



THE FEAST GUIDE

A handbook to co-develop
interventions that focus on food,
health and sustainability





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Introduction: The what and why of FEAST Interventions

Europe's current food system is unsustainable, driving environmental degradation, worsening public health, and straining public finances, while primarily benefiting large food corporations.^{1,2,3} Despite Europe being one of the wealthiest regions in the world, food poverty and malnutrition remain pressing issues. In 2023, almost 10% of the EU population could not afford a nutritious meal every second day, highlighting significant inequalities in access to healthy food.⁴ Poor dietary habits, characterized by high consumption of processed foods as well as foods high in sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats, are fuelling non-communicable diseases like obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular conditions.⁵ These preventable diseases account for the majority of deaths in Europe and impose a massive financial burden, with 70% of EU healthcare spending directed toward their treatment. Limited access to nutritious food not only worsens public health but also deepens social inequalities, leaving vulnerable populations at even greater risk of diet-related illnesses.

Without urgent action to transition towards healthier and more sustainable food systems, these issues will continue to worsen, harming both people and the planet. In this context, FEAST's mission is to make it easy for every person in Europe to eat a delicious, healthier, and more sustainable diet.

Local action is essential for transforming food systems by shaping food environments and influencing food behaviours. Food environments—whether physical or digital—serve as the contextual sphere in which food behaviours are formed and carried out.⁶ These behaviours are shaped by the interplay of attitudes, intentions, and norms influenced by various environmental factors, including, among others, exposure to marketing cues; the availability, accessibility, and proximity of food; cultural traditions and social norms; socio-economic conditions; and levels of food literacy.^{7,8,9} By directly influencing the environmental factors that shape these behaviours, local interventions can serve as a form of coordinated grassroots initiative acting on several levels of the food-value chain to foster healthier and more sustainable dietary habits and contribute to the well-being of the local community.

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¹ Xu, X. et al. Global greenhouse gas emissions from animal-based foods are twice those of plant-based foods. *Nat Food* 2, 724–732; 10.1038/s43016-021-00358-x (2021).

² Lobstein, T. The language of obesity just makes matters worse. *Nat Hum Behav* 2, 165; 10.1038/s41562-018-0295-6 (2018).

³ Allen, L. N., Hatefi, A. & Feigl, A. B. Corporate profits versus spending on non-communicable disease prevention: an unhealthy balance. *The Lancet Global Health* 7, e1482–e1483; 10.1016/S2214-109X(19)30399-7 (2019).

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20240712-1>

⁵ Changing life expectancy in European countries 1990–2021: a subanalysis of causes and risk factors from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2021, Steel, Nicholas et al., *The Lancet Public Health*, Volume 0, Issue 0

⁶ Swinburn, Boyd, Garry Egger, and Fezeela Raza. "Dissecting obesogenic environments: the development and application of a framework for identifying and prioritizing environmental interventions for obesity." *Preventive medicine* 29.6 (1999): 563-570.

Within FEAST, partners from municipalities, research centres, and civil society organisations come together to co-create and test innovative interventions to tackle Food Health & Sustainability challenges by strengthening the supply of and demand for healthier and more sustainable diets. They do this through Living Labs, that actively include vulnerable groups (those that are struggling socially, economically or geographically) during the identification of needs and the co-development of solutions. Living Labs also enable analysis and corresponding solutions that are context-specific, thus building on relevant patterns and trends in cultural, social, economic, and food environments and which consider the supply-side constraints to healthy choices.¹⁰ The experimental nature of Living Labs enables explorative spaces where different actors can come together and contribute to shaping their own environment. While their commitment is strong, municipalities often face many obstacles to their work, such as a lack of a dedicated budget and up-to-date data to support their interventions and measure their impacts. The FEAST Living Labs and all FEAST Partners have analysed these challenges and collaboratively co-designed solutions with vulnerable groups to tackle these challenges and support them to eat healthier and more sustainable diets.

The FEAST Guide is a tool for municipalities across Europe that would like to get inspired by the FEAST process and their resulting interventions and to ultimately replicate the process of co-creating innovative and inclusive solutions to support people to create healthier and more sustainable food environments and adopt healthier food behaviours.

