# NETWORK FINAL REPORT

**This report is developed by the NextAgri Lead Expert and express its own opinion about the transfer process and on what the Transfer Partners have learnt during this process.**

OpenAgri, Milan's UIA project under the Jobs and Skills topic, aimed at testing an integrated strategy to deliver innovation in existing and newly created nodes of the agrifood value chain, focusing on new skills, training, pilot projects for SMEs and startups ideas. The proposed solution is an "Open Innovation Hub on PeriUrban Agriculture" as a tool to integrate into the Milan Food Policy and the Circular Milan strategy startups promotion, capacity building initiatives, technological projects, community involvement processes.

As the focus of the proposal was on business development and innovation, OpenAgri has tested unconventional tools and innovative learning paths to support both the creation of new businesses and the development of existing ones. Besides, the project paid attention to the inclusive role of agriculture in peripheral urban areas, and the social and territorial impacts of the new businesses created.
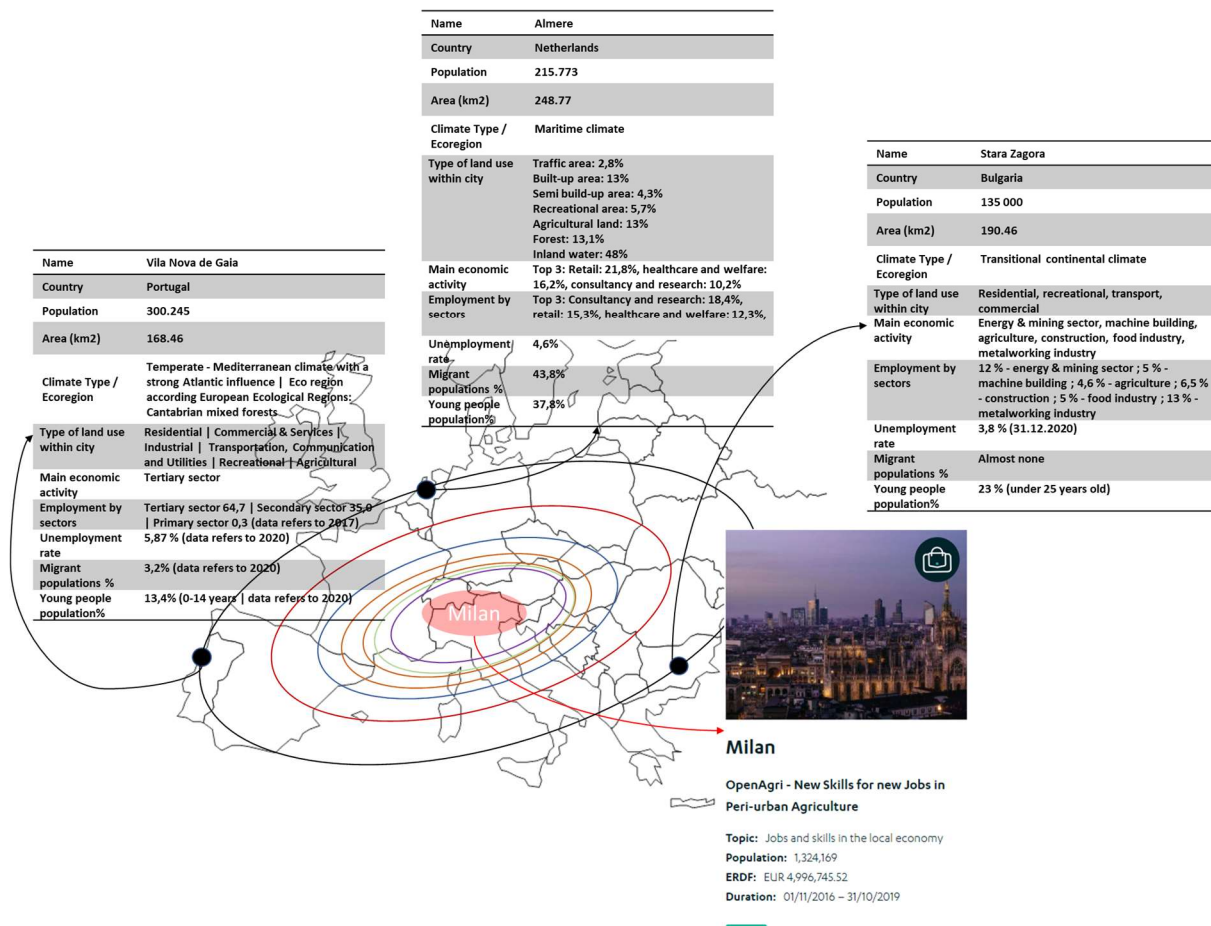
This experimental project challenged existing practices and regulations in cities, regions, policy fields and local contexts. The project proved to be an excellent testbed for UIA program approach, which takes a place-based approach to employment and skills strategies. It means not starting from physical regeneration per se, but stimulating new economic dynamics within a local area,

