

CITYZEN HANDBOOK: **URBAN FARMING** POLICIES AND PRACTICES

**Enhancing scalable innovations and
new business models based on urban
farming ecosystem values**



**Environment &
resource
efficiency**



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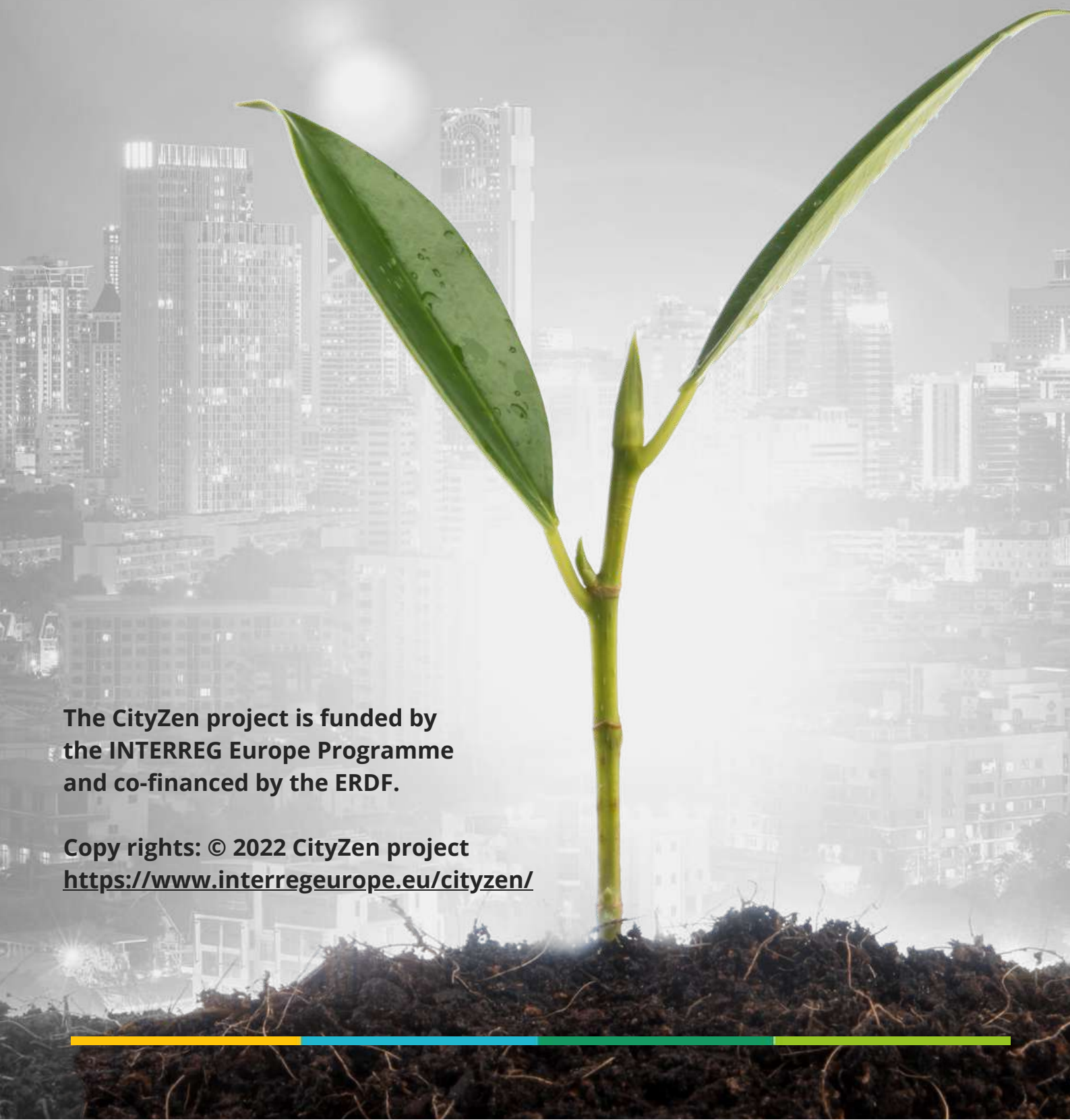


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CityZen and urban farming

CityZen is an Interreg Europe project that aims to foster urban farming policies and their key role for better resource efficiency in cities.

Agriculture in urban settings is already a global and rapidly growing trend that offers great potentials for green, social and technological innovation. It is also a challenge for policy makers that need to redesign existing policies on urban planning, use of terrains, green spaces and infrastructure, and to create a new more integrated policy framework.

