



*#urbanagricultureforresilientcities*

**★URBACT**  
Driving change for  
better cities

# GARDENISER TOOLKIT



**European Union**  
European Regional Development Fund



# GARDENISER TOOLKIT

## Index of content

<b>URBAN GARDENS – Premises</b> .....	3
<b>GARDENISER - Genesis</b> .....	5
<b>RU:RBAN - Gardeniser Training's concept</b> .....	6
<b>TC CONTENT - Gardeniser's role</b> .....	7
<b>TC CONTENT - Urban Community Garden</b> .....	8
<b>TC CONTENT – The process behind the U.G. project</b> .....	10
<b>TC CONTENT – The group in the urban garden</b> .....	10
<b>TC CONTENT – The holistic stick</b> .....	12
<b>TC RESULTS – What's up in Rome (ITALY)</b> .....	14
<b>TC RESULTS – What's up in Caen (FRANCE)</b> .....	16
<b>TC RESULTS – What's up in Loures (PORTUGAL)</b> .....	17
<b>TC RESULTS – What's up in Thessaloniki (GREECE)</b> .....	18
<b>RU:URBAN GARDENISER LABEL – a possible template</b> .....	19
<b>LESSON LEARNED – Conclusions &amp; recommendations</b> .....	20
<b>CREDITS – Trainer's bio &amp; references</b> .....	21





## URBAN GARDENS – Premises

The phenomenon of urban community gardens is something that has concerned almost all European countries for several decades. At the beginning, their function was closely and substantially related to food production but quickly they became “tools” to deliver social cohesion and revitalize deprived neighbourhoods.

---

### Urban Gardens in Europe

Community gardens may receive the support of the municipality or other local bodies, but the involvement and the contribution of citizens are the crucial elements: that's why community gardens are most of the times initiated by the citizens. Their mobilization to use free urban spaces, in order to develop community gardens, is even more fundamental, considering that an on-going fight against the urbanization of these areas has also been undertaken thanks to them. The citizens' role is therefore crucial in claiming for sustainable living in urban environments. Different approaches for ensuring a dialogue with institutions were put in practice in the different European countries, but being the Urban Garden a laboratory of participation and citizenship, they were all based on constructive approach and cooperation. Therefore, despite the different paths followed, all the experiences highlight that community gardens are tools through which citizens can play an active role for developing sustainable lifestyles and places in their cities. In this process citizens become the main actors of community empowerment and contribute to their own wellbeing.

### Urban Gardens in Italy

To give a clear, universally accepted and one-dimensional definition to the modern

urban gardens in Italy is quite complex. Also the translations might cause some misunderstandings. In Italian language there are two different translations for the 'urban garden': ORTO URBANO and GIARDINO URBANO, the first refers to a piece of land where people cultivate vegetables, flowers, aromatic herbs and fruits in a urban context; the latter refers to the same things, but it can be addressed both to the green public and private areas. Urban gardening in Italy is not a new phenomenon. Until the end of the XIXth century, Rome and other big Italian cities still had a rural landscape, people cultivated inside the cities, and urban gardens were very common. During the Fascist period the practice was supported and promoted in order to pursue the idea of a Rural Italy, founded on agriculture. During the second world war the urban gardens became an important subsistence tool and their number grew significantly. The Italian economic miracle, 1950 - 1960, transformed urban gardening in an economically counterproductive practice and it became a symbol of the lower classes; during this time the urban agricultural practices were developed in marginal areas. In Italy, the phenomenon boomed in the 70's when the citizens started to regain peripheral areas (river banks, contiguous or rail areas) or half-abandoned agricultural areas and to create shared community gardens. The





majority of urban gardens in Italy usually don't exceed 500 square meters. The modern urban garden has changed in Italy; taking care of an urban garden is not only related to the production of food, but it has also a social, educational and hobby pastime dimension. The typical Italian urban gardener is described as being a man between 50 and 60 years old, retired, worker, employee, craftsman. But younger people, men and women are recently getting involved in urban gardening, looking for new qualitative spare time activities and motivated to contribute to urban sustainable development. Between the north and the south of Italy the situation is different. In the north of Italy we can find many public initiatives for creating Urban Gardens; the phenomenon is widespread and cities like Bologna, Milano, Modena and Ferrara are the pioneers. The public administrations have set aside portions of land and have organised them in either individual or shared plots for the citizens. On the Bologna municipality website there is a section dedicated to urban gardens with a registration procedure based on a waiting list system. The gardens are given to people based on criteria of residency and a family component. Renting the land costs 50€ a year and it is considered a reimbursement to the municipality for water and electricity. In the south of Italy the situation is not so developed, apart from some isolated initiatives the phenomenon remains on a low-scale.

