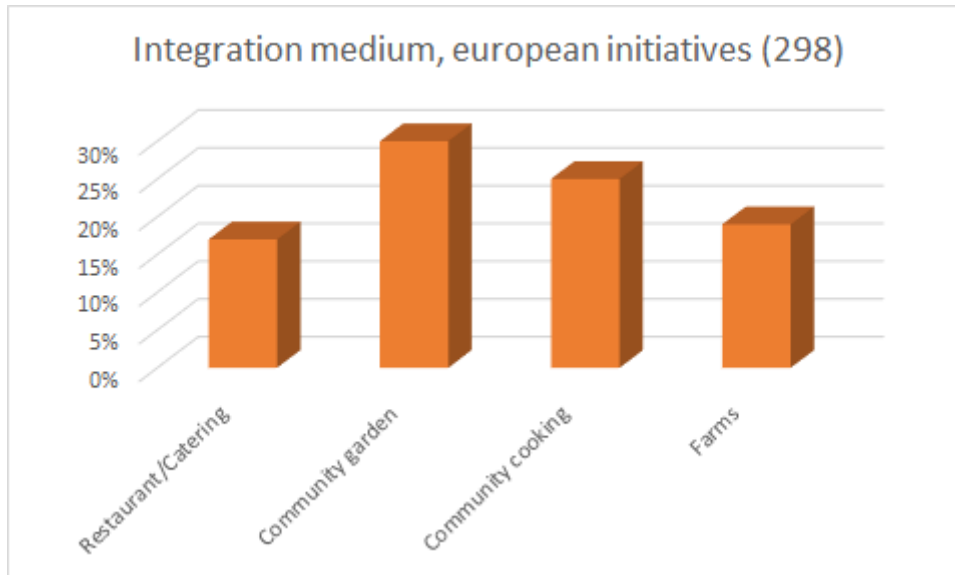
In the case of Greece, Italy and Spain we asked directly our colleagues to help us with the identification of projects since there were restrictions in terms of language/lack of online sources. After that 20-30 initiatives were identified per country and to select the best 20 initiatives overall personal contact via phone was established.

Overview Findings

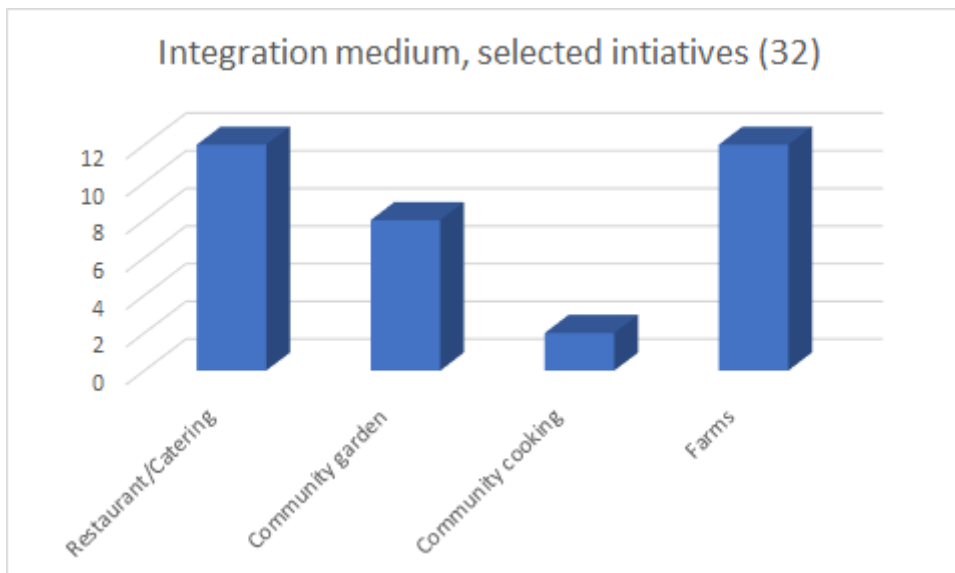
During the research, approx. 300 Initiatives were identified. 31 of them were selected.