This is the area where eight CityZen partners from five EU regions have joined efforts and expertise to enhance and democratize policies in terms of urban farming:

- **(BG) Applied Research and Communications Fund - Lead Partner**
- **(BG) Sofia Development Association**
- **(DE) Institute for Rural Development Research at Goethe University Frankfurt/Main**
- **(EL) Regional Development Fund of Central Macedonia on behalf of the Region of Central Macedonia**
- **(ES) Higher Technical School of Agrarian Engineering - University of Valladolid**
- **(ES) Natural Heritage Foundation of Castilla y León**
- **(PT) Municipality of Beja**
- **(PT) CIMBAL - Baixo Alentejo Intermunicipal Community**

For more information about CityZen visit:



Food and the City(Zen)

There are multiple benefits of urban farming that makes it so versatile and attractive for practitioners, foodies, urbanists and farming enthusiasts.

While it offers innovative and resourceful ways to use land and urban infrastructure to produce local food, it also makes cities greener and often restores malfunctioned urban sites to bridge social gaps.

It is the high community spirit that is the greatest value of urban farming and the magic ingredient to launch and sustain urban farming projects for social, economic and cultural change. These multifold social and environmental benefits are the forces that draw the attention of policy makers, urban planners and environmentalists to the edible and resilient city concepts.

And all of this in symbiosis and as a supplement to the development of rural agriculture, where urban farming is not an isolated side phenomenon but goes hand in hand with conventional farming for sustainable results.

Urban agriculture

is defined as “small areas (e.g., vacant plots, gardens, verges, balconies, containers) within the city for growing crops and raising small livestock or milk cows for own consumption or sale in neighborhood markets” and can provide a source of food and income for urban dwellers (**FAO, 2020, p. 5**).



02 CityZen experiences and good practices

Maximizing space for urban farming

Urban farmers are constantly challenged to find the open space they need for growing fresh food products. Land and space in cities are limited and sometimes very expensive assets that need to be shared among different actors for city planning and infrastructural projects like public parks, kindergartens, children playgrounds, sport facilities, residential and office buildings.

There are different approaches to use or create spaces for urban farming in a multifunctional and smart way. Changes in regulations for the use of public green spaces so that they become more inclusive for urban farming projects could be also necessary.

CityZen partners identified such local solutions on how to maximize space and support urban growers:

The background image is a photograph of a rooftop garden. In the foreground, several small green seedlings are growing in brown, biodegradable pots. The pots are arranged in rows on a dark, textured surface, likely a rooftop. In the background, there are more plants and a blurred view of a city skyline under a bright sky.

Vertical gardens

Rooftop gardens

Greening of brownfields

Multifunctional use of sites

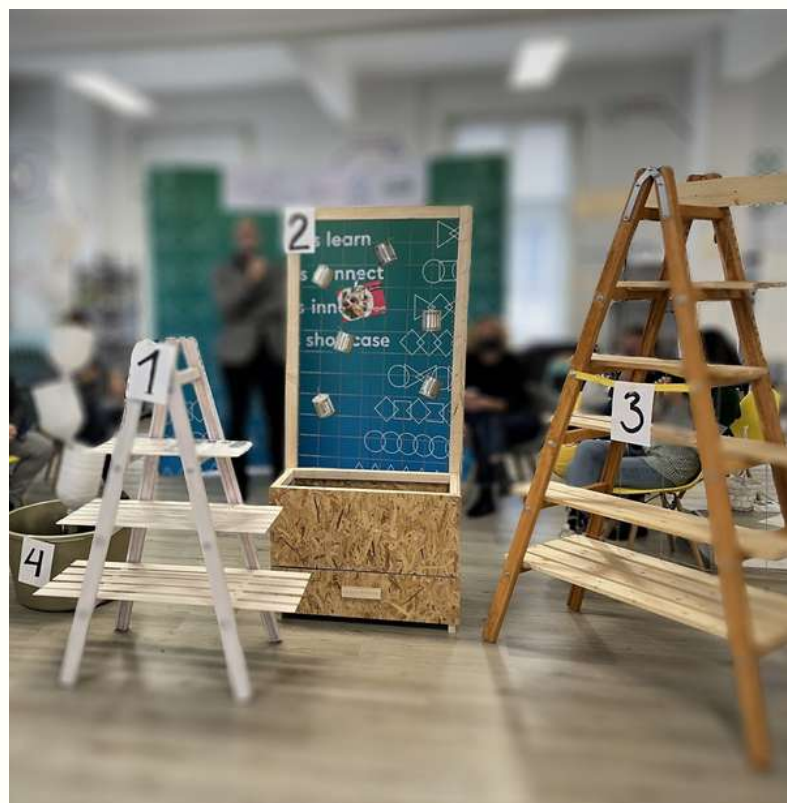
Vertical gardens

can be an alternative to urban dwellers that do not have easy access to land and open space but want to grow own green oases at home.