### **Urban Gardens in Rome**

Rome is a modern and urbanized city, with a very huge metropolitan area, but if we compare the total population with the territory's extension, Rome has one of the lowest population densities in Italy. In fact, almost 68% of its territory is green areas,

not built up areas. 34% of this green territory is intended for agricultural practices and rural areas that are still inside the urban borders: this makes Roma a unique city in Europe, one of the biggest agricultural cities. Rome has the characteristics of an agricultural city, with cultivated lands inside the urban borders and an incredible number of parks and protected areas. During the XIXth century it was possible to find gardens in the city center, just close to the Coliseum or the Imperial Fori, annexed to small houses built with recycled materials, the so-called baracche. In Rome the phenomenon of urban gardens is significant, many initiatives are becoming a political issue, a request from citizens for a better urban environment in degraded areas. Despite this, until the recent years there was no support from the municipality for the creation of legal areas dedicated to urban gardening and the citizens. The organizations find a lot of difficulties to start any legal urban garden initiative. Thanks to a self-organised strongly participated process, the existing urban gardens in 2012 started to design their own guidelines. Thanks to the sensitivity and the availability of the Urban Gardens Office of the Municipality of Rome and the opportunities provided by different European projects, the situation improved in the last years, bringing to the adoption of the Urban Gardens guidelines under the form of the public deliberation 38/2015. A further process of revision and amelioration of the original text has processed by the municipality of Rome together with the informal city network of Urban Gardens named ORTI IN COMUNE. RU:URBAN and its action on Governance, Capacity Building and Training is contributing to reinforce this dimension as local level.





## GARDENISER - Genesis

Different European projects, initiated by the civic society and focused on Urban Community Gardens, were the basis for definition of the Gardeniser role. Two of these projects, in fact, developed results that were important to define the role of urban gardens in Europe, to create a shared framework in the different countries involved, and to highlight the importance of the Gardeniser's role and its training needs. The third one focuses specifically in defining and setting up the formal recognition of what has been considered a quality element in the work with urban gardens

---

### EU'GO project

Through the LLP Grundtvig Multilateral project "EU'GO" (European Urban Garden Otesha), international research on the new phenomenon of the urban/community gardens was realised. The analysis carried out with EU'GO between 2012 and 2013 demonstrated the key role that urban gardens play in modern societies because of their being permanent laboratories of social relations, inclusion, participation and active citizenship. The project allowed an exchange of good practices among the 5 countries involved (Italy, France, the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany) that provide information, resources and activities to help people develop their own urban garden from the beginning or to improve an existing garden that they may already have started.

### Gardeniser project

The project LLP Leonardo Da Vinci transfer of innovation "Gardeniser" (implemented between 2013 and 2015) led to the identification of a key coordinating role, within the urban garden, having a position in between educational and technical. The aim of the project "Gardeniser" was to achieve an Innovation Transfer from France, where the regulation on urban gardens and on its related professionals was more advanced, with a specific focus on the competencies

that a coordinator of urban gardens should have. Indeed, in France the role of "garden animators" was recognised and provided with specialised training, recognised by the French State, which had demonstrated to bring the required legitimacy and knowledge needed for its transfer to Europe in order to better equip other European partnership countries when developing urban garden projects within their respective countries.

That specialised training was analysed, redefined and tested in France, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom and Austria and led to the identification of the most common core skills required from garden facilitators and to the recognition of the importance of the role of a Gardeniser both in the communication towards the external – playing the role of mediator between the gardeners and the institutions – and in the organisation and management of the urban garden itself, ensuring its sustainability.

### Gardeniser Pro project

What emerged from that project was that the Gardeniser is a very complex profile with very multifaceted training needs, including learning and skills in different areas. The previously mentioned European projects drew attention to an innovative professional field, but they also made it clear there was a need for an intervention to train and





recognise the skills of the garden-organiser (Gardeniser). The Gardeniser Pro project wants to fill this training gap and create a European training format in the VET field, transferable thanks to the ECVET credit system, that leads to an improvement of the competencies in all the different areas of expertise necessary for carrying out this role. In fact, the results of the previous projects highlighted the necessity of developing resources and tools for the training needs of the Gardeniser that are quite complex. At the same time they highlighted the need to develop a learning evaluation system to ensure the training of the Gardeniser is of a high quality and the requirement of the inclusion of this profile within the list of the professionals, thus enabling the Gardeniser's employability.

### Long-lasting strategic approach

All these 3 European projects, together with the ENPI project on the possible systems of governance of urban and periurban agricultural areas, SIDIG-MED, run by the municipality of Rome together with its Mediterranean partners, put the basis for the training pillar of RU:RBAN project. The project, running under URBACT programme that is focusing on resilient cities, capitalised all lessons learned in favour of a transfer of the good practice of Rome. Good practice that identifies participation, self-determination and social change as a result of a "controlled chaos", where civic engagement and mutual support seems to be key conditions and consequences of a process of empowerment at local level.

## RU:RBAN - Gardeniser Training's concept

Within RU:RBAN project the training course was addressed to individual citizens and representatives of the local stakeholders of the various institutional partners involved. The training course was aimed at informing and guiding the participants on the profile of the Gardeniser (Garden Organiser) in a urban community garden, increasing their awareness of the complexity of this role. They have also exercised the main social and coordination functions, through activities and simulations, in order to start the identification processes and enhancement of the subjects that, at the local level, can play this role in urban gardens.