The FEAST Guide includes:

- A handy Roadmap to accompany municipalities in their journey towards Food Health & Sustainability Interventions
- Insights from the 12 FEAST Living Labs on four types of interventions: food education, work with smallholder farmers, food environments, and public procurement
- Two in-depth case studies from the Living Labs
- A series of useful resources for planning and implementing interventions

The FEAST Guide stems from the experiences of the Living Labs and was co-developed with them through a series of interviews and a workshop during the FEAST Consortium Meeting in Alto Minho, Portugal.

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⁷ Boyland, E. J., & Whalen, R. (2015). Food advertising to children and its effects on diet: a review of recent prevalence and impact data. *Pediatric Diabetes*, 16(5), 331–337.

⁸ Higgs, S. (2015). Social norms and their influence on eating behaviours. *Appetite*, 86, 38–44.

⁹ Vidgen, H. A., & Gallegos, D. (2014). Defining food literacy and its components. *Appetite*, 76, 50–59

¹⁰ <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/items/96fbc3f5-5c7e-41f7-9edf-5be26db2935b>



Short intro to FEAST Living Labs

DEF Living lab: Living Labs: Practice-driven organisations that facilitate and foster open, collaborative innovation and real-life environments or arenas where both open innovation and user innovation processes can be studied and subject to experiments and where new solutions are developed ([SCAR, 2023](#)).



Avignon

Food culture at school through cooking workshops and quality school meals that valorise the local food system.



CIM Alto Minho

Transitioning to healthier and more sustainable food systems in Alto Minho's school canteens.



Cork

Driving a consultation process for the Cork Food Strategy and developing a Food Hub that supports young farmers.



Ghent

Strengthening food access in underprivileged neighbourhoods.



Guldborgsund

Introducing food education and school meals in the rural education system.



LEADER Weinviertel-Donauraum

Creating a more attractive environment for school food.



Leuven

Developing a community action platform on healthy and sustainable diets among vulnerable groups.

▀ The living labs



Lodz

Supporting the holistic health of seniors through workshops, social gatherings and procurement.



Oxfordshire

Organising food education for parents in five marginalised communities.



Prilep

Shaping nutritional pedagogy across the country.



Tuscany

Primary and secondary prevention: food education for students and elderly alongside an outpatient paediatric nutrition clinic.



Sitia

Valorising local olive oil for farmers' incomes and health.



▀ The living labs





▀ Roadmap

STEP 1

Scope what's already there

- Map existing initiatives, networks and (community) assets
- Find the gatekeepers
- Explore new activities with current partners

STEP 2

Invite different stakeholders

- The experts are within the community, work with them
- Fill the gaps in your skills with the right partnerships
- Create new, innovative connections
- Build trust

STEP 3

Agree on a burning problem

- Listen carefully, rather than making assumptions
- Be mindful of the language you use
- Remember that food is cultural

STEP 4

Co-design an intervention: tasting solutions

- Don't underestimate logistics
- Ask people what they need and want
- Prioritise what can be put in place easily
- Set realistic expectations and keep people informed

STEP 5

Whet political appetite

- Align the intervention with existing political and financial priorities
- Mainstream the conversation about food
- Drive attention of local politicians and policymakers to your project

STEP 6

Generate robust evidence to evaluate impact

6 STEPS TO FOOD HEALTH & SUSTAINABILITY INTERVENTIONS



Step 1

Scope what's already there



Before you start planning and designing the intervention, you need to familiarise yourself with what is already happening in the food system in your city and region. This will allow you to find key partners with whom to work, avoid repeating activities that are already taking place, and learn from past projects in your area, both successes and failures.

Map existing initiatives, networks and (community) assets that work on food or with your target group:

Start by mapping the stakeholders that run food projects, learn about their work and connect with them! These actors can be both within the municipality, i.e. in other departments that work on food, health, or environment, or outside the municipality, such as networks of NGOs and community organisations working on the topic or with your target group. Connecting with people who have already worked with some of the actors you plan to engage, such as schools or community organisations, will provide insights into which actors are more responsive, or which activities seem to be most successful.

It takes time to find and build trust with the right stakeholders!