with the ambition to connect the newly created skills and jobs to a wider system, at the urban and metropolitan level.

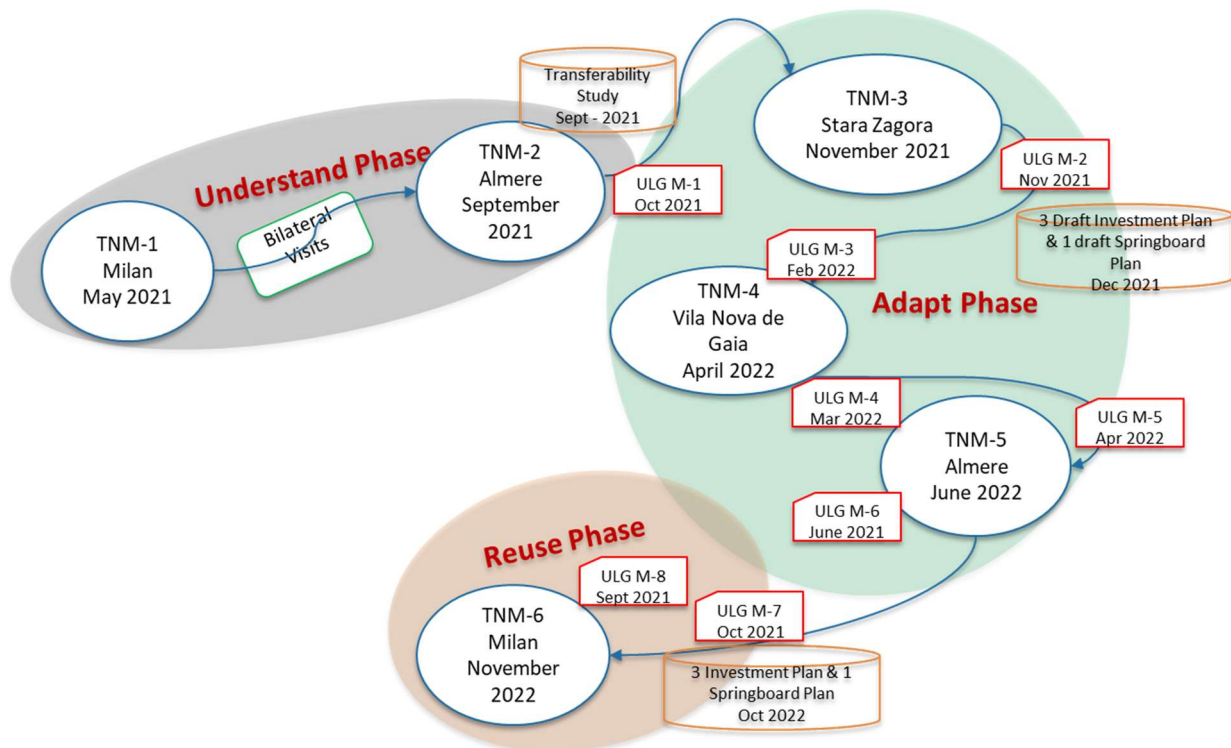NextAgri is the mechanism to transfer the practice to 3 European cities:

- VILA NOVA DE GAIA (PT); (Population: 302.295; Area: 168.46 km2) – Metropolitan Area of Porto (Population: 1.721.038; Area: 2.040.31 km2).
- STARA ZAGORA (BG); (Population: 158.563; Area: 190.46 km2) – Province of Stara Zagora (Population: 333.325; Area: 5.151.000 km2)
- ALMERE (NL); (Population: 207.904; Area: 248.77 km2) – Province of Flevoland (Population: 423.021; Area: 2.412.00 km2

| Name | Almere |
| --- | --- |
| Country | Netherlands |
| Population | 215.773 |
| Area (km2) | 248.77 |
| Climate Type / Ecoregion | Maritime climate |
| Type of land use within city | Traffic area: 2,8%<br>Built-up area: 13%<br>Semi build-up area: 4,3%<br>Recreational area: 5,7%<br>Agricultural land: 13%<br>Forest: 13,1%<br>Inland water: 48% |
| Main economic activity | Top 3: Retail: 21,8%, healthcare and welfare: 16,2%, consultancy and research: 10,2% |
| Employment by sectors | Top 3: Consultancy and research: 18,4%, retail: 15,3%, healthcare and welfare: 12,3%, |
| Unemployment rate | 4,6% |
| Migrant populations % | 43,8% |
| Young people population% | 37,8% |

| Name | Stara Zagora |
| --- | --- |
| Country | Bulgaria |
| Population | 135 000 |
| Area (km2) | 190.46 |
| Climate Type / Ecoregion | Transitional continental climate |
| Type of land use within city | Residential, recreational, transport, commercial |
| Main economic activity | Energy & mining sector, machine building, agriculture, construction, food industry, metalworking industry |
| Employment by sectors | 12 % - energy & mining sector ; 5 % - machine building ; 4,6 % - agriculture ; 6,5 % - construction ; 5 % - food industry ; 13 % - metalworking industry |
| Unemployment rate | 3,8 % (31.12.2020) |
| Migrant populations % | Almost none |
| Young people population% | 23 % (under 25 years old) |

| Name | Vila Nova de Gaia |
| --- | --- |
| Country | Portugal |
| Population | 300.245 |
| Area (km2) | 168.46 |
| Climate Type / Ecoregion | Temperate - Mediterranean climate with a strong Atlantic influence \| Eco region according European Ecological Regions: Cantabrian mixed forests |
| Type of land use within city | Residential \| Commercial & Services \| Industrial \| Transportation, Communication and Utilities \| Recreational \| Agricultural |
| Main economic activity | Tertiary sector |
| Employment by sectors | Tertiary sector 64,7 \| Secondary sector 35,0 \| Primary sector 0,3 (data refers to 2017) |
| Unemployment rate | 5,87 % (data refers to 2020) |
| Migrant populations % | 3,2% (data refers to 2020) |
| Young people population% | 13,4% (0-14 years \| data refers to 2020) |



**Milan**

**OpenAgri - New Skills for new Jobs in Peri-urban Agriculture**

**Topic:** Jobs and skills in the local economy
**Population:** 1,324,169
**ERDF:** EUR 4,996,745.52
**Duration:** 01/11/2016 – 31/10/2019

The COVID 19 pandemic brought uncertainty to NextAgri implementation, in particular to the transnational knowledge-sharing between partners. There was no off-the shelf playbook for the situation, so we follow a flexible and pragmatic approach to keep everyone on board. After 12 months of online work, from May

2021 to April 2022, the NextAgri partners meet for the first time in person at the Transnational Meeting hosted by Vila Nova de Gaia on the 11the and 12th of April 2022. A refreshing moment for the network that took the opportunity to engage with each other for the first time and to create an emotional link that during online meetings it was difficult to achieve it.

The following diagram presents the NextAgri journey:



The journey was was organized to facilitate the transfer of five Modules of knowledge that brought flexibly adapted to local contexts, according to transfer city's needs and objectives. These are presented as standalone Transfer Modules, however there are plenty of connections and linkages across them. Transfer partners used these modules of knowledge and make use and re-adapt the concepts and findings to their specific needs and objectives.

The Modules:

**Module 1: Open Innovation** – learnings from the capacity to engage local stakeholders, first in mapping and activate existing, emerging, and latent local potential (actors, processes) through a very broad and open call, then narrow

down in a collaborative way to develop synergies and partnerships among local actors that can ultimately result in feasible actions on the ground.