Four 'Do-It-Yourself' models for mini vertical gardens are co-designed by the local stakeholders within the CityZen pilot action in Sofia together with a step-by-step Manual, technical schemes and useful tips.

The aim of the action is to foster citizens and employees at residential, public and private buildings to practice urban gardening all year round.

Although suitable for small-scale projects, these mini gardens can thrive with leafy greens, herbs, spices and berries by using proper plant varieties and know-how for indoor use.



Vertical gardens are also very close to their users which is a great motivation for beginners to start urban farming without the need to travel and make great maintenance efforts.

The DIY vertical garden models were tested at six sites in Sofia:
in public offices of SofiaLab and SofiaGreen, Sofia library, a residential building and Sofia Tech Park.

Rooftop gardens on public buildings

Although related to some structural and water drainage considerations, rooftop gardening can lower the ambient temperature of a building and can save up to 14,5 % of its annual energy consumption.

Rooftop gardens also beautify and socialize empty and underused spaces in cities, which often have greater access to sunlight and rainwater resources compared to ground levels.

The range of rooftop garden designs is broad enough to provide affordable solutions for new and old buildings like hydroponics, aquaponics, vertical designs, greenhouses, raised beds, containers and bee hives.

In addition, more and more constructors are designing their buildings in a way that is resource efficient and contributes to keeping cities' biodiversity by incorporating vertical and rooftop landscaping and farming opportunities.



Green rooftops call for municipalities of Central Macedonia

The call was relaunched by the Managing Authority of Central Macedonia as part of the Regional Operational Programme, IP6e on taking actions to improve the urban environment, rebuild cities, rejuvenate degraded areas, reduce air and noise pollution, by including green rooftops and vertical gardens.

The call was reinitiated by the help of CityZen and Regional Development Fund of Central Macedonia (RDFCM) partners and is a policy change in the programme settings that opened up opportunities for greening of local municipalities. The pilot project of the Neapoli-Skykies Municipality creates green rooftops and vertical urban gardens at four municipal buildings to create green spaces with a total area of 845 sq. m. in densely populated sites of the municipality. The total budget of the action is EUR 262K.

One of the goals of the initiative is to raise awareness and to involve a wider range of beneficiaries and businesses in the next stage.





Barcelona hydroponic rooftop gardens

show the successful symbiosis between urban farming, technology innovations and the opportunities for social inclusion managed by the Municipal Institute for People with Disabilities and the Barcelona City Council.

It is a social innovation project that brings together people with disabilities to manage hydroponic urban gardens on rooftops of municipal facilities. It proves that working with the plants significantly increases the quality of life for this group of beneficiaries in terms of leisure, socialization and education.

Moreover, the use of rooftops and terraces of buildings contributes to a greener city and improves ambient air quality while innovating in the management of water and soil to obtain sustainable quality produce with less resources. Sometimes even better quality than outside the city!



Greening of brownfield sites

is a way to restore city areas that are unused or became deserted due to bad maintenance or contamination by industry or landfills. In such cases urban farming can be a tool to revitalize those areas by making some extra investments in soil remediation and site development.

CityZen good examples of giving new purpose for the land are coming from Castilla y Leon, Thessaloniki and Sofia:



Svolou's pocket park in Thessaloniki

is launched by the Alexandros Svolou Neighborhood Initiative in collaboration with the Municipality of Thessaloniki to respond to the scarcity of green public spaces in the central parts of Thessaloniki.

It is a pocket-size park of 400 sq. m. located in a city area with densely packed apartment buildings. The initiative aims to restore local community spirit by collective urban farming actions, events, film screenings, games for children and adults, by turning the site into a green and creative place. Fertile soil was moved to the site for cultivating plants which now improve the microclimate and host birds and other small animals.



"Community garden 1" in Sofia

is built on former parking lots in one of the most densely populated districts in the city: the Students' town. With a size of 250 sq. m. it is an example of how a civil society group can re-cultivate the site by bringing freshly dredged soil from a construction building area.

The case also illustrates how the owner of the brownfield site - the Sofia Municipality- can support the community garden as a land provider along with private sponsors such as a solar panel producer, construction materials store and the French Embassy in Sofia.





Allotments and ornamental trees in Salamanca

A modern urban agriculture project has led to the creation of 617 orchards located near the city center and funded through the EDUSI initiative (FEDER).

The investment of EUR 2M gives life to an abandoned area that has now in addition to the orchards, a total of 550 ornamental trees, 9177 sq. m. of grass fields and areas with tables and playgrounds.

Allotments of orchards can be requested by the citizens of Salamanca in addition with technical advice on how to better take care of the plots by the criteria for sustainability of the project.



Multifunctional use of open spaces

City premises can provide more ways to use land resources already available by combining education and learning-by-playing activities for children with growing their own food and more healthy habits.

