

EU'GO – European Gardens Otesha Project summary

www.otesha-gardens.eu

What?

EU'GO is a European project on urban community gardens.

These gardens, « European Urban Gardens Otesha », are seen as innovative tools to work on different themes:

- **social cohesion** thanks to a better intercultural and intergenerational dialogue
- **social and vocational (re)integration** through training
- **education to sustainable development** and the promotion of healthy lifestyle

This **two-year** project (January 2012-December 2013) has been developed by organisations in five big European cities:

- InWole, **Potsdam**, Germany
- Point Europa, **Plymouth**, United Kingdom
- Cemea del Mezzogiorno, **Rome**, Italy
- Nexes, **Barcelone**, Spain
- Pistes-Solidaires et le Réseau des Jardins Solidaires Méditerranéens, **Marseille**, France

EU'GO has been funded with the support from **Lifelong Learning Programme, Grundtvig Multilateral**. It thus promotes the education for all, at all ages of life.

Why?

Despite an interdependent world, the social fabric continues to crumble.

This disintegration is particularly visible in the heart of big cities where problems such as high unemployment, marginalization, exclusion, poverty, and crime are concentrated. But these cities are also sites for social innovation and economic growth.

In these big cities, even if the contacts between people are regular, there are not real relationships between citizens from different social and cultural backgrounds, different ages or different social/professional groups. Here more than elsewhere, it seems that the integration of people of different cultural origins is uncertain and, in fact, some leaders of EU countries state "the failure of multiculturalism".

Despite regular efforts, we can only see a growing social and cultural fracture. It seems difficult to be absorb because of dual and opposing phenomena such as

- social inclusion/marginalization ;
- cultural integration/isolationism ;
- social diversity/social retreat;
- education/access to education ;
- employment/access to employment

These phenomena are amplified with regard to certain groups of people who are often more vulnerable such as immigrants, women, youth, disabled or elderly.

Although this situation is not new, it needs to find new answers. The innovation seems to be the first step.

The community gardens can be one of these innovative answers.



pistes solidaires

About 40 years after the birth of the community gardens movement, some are becoming educational places to meet, exchange views, integration, promoting mutual respect. At the same time, they preserve the historical aspect of **food self-sufficiency**.

It was in New York that the first gardens were created in the seventies. They have developed around the world since then, along with the urban development and the need of citizens to establish a connection with their land.

In Europe, the community gardens have been developed to meet the different needs of the local population. In France, there is a national network (JTSE) that promotes the community gardens as places to socialize, for inclusion and intergenerational dialogue, and expression of citizenship.

Who?

In this context, six European associations located in urban areas, have come together to work on this innovative tool that is the urban community garden. They use it as:

- factor of **social cohesion**,
- support for the education to sustainable development,
- help for intercultural and intergenerational dialogue
- support for **vocational training**

We have all seen the **effects of a community garden on users**. That's why we now want to share these results, methods, and tools for working globally to improve the quality of life in European cities. We work in each country with a **group of 20 people** involved in the work on gardens, including elderly people, women, and persons in precarious situations.

They have the chance to go to one of the European partners **to discuss** what they are developing locally in their gardens, **to improve their practices** with the experience of their peers in Europe and **to formalize** these techniques in the form of **method-sheets** that will be available online.

And how?

The general idea of EU'GO is to create a pedagogical innovation to:

- facilitate the integration or reintegration into society
- transfer skills
- promote basic learning
- create bonds between people
- exchange knowledge between the project partners and the beneficiaries

During these two years, we aim at creating« **Otesha Gardens** »: green spaces, innovative & active learning spaces that promote the match of skills and know-how, the sharing, the reflection, the learning and promoting the collective creation of social, generational and intercultural bonds.

All project resources are available and summarized in the form of **e-learning files** downloadable from the **web platform** dedicated to the project.

To carry out this work, different techniques are used:

- **Focus-groups**, a method that allows gathering the views of participants about their practices or about the garden where they work, etc.
- **Learning by doing**: the learner is placed in the "to do" position; this type of learning allows new learning and a strong personal improvement
- **Self-evaluation**
- **Study visits** to partner organisations as a tool to **learn between peers**
- Work with **tools of audiovisual production** and the introduction of a quarterly **Otesha garden vote** allows the involvement of more and more users of the platform.



Lifelong Learning