Find the gatekeepers:

While mapping and talking with different stakeholders, pay attention to which names pop up often. These may be people and organisations that are trusted by the other organisations in the space. Building a relationship and collaborating with them may open many doors to be able to work with other organisations or with your target groups, particularly the most disadvantaged. In fragile contexts, trust is crucial to reach the most vulnerable populations and working with people and organisations that they trust will increase the chances of commitment and a successful intervention.

Explore the possibility of new activities with current partners:

While mapping organisations you don't yet know is crucial to opening up new horizons, be sure to also talk with the people you already know! Partners with whom you collaborate in current projects may provide valuable insights for new activities, with the added advantage that you have already built a relationship and know how to work with them and vice versa.

Step 2

Invite different stakeholders



After you've mapped existing food organisations and projects, you will have to decide who to invite to the table. Who will you invite to take part in the identification of the problems, the co-design of the solution, the implementation of the intervention and the collection of the data to understand how your intervention worked? What should you keep in mind when making the selection? You don't need to work alone, you can find reliable and impactful partners!

The experts are within the community, work with them:

The best way to ensure that your understanding and analysis of the problem is accurate and the design of your intervention targets real needs is [work with people who have first-hand experience](#) of the issues you want to address, whether it is food poverty, unhealthy eating habits or problems accessing a viable market. They have the [lived-experience](#) and knowledge needed to address these issues that is often lacking in policy-making. Working with them may mean setting up open consultation sessions directly with members of the community or collaborating with community organisations that serve them and represent their interests. Remember that experts by experience will have multiple personal and professional commitments and you may have to be flexible with your time. Moreover, their knowledge is valuable and needs to be acknowledged. .

How to value lived experience expertise?

Examples from the FEAST Living Labs

Good Food Oxfordshire set up a model of community facilitators in five communities. The community facilitators are usually people who were already employed in community organisations, either as part-time staff or volunteers, and that through this role are able to dedicate more time to the activities and be remunerated for their work. The community facilitators received training on research skills and project management, as well as further training on the topic of healthy diets, nutrition, inclusive food systems. The facilitators are members of the communities where the Oxfordshire Living Lab is active, so they were pivotal in recruiting participants and adapting the work of the Living Lab to the specific context of each community. Each facilitator ran an initial survey, two focus groups discussions and two co-design workshops in their community to understand the burning issue that needs to be addressed in the community and design possible interventions. The training built capacity in the community themselves, developing skills in data collection, data analysis and solution design.

The Ghent municipality works with [deLink](#), a Flemish organisation that offers two-year trainings for people experiencing poverty to become poverty experts. After the training, they can provide policy advice on questions related to vulnerable groups. These experts are part of the working group of local poverty organisations, health experts and city services that gives direction to the Living Lab's activities.

Fill the gaps in your skills with the right partnerships:

Reflect on the gaps in knowledge and skills in your team and invite people who can fill those gaps. These may be gaps in research skills needed to understand the root causes of a problem or to measure a baseline before implementing your intervention or a post-intervention measurement, people to help you analyse your data or the advocacy skills needed to give more visibility to your cause.

Create new, innovative connections.

Look beyond your circle and build links with people you did not initially consider. For instance, the Avignon Living Lab reached out to chefs from several restaurants in the city to develop and deliver cooking classes for children. The chefs were enthusiastic, and the intervention created a new relationship between the local schools and the local restaurants, which were previously disconnected. Looking for new connections can also help you to find your first supporter, who will help you start your movement. This is what happened in Guldborgsund, where, in an effort to initiate public school meals in the municipality, the Living Lab team looked beyond the education department and found an ally in the public health department, who helped to frame school meals as disease prevention, thus gaining support with health officers.

▶ VIDEO - How to start a movement

Build trust.

Take the time to develop the relationship with your partners, strong relationships are key to impactful interventions!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[Telling stories and shaping solutions](#) (2020): A toolkit showing techniques, strategies and best practices to empower people who have lived experience of food poverty.

[Involving experts by experience](#) (2016) A guidebook explaining how to involve experts by experience in policy influencing activities and events.

