

LIVING MORE SUSTAINABLE LIVES: CIRCULAR SOLUTIONS FOR REFUGEES' INTEGRATION IN EUROPE

2020-1-PT01-KA204-078418



MODULE ON SUSTAINABLE COOKING



Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union



Circular Economy Portugal



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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project aims to support the socio-economic integration of refugee people arriving in Europe, through the acquisition of skills in circular solutions and recycling techniques.

Within the scope of the Living more sustainable lives project, workshops on sustainable gastronomy, circular fashion, upcycling and repair of small appliances were implemented through activities developed in Portugal, Spain, Cyprus,

Italy and Greece, with the participation of six international partners, under the coordination of the Portuguese Refugee Council.

At the end of the project, a Circular Economy Curriculum is presented, aimed at refugee and migrant populations.



“

FOOD IS A WINDOW INTO ANOTHER CULTURE.

”

I- INTRODUCTION

The Module on Sustainable Cooking is one of the three Modules that are part of the Non-Formal Education Curricula on Circular Economy for Refugees and Migrants, a central output of the Erasmus+ project “Living more sustainable lives: circular solutions for refugee integration in Europe” (2020-1-PT01-KA204-078418).

The project “Living more sustainable lives: circular solutions for refugee integration in Europe” aims to support the socio-economic integration of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe through the acquisition of competences based on zero waste, upcycling and repair. Through the process of converting old or discarded materials into something useful, beautiful and of higher value, this project will contribute for the refugees’ integration, as well as promote innovative economic models. Both are essential to meet the target of 70% recycling for 2030 and the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, identified by the European Commission as relevant for the circular economy, namely number 12 “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”.

Furthermore, the project aims to foster the professionalization of refugees and migrants, in particular women, creating new job and business opportunities in areas such as food, fashion and design, while contributing to the development of a Circular Economy (CE) oriented to the integration of refugees and migrants in Europe. Life as a refugee is, perhaps, a first experience of circularity and collaborative economy.



Many times, we see refugees and migrants, who lost everything, develop certain skills such as learning crafts, building objects, and subsisting through the exchange of services, recycling and reuse of products, that is, what we know today as a Circular Economy. In addition, it is important to understand that many refugees have previous experience, in their home or host countries, with an informal economy and experience in working with crafts, woods and other materials that they can access easily in these countries. The current project wishes to redirect these competences and bring opportunities for refugees to boost their self-confidence, entrepreneurial mindset and creativity. In the future there is going to be a growing global demand for food, which will demand for increased productivity. Yet it is essential that this productivity is increased in a sustainable way, changing from linear consumption to circular consumption. Such change will require a change in norms, habits, and daily routines.

Joined governance at the local, national, and international level, not only individually, will be essential for a more impactful collective change. Only by working together can change truly happen.



“Food is a window into another culture”, forming an important part of cultural identity and, therefore, this was the first aspect considered to develop this training: the context and needs of the participants, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, going through an integration process in a European host country. This process entails emotional situations that can generate a difficult relationship with their own culture and with the new culture of the host country.

Food and gastronomy can have a peaceful and integrative role between the participants and their own culture and help them notice and value the knowledge they possess, using it as a way to build a more constructive and efficient integration.

Taking into consideration the human and climate challenges we face today, sharing knowledge about sustainability applied to food is an added value, both in personal and professional contexts. By sharing simple and practical ways of avoiding food waste, saving resources and money, better organization of the pantry, the weekly meals, and health, this module aims to give trainees knowledge and skills they can use in their daily lives. The idea is to learn through experience and the encounter of people.

In addition, it will also be important to integrate participants in their new culture and pass on knowledge in a non-intrusive format, in a way that even if it's not a spontaneous choice, we can still awaken their curiosity and interest in the country they are now living in.

The approach we propose is based on the idea of sharing and exchanging as catalysts of empathy and in which trainers and trainees learn and teach what they know, in a non hierarchical way, where their knowledge and skills are equally important and valuable.

Subversion of the traditional roles of trainer and trainee with its structures and power relations, can be a foundation to a new dynamic with real participation and collaboration. The trainer should suggest, question, invite and create the basis on which the learning process will unfold and allow the trainee to experiment new perspectives about himself/herself and about the theme.



