

# NEWSLETTER

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## PROSPERA Interreg Europe

### Editorial

PROSPERA to prosper

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the second edition of the PROSPERA newsletter! PROSPERA is the acronym of 'PROmoting Sustainable development and regional attractiveness through PERi-urban Areas'.

We are 7 partners from 5 countries, regional and local municipalities, public development and research agencies, and companies.

We are sharing good practices on protection and promotion of natural heritage and sustainable development in peri-urban areas.

By following the progress of the project through our biannual newsletters, you will be able to receive information about the development of the peri-urban areas!

In this newsletter we will inform you of how COVID-19 has affected the project partners, about the launching event in Debrecen and the results of the regional analysis reports.



European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund

PROSPERA project is funded by the Interreg Europe programme of the European Union to promote attractiveness and sustainable development in peri-urban areas.

## How Covid-19 has affected the peri-urban areas of the partners?

Equally to the rest of the world, COVID-19 has also affected our project. Fortunately, the launching event was organised in February, but the following face-to-face meetings had to be postponed. This highly affected our first study visit to Ghent. It was supposed to take place in June, but it shall be reorganized in September to make sure that travel is safe for all partners and stakeholders.

PROSPERA partners had to change the way of contacting with their stakeholders and internal colleagues. During the pandemic situation, some partners organised online meetings with their stakeholders, others waited for the relief of the restrictions allowing them to organise personal meetings.

The COVID-19 has affected differently the territories and peri-urban areas of each project partners.

**Emilia-Romagna Region** has been at the forefront of the outburst of the epidemic on the European territory. According to most recent bulletin, the region has so far registered 29434 people infected and 4283 deaths: the Province of Reggio Emilia alone counted 4103 people infected and 506 deaths.

The Municipality has tried to [respond to the needs](#) of the population by activating various services, in cooperation with other actors of the territory. First of all, it activated [home delivery services](#) for basic commodities, aimed especially at the most fragile people. In addition, thanks to government measures, the Municipality activated a [Mutual Aid Fund](#) for citizens in need to collect donations and the contribution allocated by the Italian Government.

At the same time, the Municipality increased its commitment to make its proximity felt by citizens: for instance, it launched a [survey](#) to better understand the needs of the population and better support the territory. Similarly, several cultural and social initiatives have been carried out online to support citizens in this difficult moment (e.g. [the special night of tales](#))

COVID has brought out new needs and new demands that perhaps were not so visible before the crisis, and which emerged in particular during the meetings with PROSPERA local stakeholder group:

- A prominent request for more green spaces accessible to citizens in urban and peri-urban areas.
- The need to improve the relationship between citizens and the agricultural and rural world, by working on education and awareness-raising activities for citizens.
- A greater request for local food produced by local farms situated in peri-urban areas, which resulted in the creation of delivery systems that worked well during the crisis but might not be economically viable even in the aftermath period.
- The increase of proximity tourism, which might become an opportunity for local actors to propose safe solutions and experiences in contact with nature to rediscover the cultural, natural and culinary aspects of our territory.

In **Debrecen**, the EDC Debrecen created a two round-questionnaire in which the companies were asked to answer how the COVID-19 affected their operation. The survey looked for information in the following areas: changes in income, financial, operational and employment problems, reserves (time, quantity), types of employment (unchanged, home office, other, lay off), special training needs, how the local and national authorities can help them. The results show that production within the county still increased compared to the previous year due to the openings of new companies. The agri-food companies could continue their

operation which highly affects the peri-urban areas, since their products are grown there. The International Airport of Debrecen is also located in the peri-urban area and it was stopped, on the other side some services became more valuable, such as Lufthansa maintenance. Besides the economy, the citizens valorized the peri-urban areas, since these places gave them the possibility to spend their free time safely, keeping the distances and doing sports. The so-called '[Nature Archive](#)' has followed this new trend and it has created online learning videos about the flora and fauna of the forest around the city because when citizens could not leave their home, this organisation has brought nature to them.

## Activities implemented during Semester 2

### Stakeholder meetings

During this extraordinary situation stakeholders remained engaged to the project, so they participated at the meetings either 'corona style' by keeping the 1,5 m distance, or online, but mostly traditionally in personal.



The outburst of the epidemic and the consequent socio-economic crisis made it even more important to discuss with local stakeholders how the PROSPERA project might contribute to the resolution of some pressing local needs. In this sense, the **Municipality of Reggio Emilia, E35 Foundation and CRPA** decided to organize a series of virtual round tables with restricted groups of local stakeholders, in order to collect their inputs on how the COVID crisis impacted their work and activities and which new needs and challenges emerged during the pandemics in peri-urban areas.

The meetings saw the participation of the following actors: associations of the agricultural world; University and High schools; Multiservices companies; Tourism associations; non-profit organizations; business and professional organizations; orders of architects and agronomists.

The COVID brought out new needs and new demands, in particular:

- More green spaces available for citizens' leisure.
- A stronger knowledge about the agricultural and rural world at civil society level, in order to facilitate the coexistence between citizens' leisure and productive activities.
- A new attention to sustainable and responsible consumption, which led to a greater demand for locally produced food.
- Rediscovery of "proximity tourism" by citizens, which can represent an opportunity to relaunch peri-urban areas as touristic destinations with a great cultural, natural and enogastronomic value.

Finally, a plenary meeting was organized with all stakeholders to sum up the main inputs from the round tables and match them with the good practices presented by the other European partners. This long path of discussion with local stakeholders represented a very important moment for the local implementation of the project, as it shed a light on how Reggio Emilia could learn from the experiences of the other partners to develop some innovative solutions to old and new challenges.

**EDC Debrecen** shared with their stakeholders how the emergency affected the project and what was and what will be the solution in different situation. One main topic was the presentation of the regional analysis. The challenges of the partners are included in a matrix that was introduced to the stakeholders. The other focus was on the forthcoming study visit in Ghent. The Hungarian partners expressed their interest in the Belgian good practices.



The local stakeholders in the village of Sibbarp and public officials from different departments of the **Municipality of Varberg** met in Corona style to talk about the PROSPERA project's impacts on Varberg and the development of the village. This method of working with planning in peri-urban areas is one of Varberg's good practices in the PROSPERA project. Building, planning, roads, public places, environment, mobility, recreation were the topics during the discussion.

PROSPERA stakeholder meeting was organized by the **Municipality of Aristotelis Chalkidikis**. The aim of the meeting was to introduce to the participants the objectives of the project, the planned activities, the results of the research in the region and the best practices from Greece and from the other partners. At the end of the meeting a discussion was initiated among the local stakeholders in the field of environmental measure implication in the region and new ways of tourism boosting of SMEs during the COVID-19 crisis.



Due to COVID-19, the second stakeholder meeting in **Ghent** was held online. After a general introduction, the meeting focused on the Regional Action Plan to improve the "Spatial Structural Vision 2030 – Space for Ghent". This is the policy instrument that the City of Ghent chose to review, improve and implement throughout the PROSPERA project. The central questions were: How can public land contribute to the objectives for open space that are stated in "Space for Ghent", such as food production, nature, recreation and climate adaptation? How can this be investigated- and maybe even tested? - within PROSPERA? Furthermore, the program of the field visit in Ghent and the overall approach of the other field visits was discussed. This allows stakeholders to start considering their attendance.



### **Launching event**

The launching event was organised in February 2020 in Debrecen, Hungary. The main objectives of the meeting were to share the project information for wider public by a press conference; to have a discussion about the regional characteristics, good practices and methodologies among the partners; and to define the upcoming tasks for project management, financial management, communication and dissemination.

There were different workshops led by ILVO such as regional reporting, good practices session and stakeholder engagement.

- *Regional Reporting*

During the Regional Reporting session every partner team had a brainstorming about the PROSPERA ambitions and challenges in different clusters (PROSPERA target), namely cultural heritage, food production, tourism, environment, climate change, populations, built environment, mobility, economy and natural heritage. Altogether linkages were revealed among the partners and common areas to be developed were defined.



- *Good Practices (GPs)*

During the Good Practices session each partner presented their own GPs and marked them on the earlier mentioned 'target'. Accordingly, everyone pointed on the favourite ones that they would like to visit. We put more emphasis on the following study visit's good practices giving feedback by the partners to Ghent.

- *Stakeholder Engagement*

During the Stakeholder Engagement session every partner placed their already involved stakeholders and the desired ones on the 'target'.

As a result of these sessions we could have an overview about the areas we focus on and the related good practices and stakeholders.

The project partners meeting provided an opportunity to describe the upcoming tasks for project management, financial management, and communication.

#### **Press conference presentations:**

- Welcome to Debrecen /*Ákos Balázs, Deputy Mayor for Environmental Protection, Municipality of Debrecen*/
- The importance of peri-urban areas for a medium-sized city /*Carlotta Bonvicini, Deputy Mayor for Sustainability, Reggio Emilia Municipality*/
- PROSPERA: Why a city should promote and invest in peri-urban areas? /*Andrea Porcelluzzi, CRPA (Center for Research on Animal Production)*/
- 5 European cities promoting sustainable peri-urban areas: PROSPERA main territories and challenges /*Anna Verhoeve, ILVO*/
- Landscape ecological background of the peri-urban area of Debrecen /*Professor Péter Csorba, Dept. of Landscape Protection and Environmental Geography, University of Debrecen*/
- EU policies and perspectives about natural heritage and urban ecosystems /*Sabrina Rosati, E35 Foundation for International project*/

## Forthcoming activities



*1<sup>st</sup> Study Visit in Ghent*



*Stakeholder meetings*

## Next study visit in Ghent

Next semester the first study visit is planned to take place in Ghent in September, though partners should also prepare for an online study visit if there is no chance to travel abroad.

Here is a brief overview about the good practices collected in the city.



### ***Ghent en Garde – Food Strategy***

With its own food strategy 'Ghent en Garde' Ghent strives for tasty, local and sustainable food. The Belgian city joins its forces to turn Ghent into a climate neutral city. Ghent en Garde has brought significant change to the local food system. Ghent's food policy has moved from launching small-scale initiatives to bringing structural change to the food system. It is decreasing food waste, making food procurement more sustainable, scaling up short food supply chains and improving access to food.



### ***Gentbrugse Meersen – a green area combines nature development and recreation with agriculture***

Gentbrugse Meersen is a nature development area in the peri-urban fringe of Ghent. The City aims to create a diverse nature zone. It consists of wet grasslands, but also of existing and newly created forests. The City has an agreement with two farmers to let cows graze in this area for nature management goals. The farmers also provide education about this initiative. People can hike in the area, also in between the cows, which results in an added value from recreational point of view.



### ***Open call for a city-oriented agricultural project on land from the city with social employment***

This project is a cooperation between OCMW (social welfare department) who owns the land, the city of Ghent and several private partners to realize public benefits in the field of local food production and social welfare. The leasehold contract for about 10 hectares of fertile agricultural land in Afsnee ended. This created an opportunity to launch an open call for a city-oriented agricultural project with social employment.



### ***Green climate axes***

In Space for Ghent 2030, the spatial structure plan of Ghent, one of the goals is to develop 8 green climate axes that bring green and nature in the city center, within reach for the citizens. These green climate axes also contribute to the climate adaptivity of the city. Moreover, they can be combined with soft mobility axes, stimulating people to come to the city by bike or on foot.

### **How can you get involved?**

- Participate in our [local stakeholder groups](#)
- Participate at [study visits](#)
- Let us know about [your own project or event](#) related to PROSPERA
- Reach out to us by [email](#) or on our [social media](#)

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