Step 3

Agree on a burning problem



Once you've decided who to invite to the table, you will need to collectively understand the issues that prevent people in the community from eating a healthier and more sustainable diet, and which issue is the most pressing.

Talk with people from your target beneficiary group and listen carefully, rather than making assumptions:

Conduct interviews, workshops, meetings with the people you want to work for and with, to ask them what problems they are facing. Truly listen to the answers, which will often defy your assumptions, that are based on your experience of the world and your perception of the problem. One example comes from the Ghent Living Lab: the municipality noticed that people on low incomes did not make use of solidarity pricing of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), which is meant to make vegetables more financially accessible. One of the poverty organisations involved in the intervention conducted an experiment and worked with people in poverty on the land of the CSA farm. During this experiment, they found out that working outdoors and being part of a community was much more important than harvesting fruits and vegetables for themselves. Therefore, the problem was not the price, but what was offered and what the community members got in return.

RESOURCE - Storytelling as listening method

Be mindful of the language you use:

we all have different experiences, ideas and ideals and the language we speak usually reflects this diversity. While two people may both speak English, the meaning behind their words is shaped by a myriad of factors that can end up conveying or receiving very different messages. We all engage in communication by using our own [framing](#). While it is not possible to speak everyone's language, it is important to try to engage stakeholders through positive, clear and inclusive language. Language that is not polarising can also inspire wider commitment: striving for more "tasty food" will be more widely accepted than pushing for more "healthy food".

Remember that food is cultural:

When working towards dietary transitions, it is paramount to recognise people's food culture and their previous food experiences. This means recognising people's attachment to their cultural foods (dishes that are perceived as unique to and emblematic of a culture), as well as their food culture – the set of customary practices and beliefs that define how food is part of a population's daily life and social structure. People hold very strong cultural beliefs on what sustainable food is and what a healthy diet looks like. How can we value the diversity of food cultures in our societies, while fostering the changes necessary to promote healthier and more sustainable diets for us and the generations to come?

Paying attention to food's cultural dimension - examples from the FEAST Living Labs

In Guldborgsund, the Food School teaches students new, plant-based interpretations of traditional danish smørrebrød (which is also the main staple of homemade school lunches, with cold meat cuts on ryebread).

The Tuscany Living Lab uses the [Cross-Cultural Food Pyramid](#), elaborated by the Italian Society of Pediatrics, within the outpatient pediatric nutrition clinic as food education tool. This tool, in line with today's multiethnic society, combines the Mediterranean Diet model with typical foods from different food traditions (particularly from Asia, Africa, and South America Regions), so as to provide children and their families with useful knowledge to integrate into their daily routines in accordance with their food culture.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[Positive communication toolkit](#) (2021): A toolkit exploring how to implement positive and optimistic communication strategies around environmental and animal conservation topics.

[Food citizenship: a communication toolkit](#) (2017): A toolkit for organization in the agrifood sector aiming to improve their communication towards citizens rather than consumers.

Step 4

Co-design the intervention



After analysing the problems the community faces, you can start co-creating solutions with them. This will involve one or more moments of encounter, either in person or online, in which everyone can share ideas and brainstorm possible actions. Before these encounters, you'll need to think about the logistics – the location, the invites, the agenda – as well as the appropriate methodology for your workshop. After the meeting, you'll have to think of which actions to start with and how to keep participants engaged over time.

Don't underestimate logistics:

when planning your co-design activities, special attention should be placed on where, when, and how you will meet, to ensure that people with specific needs can access the event and be included. How can you take care of a full range of special needs to ensure inclusivity? Think of the location of the event, is it reachable by affordable public transport? Are there parking opportunities nearby? Is it close to the area where the people who would have more difficulty joining live or work? Is the venue accessible for people with limited mobility? Are there enough seating options for people who will get tired more easily? Reflect on the timing of the event: what would be the best time of the day and week for working people to come, e.g. the evening or in the weekend? How long should the workshop be? How can you make the format more inclusive? Can you organise multiple events with smaller groups, or one event with small breakout groups to support people's confidence when sharing their ideas? Is it possible to provide childcare for people who will have to come with their children? Can you hire a facilitator that has proven cultural awareness skills? Depending on the length of the session, try to ensure healthy and sustainable refreshments and meal options are available.