By humanising the exchange and learning in a way that fosters intuition and equality, the trainee (in this case, the refugee or migrant) should feel as a traveller that shares, integrates, learns and lives several cultures, as a free and safe citizen.

The main objectives of this training are:

- Emancipate, value and raise awareness about the knowledge and skills the participants already possess;
- Show that the participants' culture is known, appreciated, and valued in the host country, even from a business perspective. This means participants can capitalize their knowledge and culture, generating economic value for themselves;
- Share basic information about nutrition, skills and knowledge to foster healthy eating habits and lifestyles, based on local culture and products as a way to integrate the participants in the host community.

Therefore, we hope this document can help any organization working with refugees and migrants to replicate - with the due adjustments - this training and create a closer connection between the benefits of circular skills in these peoples' integration process in their European hosting countries.



II. ACTIONS AND GOALS

Ideally, prior to the start of the training, each participant answers a brief survey to better understand their personal and professional relation with food. These questions give the possibility for trainers to collect information about the participants and assess their expectations towards the training. By sharing information about the relation of participants with food and with cooking, the trainers can prepare a training that is more aligned with the participants' needs and wishes.

Some of the following questions can be used to engage and start the conversation:

- Do you like to cook?
- Who cooked for you?
- What is your oldest memory related to food?
- What food do you miss the most?
- How often do you cook?
- What is your favorite dish?
- Are you curious about the local cuisine?
- What would you like to learn?
- Do you like to work with food?
- What dish do you cook like a “chef”?



III. TRAINING SESSIONS

FIRST SESSION

Location: conference/classroom

Duration: 3h

Logistics: The space should be inviting and informal, with some decoration and music. The food should be shared on a big table so everyone can see each other and communicate.

Also, welcoming participants with their food and local food is an excellent way to break the ice and make everyone feel comfortable and relaxed.

Wi-Fi internet should be available; pen and paper for participants to write down the recipes; create the shopping list; establish the number of people to be invited for the lunch.

10H00 - 10H10

Trainers prepare and offer dishes from their cultures/home countries (you can use the answers participants gave during the application process).

Icebreaker: the roles of trainer and trainee are inverted. The trainees are the ones judging the trainers for the dishes they cooked. It is a way to welcome them.

Since this is a training about sustainable food, the starting point needs to be food.

And, it is important that the trainers are the ones preparing the meal, because it allows them to experience the culture they are going to know better through the participants' feedback and knowledge.

10H10 - 10H25

While eating, trainers give a detailed briefing about the program.

The food should be shared on a big table so everyone can see each other and communicate. It is very important that all participants know the program and what the next activities are. This allows participants to be more engaged in the process and feel secure and comfortable about the program structure. Also, in the end there should be time for Q&A.

10H25 - 11H10

Informal conversation about food: related stories with participants (you can use the questions mentioned before).

The goal is to start a conversation about the participants' life stories regarding food-related memories. The aim is to collect information about the participants' background to develop a better and more suitable training.

Also, this information allows trainers to get to know the group better and, eventually, adjust the training program if needed.



11H15 - 11H45

Together, the group chooses the menu that is going to be cooked for a group of guests. The menu should reflect the culture and origin of the participants.

The choice of the menu is the basis of the entire program. It is also the basis for any food production process: personal or professional. When choosing the menu, the participants are invited to share the reasons why they choose to cook the dish they proposed. The menu will be based on these choices, with the help of the trainers.

By doing this together, participants will feel engaged and truly part of the process. It will also allow them to comprehend how much choice they have and how much they know about food. The trainer should always try to emphasise the skills and knowledge participants have and how valuable they are. The number of people to be invited must also be defined and the number of dishes to be prepared must take that into account.

11H50 - 12H20

Planning and preparation of the shopping list.

The development of planning, organization and operationalization skills are very important for a professional context. The trainers, together with the trainees, should help create a list of products and define how the meals are going to be cooked. The participants need to actively participate in all the decisions made. This holds them accountable and empowers them to feel part of the program as equal to the trainers. Besides that, depending on the space where the cooking is going to happen, it is important to check if there are any spare ingredients or food that can be integrated in the menu. This gives them a new experience of how to use food waste to create new dishes.

12H20 - 12H30

Informal conversation for feedback with the participants.

