COCOREADO H2020 PROJECT

FOOD SYSTEM INNOVATOR TOOLKIT

CH4 Engaging with Policy

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COREADO connecting consumers and producers to rebalance farmers' position

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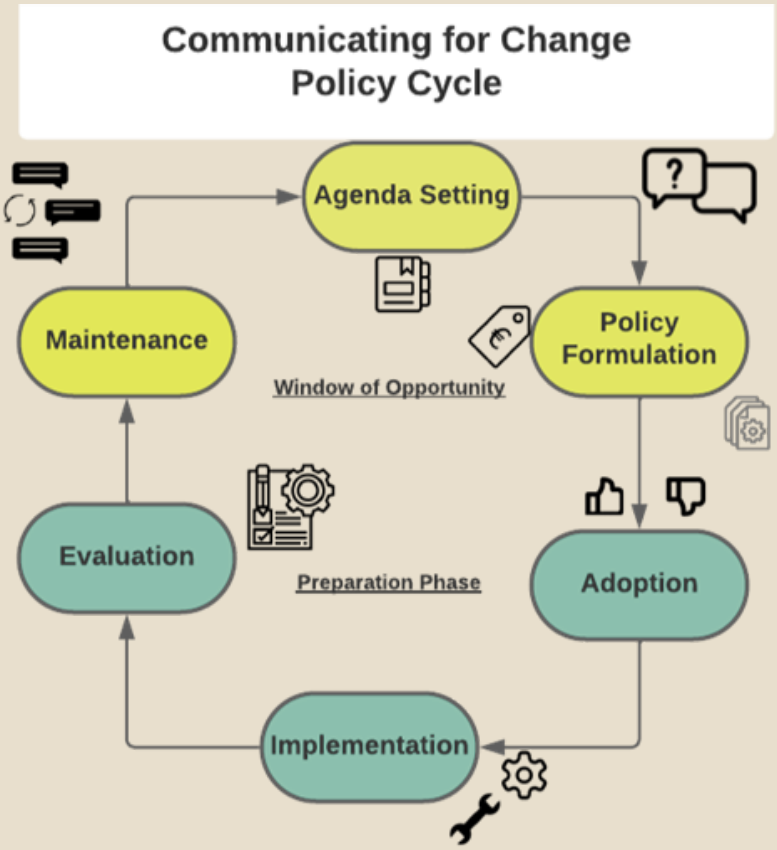
4.1- Introduction

In this section of the Toolkit, we will focus on policies related to food and farming systems, and how it is possible to interact with them in a bottom-up manner from an individual, group, or organisational level.

Engaging with policy can lead to impact at different levels: local, national, as well as European.
Policy cycles are an integral part of any policy development.

These cycles include:

- Agenda Setting
- Policy Formulation
- Adoption
- Implementation
- Evaluation
- Maintenance



The following chapter explores ways that the agenda setting phase can be influenced from a bottom-up perspective.

Here you will find information on how to:

- Establish policy-oriented communication
- Produce a policy brief
- Prepare a policy workshop
- Address and engage with a local urban food policy

Achieving shifts in policies regulating food can be the most effective way to ensure that food systems change. Collaborative activities bridging the gaps between activists, entrepreneurs, and policymakers can result in food strategies, focused policies, and new procurement arrangements that lead to more responsible food systems.

4.2- Policy-oriented communication

How to prepare a policy campaign

This section will delve into the world of policy-oriented communication, which requires a distinct approach. Just like in business, effective communication plays a pivotal role in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Nonetheless, it requires a specific understanding of the government structure and legislative timeline to be effective. Let's explore how to prepare a campaign for change in the context of policy-oriented communication.

Establishing Policy Communication Goals

In the realm of policy, defining communication goals is a crucial step in shaping the course of your campaign. Why is communication important? What are the policy objectives you seek to attain? These fundamental questions should steer the development of your communication goals. Much like in the business world, policy communication objectives should adhere to **the SMART criteria**:

SPECIFIC

What legislative or administrative changes are you striving for, and do they fall within the jurisdiction of the entity you are addressing?
In the multi-layered governance system of the European Union, not every level possesses the authority to enact legislation on all issues. For instance, in matters related to agriculture and rural areas, certain competences are exclusive to the EU, while others are shared with national or regional levels of member states. The EU holds exclusive competences in areas related to the single market[1], whereas agricultural legislation is typically a shared competence, ideally applied at the most effective governance level under the subsidiarity[2] principle.

- Identify the specific legislative or administrative changes you're advocating for.
- Determine if these changes fall within the jurisdiction of the entity you're addressing.
- Ensure clarity on whether the issue is within the exclusive competence of the EU, shared with member states, or at a regional level.
- Consider whether your proposed changes align with the subsidiarity principle.

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[1] The European single market is comprising the 27 member states of the European Union (EU). Some third countries also have a privileged access to the single market: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway (through the Agreement on the European Economic Area), and Switzerland (through sectoral treaties). The single market seeks to guarantee the free movement of goods, capital, services, and people. This is achieved through common rules and standards that all participating states are legally committed to follow.
[2] Subsidiarity is a principle of social organization that holds that social and political issues should be dealt with at the most immediate or local level that is consistent with their resolution.

MEASURABLE

- Define clear goals regarding alterations to government budgets or policies.
- Assess the potential consequences of these changes, particularly in terms of budgetary implications and sector sustainability.
- Determine how you will track progress towards your goals.
- Consider the multi-annual framework of EU budgets, and the challenges associated with securing substantial budget increases within a short timeline.

ACHIEVABLE

Are you operating within the window of opportunity to advocate for your desired change?
Based on your research, to make your campaign objectives specific to the legislation, relevant to the policymakers involved, and within the budgetary scope of the targeted legislation, it's advisable to ensure they are realistically attainable within a defined timeframe.

- Evaluate the current window of opportunity for advocating your desired change (ongoing policy evaluation, media coverage of the topic, etc.).
- Ensure that your objectives are realistically attainable within a defined timeframe.
- Ensure that your objectives are achievable within the mandate of the relevant policymaker.
- Consider the political climate and the feasibility of achieving your goals given the current context.

RELEVANT

Is your objective aligned with your long-term goals, and does it align with the current political agenda?
This assessment will determine your ability to rally supporters within your window of opportunity. To build a coalition around your objectives, it's essential to ascertain whether your issue is already on the policymaking agenda or if it can be added to the agenda. Unless you hold policymaking authority, you must collaborate with an ally who possesses the influence to set the agenda.

- Align your objectives with your long-term goals and overall agenda.
- Assess whether your objectives are aligned with the current political agenda.
- Determine if your issue is already on the policymaking agenda or if it can be added.
- Identify potential allies or coalitions that can support your objectives and help influence the policymaking agenda.

TIME-BOUND

Have the legislative processes already commenced?
Once you've determined the relevance of your proposed legislation, you must consider whether any existing legislation on the subject requires updating. Advocating for a policy change when the current policymaking cycle is near completion and implementation has begun is typically too late. The window of opportunity may have closed, necessitating a wait until the next maintenance phase to bring the topic back onto the policy agenda.