	INITIATIVE	PROJECT	LOCATION
DE	Über den Tellerrandkochen.e.V.	Interkulturelles Frauenkochen	Berlin
	Zusammenleben	Various	Freiburg
	annalinde gGmbH	Interkultureller Garten	Leipzig
	Buntes Meißen Bündnis Zivilcourage e.V.	interkultureller Garten	Meißen
	CookinHope	CookinHope	Wuppertal
PT	Associação Pão a Pão	Mezze	Lisbon
F	Association A fleur de Pierre	Jardin des cerises, jardin des parcelles, jardin des eaux chaudes, jardin de grelinettes	Digne-les-bains different places: Strasbourg, Bordeaux, Genève, Marseille, Lille, Paris
	Food Sweet Food	Refugee Food Festival	
	En chantier	La Cantine du Midi	Marseille
ES	Asociacion por ti mujer	Huertas urbanas en clave de genero	Valencia
	Integraschool	Personal itineraries for integration	Lerida
	COOPE/Central Parc	Farming	Barcelona, Sant Boi de Llobregat
	Mescladis	Cocinando Oportunidades	Barcelona
GR	NAN Restaurant	Restaurant	Mytilene, Lesvos, GR
	Options foodlab	Catering	Athens
	Pervolarides	Gardening/cooking	Thessaloniki
IT	Orient Experience, Africa experience	ORIENT EXPERIENCE I snc, ORIENT EXPERIENCE II snc, AFRICA EXPERIENCE snc, PEACE & SPICE snc	Venice and Padua
	Maramao	Coop. Soc. Crescere Insieme	Canelli (Asti)
	Salus Space	Salus	Bologna, Italy
	APS Barikamà	Coop. Soc. Barikamà	Rome
	Kamba	Kamba	Milan
AT	IGOR	(Integrationsarbeit und Gesundheitsförderung im öffentlichen Raum	Wien
CH	HEKS Neue Gärten	Neue Gärten Zürich/Schaffhausen	Zürich
	Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk SAH	SAH Garten und Landwirtschaft	Zentralschweiz
S	Gastronaut	Gastronaut(business)	Stockholm
NL	A beautiful Mess	A beautiful mess restaurant	Amsterdam
	oost Indisch Groen	Neighbour garden, guerilla gardening, cooking in their kitchen	Amsterdam
BG	Tandem Europe	New roots	Sofia
UK	The Comfrey Project	The Comfrey Project	Nottingham
	Mazimas	Mazimas	London
CZ	Ethnocatering	Catering	Prage

Countries for initial entering into EU, as well as countries with a high expectation horizon for TCNs generally speaking provide more opportunities for initiatives. So TCN are either forced to spend time (asylum process, initial reception as refugee in Europe, Dublin III) or willing to settle down and build up a base for their future lives.



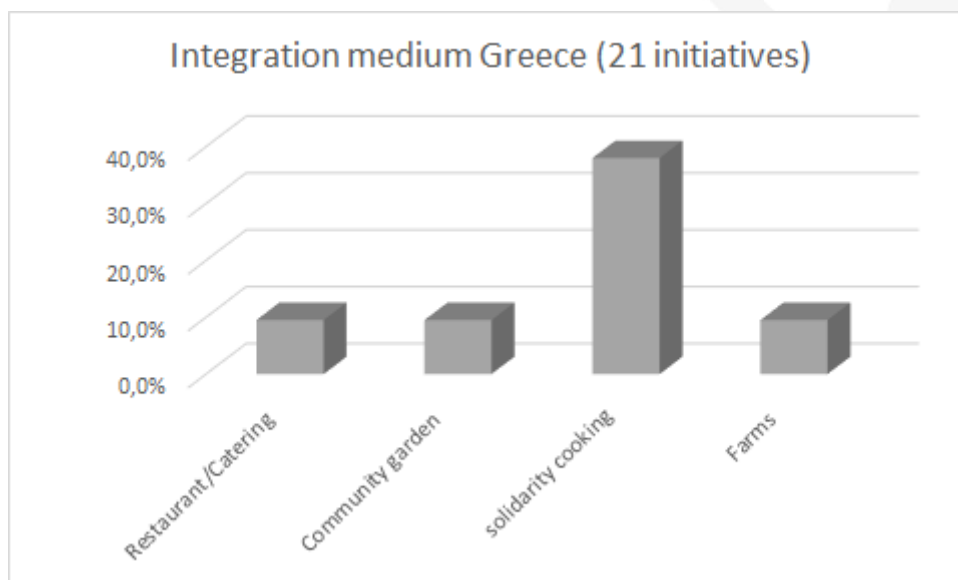
One third of the initiatives are community gardens evolved around free spaces in urban areas (fallows, parking lots, industrial areas, abandoned parks and allotments).