**Module 2: Education and Training** - learnings on: (1) One-to-one mentoring and peer-to-peer techniques appeared to be the most effective methodologies to facilitate the learning process on specific, innovative technical matters; (2) the diversities in terms of background and interests of the participants to an educational programme adds a level of complexity that may be hard to handle; (3) the adoption of an international standard digital credentialing system such as Open Badge is an essential element to guarantee the validation and recognition of skills and competencies beyond the scope of the project.

**Module 3: Innovative Land-use management** – learnings from a land-use management perspective, stimulating the generation of innovative entrepreneurial activities in the agri-food field requires the deployment of specific tools to allow, on the one hand, the highest possible degree of flexibility required when testing/experimenting new solutions on the ground and, on the other hand, to minimize the investment risks for the stakeholders. In this sense, the availability of publicly owned-land and its concession on a free, temporary basis to innovative businesses proved to be a crucial success factor. The development of an integrated masterplan for the use of agricultural land for experimental purposes is also a key element to be replicated. Such a tool, in fact, allows to plan for flexible, temporary uses while providing all the necessary services and infrastructures. And this, furthermore, allows to designate specific parts of a city's agricultural land as areas of experimentation where innovative, start-up projects/ideas can be tested on a rolling basis, ultimately facilitating the triggering/activation of a loop of innovation.

**Module 4: Resilient, Integrated Urban Development** - learnings on: (1) the multifaceted understanding of the topic of food can be used as a leverage to rethink the relationship between the city and its rural surroundings, and it offers the opportunity to trigger integrated urban development initiatives under many strands (i.e., social, environmental, economic, cultural, etc.); (2) the public actor may play a pivotal role in promoting and facilitating interinstitutional agreements for the collaborative management of services and resources; (3) the public actor may facilitate the development of arrangements among local farms

and agriculture-based business geared towards aggregating their commercial offer and enhance their market positioning, and/or to shorten the city's food supply-chain; (4) the public actor, through green procurement tools, may stimulate and support experimentation and innovation in the agri-food entrepreneurial sector.

**Module 5: Long-term Sustainability** - learnings on: (1) Innovation and experimentation are characterized by high levels of uncertainty in terms of success and financial return and therefore constitute a high investment risk. Identifying stakeholders from the private (profit or non-profit) sector willing to bear such risk proved to be a challenge. Hence the need to mobilize a publicly owned company, which can operate as a market actor, but with a stronger financial protection when embarking in innovative/experimental investments; (2) the public actor's capacity to facilitate networking, linkages and connections beyond traditional relational spheres is a crucial factor to generate in the city a fertile environment for innovation bound to last on the long run; (3) the public actor's needs to set at policy level, the conditions (i.e., long-term strategies; training opportunities; facilitated access to land and resources; flexible regulations; availability of infrastructure and services; etc.) for testing new ideas and solutions on a rolling basis, in a continuous innovation loop.

To make the transfer of the modules effective, **Multiple Working Sessions** were organized during the TNM, such as:

Stara Zagora – 11th and 12th November 2021

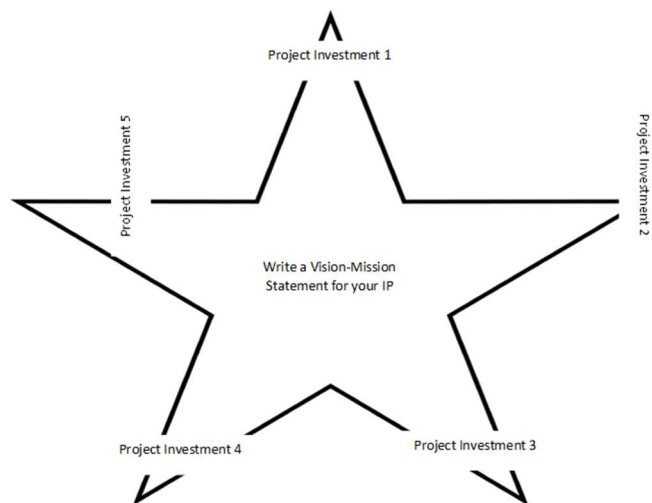@work I: Debriefing the Transferability Study

@work II: My Investment and SpringBoard Plan

<u>Vila Nova de Gaia – 11th and 12th April 2022</u>

@work I: Tell me again – a Q/A session between the Lead Partner and the transfer partners.