- Determine if legislative processes relevant to your objectives have already commenced.
- Assess whether existing legislation on the subject requires updating.
- Avoid advocating for changes too late in the policymaking cycle when implementation has already begun.
- Consider the timing of your advocacy efforts in relation to policy maintenance phases and agenda-setting opportunities.

Following these steps will ensure that your resources are allocated efficiently to achieve these objectives:

1. Identifying Target Stakeholder Groups

In policy-oriented communication, it's crucial to identify and engage various stakeholder groups, such as government agencies, interest groups (e.g. trade unions, environmental NGOs, industry groups, academic institutions), media, and the public. These groups need to be clearly defined, considering their roles and interests. The selection of channels and the tone of your communication should align with the diverse needs and expectations of these stakeholders if you want them to act on your demands and become your allies towards policy change.

2. Crafting Policy Messages

Policy messages must be well-crafted, reflecting the values of your organization or your endeavour, and addressing the concerns of your audience. These messages should be clear and precise, using language and tone appropriate for your target audience. It should not be too complex or long. In policy communication, the goal is not just to sell a product, but to persuade and inform stakeholders and policymakers about the importance and implications of the policy. In your communication you should convey your understanding of policymaking and be timely with your messages. For instance, it's important to send your arguments ahead of the final debate in the plenary session of the parliament; your messages should have already been received by the members of Parliament sitting in topic specific committees. For the European Parliament, you can follow the legislative agenda via the Legislative Train Schedule[3].

3. Choosing Communication Channels and Formulating an Action Plan

Just as in business, the choice of communication channels is essential in policy-oriented communication. Channels may include press releases, public forums, government briefings, reports, and social media, but also more privileged channels such as bilateral calls or meetings if you manage to get access. Your action plan should outline the objectives of each communication action, the platforms you'll use, and the timing of these actions. The selection of channels should be based on where policymakers and your audience are most likely to be informed and engaged.

4. Timing and Frequency in Policy Communication

Policy communication must be strategic in terms of timing and frequency. Sending out messages randomly or too frequently can lead to stakeholder fatigue and reduced effectiveness. Ensure that the timing and frequency of communication aligns with your policy goals and the specific needs of different stakeholder groups. In the policy cycle, ideal moments to advocate for change are typically between agenda setting and policy formulation (for the EU, use the Have your say platform[4]), and during policy maintenance phases for policies that have already been adopted (participate in evaluation surveys, read evaluation reports, and contact the relevant services with the power of legislative initiative). Pick your battles! Policy change is a long process, and you don't want to run out of resources after the first debate in committee.

5. Continuous Improvement in Policy Communication

As with business communication, policy communication campaigns should be measurable. Depending on the nature of your policy and the objectives set, these evaluations may be weekly, monthly, or quarterly. Continual improvement is crucial in the dynamic field of policy to adapt and refine your approach.

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[3] Legislative Train Schedule (europa.eu)
[4] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say_en

A concrete illustration

Let's consider a concrete example of young farmers in the European Union (EU) trying to secure more funding under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The CAP is a crucial policy framework that governs agricultural subsidies, rural development, and environmental programs in the EU.

1

Establishing Policy Communication Goals

In this case, the young farmers' communication goals are to advocate for specific changes in the CAP legislation, aimed at securing increased funding and support for their generation. Their objectives should align with the SMART criteria:

SPECIFIC: The young farmers are seeking legislative changes in the CAP that provide more targeted and substantial financial assistance for young farmers, thereby ensuring the sustainability and growth of their agricultural businesses. They need to work within the framework of the EU's shared competence in agricultural legislation and the subsidiarity principle.

MEASURABLE: Their campaign should focus on quantifiable objectives, such as a percentage increase in financial support for young farmers. They should also emphasize the potential positive impact of these changes on the agricultural sector's sustainability and youth employment.

ACHIEVABLE: The campaign should target a legislative window where the EU is discussing CAP reforms. To ensure achievability, the young farmers should conduct thorough research on the ongoing legislative discussions and identify key decision-makers within the EU institutions.

RELEVANT: Their objective should align with their long-term goals of making agriculture an attractive career choice for young people, and it should align with the current political agenda regarding agricultural and rural development policies in the EU.

TIME-BOUND: The legislative processes related to CAP are cyclical. The young farmers must ensure that their campaign is launched well in advance of the next CAP reform discussions to maximize their chances of influencing the outcome.

2

Identifying target stakeholder groups

The young farmers must identify and engage various stakeholder groups in their campaign:

- **European Commission:** As the institution responsible for CAP proposals, they should target relevant Directorates-General, Units, and Commissioners.
- **Members of the European Parliament (MEPs):** Engaging with MEPs who sit on the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee is essential.
- **National Agriculture Ministries:** Cooperation with national governments, particularly their agriculture ministries, is crucial.
- **Farmers' Associations:** Collaborating with existing farmers' associations and rural development organizations to amplify their message.
- **Youth Organizations:** Partnering with youth organizations to highlight the importance of supporting young farmers.

3

Crafting policy messages

The young farmers' policy messages should:

- **Highlight the Importance:** Emphasize the significance of young farmers in ensuring the future of agriculture and the revitalization of rural areas.
- **Quantify Impact:** Use data and case studies to demonstrate the positive impact of increased funding on employment, rural development, and food security.
- **Appeal to Values:** Frame their campaign around values such as sustainability, generational renewal, and the economic wellbeing of rural communities.
- **Be Timely:** Ensure their messages are delivered well in advance of CAP reform debates.

4

Choosing Communication Channels and Formulating an Action Plan

The young farmers can use various communication channels:

- **Press Releases:** Announce their campaign's launch and key milestones.
- **Social Media:** Utilize platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to engage the public and policymakers.
- **Meetings**: Arrange meetings with MEPs, Commission officials, and national agriculture ministers.
- **Public Forums:** Organize public events and forums to raise awareness.
- **Reports**: Publish reports showcasing their research findings and policy recommendations

Their action plan should include a timeline with key milestones, such as releasing a policy proposal, organizing a public rally, and submitting their recommendations to relevant EU institutions.

5

Timing and frequency in policy communication

The young farmers must strategically time their communications, especially in alignment with the CAP reform cycle. Regular but not excessive updates should be delivered to keep stakeholders informed without causing fatigue.

6

Continuous improvement in policy communication

The young farmers should continually evaluate the impact of their campaign, make necessary adjustments, and adapt to changing circumstances. This includes measuring the engagement levels on social media, tracking media coverage, and assessing the reception of their policy recommendations by policymakers.

By following these strategies and principles, young farmers can effectively prepare a policy-oriented communication campaign to advocate for more funding in the CAP, ultimately ensuring a brighter future for agriculture in the EU and supporting the next generation of farmers.

How to produce a policy brief

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)[5], a policy brief is a **concise summary of a particular issue, the policy options to deal with it, and some recommendations on the best options.** It is aimed at government policymakers and others who are interested in formulating or influencing policy, and its added value remains in the explanation of the urgency of that particular issue, focusing on presenting findings and providing achievable recommendations.

Bearing in mind that it is written for certain audiences, in this case policymakers, there are some **fundamental requirements** to be taken into consideration before producing a policy brief:

- Short document with a clear purpose
- Presents the problem/challenge and recommendations
- Evidence-based
- Represents the standpoint of a whole organization

Having a clear purpose

The policy brief must be a well-written document, so the target audience fully understands its purpose. It is a recommendation document, so in order to maximize the success of the presented recommendation, the underlying issue must be well highlighted and clearly explained. It should be possible to clearly identify the constraints created by the issue, even if the reader is not an expert in the general subject presented.