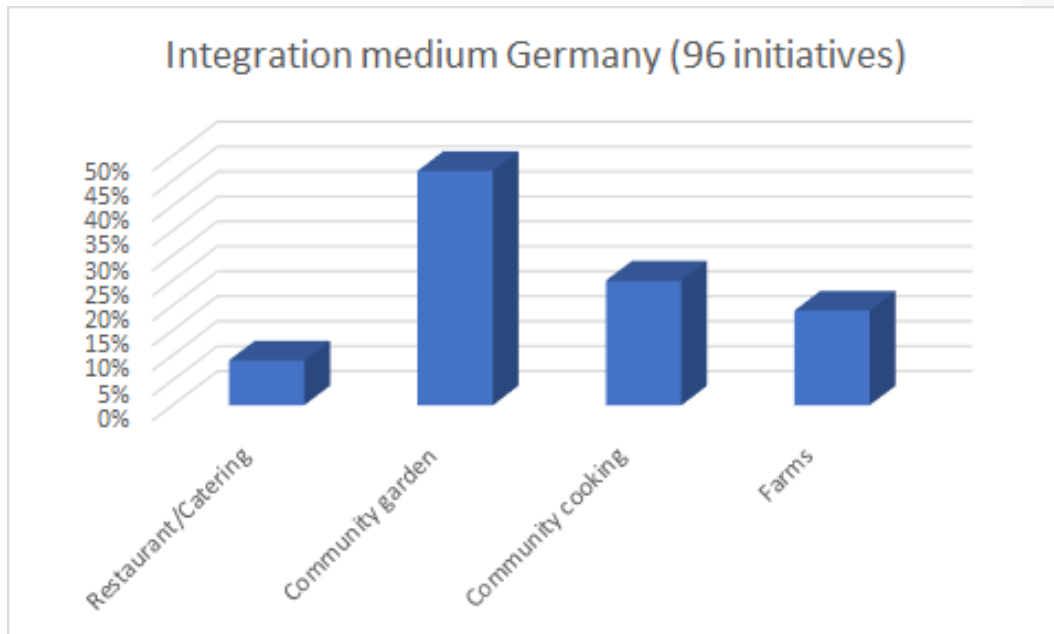
Mediterranean connected countries tend to have more crisis-coping projects (providing food and shelter).

A good example is Greece, around 36% of the initiatives provide food (mobile kitchen) directly at the refugees camps. Some of these initiatives are realized by people from Europe, who collect funds and volunteer to work directly in this area.

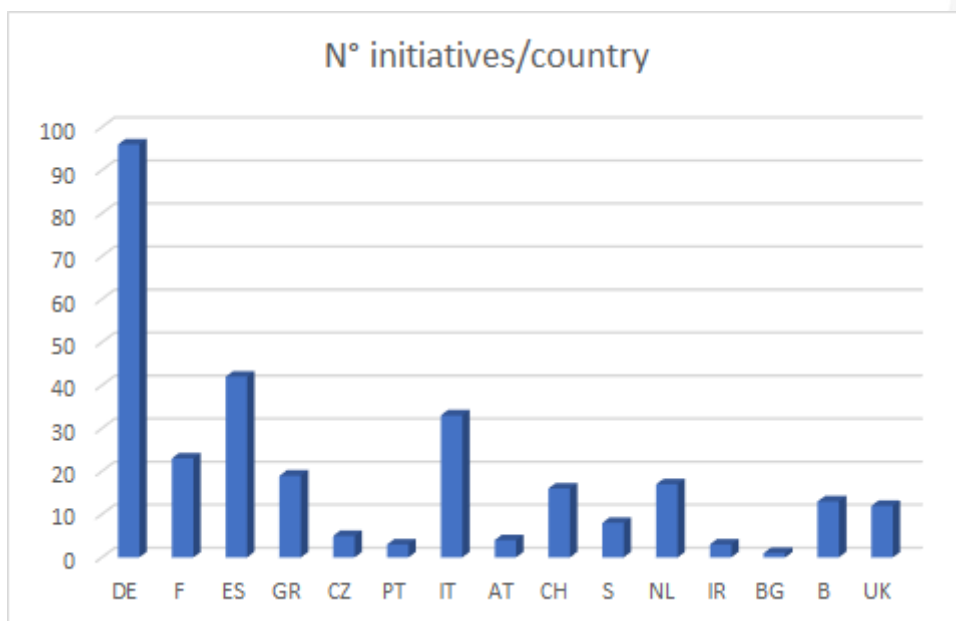
The poor amount and nutritional quality of the food from the industrial catering enterprises is one of the motivations of these initiatives which are trying to provide better quality food and community activities with the refugees, in some cases, also cooking and bakery trainings. The main aim is to ensure a proper diet for the most vulnerable groups, like children, elderly persons and pregnant women.