Universities and schools are often owners of open spaces that can be better sustained and provide ecosystem services to the local communities by the help of urban farming.





The call for school urban gardens in Castilla y Leon

is a great example of how CityZen experiences were translated into a policy change for the Regional Operational Programme, where urban farming got integrated. It is an amendment made by the National Heritage Foundation of Castilla y Leon (FPNCYL) partners with the help of the REACT-EU funds, where a new IP13I and SO “Support to investments contributing to the transition to a green economy” were adopted.

Within the new objective, 65 projects for school urban gardens in the region were approved and are under construction to

make urban farming part of the nature-based solutions, educate scholars, increase resilience to climate change and reduce inputs of energy and water resources.



Urban vegetable garden of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

The garden has operated for 8 year already by offering 450 plots of 100 sq. m to citizens that can cultivate them for a period of 1 to 3 years by paying annual fees. It is part of the mission of the University to help local people reconnect to land and grow organic food. By the start of the growing season the gardeners can join seminars for newcomers to learn and prepare for the basics of organic gardening and cultivating local Greek varieties.





Urban garden for retired people in Valladolid

"INEA" is an agricultural engineering school in the city of Valladolid that collaborates with the Valladolid City Council to develop the "Ecological Farm" project. The initiative provides 437 allotments to retired people, so that they can cultivate own vegetables.

Apart from the plots destined for retirees, there are also other parts of the garden assigned to produce food for the food bank. An annual market is held with products donated by all the garden workers, where the profit gained is donated to a charitable association.



ROLE OF POLICY MAKERS

to optimize land and space for urban farming:

- provide better access to municipality owned terrains and rooftops.
- mainstream application and rental procedures.
- provide incentives to urban gardeners such as free of charge or preferential prices to rent the land or the rooftop space; provide long-term rental contracts; better access to farmers' markets, etc.
- collaborate with innovators for the design of vertical gardens, hydro-and aquaponics in line with the lean and circular economy principles.
- communicate with citizens and work with schools, universities, hospitals, supermarkets and other stakeholders to promote multifunctional use of urban sites.

02 CityZen experiences and good practices

Urban farming educates and makes fun

Gardening is a healthy and amusing activity for children to develop new skills and learn about nature and how to save its resources by growing their own food.

School vegetable gardens and orchards are also sites that bridge generations and community groups in the neighborhood. It is an area of benefits and strong impacts recognised by all partner regions of CityZen.



Educational farm at the Regionalpark RhineMain

At Thomas Maurer's educational farm, children and adults can learn about food cultivation and animal husbandry all year round. Initiated by the local Department for Rural Areas (ALR) and the Maurer's family, the farm was opened to the general public in 1999 to create better understanding of local peri-urban food production and agriculture.

It is a mixed farm with arable crops, cattle, horses, smaller animals and a classroom to provide extracurricular classes. The educational farm provides the owner with part-time income in addition to his farming business activities. Continuous support comes from the municipal authorities of Bad Homburg and Frankfurt as well as the Regionalpark as part of the Farm Stations along the green circular route of Frankfurt.





"Cristóbal Colón School" garden and educational programme

Located in the "Pajarillos" district the school took part in the Interreg ENEREUSER project and was chosen two years ago by the FPNCYL partner to carry out a "Renaturalization" of the schoolyard. As a result part of the concrete pavement was transformed into a fruit and vegetable garden.

This urban farming site is used to create new learning scenarios where children can learn in experimental, emotional and cooperative ways mathematics, physics, languages, art, and other cross-cutting issues such as healthy eating, climate change, resource efficiency and food resilience.

It also helps overcome social and economic challenges that are experienced in the school neighborhood like poor nutritional profile and lack of open green spaces.

The school Cristobal Colón is now part of the municipal network of school gardens and has contacted local fruit canning companies to produce jam from the schoolyard fruits.



02 CityZen experiences and good practices

Food with social values

Benefits of urban farming go well beyond sustainable food production and consumption. Urban gardens usually provide greater engagement with other people and become places of learning, connection, personal fulfillment and civic participation.

It is part of the social safety net that supports vulnerable communities especially in times of economic crises and other shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic.

CityZen partner regions are strongly involved in the social side of urban farming activities and hold a small-scale survey on the impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns on local food systems.

The survey tracked and compared needs, trends and potential solutions as outputs by three main groups: local businesses, civil society groups and citizens/households.



Urban community garden «KIPOS3»

KIPOS3 garden started from the idea of three postgraduate students of Architecture and Agriculture for a pilot urban neighborhood garden to grow fresh food on unused green spaces, ideally in the urbanized heart of Thessaloniki.

About 30 families are involved in the garden and most of them have one to three plots for planting vegetables, fruits, aromatic and ornamental plants. The site is provided by the Municipality as a public space where everyone can participate for free. The garden is now also a very popular place for meeting and socializing of local residents.





