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CityZen News | #02 2020

Welcome to the second CityZen newsletter,

we are pleased to inform you about our recent activities in the Interreg Europe project! Find out how we enhance various regional policies on green innovation and resource efficiency, like low-carbon food, waste management, urban revitalization, as well as adaptation of cities to climate change with CityZen.

Due to COVID-19, a lot of plans had to be adjusted, e.g. our international meetings could not be held on site, but we found great online alternatives and could still move forward with our projects in all our regions.

We invite you to share your experiences on urban farming, or any feedback and to stay in touch through our social media channels. Enjoy reading and stay safe!

The CityZen team

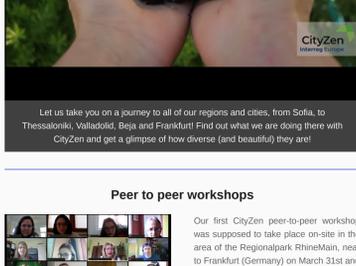
P.S. You can now meet our regions and us 'in person' - check out our brand new CityZen promo videos below!

CityZen is implemented by seven partners (see below):

Applied Research and Communications Fund (Lead Partner) - Bulgaria, Regional Development Fund of Central Macedonia - Greece, Municipality of Beja - Portugal, Higher Technical School of Agrarian Engineering & University of Valladolid - Spain, Institute for Rural Development Research at Goethe University Frankfurt/Main - Germany, Baixo Alentejo Intermunicipal Community (CIMBAL) - Portugal, Natural Heritage Foundation of Castilla y León - Spain.

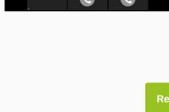
Highlights

A view into our regions



Let us take you on a journey to all of our regions and cities, from Sofia, to Thessaloniki, Valladolid, Beja and Frankfurt! Find out what we are doing there with CityZen and get a glimpse of how diverse (and beautiful) they are!

Peer to peer workshops



Our first CityZen peer-to-peer workshop was supposed to take place on-site in the area of the Regionalpark RhineMain, near to Frankfurt (Germany) on March 31st and April 1st. Instead, we moved our lively discussions online. During the workshop, which focused on good practices from Bulgaria and Germany, participants listened to the presentations made by ARC Fund's (Bulgaria) and ILS' (Germany) teams and shared their own experiences and ideas.

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Similarly, our second peer-to-peer workshop, which would have been in Beja (Portugal), had to be organised online. With a focus on the Portuguese (CIMBAL and Municipality of Beja) and Spanish (University of Valladolid and Natural Heritage Foundation of Castilla y León) CityZen cases, we discussed how to best promote and support urban farming in our regions.



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Regional spotlight

Urban farming in Portugal

Baixo Alentejo Strategic Development Plan (PEDBA), 2014-2020



Municipality of Beja and CIMBAL.
The Municipality of Beja is located in the Alentejo region (NUTS III) and Baixo Alentejo (NUTS III), extending over an area of 1,146.48 km². It borders the districts of Setúbal (North-West), Évora (North), the province of Huelva (Spain, East), the district of Faro (South) and the Atlantic Ocean (West) and has 33,579 inhabitants (year 2019). Beja has a community urban farming project integrated in Beja Eco POLIS Program, which was developed with the support of a regional research center. As a follow-up project, Beja wants to further involve the research community and transfer knowledge for a critical mass of SMEs that innovate in urban farming.
CIMBAL is a regional association of municipalities and an intermunicipal public authority. It has high competence and experience in developing and implementing policies and instruments for regional sustainable development, especially in environmental protection and resource efficiency. It is financed by regional and local public authorities. As the managing authority of the Baixo Alentejo Strategic Development Plan (PEDBA), CIMBAL has full direct empowerment for design and implementation of PEDBA priorities and actions. It is also a bridging link between municipal and regional policies and is experienced in cooperation, designing and implementing action plans.