@work II: Working on Springboard/Investment Plans with the ULG - Brief overview of Springboard/Investment Plans (5-7 minutes per partner) – Build a Star!



@work III Springboard and Investment plan fine tuning – How to work with your ULG

@work IV: What's coming?

<u>Almere – 11th and 12th April 2022</u>

@work I: From Vila Nova de Gaia to Almere: What have you done? Open discussion using wild cards

@work II: Investment and Springboard plan rollup. Finetuning the Investment Projects

@work III: Investment and Springboard plan rollup - Funding Sources

@work IV: Next steps, communication and administrative


To inspire the network partners, **Multiple Site Visits** were planned and debriefed during the project meetings, such as:


<u>Vila Nova de Gaia – 11th and 12th April 2022</u>

Case study 1: Local Visit – My sweet Green

Case study 2: Local Visit – Cantinho das Aromáticas

Almere – 11th and 12th April 2022

Site visit to Oosterwold Landscape of Initiatives: Oosterwold is a green area between Almere and Zeewolde. Here you have all the space you need to shape your dream and convictions on your own initiative. You not only decide on your own home, but also on the construction and management of roads, paths, greenery, water and the public space. You have to realise all this yourself, together with others. This is the ultimate form of 'do-it-yourself' area development. Apart from a number of rules, there are no restrictions. The main thing is to design a green and sustainable living environment together with future neighbours. One of the rules is that you have to dedicate 52% of your plot to urban agriculture. https://maakoosterwold.nl

Movie about Utopia Island & Agroforestry followed by discussion with Xavier San Giorgi (Weerwoud Foundation, Agroforestry Floriade Experience). and visit to Utopia Island.

MUFPP/Eurocities conference at Floriade Expo. Conference 'The Table is Set, food identity and cities'. This conference offers interactive presentations and debates between



researchers, city representatives, and food practitioners on new trends in the food system and cities' role in it. The conference has a central focus on food identity and sociocultural inclusion with the specific and fascinating setting of Almere as a highly diverse multicultural society. Also inspiring related experiences from other cities across Europe are highlighted.

Meeting and field visit in Cascina Nosedo. Presentation, dialogue and a long walk in the fields with: Davide Longoni from Panificio Longoni and Paolo Bossi



from Birra Corvetto – experiences from agricultural activites within the OpenAgri project.

PTP Technological Park – Camilo Gianinazzi. Food agricultural products analysis and certification.

Food Policy: priorities, strategies and tools. Presentations Comune di Milano and other partners on how to design and implement a Food Policy strategy.

Visit to Cascina Campazzo: agri-food production and environmental conservation. Talk with Andrea Falappi - Farmer in the Southern agricultural park of Milan.

Field visit to the farmsteads of Mater Alimenta Urbes project

Based on the learnings shared during the NextAgri journey, it is possible to identify on **Transfer Partners Investment Plans the inspiration from the 5 transfer modules**.

**City of Almere:**
Investment Project 1 - Research of the taste of Almere:
- Specific connection with transfer modules:
  - Module 1 #Open innovation: Engagement of entrepreneurs and want-to-be entrepreneurs with specific ideas on food local chains;
  - Module 4 #Resilient, Integrated Urban Development: Strong connection with the city food strategy about the priority to promote more food from local origin for city consumers enhancing rural-urban market connections

Investment project 2 – Product development
- Specific connection with transfer modules:
  - Module 4 #Resilient, Integrated Urban Development: New concept products developed and tests of their market position; Focus on process food safety based on the requirement of the retailers.

Investment project 3 – Scaling up and realization of a Food Innovation Hub
- Specific connection with transfer modules:
  - Module 5 #Long-term Sustainability: Business development for the entrepreneurs engaged; Involvement of a specific key stakeholder to enable the business to the market and funding research for the start-up phase

## City of Vila Nova de Gaia:

Investment Project 1 – Place making
- Specific connection with transfer modules:
  - Module 1 #Open Innovation: Create a network of people (producers and local-scale investors) and spaces (connected to agri-food production and consumption)
  - Module 2 #Education and Training: Engagement and empowerment of the local community in the theme of peri-urban agriculture
  - Module 5 #Long term Sustainability: Development of cultural and recreational program to be repeated every year

Investment Project 2 – Experimentation and demonstration
- Specific connection with transfer modules:
  - Module 1 #Open Innovation: Development and test the Agro-hub concept engaging stakeholders to identify form and functions of the new space
  - Module 2 #Education and Training: Dedicated workshops and seminars based on the needs of local food producers and buyers.