Target countries (for TCN) such as Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Sweden... tend to have projects with an emphasis on community building, vocational training, social and ecological change (urban gardening, pick your own, box schemes, intercultural dialogue, etc.). One of the main factors in this distribution of areas of activities is the motivation of the respective newcomer to stay and build up a base of life (target countries) in contrast to being forced to stay, due to Dublin III and asylum process (transfer countries).



Statistic about distribution of projects in EU .



One third of the initiatives found are situated in Germany (many calls for funding and contests for urban gardening or rural projects with the aim of social inclusion, many volunteers, social business as a concept is well known and funded).

Germany as a target country for TCN provides a broad landscape of initiatives with the aim to connect locals and newcomers as well as social inclusion and food related topics. The long history of urban gardening (1996) fostered by the intensive work of Anstiftung (Foundation to support urban gardening and especially also intercultural gardens) and an active network between the initiative acts as catalysator for new initiatives in the field.

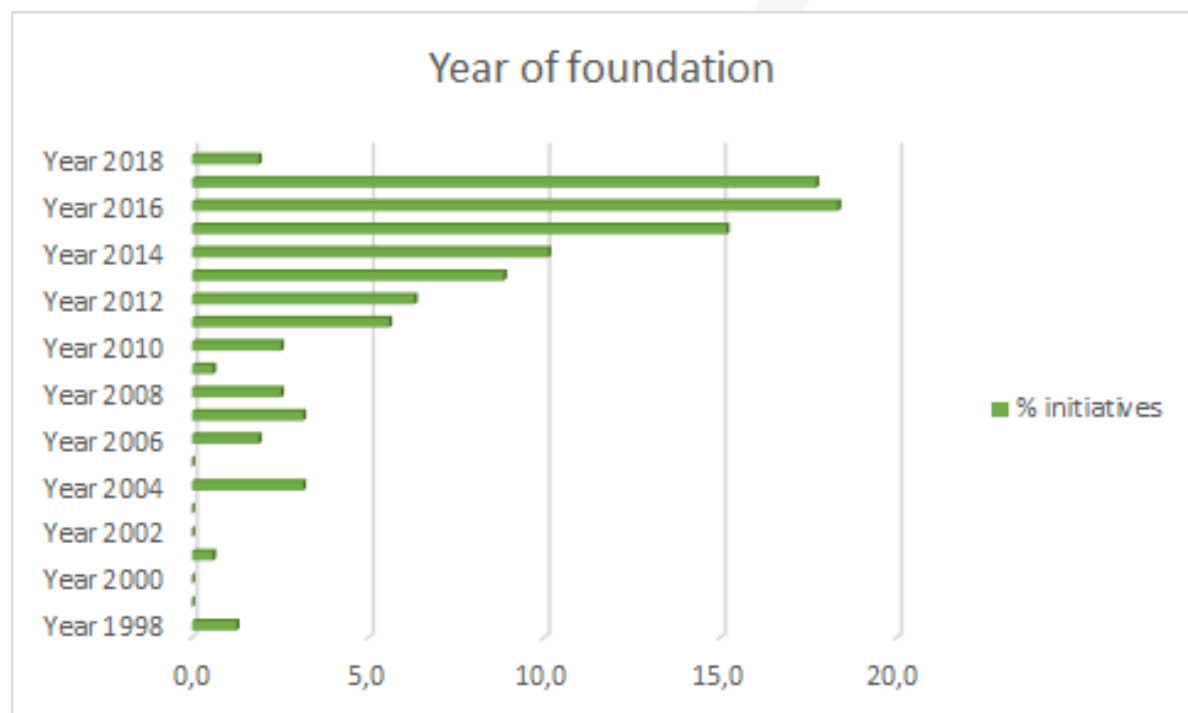
The welcoming (Willkommenskultur) movement during the opening of the borders 2015 also played its part in the foundation phase of many projects. The increasing number of people voting for the far right party (Alternative für Deutschland) motivated organisations and individuals to dissociate to racism and hostility to foreigners by starting projects in this respect.