Community farming in Beja

is an initiative since 2012 that allocates small plots of land initially planned for urban green areas and now transformed into urban gardens to support financially challenged families. It offers 138 plots for a monthly fee of EUR 5 to grow organic food, increase family income and provide community support. For years, all plots are kept busy, and there are dozens of new applicants waiting to join the gardens.

The Municipality of Beja is a trusted partner to citizens and is responsible for checking the availability of plots and their

allocation by a set of criteria like residence, time of registration, proven state of unemployment or economic hardship to give a priority and 50% weighting over regular applicants.

In addition, the Municipality provides facilities like public lighting, water, composters, garbage and recycle bins, shading area, global sealing as well as scientific and technical support. It prepared general regulations while specific rules of the community garden are made by a council of gardeners.



Urban Gardening-Sofia

is one of the first civil society groups to start urban gardening in 2012. Nowadays it accommodates the largest network of community gardens in Sofia spread out on 6000 sq. m. and 100 gardeners.

'Gradina zaDrujba' is the kick-off site launched by the initiative in 2015 that assigned part of its plots for two solidarity gardens, where cooperators and volunteers can grow fruits and vegetables for a solidarity kitchen. The garden holds team building campaigns for companies, where employees can work in the solidarity plots and grow food for people in need.





Urban Gardens in Valladolid

are based on two initiatives carried out by the Valladolid City Council for the creation of Urban Gardens in the city. There are 50 sq. m plots distributed in 4 areas of the town that the city council lends free of charge to unemployed people so as to reduce their expenses for food shopping.

If any allotments remain available, the city council provides the rest of the plots to workers over 18 years old, who are interested in doing urban gardening. In addition, there is an area offered to patients' associations to help improve health and wellbeing of their members by taking care of the plants.



ARGO social enterprise in Thessaloniki

is an example of a successful start-up and a therapeutic programme based on urban farming. It prevents healed addicts from relapsing to drugs due to unemployment or lack of socializing. Such former patients are given the chance to work in a team and get financial support through ARGO.

The job offers and the series of educational seminars and training reduce potential risks and empower new skills and talents of ARGO's employees, who are also encouraged to launch their own projects. The psychiatric hospital of Thessaloniki has supported ARGO by offering facilities and granting the management role for the farms.



02 CityZen experiences and good practices

Urban farming connects

Along with the food production that is an essential part of the mission of urban farmers, doing agriculture in the city creates new value chains and networks of actors.

Located in the heart of the city and its daily life, urban farming directly connects growers, consumers, citizens and resources into more sustainable and fair trade models.

The discussions on the local land-use and urban farming regulations are another key areas where urban growers should be in constant dialogue with policy makers to create and harmonize rules and decisions.

Participatory approaches and multi-actor communication are the very fabric of society that also drives urban farming development and good governance.



Santo Amaro's market in Beja

is a street market that provides each Saturday space for urban farmers to sell their products directly to consumers. With the support of the Municipality of Beja small farmers and urban growers can offer local fruits and vegetables, as well as processed food products without bureaucratic hurdles since no fee or registration is required.



The initiative helps to preserve the variety of local and regional products and minimize negative effects of economic crises, supply chain disruptions, rising food prices and pandemics.

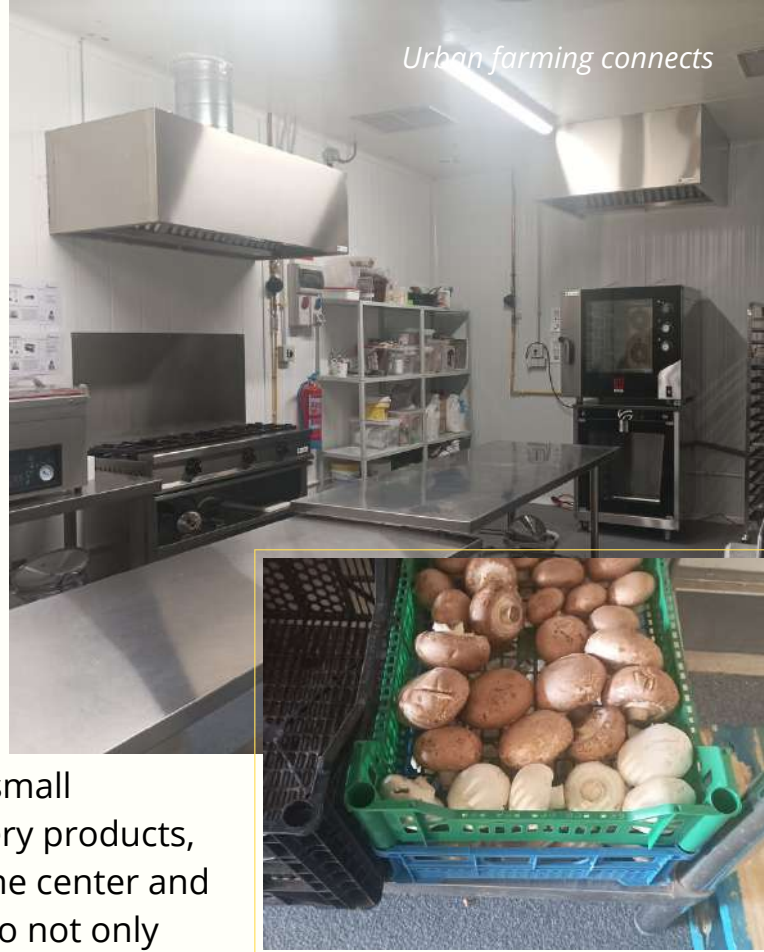
In addition, a strong bond of cooperation and trust is created between farmers and citizens, who are often long-time customers.