Conversation about what participants would like or think they need to learn.

This “assessment need” can be difficult since some people may not be able to identify their necessities. Trainers need to help throughout this process.

12H30 - 12H45

Debriefing:

A summary of the previous conversations, to remember the process done so far. It is important to clarify what they have been doing and why they are doing it.

12H45 - 12H55

Closing:

Moment to close the day and messages for the next day:
schedule, needs and directions.



SECOND SESSION

Location: study visit to a supermarket and restaurant.

For example, in Portugal: local middle-eastern grocery store Zaytouna (www.zaytouna.pt) and restaurant Mezze (www.mezze.pt). In Italy: local sweets shop.

Duration: 4h

Logistics: It is important and inspiring to visit projects related to food, where other refugees are working and listen to their experiences. Keep in mind the budget when doing the shopping.

09H30 - 10H00

Travelling from the pickup point to the Market: briefing of the day.

During the trip, trainers will share what is planned for the day.

10H00 - 11H00

Visit to the local market/store to buy the ingredients needed for the dishes.

Purchase of products needed based on the menu set up the previous day, and after confirming that the necessary ingredients can not be used from food surplus or leftovers.

This shopping experience also shows once again that their products are valuable and going to the local market is a way of integrating them in the local culture. The trainers should help in choosing and learning about the local products; sharing stories and tips. If there is access to a "Food Bank", it is important to use some products that can be found there, in order to create awareness of the importance of managing food in a responsible manner, saving resources and avoiding food waste.

11H00 - 12H00

Talk with the founders of Mezze and with employees.

The main purpose of this activity is to show that it is possible to work using the skills and knowledge they already possess in a work context in their host countries, as also a way of integration.

12H00 - 13H00

Lunch time!

13H30 - 14H30

Debriefing and Closing

Summary of the day and what was done.

The aim is to recap with the participants why this process was done.

Moment to close the day and share details on how the next session is going to be organized: schedule, needs and directions.



THIRD SESSION

Location: Kitchen and dining room; conference room.

Duration: 6 hours - 5 hours cooking and lunch; 1hour recommendations, feedback and evaluation.

Logistics: Kitchen should be fully-equipped and with the necessary space for all the participants to cook at the same time. Otherwise, divide the group accordingly.

Dining room for lunch should also be fully equipped with plates, cutlery, cups, platters, etc.

12H00 - 13H00

Participants are responsible for cooking the dishes defined in the menu.

The trainees teach the trainers how to cook their own recipes. This act of teaching and inverting the roles makes them aware of the knowledge they possess and how valuable it is. In the case of the session held in Portugal, two hours were enough to cook all the dishes, but this depends on the number of dishes/guests.

13H00 - 14H30

After the dishes are completed, the participants are invited to present and describe it, together with related stories, memories or interesting facts and the reason why each dish was chosen.

The trainers do the same for the traditional dishes they have prepared.

This is a very important part of the program, because it is the moment in which they have to speak to the guests and the trainers and explain why and how they cooked the specific dish. The aim of this activity is to develop communication skills and increase their confidence and self-esteem. The participants are encouraged and prepared for this moment, given that the trainees have ensured a safe space for them to speak publicly if they feel comfortable doing so.



14H30 - 16H00

Formal training in a room: trainers share basic knowledge about several topics.
Use of a bilingual presentation, if needed.

Theoretical-practical training about healthy and sustainable cooking, working on a professional kitchen and opening their own business and the challenges behind it.

16H00 - 16H20

Debriefing and feedback from participants

Summary of the day and participants' feedback about the work they did. This stage is very important for participants to share their learning outcomes and mindshifts, as well as to give advice on how they can use this experience to begin a new life in their host country.

16H20 - 16H30

Moment of closing with a group dynamic.