France is a popular destination of migration particularly for TCNs from Maghrebian and such African countries which were formerly French colonies. There are also a considerable amount of Turkish and Kurdish people arriving in France. Language is a very important factor for immigrant's decision about the target country. France has a long history of immigration from former colonies and oversea-departments e.g. in the Caribbean. For these reasons many initiatives exist, many of them were started before the recent wave of immigration in Europe. France is well known for its gastronomic culture and food plays an important role in the mentality of the French people. Artisanal produced food is very much appreciated throughout the population. There are many initiatives which work with vocational trainings in restaurants and catering services, providing chances for integration into the labour market.

Statistics about the foundation date, medium of integration and vocational training

In the period 2012-2016, there has been an enormous increase of initiative foundations. In the last two years this has gradually declined, and only a few initiatives created in 2018 have been found. Not only the creation of new initiatives decreased, but also the participation of volunteers and different sectors of society.

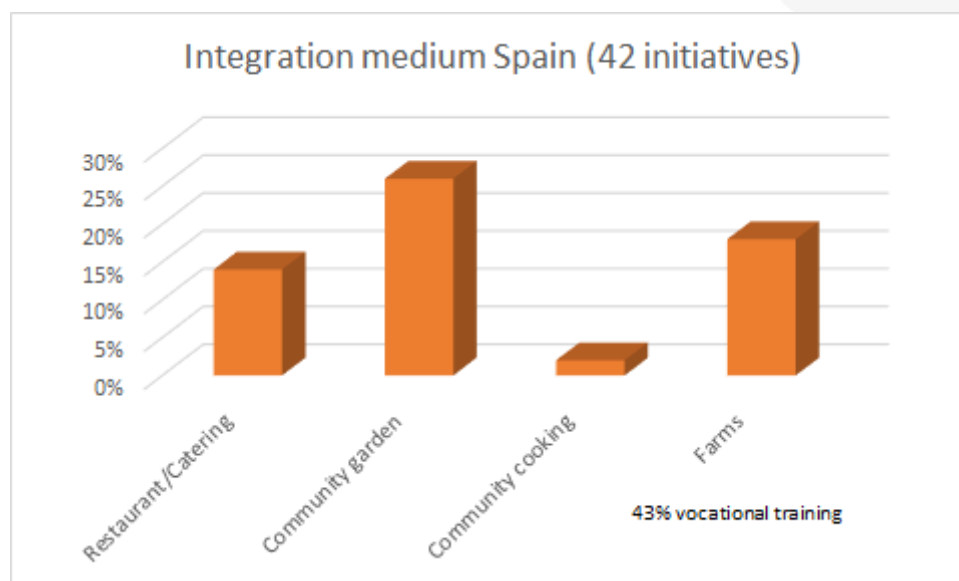
During the opening of the German borders the number of TCN increased rapidly, and in answer to that the amount of initiatives providing support and social spaces for the respective peers and the local community. The opening of the borders in Germany has also a direct effect on the number of TCN (and initiatives) in other European countries.