### Objectives of the training

The training course, repeated in 4 countries and addressed to participants each time different, aimed to achieve the following specific objectives:

- Support participants in conceptualizing possible structures and missions of shared urban gardens;
- Understand the costs and benefits of the urban garden;
- Reflect on the role of the urban garden in the territory;
- Support participants in conceptualizing the figure of the Gardeniser;
- Exercise the role of Gardeniser in its main functions.







### Training environment

Experiential learning is represented by the activities that are proposed and which act as a stimulus for the participant leading them to a reflection on their reactions, on their way of relating to others and the topic addressed, collecting, through sharing, the reflections of the other participants. In this case the trainer facilitates the circulation of ideas for reflection, possibly supporting their systematization and abstraction in terms of analysis. In this way, abstraction allows participants to grasp those elements useful for their learning, the deepening of the theme and the consequent translation that can be done in their own context of origin. The proposed training environment aims to create the atmosphere and the conditions of trust, where non-violent, non-competitive attitudes are applied, where anyone is judged and where everyone is asked, even in different roles, to become more aware, without feelings of guilt or fear. The activities will therefore take place in this way in the absence of judgment, starting from the trust that is given to each person, starting from respect for every opinion or emotion; the resulting reactions and responses, individual or group, do not generate judgments, but become the object of careful evaluation, of listening, of respect, of self-evaluation.

### Training methodology

The active methodology is based on the principle of learning by doing, experimenting with situations or activities that stimulate the reflection of the individual, the group and the individual on the group. The active methodology allows the participant to learn about himself/herself, in a path of human growth aimed at greater self-awareness. A process based on interaction with the group through a continuous exchange of input and feedback. The participant is therefore not an empty element that uses training to fill himself with content, but takes an active role for himself/herself and for the other people involved. Each activity proposed (simulations, fun activities, games of knowledge, sharing in small groups, etc.) has as main objective to build with the participants an experience that can be a starting point, a metaphorical bridge to new activities and future experiences, that continue to make them grow and explore. The active methodology has as its reference the development of the human being, considering it as a process that does not have a specific age of reference, but is understood as a continuous evolution, based on lifelong learning.

## TC CONTENT - Gardeniser's role

"The Gardeniser IS NOT a technician, NOT a landscape designer, NOT an expert, NOT a facilitator, NOT a trainer, NOT a counsellor, NOT a friend. IT'S ALL THAT TOGETHER! He/She knows nothing more than you, but can help you find a solution, even when you need to put together your needs and those of others, especially when they do not coincide. The Gardeniser works the land like you, but the roots to be treated are the internal cohesion and the well-being of the group in the urban garden; the plant to grow is the relationship with the territory and





with the institutions for a constructive dialogue and the recognition of the urban shared garden as a common good".

---

### **Gardeniser's role and areas of action**

A Gardeniser (garden-organiser) is a key coordinating role working inside the community or urban garden. The role requires the Gardeniser to have both technical skills, like practical gardening skills, as well as the ability to enable volunteers and staff who work in the garden to be fully included in the work that garden is doing through good communication, mediation, organisation and management skills. A Gardeniser supports cohesion, participation and social inclusion in the community garden. The Gardeniser promotes community/urban gardens in their area by raising awareness of their garden in a community and the outcomes they can deliver for their area such as reducing social isolation, creating volunteering opportunities and enabling people to access fresh fruit and vegetables. They also support good communication between the public sector and the community active in the community garden.

### **Gardeniser's profile**

- ✓ Can describe and understand the urban/community garden model
- ✓ Know the history and philosophy of the urban/community garden
- ✓ Have a good understanding of urban/community gardens and gardeners, in it including volunteers and staff that support the garden
- ✓ Have an understanding of the variety and different types of community/urban gardens which operate in their country
- ✓ Have an understanding of planning and designing an urban garden including access to land and water
- ✓ Know tools and techniques required for a community garden
- ✓ Have a knowledge of the legal status, regulations and procedures required to set up and run a community garden
- ✓ Have an understanding of tools and techniques for measuring the impact of the garden in the community
- ✓ Have a good knowledge of sustainable practices within the garden
- ✓ Have an understanding of places to find funding and support for the garden and ways to make the garden sustainable.

## **TC CONTENT - Urban Community Garden**

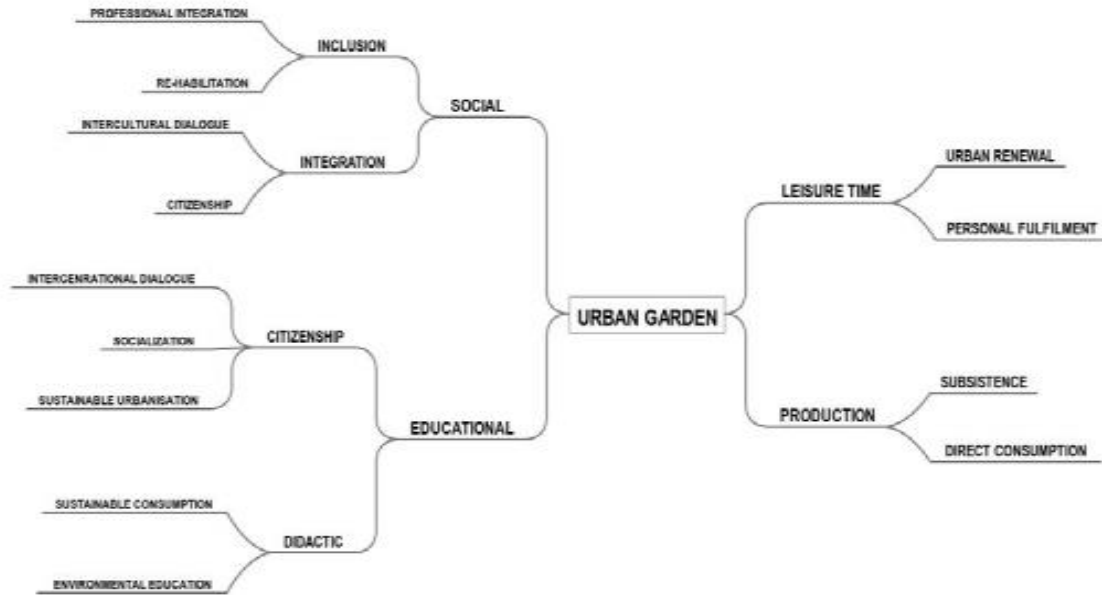
The International research on the new phenomenon of the urban gardens, which had a remarkable impact on the policies about the managing of the green areas (i.e. in Rome it feeds the first input that led to the approval of the Regulation of the urban gardens by the municipal administration), demonstrated that they have a key role in modern societies due to their being permanent laboratories of participation and active citizenship. Several European countries include in their welfare strategies some actions which support the urban gardens (that in their experience are public vegetable gardens based on participation and providing benefits for all the community) recognising their potential in the development of social bonds, as educational therapeutic tools for people at risk of social exclusion and as facilitators of cross-generational and intercultural dialogue.







One of the first elements of the Training Course has been focused on building a common understanding on the difference between an individual allotment and being part of a urban community garden.



### Allotment

Allotment sites will have a number of allotment gardens/plots, which are rented by an individual for growing fruit and vegetables, for personal and family use. Traditionally they have been owned by the local authority, but allotment land can also be owned by other landowners, for example, private individuals, charitable trusts, commercial landowners, farmers or religious bodies.

### Community Garden

A community garden is defined as being collectively managed and operated for the benefit of members and users for a variety of purposes including leisure, recreation, play, community activity (e.g. BBQs), wildlife,

pleasure, education and sensory purposes. Food growing may be a feature of such a site, but may not be the primary or sole purpose. They come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from tiny wildlife gardens to fruit and vegetable plots on housing estates, to community polytunnels and community-managed market gardens. Community gardens are often developed by local people in a voluntary capacity, and commonly retain a strong degree of volunteer involvement. Some larger community farms and gardens employ many workers whilst others are run solely by small groups of dedicated volunteers. Most are run by a management committee of local people and some are run as partnerships with local authorities, whilst retaining strong local involvement.





## TC CONTENT – The process behind the U.G. project

As in a community urban garden, the different competences present in a group in a training on these issues must enhance the diversity present. By putting this diversity at the service of others, it is possible to accompany a very complex process, which is to build a community behind the urban garden project. Community that will characterize the urban garden project and the actions it will pursue. An "impossible mission" that retraces the steps of this participatory reflection process

---

### **Mission 1**

Think individually to an ideal location where to set up a urban garden in your city (a not existing one)

### **Mission 2**

Divided in groups, now share info about this ideal place and choose one only

### **Mission 3**

How will you involve the community in this idea? Who will you address to? How will you organise your group?

### **Mission 4**

Plan and draw the map of your urban garden? Which are the main elements present?

### **Mission 5**

Where will you find the money? How you will generate incomes for the urban garden?

### **Mission 6**

Which are the legal steps and the documents to be prepared? Who will you address in the municipality and how? Who will do the paperwork?

### **Mission 7**

Which are main rules of the urban garden? Who can have a plot there? How? Who will train new members?

## TC CONTENT – The group in the urban garden

The diversity of the various people who can participate in an urban garden is its richness but it also represents its complexity. There are various forms and ways in which one can participate in an urban garden. They may depend on skills, time availability, personal characteristics, group dynamics, etc. The gardeniser is a function that can be performed by a single person or shared among a group of people. What is certain is that strong awareness is needed on how the dynamics work in a group and how to support good communication and spirit for cooperation.

---





### The exercise: BidibiBODYbibu

BidibiBODYbibu is an evolution of another activity mostly known as "the fax". Teams of 6 members have the task of reproducing a complex image with as much details as possible. Each of them has different abilities and limits for the interaction. The objectives of the activity are: to experience communication in a group, to deal with task division and time management and to learn about personal limits and resources.

### Aim

Reproducing a complex image with as much details as possible is the goal of the activity for a team of 6 members. Basically it is an activity used during training sessions about communication within an organisation. Being quite interactive and complex a lot results can come out about interpersonal communication, strategy, team working (especially rules management and task division).

### Methodology

The activity is based on a cooperative learning approach. Everyone succeeds when the group succeeds. Participants must fully participate and put forth effort within their group. Each group member has a task/role/responsibility therefore must believe that they are responsible for the achievement of his/her task and that of their group. The activity tackles the social skills that must be exercised in order for successful cooperative learning to occur. Skills include effective communication, interpersonal and group skills

1. Leadership
2. Decision-making
3. Trust-building
4. Communication
5. Conflict-management skills

Positive interdependence among participants is a key element of the activity. All group members must be involved in order for the group to complete the task. In order for

this to occur each member must have a task that they are responsible for which cannot be completed by any other group member.

### Step by step process

Plan BidibiBODYbibu can be played in 2 or more groups of 6 people. They will have 6 different roles inside each group. Each role has its own rules to follow. The task of each group is to reproduce a drawing as more precise as possible. Only one of 6 members will see the picture.

Each group has basically 20 minutes, but each team has the possibility to increase its time, obtaining some time-bonus, thanks to the role of one of the members, focused on passing some tests.

The activity is developed in 3 rooms, one for the EYES, one for the HANDS and one for MR/MS TIME.

The 6 roles are the following ones:

EYE: has in its hands the drawing that the HAND has to reproduce (HAND is in another room). It cannot move and it has to stay on its chair. It can talk with everybody.

HAND: has to reproduce a drawing that it cannot see. It is still in its room and it cannot move. It can talk with the VOICE and Mr./Ms. YES/NO.

VOICE: is the person through which the EYE and the HAND communicate. It can talk with everybody but it cannot see because is blind. It can move from one room to another but only with the help of the FOOT.

FOOT: You are accompanying the VOICE. You can see but you cannot communicate with anybody. You can move from one room to another, also without the VOICE.

MR/MS YES-NO: can move and see. It can talk saying only YES or NO and answering





only to precise questions from the other members implying a yes or a no.

MR/MS TIME : can move, see and talk with everybody apart from the HAND. It has to gain some extra time for its group, passing some tests given by a trainer. Every test passed will give access to a time-bonus, that has to be delivered to the trainer in the HAND's room.

Before starting, the teams have 3 minutes for splitting the different charges/roles inside their group. After this time they have to move to their room to start the game.

### Outcomes

Dynamism and enthusiasm are the most visible effects of this activity. Thanks to the different discussions in groups and by roles (and the following debriefing if needed), the

analysis of these dynamics brings to a comparison and a connection with everyday life (within the working group, organisation, institution, group of friends etc...), spotlighting the elements needed for a positive interdependence. Like in everyday life, we need other people but it is not easy to work together!

### Evaluation

2 different spaces for debriefing, one following a discussion by (colour) team and the other a discussion by roles (Hands, Eyes, Feet,... etc...), will accompany the self-evaluation of the activity (see tips in handouts)

### Handouts

<http://educationaltoolsportal.eu/en/tools/bidibibodybibu>

## TC CONTENT – The holistic stick

Challenging the ability to work in a group, to carry out an apparently simple task, especially if done in a group, but which is not so simple. Field learning involves and puts the people we work with at risk. Practicing and reflecting on all the aspects to be careful in working together, is essential to achieve results together in a comfortable environment

The Holistic Stick exercise, aims to bring as a group a very light stick to the ground, without ever losing the touch of each participant's fingers with the stick, placed under the stick. This exercise put participants in front of a severe test allowing them to identify the added value of a facilitator, a mediator, as the Gardeniser is.

The trainer/facilitator can decide to split the group in smaller groups, if he/she might consider it necessary.

In the beginning the trainer draws on the flipchart two arrows, one going up, the other going down. The trainer takes some moments to explain the concept of UP and DOWN. The trainer gives participants the instructions of the game. Their task is "ALL AT THE SAME TIME to ACCOMPANY the stick DOWN on the floor".

The stick must remain in contact with / touch all of participants' fingers at all time. The game starts when the trainer places the





stick on all participants' fingers starting from the a fixed height (for example the height of the trainer's chest). The activity is thought to be realized in more phases:

1. The trainers places the stick on participants' fingers and allows them to try.
2. The trainer stops the participants and invites them to talk between them. The participants are given 15-20 minutes to talk before trying again. (Generally participants don't use all the time at their disposal.)
3. The trainer places again the stick on participants' fingers for them to realize the task. (Generally participants are still not able to complete the task.)
4. The trainer stops them again and gives them again the time to talk and find their own strategy to complete the task. (Generally participants take this time more time to discuss and agree on a strategy.)
5. The trainer places again the stick on participants' fingers for them to realize the task. (Generally the participants are still not able to complete the task.)
6. The trainer stops them again, after some time, and tells them that they can remain with the stick and do as many trials they need. When they decide they are ready, they can say so and the final try can be done. (Generally the task is this time fulfilled.)