IV. RECOMMENDATIONS WHEN SHOPPING AND/OR COOKING TOGETHER

- Make a Grocery checklist before going to the supermarket.
- Use a cart or reusable bags. Not only are you helping to reduce the use of plastic, but you are also saving money.
- Avoid buying perishable items in bulk, as well as overly-large portions and pack sizes.
- Eat seasonal fruit and vegetables. It is not only healthier, since they have a higher nutritional value, but they are also tastier, cheaper and more environmentally friendly. Large supermarket chains tend to sell only picture-perfect food, but there are markets selling not-so-appealing fruit and vegetables cheaper, avoiding its waste.
- Freeze fruits and vegetables, if you haven't used them in a few days after purchase. However, be careful not to overfill the fridge! Pickling, drying, canning, fermenting, and curing are other techniques for extending the lifespan of food and reducing waste.
- Some products like bananas, avocados, tomatoes, cantaloupes, peaches, pears, green onions release ethylene gas as they ripen. Keep these foods away from potatoes, apples, leafy greens, berries, and peppers, as they are more sensitive to this gas.



- Water is life! Water and sanitation are recognized as a human right. In Europe, usually it is safe to drink water from the tap. By doing so, you are saving money (and also the environment!) by not using plastic bottles.
- Look for products with reduced price. Some supermarkets offer discounts on food that is close to its expiry date.
- Give preference to white-label products. These are products of good quality, but usually much cheaper.
- Keeping our portion sizes within a healthy and conscious range, according to how hungry you are and how much you need to eat.
- Pay attention to the expiration date: Some food should not be consumed after the expiration date. So, before throwing it away, you should:



LOOK



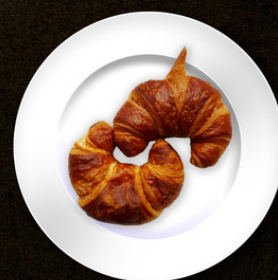
SMELL



TASTE

Also, you should look for 4 Indicators:

- 1** - Smell before using.
- 2** - Damage.
- 3** - Discoloration.
- 4** - Mold and texture.



V. RECIPE EXAMPLE

ORANGE PEEL PRESERVE DESSERT



An absolutely delicious orange peel preserve recipe! Bright, colorful, sweet and syrupy, this the perfect way to preserve the essence of this delicious fruit all year round! The recipe is found online in [Akis Petretziki's recipe website](#).

Ingredients:

2 kg of oranges

800 gr granulated sugar

800 ml water

1 tbsp. glucose

2 asteroid anise

2 pods of cardamom (kakoule)

lemon juice from 1 lemon



Remove the zest from the oranges and put them in a bowl. We can put 80 ml brandy and 2 tbsp. sugar and use it as an orange extract. Store in the refrigerator in a closed jar.

Cut the lids from the oranges and then carve the skin around the perimeter. Carefully remove the peels, wrap them and nail them with a toothpick.

Transfer the peels to a saucepan of boiling water and simmer for 5 minutes to separate. Strain the water and follow the same procedure with clean water for another 1-2 times depending on how bitter the peel is. If it produces a lot of color in the water, it means that it is quite bitter. Strain and set aside.

In the same pot put the sugar, water, glucose, anise, cardamom, orange peel and transfer to low heat. Boil for 40-50 minutes.

Remove from the heat and add the lemon juice.

Allow to cool well. The colder the syrup, the more it binds.

Serve with yogurt and rosemary. Keep tightly closed in a airtight jar in a dark and cool place.

VI. LESSONS LEARNED

This training was designed with the main purpose of welcoming the participants and to show how valuable they and their culture are. The idea is to show that the participants already know how to cook and that the cooking skills and knowledge they have are valuable for the host country's labour market.

- Time management: it is important to always have a timekeeper, since when working in a kitchen time can fly very quickly. Scheduling and planning is essential to ensure that everyone has a good experience;
- Communication: when there is a language barrier among the participants and/or the trainer, it is important to have an interpreter present. Otherwise, the communication would be difficult, and the message could be unclear;
- Reference person: it is crucial for someone to be present that can serve as a reference figure (from the Reception Center, if they are staying in one), since it can give a sense of security and familiarity; This person can also assist in the documenting of the training (taking pictures, making videos), as well as recording and taking notes about the dishes and their stories;
- If your organization has facilities with a community kitchen, and also outside space, such as a vegetal garden, you can also introduce activities related with composting;

Composting is the natural process of recycling organic waste, such as vegetable scraps and food spoils, transforming it into a valuable fertilizer. This presents several environmental benefits, such as enriching soil' and plants' health while reusing the nutrients, as well as contributing for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, by creating a compost, we are completing the circular chain.

If you want to learn about composting: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compost>



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