In Spain, Italy, Greece (transfer countries) agricultural sector is predominantly depended on non-EU immigrant workers, whereas in Germany mostly EU migrants are working in the agricultural sector (Romania, Poland). Whether the TCN are allowed to work in the respective country depends on the regulation concerning the access to employment for asylum seekers. These differ within the EU. Germany will give work permits after three months after the application for asylum was lodged but can prolong this period until up to 24 months, if the asylum seeker is obliged to stay in the initial reception center due to origin from a “safe country” or other regulations. In Greece, TCN are treated as normal citizens in terms of access to the labor market but increasing unemployment and obstacles in dealing with administrations are making this advantage obsolete.

In Ireland, asylum seekers are still not allowed to work at all. The waiting period for a work permit differs from two (Italy) to twelve (UK) months in the EU. This disparity has a direct influence on the landscape of initiatives, facing either problems of unemployment (Greece) or forced passivity (UK, some TCN still wait for their asylum process lodged in 2001!)

The United Kingdom as a target country and the longlasting process of application for asylum (sometimes more than a decade), leading to a raising number of migrants not allowed to work, plays an important role in the design of food related projects. For a majority of TCN the only chance for a socially accepted occupation is volunteering, being subject to pressure such as the emotional climate after Brexit within the locals, the high cost of living and uncertain housing situations.

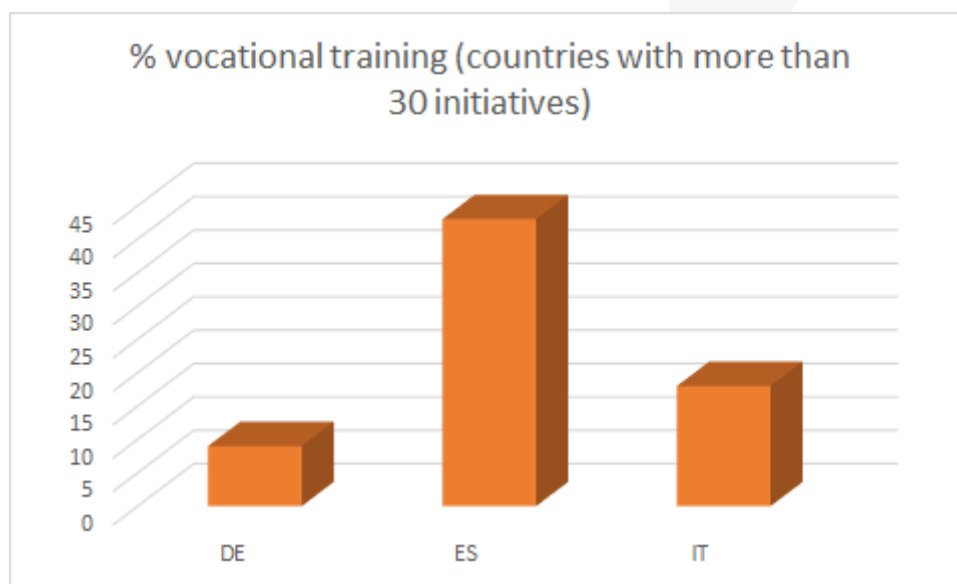


The vocational training plays an important role in some countries like Spain, where approximately 43% of the initiatives offer some kind of training in agriculture or catering.

The number of social enterprises which provide education for TCN has considerably increased in the last years, especially in organic agriculture and community gardens.

This corresponds with the lack of labour force and generational replacement and the necessity of knowledgeable workers in this area.

This fact is also a good opportunity to counteract increasing depopulation in rural areas, a big problem all over Europe. In this sense, an interesting combination are initiatives which involve TCN in sustainable practices by using abandoned fields in rural areas.

