

**SUPURBFOOD** is a research project funded by the European Commission's 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Program. It aims to contribute to the development of sustainable modes of urban and peri-urban food provisioning.

## About the project

Until recently, short food supply chains and multifunctional agriculture were considered to be part of the rural development realm. However, this project looks at these topics from the perspective of urban rather than rural development. Short food supply chains have been advocated as a means to reduce the environmental impact of the agro-food system. However, to improve the ecological performance of the agro-food system, other flows (e.g. nutrient, water, and urban waste) need to be considered as well. In the current context these aspects are usually treated separately. This project will treat them in an integrated manner.

## Approach

Research will be carried out in seven European city-regions (Rotterdam (NL), Rome (IT), Ghent (BE), Vigo (ES), Bristol (UK), Zürich (CH) and Riga (LV)) in collaboration with a diverse group of SMEs to further innovate in urban and peri-urban food provisioning, nutrient, water and waste management, and multifunctional use of urban and peri-urban space. Finally the project will also establish links with researchers, policymakers and SMEs in these domains in developing countries. This will be organised through a process of dialogue, sharing of experiences, exchanging of best practices and joint learning.

## More information

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



## What is Lucavsalas Ekoproject?

Lucavsalas Ekoprojekts (also called Lucavsalas Ekokopiena) is group of people who are trying to build a public permaculture farm in Lucavsala – an island on the river Daugava in the centre of Riga. By doing so this group hopes to secure the city's green space and protect Lucavsala area from possible industrial projects.

Lucavsalas Ekoprojekts is a new initiative. It became visible only in the winter of the year 2011 / 2012. Project participants claim that the project came as a protest after Riga municipality approved that one of allotment territories will be used as a building ground.

Lucavsalas Ekoprojekts started as an initiative that tried to protect the city's green area. However over time the group has taken new aims and activities. First of all it came up with an idea how they can save a specific area – the suggestion was to build an educational community farm. This then became the main group's target. Since then the group has been actively involved in protecting historical bio-diversity and in unofficial seed exchange. Furthermore it has been involved in plant diversity protection in other ways as well. The group has tried to organize protection of rare apple trees by collectively collecting branches and later on grafting them on apple trees around Latvia. The group's members also participate in seminars promoting permaculture and food sovereignty.

## Who is involved?

Lucavsalas Ekoprojekts core consists of around 5 activists and 2 spokespersons. The group desperately tries to expand by searching for new members. However most of these attempts have been unsuccessful. This inability to attract followers slows down the initiative.

Core members of initiative are permaculture farmers themselves. This is an additional blockage for initiative because the core members prioritize their own gardens over the community farm. Furthermore, the initiative does not function as a legal entity yet. This blocks its ability to attract legal partners.

## Development peculiarities

The project emerged when several activists came up with a plan to erect a public farm in Lucavsala that would serve for educating purposes for both beginners and professionals. Currently their project is developing slowly. They are learning from every encounter with the municipality and are using several more competent NGOs to collect tips and supporters. After the first encounter with the municipality the civic activists understood that they would need to become an official organization. After the second encounter they realized that the municipality will not approve their claims, if they are not able to submit a plan of actions. Meanwhile, consultants from other civic movements have suggested that the municipality will have much more difficulties to ignore their voice if they raised at least a temporary building on the territory. The organization is working on all these challenges simultaneously. On the one hand they are already erecting a garden and a public community house in the territory, on the other hand - they are trying to negotiate with the municipality. However the project is moving on slowly. Partly this is because the initiative is unsuccessful in attracting new participants and partly because the initiative does not try to attract any funding. Also lack of management skills has turned out to be a factor that limits their possibilities to grow fast.

At least temporary lack of funding is solved with decision to reuse non organic materials for the construction. Project participants have decided that the use of specific building materials would serve as an example and would educate about the ways of reusing certain materials.

## Which activities are carried out?

Initially group was oriented towards erection of public educational permaculture farm in Lucavsala. Its main goal has not changed. However group has taken several other targets on the way. Group participates in seed exchange, plant protection, also it involves in activities of other groups. Yet for these other activities group does not have any specific plan – they are just improvising with what on the moment seems important.



## Lessons learned from Lucavsalas Ekoprojekt:

- Lucavsalas Ekoprojekt shows that one core project can be used as a source to generate spin-off initiatives.
- Knowledge on attracting members and funding is crucial for the success of the project.
- The initiative shows the importance of learning during implementation process in order to succeed. .
- The initiative is an example of shortened food chains, multifunctional land use and recycling. It shows that thematic areas organically overlap.

## Contact details of SUPURBFOOD

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## Location in Riga:

