

# NEWSLETTER

January 2021 | #03



## PROSPERA Interreg Europe

### Editorial

Dear Reader,

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

The overall objective of the project is to improve regional policies on protection and promotion of natural heritage in peri-urban areas, with the ultimate aim of preventing biodiversity loss, soil consumption and further degradation of natural assets, by in parallel leveraging on these challenges as a way to favour regional attractiveness and economic sustainable development.

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 about our first study visit in Ghent.

PROSPERA to prosper



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.

## Activities implemented during Semester 3

### First study visit in Ghent

The first study visit was organised in December 2020 in Ghent, Belgium. The main objectives of the meeting were to exchange experience and present local good practices to the stakeholders and the project partners of each partner region.



As the COVID-19 crisis hits Europe, the planned activities of the PROSPERA project had to be reorganized online. Thanks to the creative tools developed by the Flemish Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Research (ILVO) the process of interregional learning on peri-urban development, which is the key goal of the PROSPERA project, has continued successfully. Likewise, ILVO provided the methodological support for the organization of a fruitful online field visit, which was attended by more than 80 persons.

#### Agenda:

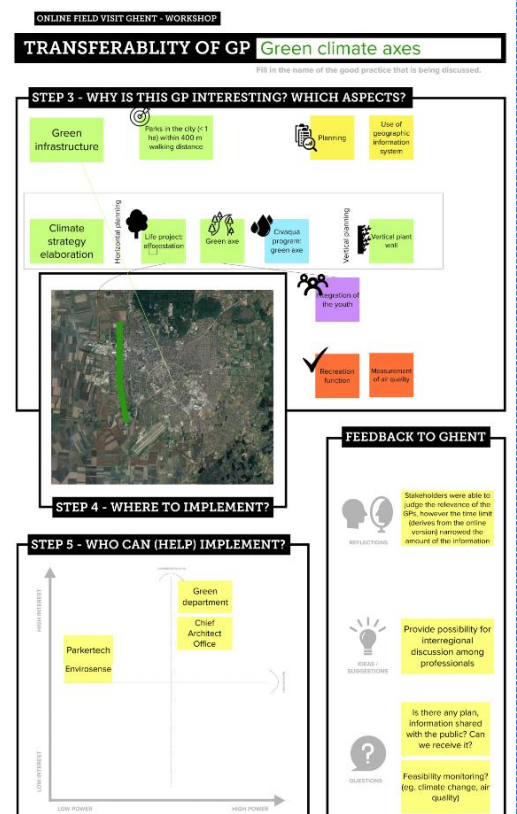
- DAY 1 (24th November) – Project partner meeting (with the ambition of using the field visit canvas in an interactive way)
- DAY 2 (1st December) – Presentation of Good Practices by Ghent
  - Presentation of Good Practices
  - Local discussion on Ghent Good Practices
  - Plenary closing session
- DAY 3 (10th December) – Deepening interregional learning

#### Methodology

„In essence an online field visit respects the basic structure and principles of a regular field visit. Firstly, the audience needs to understand the context of the good practices that will be presented. So, information was provided which triggered attendees to reflect on the key differences and similarities between Ghent and their own local context. Secondly, the link with the overall project focus was guarded deliberate focus of the good practices presentations on the PROSPERA themes and on the role of the city.

The presentations by the city of Ghent were also very illustrative. You could imagine the spaces, even if you were sitting in your own home. We used the tool Mentimeter to capture first reactions and questions for each presenter. Specific questions were answered immediately but broader, reflective questions were addressed in a plenary debate with all the presenters.

As during a regular field visit discussions on how to bring home the good practices were fit into the program. We asked the attendees to debate in a separate afternoon workshop, if and how a good practice of Ghent could be transposed to their own, local context. Visualization tools such as MURAL helped to structure that debate and helped to make the abstract more tangible. Local workshops also allow everybody to speak his or her native language. The workshop also allowed for PROSPERA partners and their local stakeholders to get to know each other. The last workshop drew together all reflections, ideas and questions about each good practice of Ghent. This was an occasion for the other cities to inspire Ghent in further steps for their good practices.” /Anna Verhoeve and Jeroen De Waegemaeker, ILVO researchers/



City of Ghent showed four good practices to the PROSPERA partners and stakeholders: the local food strategy Gent en Garde, the open call in Afsnee, the grazing project in nature reserve Gentbrugse Meersen and finally, the green climate axes. Each of these good practices are examples of how a city itself, as a local government, can play a role in achieving sustainable development of the natural heritage in its peri-urban area.



**Reflection**

*"Ghent seems to us a very inspiring city to relaunch our food production and consumption system, as well as the connections with rural and inland areas - in line with the Mab UNESCO project - and the enhancement of new skills and resources for our city." /Carlotta Bonvicini, Deputy Mayor for environmental and sustainability policies/*



**Local food strategy Gent en Garde**

The local food strategy Gent en Garde defines guiding principles related to sustainable food production and consumption in Ghent. These are concretised in specific actions that make a tangible change in the City. The active involvement of the food policy council (and the yearly budget they get to spend on innovative food projects) is an important and innovative aspect of this good practice. Other examples of concrete actions are the B2B short chain platform VANIER that acts as a hub to connect local producers with local restaurants, canteens and retailers; Thursday Veggie Day and the project Foodsavers that prevents food waste by reusing leftovers as a resource.



**Reflection**

*We found the presentation about the Food strategy to be both professional and interesting. It would be interesting to transfer this model to Varberg. We do however see challenges in relation to our food and cooking legislation as well as public procurement legislation. But we see possibilities to establish a food budget within the European agricultural fund for rural development – EAFRD. This would also enable the creation of a food council, like the one in Ghent, within the work of the Leader program (which is a part of EAFRD).*



**Green climate axes**

The green climate axes are an active strategy to realise a green-blue network, bringing more greenery and more space for water into the city. The preferred location of the axes has been defined and they are now being realised step by step. The green climate axes bring a cooling effect and ventilation, they mitigate urban heat stress effect, they prevent drought and flooding. They also have an important role as nature connection for fauna and flora. Moreover, they contain a continuous and comfortable bicycle and pedestrian path between the city centre, the peri-urban and rural area.



**Reflection**

*"We can learn a lot from Ghent. As the major gardener of Debrecen the green corridor and recreational pathways combination is really for my heart. We have to learn and develop our green corridors with a natural and recreative way, instead of taking them into the motorized transport network." /András Kuhn, Major Gardener of Debrecen/*



### Open call Afsnee

In Afsnee, a borough in the peri-urban area of Ghent, about 10 ha of publicly owned land became available due to the lease contract's ending. The City of Ghent then launched an open call for a city-oriented agricultural project, in line with the local food strategy. As a result, a group of farmers engaged themselves to produce food for the local market on this public land. At the same time, other goals such as social employment are included. The idea is

to also learn from this project about how to use public land as a lever for sustainable food production.



#### Reflection

*We discussed the economic sustainability of this project and how it may be adapted in the local rural context. Stakeholders also appreciated the actions taken to create green areas available to citizens. In fact, during the lockdown the need for more green areas was also felt by the citizens of Reggio Emilia.*



### Gentbrugse Meersen grazing project

The Gentbrugse Meersen is a nature reserve in the peri-urban area of Ghent. To manage the grassland part of this nature reserve, cows of a local farmer are grazing in the area. This project shows how nature conservation, recreation and agricultural goals can be combined and lead to a win-win situation. The City has a solution for the management of the nature reserve.

The farmers have a healthy grazing location for the cows. And the citizens

are happy with the large nature reserve, in which the view of the cows is an additional asset.

### Forthcoming activities



*Study Visit II. in Reggio Emilia (IT)*



*Stakeholder meetings*



*Study Visit III. in Aristoteli Chalkidikis (GR)*

### Next study visit in Reggio Emilia

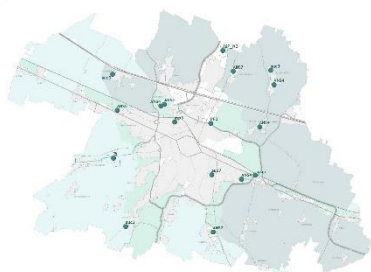


Next semester the following study visit is planned to take place in Reggio Emilia in March. Reggio Emilia is a medium-sized city situated in the north-eastern Emilia-Romagna region, in the heart of the so-called "Italian food valley". The rural area of Reggio Emilia covers approximately the 76% of the whole territory: peri-urban areas play therefore a crucial connective function between the urban centre and the extended rural context.





The study visit will provide an opportunity to explore the valorisation efforts promoted by the Municipality of Reggio Emilia to preserve the ecological and connective function of these areas. In particular, Reggio Emilia's good practices will cover the following themes: food production, sustainable mobility and preservation of natural heritage.



### ***Soil consumption***

Presentation of the "variation to the urban planning tool" of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, which provided for the cancellation of 136 hectares of potentially building areas in agricultural territories. The objectives of this GP are to reduce land consumption and enhance agriculture as an important economic player in Reggio Emilia's development.