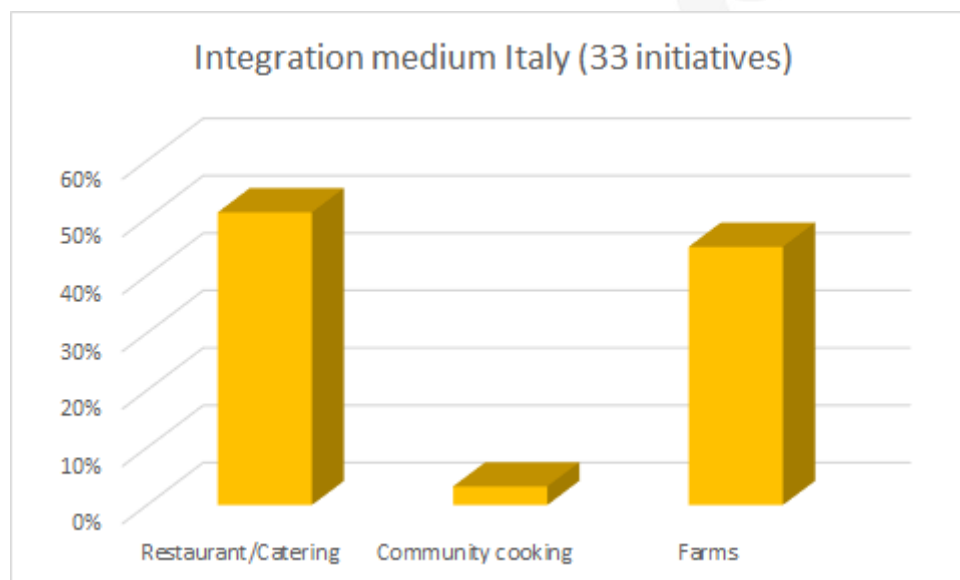


The situation in Greece is different, the initiatives are often located close to refugee camps, where the humanitarian aid is needed the most.

This is one of many reasons why getting information is very hard for projects like “Food Relations”. The lack of connection between the different projects, the legal status of most of them and the users and other obstacles blur the picture we were able to get about the greek situation. In other words the lack of exchange between the initiatives and the economic and bureaucratic obstacles which initiatives face when creating a social organisation to help refugees in Greece, lead to little availability of public information about initiatives. Part of the information that we have received comes from initiatives from other European countries which also work abroad in Greece.

In Italy, the most important integration activities, 50 % of the initiatives, are related to catering and agriculture. The weight of the catering sector and the agricultural production increase inclusion opportunities for TCN.

Vocational training and access to work opportunities are the two most common fields of actions. Social agriculture represents approximately 43% of the total initiatives in Italy, a few of them are organic farms.



Unfortunately projects evolving around running farms or primary production only occasionally exist. One of the many reasons in spite of the hardship small-scale farms face in a globalized market and with the current distribution of EU-subsidies, is the insecure legal status of TCN. Mainly seasonal work is offered, but without the aim to integrate or socially support asylum seekers. In most of Europe there are no structures to support farmstarters helping them to set up new farm businesses and providing them with access to land, knowledge and local networks.

Around 80% of the initiatives are concentrated in urban areas and surroundings. This fact is in line with the necessity of infrastructures, contact and support from other public and private entities as well as easier access to volunteers and social response.

In rural areas only agricultural initiatives are located, though being in contact with cities in order to sell their products and relate with consumers (or even prosumers).

The community gardens which are mainly located in the cities have more participation and social impact. However, there are also some examples of community gardens in rural areas which do pioneer work to facilitate open-spaces to meet and build up a community in cut-off areas.

Design of the selection criteria

The selection of the criteria was a participatory process of all projects members of Food Relations. Depending on their importance, they were categorized into the two groups, mandatory and optional criteria. Mandatory criteria were given double value compared to optional criteria. The evaluation was performed by using an ordinal scale from 1 to 3, with 1 being the lowest score, 2 representing a medium and 3 being the highest score.

Social sustainable initiatives (work conditions etc)	Pedagogically sustainable (possibility to practice the language, to foster the dialogue about global issues, like global food crisis, alternatives production techniques)	Environment Sustainable initiatives. In the direction of the agroecology	Special considerations for women empowerment	Immigrant's participation in the process of design of the initiatives.	Independence of external consumables, operating along the chain of added value	Connections with social ,political and public sectors	Sustainability of the projects over time. (Assignment of plots, infrastructures, professionals)	Innovative and creative concept	Financial sustainability	Long standing experience	Mandatory	Optional	Total
3	3	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	22	13	35

Mandatory criteria:

- Social sustainable initiatives (work conditions etc)
- Pedagogically sustainable (possibility to practice the language, to foster the dialogue about global issues, like global food crisis, alternatives production techniques).
- Environmental sustainable initiatives: in the direction of the agroecology.
- Special considerations for women empowerment.
- Immigrant's participation in the process of design of the initiatives.