Presents the problem/challenge and recommendations

The core of this document is made up of two topics: the problems and the recommendations. The purpose of a policy brief is to highlight pressing problems in a given area and present recommendations for solving them. The document should be developed around these objectives, ideally supported by real examples and evidence, and written in a straightforward way so the impact of the problems and suggested recommendations can be easily recognised.

Evidence-based

A policy brief shouldn't be confused with opinion content or a summary of scientific research. Nevertheless, it increases credibility in the eyes of readers if it includes some research-based evidence, particularly if readers are unfamiliar with the presented issues.

Represents the standpoint of the whole entity

Naturally, such an important document should represent the viewpoint of an entire entity (i.e. any group of people with similar interests who have decided to collaborate on producing the document). In this case, if a potential recommendation is questioned within the group, those doubts should not show through in the document, since it is supposed to present a single well-directed viewpoint. It is not meant to be an open-ended document, as differing interpretations could cause doubt in the implementation of certain recommendations. The purpose and benefits of a recommendation for a particular issue could be unclear if the recommendation itself is also unclear.

With these considerations in mind, the process of producing a policy brief reflects the following steps:

[5] The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Our goal is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives.

STARTING POINT:

- Define the debate you want to participate in.
- Is the idea timely? Is there a debate going on?
- Does your idea add value to the debate?

PREPARATIONS:

Identify:

- What is the specific challenge or problem that requires policymakers' attention?
- What specific recommendations do you want to give to the policymakers?

Discuss, agree, and write down:

- Purpose: Why are you writing this policy brief?
- Key message: Briefly, what do you want to say to the policymakers?
- The audience: To whom are you writing?

CHALLENGES / PROBLEMS:

- What is the challenge/problem faced in the real world?
- How is it manifested in practice?
- How do you illustrate that the challenge is in the scope of your project/organization?

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Give recommendations to solve/relieve the problem/challenge described.
Use clear statements with concrete advice.
For example, ask:

- What is the core idea of the recommendation?
- In what circumstances/environments/situations is the recommendation feasible?
- Are there alternative recommendations for different situations?
- Who benefits if the recommendation is implemented?

WRITING:

A policy brief is written to policymakers who are not necessarily specialists in the area, and have very limited time to focus on your policy brief. So:

- Write in clear, jargon-free language.
- Be brief!
- Make it visually attractive.

Every policy brief is unique. Select a structure and layout that highlights your core message. The following elements should be found in the policy brief: Title, summary, introduction, challenges/problems, recommendations, introduction of the releasing organization/project.

TITLE AND SUMMARY:

- What are the main points you want policymakers to understand, even if they read nothing else?
- The title and the summary are the first things a reader sees; they should lure in the reader to read the whole policy brief.

INTRODUCTION:

- Highlights the urgency of the policy brief.
- Ties the policy brief to ongoing debate, EU initiatives for example.

CHALLENGES/PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Select the best way to introduce the challenges/problems and recommendations.
- Be precise with your recommendations!

RELEASING ORGANIZATION/PROJECT, AUTHORS, AND REFERENCES:

- A very brief introduction on releasing organization/project.
- Authors are listed if they can provide additional knowledge on the topic.
- References should be used cautiously, focusing on sources connected directly to the policy brief

SHARING THE POLICY BRIEF WITH THE AUDIENCE: HOW TO REACH THE POLICYMAKERS?

- Use every measure necessary.
- Extract the key recommendations and use them in social media.
- Use personal networks to reach the key audience.

Check examples of policy briefs produced by COCOREADO here!

1. Lowering the barriers for farmers to participate in sustainable public procurement
2. Empowering Young Citizens Involvement in Transition Towards Sustainable Food Systems
3. Benefiting from new business opportunities require business skills

4.3- Guidelines to approach local policymakers

Identifying and engaging with the most relevant policy makers

Given the possible complexity of different policy decision-making systems at the regional, national, and EU level, before identifying responsible policy makers and contacting them, the first step should be gaining knowledge on how the system works, where the decisions are taking place, and who are responsible persons. Once you have this understanding, you can proceed with developing a strategy for approaching the policymakers and think about possible instruments to do this.

The next consequent step would be to **identify the most relevant policymakers**. These may not necessarily be the ones with the most decision power, but those who are more likely to understand your statements and recommendations. Even though there is no one way to precisely spot the right policymaker, it might be helpful to identify which policymaker talks publicly (or has written reports, given interviews, etc.) on topics close to the issues that you want to raise.

If the policy brief is more tailored to the interests of particular policymakers, they might feel more part of the process and drive more lobbying within the environment of policy decision-makers. This way, there will be a higher potential of achieving the objective.

When it comes to identifying the most relevant policymakers, the starting point should be defining the scope of the target, whether it's at the **local, regional, national, or European level.** Only after clearly defining this target should you proceed to map out which institutions and/or individual policymakers to approach.

The starting point of the process can often seem somewhat challenging, either because of the inherent complexity of the decision-making system (which can complicate understanding of which specific institutions and policymakers have decision-making power), or due to a lack of knowledge of direct contacts that should be approached in order to identify the most relevant policymakers.

A possible solution could be to deconstruct the steps, establishing stages to identify the most relevant policymakers for your purpose. Identifying contacts in stages could lead to greater success in identifying the ideal policymakers, so that it is possible to adjust your method of reaching out and communicating with the target audience.

Adjusting your method of reaching out and communicating with the target audience

For example, if you have decided to approach local policy offices, it may be easier to present supporting documentation such as a leaflet with policy recommendations. Additionally, it is important to be assertive in setting up an interaction with local decision-makers, as the communication streams are simpler and the level of discussion allows a better understanding of the urgent needs and subsequent proposed policy recommendations.

On the other hand, given an example where the aim is to reach a policymaker at the European level, organisations within the EU decision-making system that produce policies and advise decision-makers in specific fields of action should be identified. After that, the organisation's stakeholders should be identified and advised on your policy recommendations. This can be ensured through **direct contact with a policymaker, by promoting a campaign,** or extending it to the organisation of an event where the information can reach multiple actors simultaneously, such as **a policy workshop**.

Policy workshop preparation

Policy workshops are events where you can promote the dissemination of policy recommendations to decision-makers. Firstly, you need to **clearly define the goals and objectives of the workshop as well as identify the most suitable audience for the event.** You can also choose relevant policymakers to invite based on the policy recommendations you want to present.

The right audience is essential for organising such an event, as policy is a specific subject that needs at least a minimum level of background knowledge to achieve productive debates and ensure that policy recommendations are framed within the normal set-up for policy offices. For example, organising an event for an audience of people unfamiliar with the framework of policy briefs can make it difficult to present the content of a developed policy brief. Alternately, organising a policy workshop for an audience of people unfamiliar with the framework of policy briefs could also provide some valuable insights, such as adjusting the layout of the policy brief since it is desirable that it is easy to read and understand.

Then, after defining the right target audience, it must be decided **whether to organise the event in person or online.** Clearly, online events are currently very popular due to the comfort and ease of accessibility for participants, but there are certain topics that require a face-to-face event where interactive sessions, as "World Café", "I Couldn't Disagree More" and others, can be promoted.

It's essential to gather as much feedback as possible at these events, so you can take the various feedback into account to adjust your message to the needs of the decision-makers, so your recommendations are more likely to be put into practice in the future.

Additionally, the **presence of speakers representing political offices at the EU level should be mandatory**, not only to promote the credibility of an event, but also to bring other organisations together and encourage greater interest in attending.

Once all these requirements have been defined, the technical preparations for the event must begin, keeping the following points in mind:

- Preparing invitations for the participants, where it should be clear what the aim of the event is, what the expected outcomes are, and how they will be used.
- Date and location (if not online)
- Agenda
- Guest speakers
- Event promotion and participants

Date and Location

The date of the event should be the first thing decided, even if it is subject to change afterwards due to unforeseen circumstances, such as unavailability of venues or unavailability of a participant who is crucial to the event. Thus, to minimise any possible date changes, the event should be planned at least 3 months in advance (if it is to be held in person), and a time window of 1 week can be set if the initial date for the event has to be changed.

After deciding whether it will be an online or face-to-face seminar, it's time to decide on the venue. To ensure that the target audience can participate without any constraints, accessibility must be highly considered, as well as the size and layout of the venue, considering the expected number of participants and additional technical equipment.

Agenda and Guest speakers

The agenda is essential not only to ensure that the event runs smoothly, but also to captivate the audience. The event can be held for part of the day (morning or afternoon) or all day depending on the type of event, although a 3-hour event may prove very productive if it is well planned.

To engage the target audience, it is recommended that the agenda includes the names of the guest speakers, so it's necessary to confirm the presence of the guest speakers in advance. In the case of a policy workshop, it's recommended that the guest speakers are individuals representing policy offices at the EU level, due to their relevance to the topic and the audience they attract through their presence at the event.

Regarding the sessions, about 15 minutes should be allocated at the beginning for a brief introduction to the event and its context. If the number of participants enables it, a brief icebreaker activity can facilitate communication and encourage individuals to feel more comfortable in a group.

Throughout the event, ideally, there should be a combination of lecture sessions focused on introducing the topics for discussion, and debate sessions. Give priority to the latter, so participants can elaborate on the content presented and generate productive debates. Remember, it's also essential to include short, frequent breaks to keep participants energised.

Event Promotion and Participants

As described previously, identifying the most suitable audience is one of the main requirements for organising an event of this kind. After this process, the next step is to prepare and send invitations to the defined list of target participants.

When sending out event invitations, it's important to ensure that participants have enough time to organise themselves before registration closes, which requires carefully planned dissemination of the event.

The event can be promoted in 3 phases: a **save the date** 3 months before the event, an **invitation** 2 months before the event, and a **reminder** 1 month before the event. This can be shared through the same channels used to invite the participants, or through flyers, if justifiable. Contacts can be made directly with potential workshop participants and then invitations sent out as soon as they confirm their participation or the invitations can be made using various means of communication, such as social media platforms or more broadly inviting emails.

Follow up on the event

After the workshop event, it is important to ensure that the participants felt that the event created added value to the main topics discussed. It's also essential to ensure that the ideas and recommendations presented and discussed were meaningful, and that the event participants will be disseminating them to other relevant stakeholders.

This follow-up could already be encouraged at the end of the event by inviting participants to collaborate in sharing supporting educational material related to your goals.

4.4- Dissemination channels and European networks

Nowadays, there are several active networks with a focus on agricultural and rural areas, such as: EU CAP Network, Youth organizations networks (RYE, CEJA, MIJARC), National CAP Networks. These networks are connected between themselves, in order to promote a valuable flow of information. The exchange of ideas has never been so easy and user friendly as it is now, and this should be taken advantage of.

There are simple ways to disseminate the information, such as various social media platforms, where it is possible to promote dissemination on different platforms, with different audiences and contexts, and as varied networks.

As for networks, each type of network must be considered, from personal networks to broader networks. Elaborating on this, and given a COCOREADO project example, we can either **approach our closest circles** regarding sustainable food consumption, or we can approach **wider consumers' networks and other farmers' networks** active in food education issues that promote training and dissemination of good practices to ensure awareness of sustainable food consumption. Additionally, we could approach an identical consumer network active in another region and identify possible synergies in order to strengthen the exchange of information and the implementation of good practices.

Ultimately, the approach to European networks that have close linkages to policy offices which produce policies and advise policymakers would be ideal, in the sense that the more we promote contact with networks of increasing size, the closer we will be to informing decision-makers of the issues and recommendations we intend to advocate for.

4.5- A practical example: urban food policy and ways of engaging with it

Urban food policies encompass not only food consumption, but ideally also production and the connection between both ends of the supply chain. However, developing a food policy is something a lot of cities struggle with. Therefore, collaborating with local governments and engaging with the urban food policy at any development stage is a way to inspire action towards more sustainable and just food systems for the citizens of the city.

Why urban food policy?

To date, hundreds of cities have developed policies and programs on urban food security, nutrition, urban agriculture, and similar topics, often in collaboration with civil society and private sector stakeholders in the food system[6]. These policies and programs vary widely in scope, ranging from single-issue plans that address specific elements of the food system (e.g., food waste reduction plans), to comprehensive approaches that assess and plan the urban (or city-region) agri-food system[7] or provide vulnerable social groups like unemployed people, families with many children, or retired people with access to urban or peri-urban areas where they can grow their food. This diversity results in different food-related initiatives originating from both private and public sectors, as well as civil society. However, a lot of these initiatives lack a central focus and vision to build upon for long-term changes at the city level. To align various food efforts in a city and to approach the food system of a city holistically, urban food strategies (UFSs) are being developed. In essence, a UFS is a plan and process to inspire action towards more sustainable and just food systems for all – a working document that needs to be updated regularly, serving as a starting point rather than an end goal[8].

Possible challenges when striving for a sustainable food system in the city

City councils play a crucial role in promoting positive change within their cities and influencing the evolution of the food system. It can be accomplished in different ways, for instance by:

- Establishing legislation and regulation frameworks
- Offering incentives through funding
- Initiating the creation of city food councils
- Creating public food procurement plans
- Fostering connections among different actors of the food chain.

Opportunities for change can be found in areas such as catering contracts, where the focus can be on offering more vegetarian or organic options and collaborating with small and medium-sized enterprises. Additionally, spatial policy and improving access to healthy food are vital aspects where cities can make meaningful contributions through, for example, the creation of urban allotment gardens.

Despite the possibilities for positive change, cities also face certain limitations when striving for a sustainable food system, and it is crucial to be aware of these challenges during the development of a UFS. Some of the challenges that cities encounter include:

- **Cities and municipalities face limitations as their jurisdiction is limited to their own territory.** Often, agricultural areas lie outside the cities, in neighbouring villages, forming the green belt around the city. In these villages, the cities lack jurisdiction, making collaboration with the neighbouring villages essential when cities want to engage in buying local produce or working with local farmers. However, this collaboration can be challenging due to local politics and other factors.

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[6] Zeeuw, H. de, & Drechsel, P. (2015). Cities and Agriculture: Developing Resilient Urban Food Systems. Routledge.

[7] Smaal, S. A. L., Dessein, J., Wind, B. J., & Rogge, E. (2021). Social justice-oriented narratives in European urban food strategies: Bringing forward redistribution, recognition and representation. Agriculture and Human Values, 38(3), 709–727. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-020-10179-6

[8] Moragues, A., Morgan, K., Moschitz, H., Neimane, I., Nilsson, H., Pinto, M., Rohracher, H., Ruiz, R., Thuswald, M., Tisenkops, T., & Halliday, J. (2013). Urban Food Strategies: The rough guide to sustainable food systems.

- **Smaller cities and towns may lack capacity to develop a comprehensive UFS on their own.** To successfully build bridges between different policy domains and initiatives, there is a need for a paid worker with expertise in the field. This individual can facilitate coordination and cooperation among various stakeholders effectively.
- **Urban food policies encompass multiple policy domains and do not have a domain of their own.** Instead, they intersect with various areas, such land-use planning, infrastructure and transport, environmental conservation, housing, and economic development. Although food can potentially serve as a vehicle to integrate these domains, the practical integration of different policy areas proves challenging.
- Finally, local and national policymakers may simply **not be familiar with the notion of urban agriculture** and cannot acknowledge the benefits that it can provide for cities and citizens. In these cases, there is a lot of room for engaging with policy change from a bottom-up level.

Some additional challenges commonly faced when developing a UFS, whether through top-down or bottom-up approaches, are as follows:

- **Lack of political support.** Urban food strategies may not always receive sufficient political support, especially when they are developed from the bottom-up by community stakeholders. This lack of support can hinder effective implementation of the strategy.
- **Insufficient budget allocation**: Despite initial enthusiasm and widespread interest in participating, many UFSs suffer from a lack of adequate funding. This budget constraint often arises due to the multifaceted nature of food policies spread across different domains.
- **Limited implementation of tools:** Without adequate tools, it becomes challenging to transform the vision into concrete actions.
- **Limited involvement of farmers:** In some cases, farmers and urban gardeners may not be actively engaged or adequately represented in the development of UFS (although farmer unions often are). This limited involvement can result in a lack of perspective from key stakeholders in the food system, impacting the strategy's effectiveness and sustainability.

To effectively address these challenges, the UFS must be developed in a participatory and inclusive manner, involving all relevant stakeholders. Key actors such as policymakers from different domains, farmers, gardeners, researchers, entrepreneurs, environmental organisations, agricultural organisations, health and educational organisations, and citizens should be actively engaged in the process [9]. Their collaboration is vital to ensure the envisioned transition in urban food systems is robust enough to tackle a variety of upcoming challenges.

Engaging these different actors is crucial when tackling city-level challenges. This can be achieved through the creation of a food council, steering committee, or food partnership. Moreover, the level of engagement in these groups may vary from city to city, with some individuals participating more actively than others. While compensation for participation may sometimes be provided, it is not always a prerequisite for involvement in these initiatives. For instance, the development of an urban garden may be a voluntary endeavour, especially when it is started from bottom-up efforts, which should be taken into consideration.

For more inspiration, you can find examples of three urban food strategies in the annex of this chapter.

[9] Moragues, A., Morgan, K., Moschitz, H., Neimane, I., Nilsson, H., Pinto, M., Rohracher, H., Ruiz, R., Thuswald, M., Tisenkops, T., & Halliday, J. (2013). Urban Food Strategies: The rough guide to sustainable food systems.

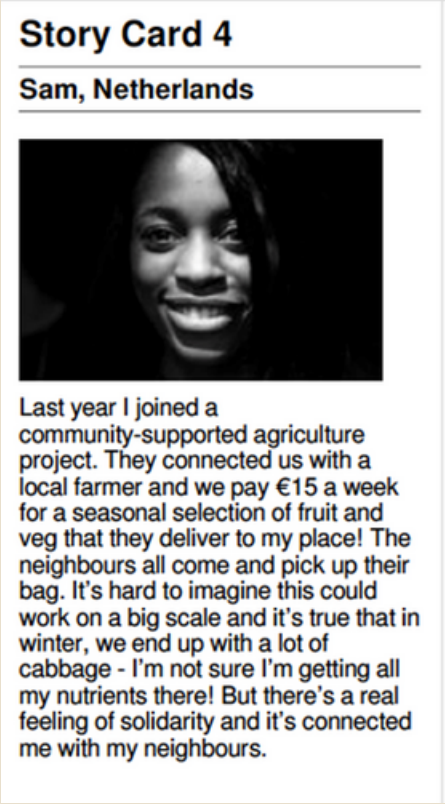
Ways of engaging with your local urban food policy

Your way of engaging with the urban food policy and developing urban food strategy will depend on both the state of readiness of the city and your role in the food system. While in some cases the most convenient options might be either explaining your vision or suggestions in a written form or meeting face to-face with one or a small group of representatives of the municipality, we also suggest trying out the workshop method.

During the COCOREADO programme, a workshop was held to help to develop the urban food strategy of Riga by gathering together representatives of the Riga City Council and young people who are enthusiastic about changing the food system from across Europe. During the workshop, the **PlayDecide Tool** was used to define the main aspects that should be considered when developing the urban food strategy of Riga.

The PlayDecide card game[10] was launched in 2004 as part of the EU-funded project Decide (2004-2007). It allows for a simple, respectful, and fact-based group discussion. It facilitates an inclusive dialogue, allowing diverse perspectives to be heard and fostering consensus building among stakeholders. Using this game, the players can get familiar with the topic; it will help them to see different perspectives, and form their own opinion. As a group they look at an issue and try to reach a positive consensus about the proposed policy positions.

The game consists of different types of cards that can be played out during several rounds to gain varying perspectives on food policy and the issues it should encompass. The types of cards include:



- **Story cards** which feature personas related to the food system. They allow participants choose those participants of the food supply chain and corresponding story cards that they find relevant for the discussion. While picking the story cards, they consider if these types of personas should be actively involved in the development of an urban food strategy.

Figure 1. Example of a story card of PlayDecide

[10] https://playdecide.eu/

- **Info cards** which present information on various food-related topics. Participants can choose topics that should be involved in the development of an urban food strategy.

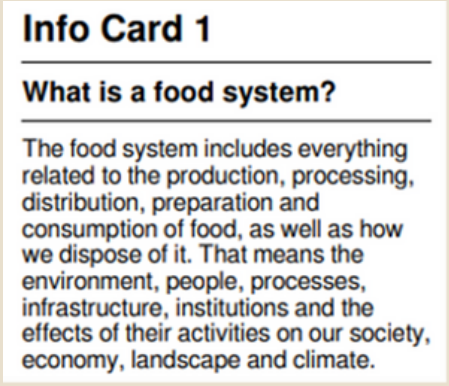


Figure 2. Example of an info card of PlayDecide

- **Issue cards** that highlight different challenges and problems related to the food system. They allow meaningful conversations and brainstorming sessions aimed at understanding the complexities of the food system.