### ***Greenways***

Greenways connect a number of small rural villages located in the area surrounding the city through the use of rural tracks, rivers/creeks levees, cart roads of farms and other paths or tracks. They are also linked to virtuous experiences of sustainable mobility and territorial valorisation, such as the "Biodiversity Road" connecting Modolena-Quaresimo parks in a historical-natural environment that can be reached through cycle paths and greenways. This good practice is the result of a participatory process aimed at innovating city governance through the direct involvement of citizens and civil society organisations.



### ***Agrobiodiversity conservation and didactic farms***

Guided by the students at the High school "Zanelli", citizens and associations are involved in the life of the farm. The farm experience includes specific paths ranging from the knowledge of good agricultural practices to animal breeding and the knowledge of ancient crops that have otherwise disappeared from our territories. This good practice has a strong educational function for both children and citizens about the agricultural

and rural world and it can also be linked to other local education activities about local gastronomy and food culture promoted by Pause Atelier of Tastes.



### ***Edible park***

Edible park is based on a renewed interest in agroforestry systems as sustainable production model. The objective is to provide to local consumers high quality food products while stimulating societal engagement in the farming activity and considerably reducing environmental impact. The good practice aims at strengthening the model of a multifunctional agriculture within the local socio-economic context and it also engages disadvantage workers in its activities.





### **Urban forestation**

Involvement of citizens and private actors in forestation interventions on public areas identified by the Municipality, with the aim of increasing the city's resilience to climate change and pollution effects as well as providing more green recreational areas to citizenship. The experimental project in the peri urban "Acque Chiare" park will be explored, where an orchard with a selection of old varieties has been recreated to preserve biodiversity and support sustainable agriculture.

### **Next study visit in Aristoteli Chalkidikis**



The Municipality of Aristoteli is going to host the project partners and their experts in June 2021. Municipality of Aristoteli is working the last years very actively on peri-urban branding strategy connecting cultural and natural heritage for promotion and support of local tourism and entrepreneurship. Under the umbrella of the "ARISTOTELIS" brand have been developed numerous activities promoting the region and enhancing its economic growth. Part of these activities will be presented during the local study visit and examined from the foreign participants.



### **Aristotelian Route**

In Aristoteli Chalkidikis, efforts for place branding of the peri-urban area around the town Stagira, has resulted in the creation of the Aristotelian Route, an outdoors hiking pathway, connecting the new town of Stagira to the ancient city of Stagira, which is now an archaeological site.



### **Aristotle's Grove**

Aristotle's Grove is an outdoors theme park situated a few kilometres outside Stagira. Aristotle's Grove combines elements of educational and outdoors recreational tourism, as it is situated in a green area, uphill, overlooking the sea and with views of close by mountains, while it contains a series of experimental, scientific and interactive instruments that visitors can play with and learn about the laws of physics and Aristotle's writings.



### **Parallel Restoration**

In Aristoteli Chalkidikis, there are mines in three locations. Parallel restoration implies that locations where individual mining projects are completed, get immediately restored, in parallel with the progress of other mining and restoration projects. Rehabilitation works, which may be either to remove the visual effects of an existing mine site or to reduce the impact of a new mine site to a lowest degree, should be planned before starting the operation and carried out in parallel with mining activities, since by this way, reclamation can be implemented in a more economical way with minimum cost.



### **KOUZINA programme**

Another important part of the branding strategy that will be presented is the gastronomic tourism, KOUZINA programme and Women Cooperatives' work. The KOUZINA program is an annual gastronomic festival. It always lasts one month, and it includes a series of gastronomic events that represent the national and local culture. The festival focuses on local tradition, products and recipes and it is a vehicle for honouring the local land and the gifts it offers. The gastronomic approach includes marrying local tradition with modern gourmet creations, while using always local organic products.



### **Women's Association**

In Greece, women's associations and cooperatives have a long tradition and constitute a distinct part of local production and cultural heritage. Over the years, there have been hundreds of agro-touristic cooperatives made up by female members, operating in Greece in a context of social, solidarity and cooperative economy. The Women's Cooperative that is active in Aristoteli Chalkidikis is the Varvara Agricultural Association, called Dryades. It is a partnership of housewives, who many years ago combined their strengths and culinary knowledge to create a fragrant home, with the aim of turning rich local produce into a tradition and gastronomic brand. Its main traditional products include pasta, sweets, jams, liqueurs, and aromatic herbs.

### **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](#)

### **Visit us to learn more about us**



[www.interregeurope.eu/prospera](http://www.interregeurope.eu/prospera)



<https://www.facebook.com/InterregPROSPERA>



<https://twitter.com/IProspera>



[prosperacommunication@gmail.com](mailto:prosperacommunication@gmail.com)