Music is used throughout the activity as a source of noise, firstly loud and then, towards the final phases the trainer lowers down the music.

Debriefing:

The participants are invited share their answers to the question:

"What does it take to bring the stick down? What are the necessary elements?"

In general the KEY WORDS that come out are:

TAKING TIME  
MOVING TOGETHER  
GUIDE  
SILENCE  
ERRORS – EXPERIENCE  
KNOWING  
KNOW-HOW  
COORDINATION  
TRY  
BALANCE  
FEELING THE WEIGHT  
STRATEGY  
SYNTONY  
FEEL  
RELAX  
COLLECTIVE SENSITIVITY  
RITHM  
CONCENTRATION  
RESPONSIBILITY  
COMFORT  
WILL  
IDEAS  
TRUST  
UNDERSTAND  
LISTEN TO EACH OTHER  
HARMONISE WITH EACH OTHER

The trainer supports the participants to find the answers and draws their attention that all these elements are connected to TEAM WORK. The trainer facilitates a short reflection regarding how this is relevant in volunteering. In the end the trainer tells a story of the "the slowest soldier" to fix the learning:

"Once up on a time there was a platoon of soldiers that had troubles marching together. They go to their general and say: "General, we cannot succeed to march together, we cannot find the rhythm." The general advices them: "In order to find the rhythm, you must find the slowest soldier and take the slowest soldier rhythm." The soldiers go back and try to follow the general's advice. They try to take the rhythm of each of the soldiers, from the slowest to the fastest, but they still are not able to march together. They then go back to the





general and share their failure. The general answers to them: "You are still not able to march together because you have probably

did a bad research: the slowest soldier is the group" ...and the general was Ernesto Che Guevara.

## TC RESULTS – What's up in Rome (ITALY)

During the first of the four meetings planned with the ULG members, in Rome, the target group of participants of the TC was biased towards the officers and managers of the various city members of the project. This peculiarity was determined by the administrative difficulties related to contracts and the procedures for signing international agreements, which in many cases have slowed down the organization process which, in public administrations, is necessary to support the mere organizational-administrative expenses for the participation of people outside the administration itself, even if it, in this case, were citizens of that same cities.

---

In agreement with the coordination group of the RURBAN project, it was decided not to vary the training program in its content, but to intensify it in terms of activity, not expecting a thorough and experiential knowledge on the topic of community gardens. The objective assigned to this course in Rome in particular, given the launch phase of the Rurban project, was to enable the public officers to acquire the sensitivity and information necessary to identify, within their ULG, those figures who actually play the role of Gardeniser without knowing it or that potentially could take on this role.

After a first phase of sharing of the objectives and of the structure of the training course on the 3 meetings planned, a reflection was started on the distinctive elements of a community garden in comparison with a simple plot, rented or assigned by public authorities. In this case a peer learning process among the participants and a facilitation with the inclusion of some references to definitions adopted in some countries in Europe, have

led the group to clearly establish the scope of the action of the Gardeniser. A simulation structured on the "MISSION IMPOSSIBLE" model proposed to small groups, appropriately composed of participants from different countries, made it possible to reproduce the difficult process of activation of citizens and the difficulties they face when they decide to commit themselves to creating a community garden.

The dimensions touched by the simulation based on the principles of PLAYING FOR REAL were:

- identify different suitable sites and imagine their possible evolution as an urban garden
- carry out an initial consultation already in the small group to make only one choice
- reflect on how to collectivize the idea and how to broaden participation outside the original group, also choosing which organizational form to adopt
- effectively drawing up a map of the shared urban garden, distributing the key







elements and services needed for collective use

- plan fund-raising and financial sustainability strategies for the garden project
- explore and plan the actions necessary to activate the relationship with the public authorities and the legal process behind it
- establish which are the common rules of the shared urban garden, who has priority to have a plot and what are the internal tasks, including that of the factual and value training of new members of the garden

An activity completely focused on action, to compensate for the extreme effort of imagination and previous reflection, was proposed to the participants, organized in 3 groups, this time composed randomly, characterized by colour with the same mission and the same internal roles. Bidibibodybibu, this is the title given to the exercise, is focused on organizational communication, an area in which everyone is important, without exception. Even the simplest and apparently irrelevant role is actually fundamental for the collective success. Exercise obviously that has opened strong parallels with the urban

garden, but which has obviously been identified as revealing of many working dynamics in which the same public officials have recognized themselves with respect to the daily work in the public administration, which by definition has a collective mission. After extensive analysis and reflection in small groups and in plenary, which theoretically had to have raised attention to the importance of the group and its internal communication work, a last activity was proposed, with the intention of bringing out all the areas of attention of the Gardeniser within any workgroup. The holistic Stick exercise, which aims to bring as a a group a very light stick to the ground, without ever losing the touch of each participant's fingers with the stick, placed under the stick, put the participating public officials to a severe test . This exercise not only allowed us to identify the added value of a facilitator, a mediator, as the Gardeniser is. A reflection was logically connected to the need for support and training that citizens have in exercising their participation and active citizenship through the shared urban garden, returning to the motivations linked to governance and the role that the public authority has in creating the conditions for this fruitful exercise (community garden) in public policy.