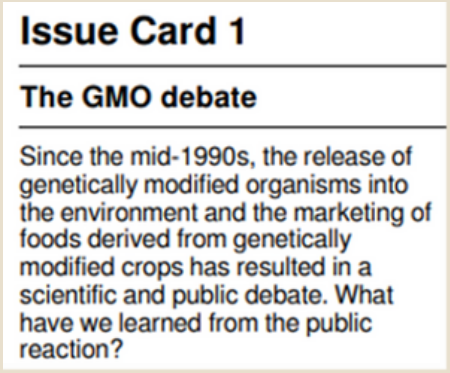


Figure 3. Example of an issue card of PlayDecide

Working with the different types of cards and clustering them around central themes and topics, and defining corresponding policy positions (i.e. themes and the topics that policymakers should be considering), is a structured and productive way to reach consensus on the ideas that are important for developing a new urban food strategy. Alternatively, they can also be used to gain inspiration for upgrading an pre-existing urban food strategy. If the tool is used in a form of a workshop, it is suggested that someone who is already familiar with the tool moderate the discussions.

Sharing experience

The PlayDecide tool was used during a face-to-face session that involved participants of the COCOREADO ambassador network and representatives from the policymaking bodies of the city of Riga. The discussion was structured in various stages, including clustering of the cards, forming a unified policy position, sharing inspiration, and finally, creating a unified vision by focusing on the most important element(s) for the first stages of development of the UFS. It facilitated open discussions thorough exploration of diverse viewpoints when talking about food policy. To illustrate, during the discussion some groups focused on food waste, while others focused more on the role of the community. It served as a catalyst for constructive conversations, enabling participants to critically reflect on challenges and opportunities before arriving at decisions.

The emphasis on integrating various viewpoints, facilitated by this tool, reflects an integrative approach that encourages complexity in decision-making. By engaging in this participatory and integrative process, the participants were better equipped to develop a comprehensive and inclusive vision for the UFS of Riga.

Annex: Examples of three urban food strategies

As an inspiring reference, we present three examples of urban food strategies in Belgium, UK, and Italy. The ideas represented in these urban food strategies can be used to develop or improve local food policies of other European cities.

Table 1 provides a summarized overview of the main aspects of each city's UFS.

City	Ghent (Belgium)	Bristol (UK)	Rome (Italy)
Population density	1 700 people/km²	4 022 people/km²	City: 2 133 people/km² Metropolitan region: 787 people/km²
Name of UFS	Gent en garde	Feeding Bristol	Roma Food Policy
When MUFPP signed	2015	2018	2015
Start of UFS	2013	2011	2021
Participatory approach	Top-down: developed through a participatory process involving citizens, policymakers, and other stakeholders.	Bottom-up: driven by strong citizen engagement and collaborative efforts among local organisations.	Bottom-up: developed in collaboration with stakeholders from various sectors, including farmers, NGOs, academics, and citizens.
Name of council	Food council	Bristol Food Policy Council	Food Council Rome
Key focus	Promoting sustainable food production and consumption, reducing food waste, enhancing food education and awareness, supporting local food entrepreneurship.	Enhancing food sustainability, improving food access and affordability, supporting local businesses, reducing waste.	Promoting sustainable food production, ensuring food security and access, contact with region.
Logo	GENT EN GARDE	FEEDING BRISTOL	ROMA FOOD POLICY

Table 1. Summary of the three cities with their urban food strategy

Ghent en Garde, the UFS from Ghent (Belgium)

Ghent has approximately 265 086 inhabitants (in 2022) with a density of 1 700 people/km². As the capital of East-Flanders, it is the third largest city in Belgium (after Antwerp and Brussels). Currently, the mayor of Ghent is from the liberal and democratic party. Ghent committed to become a climate neutral city by 2050. This climate neutral plan, also called a climate strategy, serves as an overarching plan for many public and private actions. Food is one emergent focus in this strategy. The policy agreement for 2013–2018 included the aim of establishing an urban food strategy with a clear focus on local food initiatives and urban agriculture, making Ghent the first Belgian city with a food strategy.

The city is characterized by a lack of farmland and space to develop and sustain the farming sector. Still, Ghent has diverse efforts (e.g. organic farmer's markets, vegetarian capital of Europe since 2009, Thursday veggie-day) from local actors, such as autonomous citizens, civil society initiatives, innovative farmers, and companies (Crivits et al., 2016).

Since the 1990s, there has been a growing interest in alternative food networks. One notable example is ProVeg, formerly known as EVA (Ethical Vegetarian Alternative), an NGO dedicated to raising awareness about the advantages of vegetarianism. ProVeg originated from a group in Ghent and has been actively promoting a movement called 'Thursday veggie-day' since 2009. This campaign encourages the public to refrain from consuming meat or fish at least one day a week, with the aim of improving both individual health and the health of the planet. The initiative gained momentum rapidly and inspired other cities in Belgium and around the world to follow suit. Today, the 'Thursday veggie-day' concept is embraced in various locations, including Sao Paulo (Brazil), Bremen (Germany), Washington (USA), San Francisco (USA), Cape Town (South Africa), and more.

Only in 2013, Gent-en-Garde, the urban food strategy of Ghent, was launched. They proposed 5 strategic goals and founded a food council. Today, this council has around 30 partners. In 2018, the council received their own budget of €300,000 (over a six-year period). Still, Crivits et al. (2016) state that this budget is inadequate to meet the five strategic goals. Despite the small budget, actions have been undertaken, such as providing space to urban agriculture initiatives or participating in international projects that generate money for the urban food strategy. At the same time, Crivits et al. (2016) state that more weight should be given to physical resources (e.g., providing land and space for food hubs) and non-physical resources (e.g., communication, time, participation, and inclusion) for the support of the UFS. Eight years after the launch of the UFS, in 2021, the strategic goals were updated. In the updated version, they work around 3 strategic goals:

1. Short and sustainable food supply chain
2. Everyone eats sustainable
3. Nothing goes to waste

Example of putting strategic goals of the UFS into action: In the summer, there is a 10 day festival in the city, Gentse Feesten. They made a bold decision to have 50% of the food vendors be vegetarian options, which made quite a commotion in the city. As you can see, this didn't come about overnight, it took time to come to the point that they are now.

