

Thematic interim output:

Good Practice Transferred: Mollet del Vallès

March, 2015

Background

The transfer process of the Diet for a Green Planet concept has been on-going during the course of this project. There have been several bilateral and transnational meetings and based on those, interim reports have been made to continuously follow and “measure” the process.

This thematic interim output report serves to summarize the progress in each receiving city. This version of the report brings up Mollet del Vallès in Spain.

The account brings up the following aspects:

- Short description of the process
- Project results
- Future challenges

Short description of the process

Mollet del Vallès has had strong support from the political leadership and also from high level city servants during the entire project. There was already a strong commitment for environment and health issues from before the project started. The politicians were eager to develop new policies and the civil servants have been proactive and deeply involved in the local project team.

The Local Support Group, which was created as a project tool, gave the possibility to work together with stakeholders from different areas as the city administration, parents’ associations, private companies, headmasters of primary schools and kindergartens, the manager of Gallecs rural area etc. It turned out to be an efficient way of working which, Mollet now considers could be regularly used to solve local problems, transforming it into a City Food Council.

The cooperation at the project beginning with the Ecological School Canteen Association of Catalonia has also been crucial for giving the work a clear direction from the start, as they performed a feasibility study including an initial audit.

A strong long-term political commitment has been created

During the process the involved politicians have experienced an ongoing learning process regarding the management of food and school canteens. Some politicians have explained that they have enjoyed seeing how an exchange project can lead to concrete actions and results, as positive and important as



Connecting cities
Building successes



those that were achieved through this project. Sometimes these kinds of projects remain on a level that is too abstract, making it difficult for citizens to see obvious outputs.

At the end of the project the City of Mollet adopted a new diet policy in accordance with the Diet for a Green Planet concept. The policy was approved in unanimity by all political parties represented in the Mollet city council. A political consensus about the Diet policy has been emphasized from Södertälje as a very important condition to ensure the long-term commitment, which is needed for this kind of work. Mollet did not have any local elections during the project period, which made the work easier than for the other partners' cities. But local elections will be held soon after project end, and the political consensus about the diet policy will be important if a change in the political leadership comes.

The local project coordinator in Mollet, Albert Garcia Macian, has expressed that the most important experience was to prove that it is possible to improve a public service with a local scope by networking at European level.

"It was surprising that, even though the Swedish and Spanish situations regarding public meals are very different, we succeeded in finding common denominators which are transferable at all levels."

Three kindergarten canteens transformed

All the stakeholders have been interested, and the three kindergarten canteens under the responsibility of the city administration, have been very quickly transformed to the Diet for a Green Planet management model. The City administration of Mollet del Vallès is not responsible for the school canteens in primary schools – they are managed by parents associations, headmasters or school councils.

Although efforts have been made to involve the primary schools of the city, their engagement has differed a lot. However, three schools have been engaged and have already decided to convert their conventional school canteens into ecological ones from the first of September 2015. For these schools' headmasters the exchange activities have been very inspiring even in a broader perspective than for just the canteen services. Furthermore Mollet will also transform the two kitchens of the public institute for disabled people from autumn 2015.

The printed handbook has become a tool to enhance the transformation of school canteens in Catalonia. Stakeholders with specialized knowledge were invited to write articles. By sharing the different visions/approaches regarding food in the school canteen management at local and regional level, a true learning community was created in which every member has learnt something new. All stakeholders feel a belonging to a group of people who have done a good job, which will make the life of the citizens better. This has created a sense of pride in the most positive way.

The politicians have also been aware of the importance of explaining the work done by the municipality to the families who have children in the public kindergartens. As a result, all families and also the citizens in general know about the project and the transformation achieved.



Connecting cities
Building successes



High ambitions, but too little time

Mollet had high ambitions to fully achieve all the goals, but the structure for managing European projects is quite weak in the municipality - only two civil servants. Despite this, Mollet reached success with a great magnitude of achieved changes. But at times during the project there was a risk of losing the commitment of stakeholders due to the pressured and stressful conditions of the project.

Additionally the structure of the public administration in Spain is quite rigid to allow innovative approaches in the public services management, so the project team had to struggle a lot to carry out the changes.

With that in mind, it must be noted that the Mollet del Vallès team has achieved great success during the project – more than expected possible.

Project results

- A feasibility study: An initial audit of the public canteens in the three public kindergartens and the public institute for disabled people was done. As expected a lot of opportunities to improve the services were identified. After knowing the starting situation it was important to know how far the services could be transformed (the price of the service, human resources, stakeholders' involvement, legislation, etc).
- A new public procurement model for a total transformation was elaborated, which allows Mollet, as public administration, to buy local, seasonal and ecological products, etc (Diet for a Green Planet Criteria). The big change lies in the fact of giving 90 points of 100 to the food quality, and not for the cheapest offer to manage the service, as it was before.
- Transformation of three kitchens has taken place in the public kindergartens. These canteens' services are now managed by catering companies which are contracted according to the new procurement model. Mollet can now show that a change is possible and give support to the primary schools which want to join this transformation process. Three primary schools and the two kitchens of the Public Institute for Disabled People are already on the track for a change in autumn 2015.
- Auditing the service: The three canteens have been audited after six months of transformation, which gave valuable information to make new changes and further improve the public service.
- Creating awareness for the families: meetings with the families to explain the transformation and to give them the possibility to ask questions regarding food, health, etc. have been arranged. Doctors, cooks, etc. were invited to present more expertise.
- Seminars for cooks were arranged with the support of the Ecological Canteen Association to improve the skills of the Mollet cooks and to explain the Diet for a Green Planet concept in depth.
- Creation of a follow up group: A group has been formed, with some of the members of the Local Support Group, which meets weekly with the cooks, teachers and private companies to make a follow up of the school canteen



Connecting cities
Building successes



service. To ensure that information arrives to the kitchens and also that the cooks and teachers have someone to consult if they have some doubts about the process they should follow.

- A Diet for a Green Planet handbook has been published in Catalan and can now be used in a broader context to spread the concept in the whole of Catalonia. A Spanish version is also planned.
- A letter of Intent between Mollet and Södertälje about future cooperation has been signed.
- A new diet policy has been approved: All the political parties of Mollet passed this new policy on the 23rd of March 2015 by consensus.

Future challenges for Mollet del Vallès

- To develop management control systems which have objective indicators regarding local, ecological, seasonal food etc. Currently there are no public indicators for food quality in the school canteens of Catalonia. After having a functioning control system it could be offered to the primary schools, together with the new procurement models and the expertise of the civil servants.
- To reach a total transformation of the schools' canteens in a period of four to five years. It would also be important to convert the hospital canteen and the elderly care centres in the city. This will require a package of activities to sensitize parents' associations, headmasters and school councils about the need to transform their canteens to the Diet for a Green Planet concept.
- To stimulate capacity building in the agricultural sector to have a fast response if the demand for ecological products increases very fast.
- To transform the Local Support Group into a Food Council. The council should have a legal body, a budget and human resources. The mission would be to give expertise to primary schools, to the public hospital, to kindergartens and all other public kitchens in the city. Activities could be: audit canteens, arrange seminars, publish handbooks or booklets regarding healthy food and diets for all citizens, etc.
- More networking on regional level to spread the concept, but also to ensure the quality of the canteen services at Catalan level when the big companies start to market themselves as ecological and local.