"VallaEcolid"

is a recently created association based in Valladolid, where small producers of organic products collaborate and are able to transform their production. The association is also responsible for distributing these organic food products to municipal nursery schools and for organizing an eco-market one Sunday a month in the city center of Valladolid.

A product collection and transformation center is located in an important food complex in the outskirts of Valladolid where small producers process their production into bakery products, canned vegetables and ready-to-eat foods. The center and "VallaEcolid" activities help urban producers to not only reduce costs and obtain ecological certification, but to connect with business partners, municipal bodies and clients.



Regionalpark Farm stations in Frankfurt RhineMain

are located along the circular route which is one of the main places for citizens to recreate and cycle. The 20 farm stations represent local practices for food production and are visited by tourists, school classes and locals to enjoy food and learn about farming. Farmers in these (peri-)urban areas at times experience conflicts with recreational users of the circular route pathways that go along or cross agricultural areas.

To balance all needs of citizens and farmers, the Regionalpark in close cooperation with the Department for Rural Areas (ALR) created information signposts and a brochure to better communicate and create mutual understanding among recreational users and farmers.



Community Food Lab

is launched in the Castilla y Leon region to promote urban farming, local products and new businesses. It also addresses demographic challenges in the region where traditional products might be lost due to the lack of succession among generations to collect and process food at local urban gardens, orchards and edible forests.

A total of 36 entrepreneurs have already participated in the lab to take part in training and by using equipment for processing and conservation of products.



By the support of the Natural Heritage Foundation of Castilla y Leon (FPNCyL) as part of the regional government in Castilla y León, participants of the food lab are also creating a cooperative to offer products on the market under united label.

02 CityZen experiences and good practices

Urban farming business models

Urban farming can significantly impact our food supply when scaled up into successful businesses. There are several business models that are specific to this sector and also reflect social and environmental values of the urban farming mission statement: to provide fresh, safe and affordable food by the sustainable use of resources and with social benefits for the local communities.

→ ***Community supported agriculture***

In Oberrad, a suburb of Frankfurt, a farm that operates as a community supported agriculture (CSA) was visited by the CityZen partners. The demand for organic, regional food brings the farm owner a secure and predictable annual income, where consumers buy shares of the harvest in advance. By this model, the farmer can cultivate fields without economic pressure while consumers get regular delivery of fresh food.



→ ***Urban gardens subscriptions***

Oberrad's visit also showcased seasonal gardens on a farm land traditionally owned by a family, where citizens can subscribe for a year and harvest organic vegetables cultivated by them on a plot of land. The land owner provides seeds and plants to the subscribed gardeners from her own cultivation.



→ ***Urban gardens for stores and restaurants***

Vegetable gardens set outside a department store were visited by CityZen in Thessaloniki. The products grown there are used in the restaurant of the store and cover the needs of fresh vegetables for a long period of the year.



02 CityZen experiences and good practices

Urban farming for more efficient and sustainable cities

Urban farming, as demonstrated by the entire CityZen experience, has great potential to minimize many of the negative effects of urbanized life towards more sustainable cities.

The benefits range from the more adaptive and efficient use of land, space, water and energy, to smarter management of costs and food waste and re-engineering of local environments to deal with heat and air pollution. Tools, networks and circular economy practices linked to urban farming preserve many natural assets in cities and keep biodiversity.



Digital map of Sofia

visualizes free terrains that are suitable for community urban gardens based on available public data and field trips for validation by volunteers.

The map was designed by the municipal enterprise Sofiaplan but the idea came bottom-up by the 'Initiative for the Development of Urban Farming' in Sofia - a civil society organization that took active part in the process of data collection and validation of the terrains.