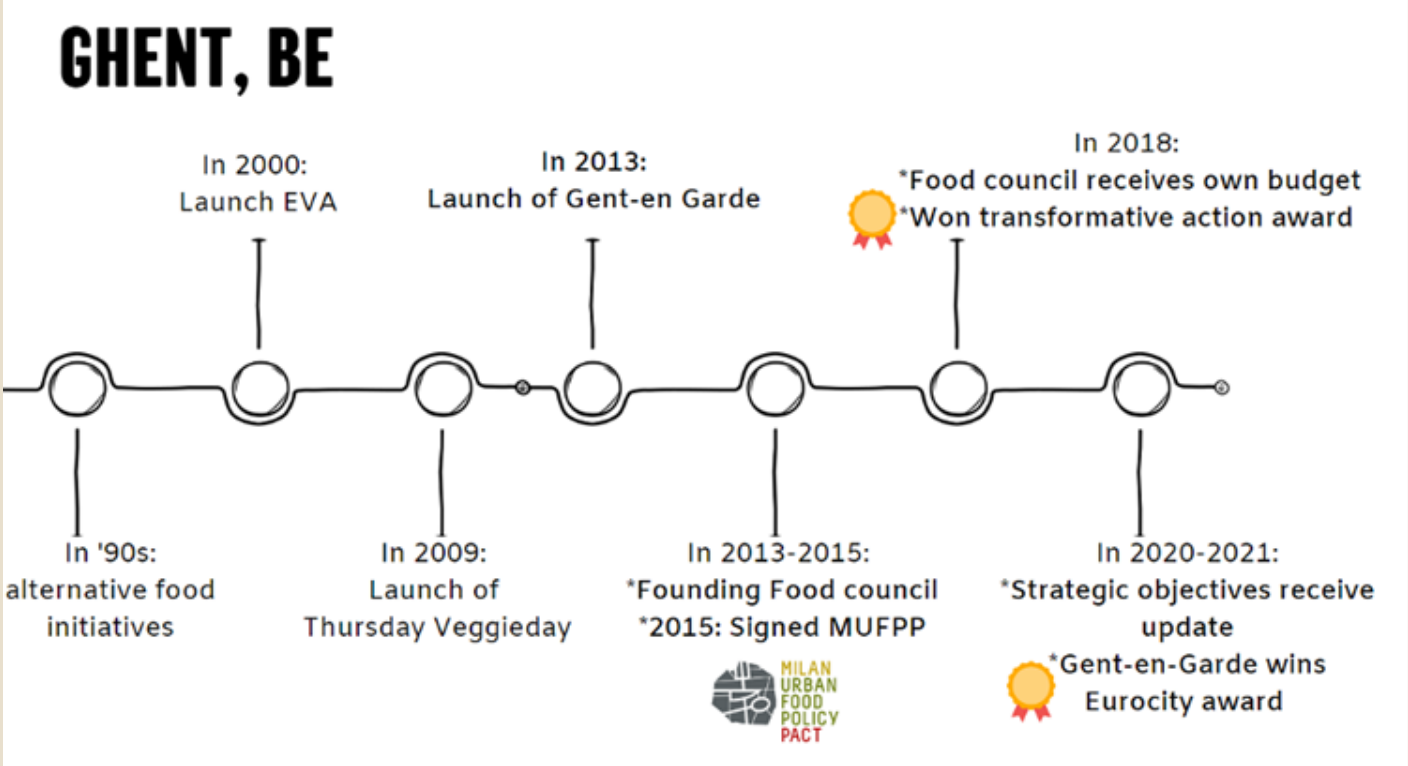


Figure 1. Timeline of actions made in relation to the UFS of Ghent (BE)

Who feeds Bristol? And ood inequality strategy as the UFS from Bristol (UK)

Bristol is the largest city of southwest England and has approximately 467 000 inhabitants (in 2021), with a density of 4 022 people/km^2. The southwest has the greatest concentration (38%) of organic producers of anywhere in UK. Still, like any other city in the UK, Bristol is almost completely dependent on four large food supply companies (Tesco, Morrisons, Sainsbury's and Morrisons) (Carey, 2013).

Bristol City Council established Bristol Food Links in 1997/8 as part of its own Sustainable City team activities. Over the years Bristol Food Links evolved into Bristol Food Network, moving from a fully funded Council initiative to a voluntary sector network with its own website and newsletter, supported by the Council. In addition to Bristol Food Links, the Council's own main food interventions have been to establish Bristol Farmers' Market in 1997 (the second in the UK following Bath), promote the uptake of allotments, and more recently, sustainable food procurement. The Soil Association (started in 1946) is a charity campaigning for healthy, fair, and sustainable food, farming, and land use. They certified 70% of organic food in the UK. They support work on school and hospital meals through its Food for Life pilot work since 2004, followed by the development of the Food for Life partnership and catering mark (Soil Association, n.d.). This is an independent endorsement that awards and recognises food providers who are taking steps to improve the food they serve. For many years already, the civil society movement around food in Bristol has been strong (Halliday & Barling, 2018). Beyond these interventions, however, the local food agenda has remained largely a concern of the voluntary sector, with their focus on food growing, skills development and food access. (Carey, 2013).

Figure 3 shows a timeline focusing on the movements that had an impact on the UFS. In contrast to Ghent, they started with creating a Food Policy Council. Furthermore, Bristol is largely driven by the voluntary sector. There is a shared set of values around a vision of sustainability, which is focused on care for nature, protection of diversity, concern for community health, empowerment, and inclusion.

'Who Feeds Bristol?' is the first report that was created and it provides baseline information and evidence to inform plans and actions that will improve the resilience of the food system. The report shows that Bristol has a wealth of local producers, wholesalers, processors, caterers, and shopkeepers, and there is a strong network of community groups, organizations, and businesses interested in good, sustainably produced food (Carey, 2013). This report also shows that Bristol has different opportunities for improvement, such as energy use and carbon emissions in this food system. Another report, a Good Food Plan 2020, promotes system change and offers practical solutions to the complex issue of food provisioning in Bristol (Halliday & Barling, 2018).

In 2022, they made a strategy to fight against the food inequality in Bristol, as one in every 20 households in Bristol face stress to access adequate food. In this Food Equality Strategy (2022-2032), they focus on 6 strategic work programmes always linked with different actions (Khaled, 2022):

1. Fair, equitable access
2. Choice and security
3. Skills and resources
4. Sustainable local food system
5. Food at the heart of decision-making
6. Cross-cutting strategic aims