Investment Project 3 – Physical Intervention (Land and Infrastructure)
- Specific connection with transfer modules:
  - Module 3 #Innovative Land Use Management: Analysis of the agricultural potentialities of the lands to be activated and development of a masterplan for the agricultural uses
  - Module 4 #Resilient Integrated Urban Development: Renovation of existing infrastructure/buildings for the implementation of the Gaia Agro-hub

Investment Project 4 – Physical Intervention (Buildings)
- Specific connection with transfer modules:
  - Module 4 #Resilient Integrated Urban Development: Renovation of existing building (farmhouse and related rural buildings) to host Gaia Agro hub services; Creation of community meeting center not just for agricultural entrepreneurs but also for citizens; Maintenance plan to guarantee the durability of the physical investment

Investment Project 5 – Capacity building and Business support
- Specific connection with transfer modules:
  - Module 1 #Open Innovation: Engagement of external support to develop dedicated educational programs; Acquirement of the equipment and material for the trainings.

    o  <u>Module 2 #Education and Training</u>: Management of courses and for the local communities on agriculture, biodiversity, sustainable lifestyles and food chains; Promotion of new jobs and skills to reinforce the project with a strong commitment of the territories and communities engaged

**City of Stara:**

<u>Investment project 1 – Establishment of an Agricultural Innovation Centre and development of biological products</u>
- Specific connection with transfer modules:
  - <u>Module 3 #Innovative Land Use Management:</u> Management of agricultural plots; Analysis of nutritional elements in soil, plants, food products.
  - <u>Module 4 #Resilient Integrated Urban Development</u>: Renovation of urban building with agricultural functions

<u>Investment project 2 – Construction of capacity for farmers and organic producers</u>
- Specific connection with transfer modules:
  - <u>Module 2 #Education and Training</u>: Certification of quality organic products; Certification of funding and marketing skills.

<u>Investment project 3 – Promoting Bulgaria as a country of organic products on the international markets through participation in international bazaars and building a communication strategy</u>
- Specific connection with transfer modules:
  - <u>Module 1 #Open Innovation</u>: Communication strategy and product placement strategy based on farmers needs

<u>Investment project 4 – Scientific research on the development of next generation agrotechnologies</u>
- Specific connection with transfer modules:
  - <u>Module 1 #Open Innovation:</u> Partnership with local university and research center on agrotechnologies ; Test-bed agricultural areas for testing innovative solutions in peri-urban agriculture

<u>Investment project 5 – Developing a marketing strategy</u>
- Specific connection with transfer modules:
  - <u>Module 5 #Long term Sustainability:</u> Strategy to guarantee the market position for agricultural entrepreneurs engaged

**NextAgri Takeaways** are an important learning opportunity for all parties involved, such as, European cities, European funding instruments and managing authorities Urbact programme, EUI programme and other actors involved in exchanging learnings between cities.

**Take-aways:**

1. Exchanging learning between cities works and is effective to scale up good practices;
2. The methodology used to promote transferring, based on Understanding; Adapting; and Re-use, proved to be efficient and it works;
3. Most of tools put in available to the projects to support the transfer process proved to work, nevertheless, others like support to funding needs to be improved and better deployed to cities and experts.
4. The Investment Plan is the main output of the projects for the transfer cities and is an important tool to engage ULG. However, it is recommended to review the focus of the Investment Plan in light of bringing more maturity to the planned investments.
5. The guidance to access to finance needs improvement.
6. The link between the UTM project and the UIA project is a key aspect of the transfer process. It's important to keep in the loop the original team involved in the UIA project as well the UIA expert.
7. The role of the Lead Partner is vital for a successful transfer process. The offer provided to the LP to participate in UTMs must be reviewed in order to make it more attractive.
8. Modularization worked for NextAgri project.
9. The transferability study is recognised as a very important tool.
10. All the NextAgri cities, lead partner and transfer partners, express the will to participate in similar projects in the future, confirming the added value of UTM to their city.

NextAgri Lead expert

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