As a digital tool that is publicly available, the map shows terrains owned by the municipality and helps urban gardeners to approach the respective administrations and apply for a long-term use of the land. The map provides an interface for citizens to find, contact and negotiate on plots for urban gardening with the municipality.

Constant updates of the map by the support of volunteers is a challenge, but the team is ambitious to add more functionalities to the map.





Mertola Food Network

aims to experiment and come up with solutions for a more sustainable future via co-creation, testing, demonstration and monitoring of diverse agroecology techniques, related in particular to permaculture principles. It is part of the initiatives of Mertola municipality to foster discussion culture, peer learning with farmers and producers and the work of the demonstration center for farming techniques.

The network connects different local actors like farmers, local authorities, associations, schools, social initiatives and local entrepreneurs. It also holds different initiatives such as the "Night at the Market" events for socializing and food sharing, the Forest-Gardens to learn food production modes and a supply and delivery service of fresh local products by electromobiles.



Preservation of orchard meadows in Frankfurt

Meadow orchards are an essential element of the historical cultural landscape of the Frankfurt RhineMain region. They are part of the Regionalpark and the cycle route that allows families to experience meadow orchards biodiversity along with the fields, wetland biotopes, adventure sites with vantage points and playing facilities.

A major problem for the preservation of these orchard areas and also of horticulturally cultivated areas in the region is the theft of fruits and other products. It is a major obstacle for the successful cultivation and maintenance of the orchards. In order to make visitors part of the solution and preserve these valuable sites, a better public awareness on the benefits of such green assets is promoted.





Food waste solutions

In cities more than half of the food wastage happens at the retail, storage and consumer stage. Located in the heart of the city or in the suburbs, urban farming provides a solution to reduce food waste by shortening or even turning down to zero the supply chain from the time the food is produced to the moment it reaches consumers. Urban farming practices also greatly help the change of consumer attitudes and get citizens better related to food on a daily basis.

Urban farming in all CityZen regions is strongly connected with composting practices that turn organic wastes into nutrient-rich soil for gardening. It is in the grounds of sustainable urban farming and is widely practiced by each site or as networks of shared composters. Taken at municipal level, food waste reduction and composting is not only decreasing food scraps in the landfills but also fosters innovative waste management activities.

Sofia Municipality composting facility “Han Bogrov” is a plant for biological treatment of food waste coming from restaurants and stores that is converted to biogas. It also transforms green waste collected from public parks and gardens into compost. Citizens with paid waste taxes can take free of charge up to 10 kg of compost, or buy larger quantities at low price to start their gardens.



03 Creating a policy change

CityZen Action Plans

Turning interregionally gained knowledge into policy actions is in the heart of the Interreg Europe projects and the CityZen's Action Plans design. The sequence of learning events and visits to good practices have created a pipeline that helped us structure and focus our strategic actions to the next level.

The plans include key steps to be taken by the managing authorities in the CityZen regions, so that changes in policy instruments are launched and mainstreamed to help local urban farming initiatives grow and expand.

CityZen Action Plans are result-oriented and will be implemented for 1 year by the active involvement of all partners and key stakeholders.

Action plan for Sofia region and the SOfiaGreen programme

This Action Plan steps upon the CityZen pilot action on "DIY vertical urban gardens" and will extend a recent call of the Sofia Municipality for tree planting at schools and pre-schools with an additional funding to build vertical urban gardens as well. Sofia schools and kindergartens can apply for a fixed amount of EUR 125 within this add-on call to build a mini vertical garden together with seeds, seedlings and composted soil for planting.

SOfiaGreen programme will finance up to 10 mini vertical garden projects for the first year of the add-on call by addressing schools and kindergartens as a new group of beneficiaries beyond the initial pilot action sites at a residential building, public and private office spaces.





Action plan for Region of Central Macedonia and the Regional Operational Programme

The Action Plan is driven by the policy change achieved in Phase 1 of CityZen, where the project “Green roofs in municipal buildings of Neapoli-Sykies” was approved under the resumed call for green rooftop municipal projects within the ROP, IP 6e, action 3.

The Plan will monitor the impact of this policy change by observing the increase of the municipal area used for urban farming activities at the Neapoli-Sykies. An indicator will also measure the multiplying effects to other municipalities, schools and key stakeholders after the study visits to the green rooftop facilities built by the project. New project ideas that originate from the rooftop visits will be presented by the Region of Central Macedonia to the Managing Authority of the ROP 2021-2027 as potential topics.

Action Plan for Baixo-Alentejo region and the PEDBA plan

PEDBA is a policy instrument for strategic planning and regional development of the Baixo-Alentejo region. The Action Plan aims to integrate urban farming thematic among the policy goals of PEDBA in order to provide more sustainable use of urban resources and new entrepreneurial and social opportunities in the 13 municipalities covered.