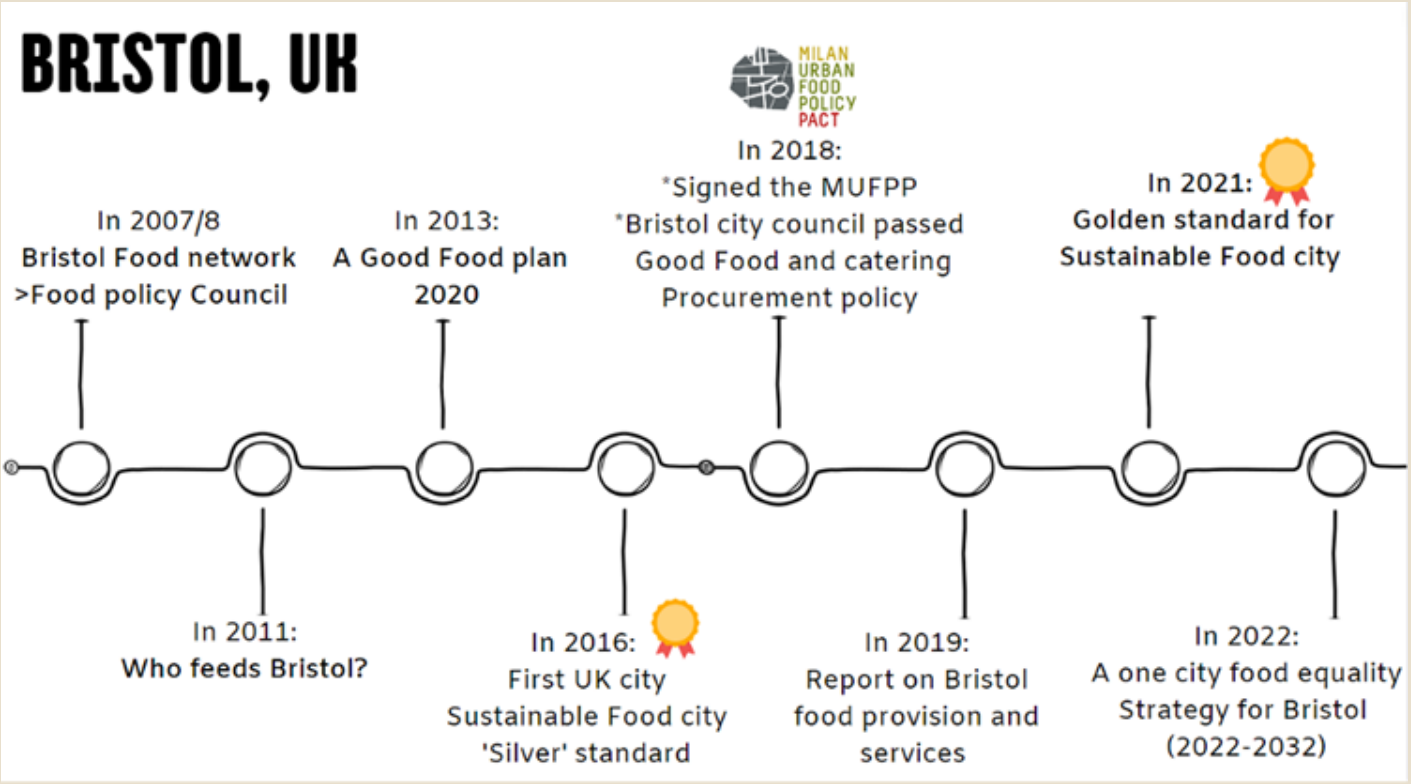


Figure 2. Timeline of actions made in relation to the UFS of Bristol (UK)

Food policy Rome, the UFS from Rome (Italy)

The city of Rome has 2.9 million inhabitants with a density of 2 133 people/km², whereas the population in the metropolitan region is approximately 4.3 million (with a density of 787 people/km²).
The city of Rome is the most populated commune in Italy. But on the other hand, it has the second largest agricultural municipality in Europe. In this context, the relationship between the city and the countryside is fundamental in terms of the urban food policies (Minotti et al., 2022).

Figure 4 shows the timeline of different actions of Rome's UFS. As in many parts of Europe, the interest in different alternative food networks grew in the 90s. In 2014, the Eating City Conference was held in Rome, where they have built a platform. The aim of the Eating City platform was to create opportunities for international meeting, to elaborate on case studies and publications with concrete proposals useful for public and private decision makers. They worked upstream and downstream of the food supply chain, together with the food industry and food service operators and buyers. After signing the MUFPP, they wrote the Strategic Metropolitan Plan, intending to create a development strategy for the area (Minotti et al., 2022).

In 2018 a participation process was launched, named 'Towards a food policy for Rome'. The food council was named Rome Food Policy and involves more than 50 organisations. In 2021, they approved the Food Policy for Rome, a working document with 10 priorities:

1. Access to primary resources (especially land, water, and agrobiodiversity)
2. Sustainable agriculture and biodiversity (sustaining organic agriculture and agroecology)
3. Short supply chains and local markets
4. City–countryside relations (integration between different phases of the supply chain, special focus on the Green Public Procurement)
5. Food and territory (strengthening territorial labelling systems, testing a traceability system for the supply chain)
6. Waste and redistribution (sustain leftovers redistribution)
7. Promoting multifunctionality (involving the disadvantaged in the process, therapeutic agriculture, agritourism)
8. Raising awareness among citizens (food and environmental education)
9. Landscape protection (contrasting soil consumption)
10. Resilience planning (agroecosystems as central elements of infrastructures, quantification of agrosilvopastoral systems' services)

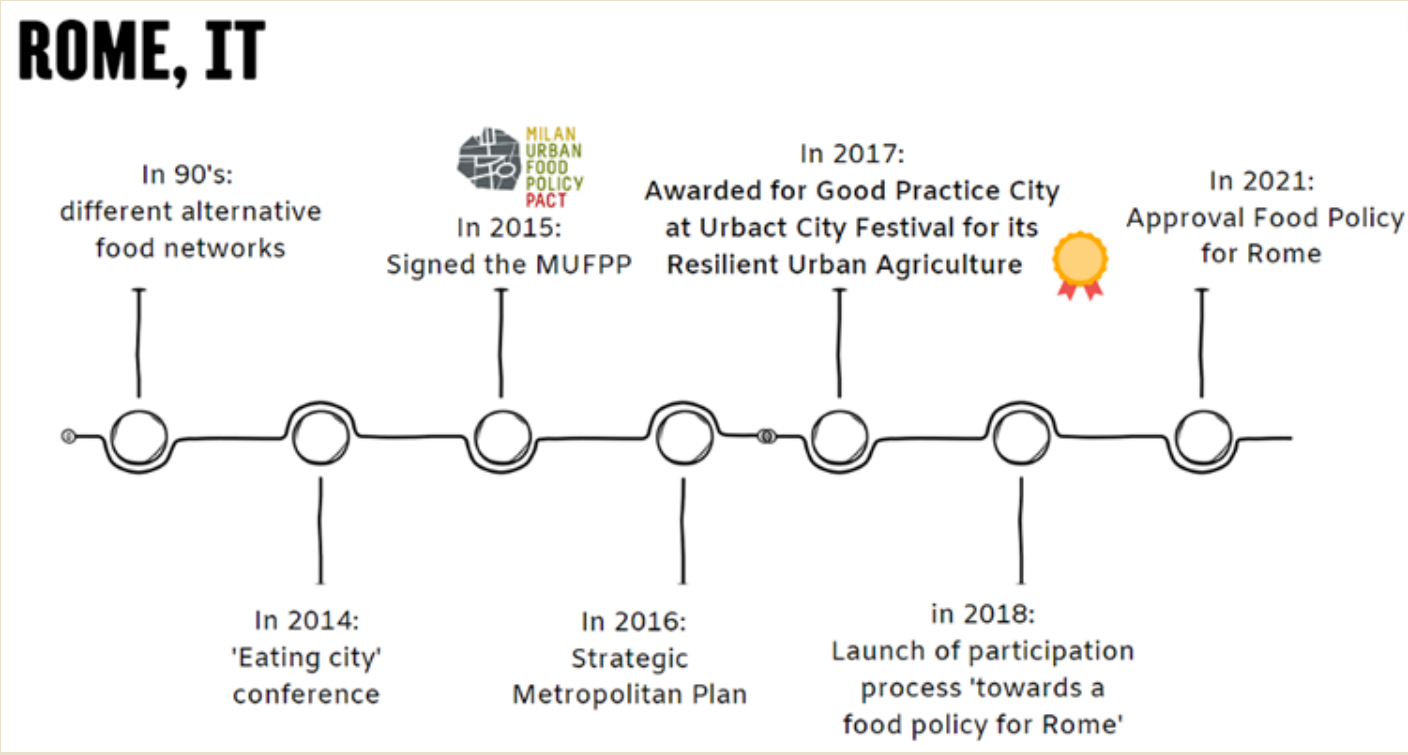


Figure 3. Timeline of actions made in relation to the UFS of Rome (IT)

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