## TC RESULTS – What's up in Caen (FRANCE)

During the second of the four meetings planned with the members of the ULG in Caen, the target group of the TC was rebalanced. Local ULG representatives were present with a more structured and direct experience in urban gardens, although very different from each other. Public officers were also present but this time with specific and technically relevant skills, directly connected to environmental policies and able to dialogue with the members of the ULG in terms of regulations, possibilities and public objectives linked to shared urban gardens..

The structure of the training course in this case was totally changed, following the enthusiasm and desire to share present on both sides. However, the limited number of participants allowed the facilitator to accept the self-determination of the participants, who have assumed the role of peer educators, bringing into play very different and all very complementary skills. The only phase of presentation among the participants, interwoven with stories and exchanges of opinions, has extended the redefinition of the educational objectives to the first 2 hours. They have not been changed in fact, they have only been reached in a different way. The facilitator in this case did not need to include many elements in the dynamic, as the exchange was complex and well-articulated.

In reality the MISSION IMPOSSIBLE activity has taken on a very in-depth dimension and has created exchange dynamics not only inside small groups, but also among the groups themselves, as approaches to various problems have emerged that are alternative and sometimes opposite places, which have allowed to fix an extraordinary wealth of elements. The training day then unfolded on the 7 missions, arriving, during the final reflection on the collective recognition of the fields of action of the gardeniser, a figure in which many of the participants finally recognized themselves.

Additional very interesting cues for the group of Rurban partner cities have emerged:

- o the public officers present, who are actively involved in the experimentation on urban gardens and who had difficulties in the aspect linked to the community, have found interesting ideas and suggestions about how to tackle the problem from the members of the ULG who actively participate in urban gardens
- o the ULG members present have made a decisive step forward in the ownership of the Rurban project, proposing, upon return, to contact themselves the people who, according to them, can enjoy with great local added value, the training opportunities offered by the Rurban project

Also on the basis of these elements, the group of member cities of Rurban are reflecting and considering the possibility of adding a fourth formative moment in Greece, where the Thessaloniki administration, up to now in participation deficit due to various problems, could participate with more important numbers of ULG members, strengthening its active role at local level.





## TC RESULTS – What's up in Loures (PORTUGAL)

The third appointment with ULG members at Loures in Portugal was characterized by a very large number of participants. The group had a double size compared to the ideal training group. The group of participants was exclusively composed of ULG members. The level of experience in urban gardens in the group was absolutely high and the wealth of experiences, in addition to the desire to share, characterized all the dynamics.

---

The structure of the training has been influenced by some time restrictions and some elements of logistics. The coffee break served in another building as well as the lunch, although they were absolutely compensated by a kind and warm support by the Municipality of Loures, gave a temporal cut that has fragmented the rhythm of the group. This aspect together with the very high number of participants, has not allowed to be able to use all the potential present in terms of experience and has created difficulties in bringing the whole group to benefit from the knowledge of the many members present.

This time of the training program focused on fewer elements and on a setting halfway between what was the experience of Rome and that of Caen, once again varying the working formula, while keeping the instruments unchanged, adapted to the large group to ensure efficient operation and compliance with the required logistics timing.

However, during the course it was possible to find a higher level of awareness and interest in the figure of the gardeniser in urban gardens. This is probably a process that is taking place thanks to the Ru:rbán project, rewarding the choice to alternate at each moment of meeting different members of the local ULG from the various countries. The declared intentions of Spain and Poland to carry out an entire training course dedicated to the gardenisers of their community in support of urban gardens, is a strong proof of this process. The request of France to carry out a similar training day in French, in order to support the implementation phase of the project in Caen, enriches what emerged from the course.

The awareness of ULG members is going hand in hand not only with listening but also with the concrete support for this process of empowerment by the institutional partners of the project to the local ULG.





## TC RESULTS – What's up in Thessaloniki (GREECE)

Officially the last of the meetings scheduled for the training work on the figure of the Gardeniser within the Ru:urban project, all the actions that took place in Thessaloniki worked so well together to give the firm impression of a beginning of something even more complex.

---

Adding an extra day to the transnational meeting has given the desired results. The stakeholders who participated in the Gardeniser course arrived with less physical and mental tiredness than in the previous editions. The possibility of exchanging in more depth during the previous 2 days, left more space for comparisons on deeper aspects like principles and values that understates urban community gardens, an exchange also facilitated by a climate of trust and respect for the different experiences present, created with the longer time spent together. A good composition of the group, with different levels of experience in urban community gardens, has characterized the course in Thessaloniki. Greater proximity in terms of spontaneity between the model of Roman urban gardens and those of Thessaloniki has encouraged and stimulated a more important work on internal cohesion within the garden and its relationship with public institutions. The natural proactivity of the proposed and identified solutions was also combined with more analytical and lateral thinking aspects, thanks to the presence for the first time also of young researchers on urban gardens in the training group. Reflections on the "how" were balanced with reflections on the "why", promoting, through comparison within their national group, a greater understanding of one's own local reality, working on the reasons that determine the peculiarity of one's experience in urban community garden.