As managing authority CIMBAL will launch and coordinate a Mechanism for participation and dialogue with local municipalities and key actors to streamline PEDBA’s urban farming objectives and support measures. A public consultation round will be held with a wider group of stakeholders for PEDBA validation. The number of new urban farming support measures in PEDBA will be also monitored.

Action Plan for Castilla y Leon region and the Regional Operational Programme

Urban farming has been successfully involved as a topic in the ROP of Castilla y Leon already in Phase 1 of CityZen. It is a policy change that resulted in the amendment of the programme by the help of the Spanish partners and the REACT-EU funds. A new IP13I and SO "Support to investments contributing to the transition to a green economy" were adopted with 65 projects for school urban gardens already approved by a total budget of EUR 400K.

The Action Plan aims to monitor the performance of these 65 school gardens, where urban farming becomes part of the nature-based solutions to educate scholars, increase climate change resilience and reduce inputs of energy and water. Indicators will measure the impacts of the school gardens, their integration in the educational process and follow-up activities to enhance local knowledge and skills.

Action Plan for Frankfurt RhineMain region and the Regionalpark's Guiding Concept

The aim of the Regionalpark is to safeguard green spaces, including farm- and woodland, within the densely populated area of Frankfurt. At the moment, the Regional Park's Guiding Concept hardly addresses agricultural projects nearby the city, but rather focuses on the development through cycle routes.

The Action Plan will identify innovative pilot projects related to urban agriculture and the food system and will include them into implementation and financing plans of the policy instrument in three priority areas: measures to promote and communicate agriculture along the circular route, activities to preserve orchard meadows as cultural and recreation landscapes as well as promotion of urban gardening by pilot spots including aquaculture.

04 What stakeholders say

Support to urban farming

We asked 150 stakeholders from local businesses, civil society groups and citizens (households), what is the most demanded support for the urban farming activities.

Have a look at their feedback and needs in the context of the additional challenges faced by the local food systems during the COVID pandemics:

- Better access to plots in urban areas.
- Small grants to launch urban gardens.
- Rental schemes for the basic infrastructure - fences, water tanks, solar panels, etc.
- Free access to farmer's markets for urban gardeners.
- Tax reduction for commercial urban farming.
- Free use of water and electricity for the gardens.
- Vouchers for advisory and technical services.
- Need of regulation on urban farming, incl. go-to-market for hobby farmers and sales of surplus products at household level.
- Creation of platforms for trade and donations of surplus food products.
- Support for innovative business solutions in production and social innovations.
- Promotion and incentives for the use of existing innovative solutions and systems for urban agriculture (e.g. aquaponics, aeroponics, hydroponics).
- Mapping of public buildings suitable for rooftop gardens, as well as private buildings that offer roof space.
- Public procurement activities with schools, homes for elderly people, where fresh produce can be purchased. The role of municipalities is key to develop necessary procedures.

05 10 things you probably didn't know...

...about urban farming

- 1 **Urban farming is productive:** Urban gardening plots can be up to 15 times more productive than rural holdings. An area of just one square meter can provide 20 kg of food each year.
- 2 **Food grown in cities is healthy:** Urban farming is also usually organic which means the produce is more nutritious compared to products grown in large-scale farms which use pesticides and fertilizers.
- 3 **Urban farming is not only about planting vegetables and fruits:** It can involve animal husbandry, mushroom cultivation, beekeeping and integrate smart technologies like hydroponics, aquaponics and vertical farming.
- 4 **Urban gardening masters our skills:** It requires good spatial planning, knowledge on soil, seeds and cultivation, financial control, communication with neighbors, skills to manage volunteers and to reduce, reuse and recycle resources.
- 5 **Urban gardens co-exist with other activities:** Design and construction of schools, playgrounds, residential and office buildings, rooftop spaces can be combined with the endless benefits of urban farming for education, fun, recreation and resource efficiency.
- 6 **Urban farming stands for resilience:** It helps cities to overcome economic, demographic and climate pressures and shocks by enhancing food security, social capital and circular economy.
- 7 **Urban gardens create community spirit:** Urban farming is always more than food. It creates inspirational places where locals by different ages and backgrounds share same values, build communities and have solidarity to people in need.
- 8 **Urban farming is for people of all ages:** It helps all generations connect and learn more about food production, healthy and sustainable living. Urban gardens can offer part time jobs and subsistence to young and old in the time of hardship and challenges.
- 9 **Policy and regulations are crucial to make it work:** In absence of municipal policy to support urban farming, it is very difficult to get assistance by any of the local administration units to launch and sustain the gardens. No matter social or business activity, urban farming regulations are crucial to support all stages of the urban gardens life.
- 10 **What is your life experience with urban farming?**

06 CityZen in pictures

Learning & Exchange events





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