Picture: CIMBAL

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Urban farming in Castilla y León

ERDF Regional Operational Programme of Castilla y León



Natural Heritage Foundation of Castilla y León & Higher Technical School of Agrarian Engineering - University of Valladolid.
In Spain, the phenomenon urban agriculture is increasing exponentially, as demonstrated by data from a study led by Gregorio Ballesteros from the Studies and Alternatives of Madrid Polytechnic University. Urban agriculture areas have increased from 9 in 2000 to 508 in 2015 and the number of urban orchards currently exceeds 20,000. In some regions urban farming is strongly supported by authorities while in others, city councils are the supporters. In Castilla y León city councils encourage the creation of urban gardens, mainly with an educational, leisure, social and environmental function.

It is necessary to study local initiatives, share good practices and promote policies and action plans for a sustainable development of this new sector. In this sense, CityZen explores the ecosystems associated to urban agriculture and promotes local policies that support new business models, improvements for local products, innovative value chains and changes in the styles of life with the overall goal to increase the sustainability of towns and regions!

Picture: University of Valladolid

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Latest CityZen News



Why regional and urban agriculture is more important than ever
CityZen strengthens regional and urban farming – which could be one answer to dealing with the consequences of threats like the COVID-19 pandemic, in the future! The partial collapse of global supply chains, empty supermarket shelves, panic buying and the restrictions to stay at home raised the desire for self-sufficiency and healthy food. The result is an increasing number of people looking for local (and regional) alternatives to meet their food needs – and a global growth of urban farming activities.

Picture credit: Martin Winkler, Pixabay.com

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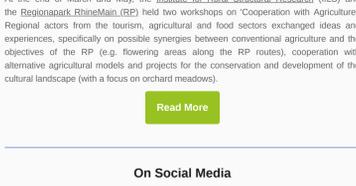
Bulgaria: International conference on urban farming
ARC Fund presented CityZen at the international conference "Urban agriculture as a strategy to increase the quality of life of urban communities", organised by the Institute for the study of societies and knowledge at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.
Conference participants made their presentations in the form of self-recorded videos and ARC Fund's team highlighted goals, activities, partners, advantages and challenges of urban farming in Sofia.

[Find the video\(s\) here](#)



Mértola: Covid-19 and the challenge of self-sufficiency in food
In an online seminar in June, CIMBAL presented the CityZen project and its relevance for the region. The main focus lay on the Portuguese city Mértola, as an inspiring city to learn from in terms of resource efficiency and self-sufficiency in food production.
In recent years, Mértola has launched several initiatives, like local food networks, school gardens or a training programme that also makes land available to (new) farmers that have started the needed transformation process of the local food system.

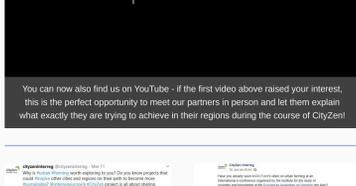
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Germany: Regional Stakeholder Meetings
At the end of March and May, the Institute for Rural Structural Research (ILS) and the Regionalpark RhineMain (RB) held two workshops on "Cooperation with Agriculture". Regional actors from the tourism, agricultural and food sectors exchanged ideas and experiences, specifically on possible synergies between conventional agriculture and the objectives of the RP (e.g. flowering areas along the RP routes), cooperation with alternative agricultural models and projects for the conservation and development of the cultural landscape (with a focus on orchard meadows).

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On Social Media



You can now also find us on YouTube – if the first video above raised your interest, this is the perfect opportunity to meet our partners in person and let them explain what exactly they are trying to achieve in their regions during the course of CityZen!



Recommended Content



CityZen is built on exchange and sharing experiences among European partners to learn from each other and grow. Finding digital alternatives (GoToMeeting & Zoom) to our on-site meetings was crucial. The following site contains a list of accessible tools and resources for online project meetings, including a helpful comparison of platforms to use remotely: <https://4edth.com/en/remotely-productivity/>

INTERREG Europe also shared tips for successful online meetings in an online seminar that [you can find here](#).

Following the outbreak of Coronavirus, farmers and producers are facing difficulties and increasing pressure to maintain food security. Find out what actions the European Commission has taken, in close contact with EU countries and sectoral organisations, to support all actors involved here: https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/coronavirus-response_en

What's next?

2020
August 20 - Regional Stakeholder Meeting in Frankfurt, 'Cultural Landscape & Orchards'
September 23-25 - 3rd peer to peer workshop in Thessaloniki, Greece | online