Optional criteria:

- Immigrant's participation in the process of design of the initiatives.
- Independence of external consumables, operating along the chain of added value.
- Connections with social, political and public sectors.
- Sustainability of the projects over time. (Assignment of plots, infrastructures, professionals).
- Innovative and creative concept.
- Financial sustainability.
- Long standing experience.

Process of rating

The process of rating is based on the mandatory and optional criteria above mentioned. It was conducted by the research team AGRONAUTEN with the collaboration, monitoring and evaluation of all project members of Food Relations.

We made a first selection with the initiatives with more than 35 points in total which was the case for 62 of the initiatives. However, as our aim is to represent a diversity of projects with a diversity of countries we didn't merely chose the initiatives with the highest total points. Instead we decided to choose min. 1 and max. 5 initiatives per country with the highest total score. After that we tried to get into contact with these pre-selected initiatives in order to get more detailed information and start collaboration. At this point it was the main challenge to get into contact with all of the pre-selected initiatives, thus in practice our final selection is the result of the initiatives that were highest ranked and with which we established collaboration.

Conclusions

Food not only connects the initiatives and projects we found during our research, foremost and primarily it connects people. Representing a basic human need for nourishment it brings people together no matter which background, gender or other conditions they have. The found initiatives use food not only as a tool for integration or cultural exchange but also as way to empower people to develop skills to nurture themselves and a community. By doing so Food Relations not only stands for the relations between individuals from all around the globe but also represents places where people can connect to earth, its outer layer soil and the products cultivated on that. Like plants looking differently dependent on the environment variables the initiatives and projects are always connected to the national and sometimes even regional contexts. They all fill a gap in society, left wide open sometimes by governments or the economical driven and growth-minded society. The gap might be a wholefood and healthy diet, a community garden, a kitchen or restaurant or even just a place to eat together. The many ways they address the deficits go along with the idea of self-empowerment and getting happy by gathering people together to make the world a better place (or as Über den Tellerrand would say: Make the world a better plate).

Some initiatives, e.g. in the field of community gardens and restaurant/education-projects, understand themselves as initiatives to integrate all kinds of people in vulnerability, thus they don't see themselves as specifically targeting TCN, it is rather a result of their vulnerability that TCN are attracted and part of these initiatives.

What first strikes the eye looking at the results of the research is the huge variety in terms of the pure number of initiatives existent in the respective countries. One explanation is the amount of TCN arriving and already present in the countries, but an even bigger role plays the nationwide climate about TCN and the governmental and non-governmental tools provided to support food-related projects with an aim of integration. This climate paired with the motivation of the TCN to either stay or move on makes the numbers more understandable.

Countries which are only transition-countries for refugees, like for example Belgium, don't have initiatives like community gardens or restaurants for vocational training because there is no point in terms of sustainability to set them up. There are charity projects but they are limited to the provision of food packages in refugee shelters or privately organized dinner cooking events.

Looking at the fields of action one can say, that projects can be divided into two main groups: Community-Building and Skill-Training. For sure the boundaries are blurred, but there are projects which tend to put a focus on voluntary work, a situative approach, self organized structures and very low profile entrance requirements. These initiatives are found in community gardens, open cooking events, intercultural cafés, solidarity meals and likewise. Projects who provide an infrastructure for vocational training, skill development and a work-oriented learning environment tend to be a social business securing the social work through a running business. Restaurants play an important role in this section, they can provide a welcoming environment by also having the chance to work and develop skills for a potential self-employment. On the other hand catering is a tough business and its hard to compete with the big number of restaurants in urban areas. Not underestimating the importance of the mentoring and individual challenges working with people from crisis-torn backgrounds, social businesses like Restaurants or Cafés present a valid tool for vocational training as well as a place to build up relations and networks with locals. The biggest lesson learned during our encounter (communicating or visiting) with the initiatives is the need for more exchange and networking on an European level. Considering the different national frameworks, food-related projects working with TCN have a lot in common too.

Sharing knowledge, tools and experiences on an European level can support them in getting better in what they are already doing very good. We are looking forward to play our role in connecting projects and initiatives that connect people.



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