The choice of Thessaloniki municipality to carry out in parallel, within the same

structure (among other things, an ideal environment for training) the work with stakeholders and the work with the partner cities of the project, was excellent and very fruitful. Thanks to fast and profitable exchanges (not to be given for granted, because they are the result of an important job), never like this time the three pillars of Ru:urban project (Governance, Capacity Building and Training) have been able to interface constantly, with great benefit under all points of view. An immediate reference to the dynamics of the course allowed a final comparison which led to the scheduling of 3 other possible training interventions, with precise peculiarities and objectives, absolutely based on local needs, for each of them. A strategic conversion of the training opportunity given by Ru:urban on the role of the Gardeniser have been done by these 3 municipalities. It became a tool fostering the implementation of the good practice at the local level, directly aimed to satisfy the needs emerged among their stockholders during the project. The work on the recognition of the internal figures that, in the local urban gardens, can play the role of gardeniser, pushed the reflection up to the request for a label "Ru:urban gardeniser". The aim of it? To allow the recognition of the commitment and the mission that the participants of the Gardeniser training course assumed towards their local reality, as guarantors of territorial impact of Ru:urban project.

A template is therefore proposed in the following pages.





## RU:URBAN GARDENISER LABEL – a possible template

Under request of the participants of the 4 editions of Gardeniser training course, lasting 8 hours, a template has been designed. Aimed at certifying their participation in one of them, it can be adopted by the different partner municipalities, that can issue the declaration of attendance for each TC. It might be signed and stamped by the public officer in charge of Ru:rban project, contributing to give value to the document within the local community .

**THIS TO CERTIFY** THAT THE TRAINEE

PARTICIPATED IN A 8 HOURS TRAINING COURSE ON  
**THE ROLE OF GARDENISER**  
**WITHIN URBAN COMMUNITY GARDENS**

Municipality of Rome

21.02.2019

European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund

Ru:rban  
urban community gardens

URBACT  
Driving change for  
better cities





## LESSON LEARNED – Conclusions & recommendations

Nowadays the Urban Community Garden is a fundamental hub for participatory public policies. Ru:rbn project contributed to grow up awareness and participation among stakeholders in the partner cities.

---

Citizen approach urban community gardens to change:

- to improve the quality of the food
- to improve social relations
- to improve the society in which he/she lives
- to improve the environment in which to live

Elements that eventually lead him to improve himself/herself.

In a society where there is less and less recognition of a positive role for the institutions. The urban community garden offers citizens the opportunity to decide their own rules, their priorities, to re-establish a social pact of coexistence in the

garden, which effectively traces the reasons of the social agreement of which the institutions must be guarantors.

Environmental sustainability today is a question of drastic re-orientation of collective choices. Collective choices are made if individuals make consciously different choices in their everyday life. Growing zucchini in the urban garden does not satisfy your need for zucchini in terms of quantity, but it certainly affects your consumption of zucchini, pushing your preferences towards those grown naturally. These kind of behaviours increasingly influence the markets, the production, and therefore the effects on the environment. It is not by chance that in Ru:rbn project we started to talk about FOOD CITIZENSHIP.







## CREDITS – Trainer's bio & references

In the last years he has been constantly involved in European projects concerning Urban Community Gardens. He supports the Forum of Urban Community Gardens of Rome facilitating communication, participation and networking. In cooperation with the main local public institutions, he is working on building the conditions for the formal recognition of Gardeniser professional profile in Italy.

---



During his studies in International Political Sciences at the University of Bologna, he did a 10 month Erasmus mobility in Université

Libre de Bruxelles and an internship at the European Parliament.

From 1998 he has been dealing with Educational European Programmes. Training, Learning Mobility and Active Citizenship are the main focus.

His personal mission is fostering participation and social cohesion, for the development of the civil society. As trainer and project manager he is implementing long-lasting strategic actions involving

informal groups of citizens, NGOs, Public Institutions (local, national, regional and international level). He gained expertise in the design and management of online platforms for learning

He's currently the president of Replay Network, a non-profit organisation active in the education and training fields.

Contact email:

[gardeniser@replaynet.eu](mailto:gardeniser@replaynet.eu)

Institutional webpage:

[www.replaynet.eu](http://www.replaynet.eu)

Facebook page:

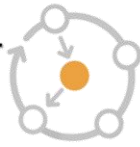
[www.facebook.com/replaynetwork](http://www.facebook.com/replaynetwork)

Likedin page:

[www.linkedin.com/company/replaynet](http://www.linkedin.com/company/replaynet)



Edited by



**REPLAY**  
**NETWORK**

THE TRAINING AGENCY

Rome, January 2020