Ask people what they need and want:

the main goals of co-design are to create a sense of ownership among the people involved and to make sure that an intervention will be truly useful for those we are trying to support. What is their vision of a healthy and sustainable diet and how do they imagine getting there? For this, it is necessary to create formats that allow them to share their ideas and opinions freely, the responses may surprise you! For example, while co-developing the intervention in Ghent, people from lower-income households said they do not need a new cookbook to show them how to cook healthy meals, but rather they want more access to fresh fruits and vegetables. On the other hand, in Oxfordshire, families making use of food support, such as

food banks or community larders, were enthusiastic about the idea of learning new recipes and cooking techniques to help them adopt a healthier diet. This meant that in Ghent and Oxfordshire, a similar starting point led to two completely different solutions, based on the needs of the community.

RESOURCE - Explore workshop methodologies that include visioning exercises

Prioritise what can be put in place easily:

at the beginning you may want to focus on a small intervention that can be implemented with limited resources. Once the intervention is running successfully, you will have a concrete example of your work to showcase and gain support from other actors. Be sure to publicise your success!

Set realistic expectations and keep people informed:

while in a co-design process you want to involve people from the beginning, you can't make any promises about the results at the start. Be clear and realistic about the results that will be possible from the co-design exercise at this initial stage, based on the financial and political support your solution already has. Additionally, after the co-design event, set up communication channels with the participants, such as emails, a newsletter, a WhatsApp group or field visits. Make sure to communicate openly about what is happening or is not happening.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[The power of many](#) (2024): A guide for city officials and policymakers on how to design co-creation processes involving different stakeholders for environmental sustainability and social justice related projects.

[Getting participation right \(and wrong\)](#) (2023): A blog article showcasing success and unsuccessful stories of recruitment processes in co-design and group decision-making activities.

[Equitable events handbook](#) (2023): A handbook providing guidelines to organize non-discriminatory, equitable and inclusive events.

Step 5

Whet political appetite



To institutionalise your intervention and, ideally, obtain funding to ensure its continuity over time, or to expand to different groups, you will need political support from the policymakers who decide on these matters.

Align the intervention with existing political and financial priorities:

if your city already has a policy on food, such as a food strategy, you should make sure that your intervention and its impacts align with the objectives of this policy. However, not all cities may have a policy on food, as they could prioritise other themes, such as health or climate. But fret not! Food is cross-sectoral, and as such, you can link your intervention to other priorities of your municipality. The Guldborgsund Living Lab, for instance, shifted the perspective from food to the health agenda, framing the impact of school meals in relation to the positive effects on childrens' health. This way, they leveraged one of the priorities of the Guldborgsund Municipality (health) and gained allies in another municipal department to support their work.

Aligning interventions with the city's strategies – examples from the FEAST Living Labs

The city of Ghent has had a food strategy for more than 10 years, which was designed by the Gent Food Council and adopted by the city council. The strategy has three main objectives: 1. a short and sustainable food chain 2. sustainable food for everyone 3. no food waste. The interventions of the Ghent Living Lab implement the objectives "Sustainable food for all" as well as "Short and sustainable food chain".

In Guldborgsund, the Committee for Children and Learning has a strategy that states "Care and health promotion: Through partnerships, we will work to provide more information about health so that children, young people and parents have the best conditions for making healthy choices. We want to offer healthy food in daycare centres and schools and give children and young people a taste for healthy choices." By aligning its interventions with the goals of this strategy, the Guldborgsund Living Lab was able to obtain the mandate to work on food in schools and food literacy for students.

Cork has just received the EU Mission label for Climate Action and Smart Cities. The Test Site group in the Cork Living Lab is using this opportunity to make developing urban agriculture relevant to the Net Zero objectives and other City's strategies related to economic development, biodiversity and climate action. There is a biodiversity and foraging zone on the site, a composting pilot with a business on waste prevention and reduction. Moreover, the head market gardener is a Chef who is developing a selling plan with a group of restaurants very supportive of local food growers, which ties in with the objectives to develop Cork as the Food Capital of Ireland and encourages stakeholders to include sustainability in their plans.



Mainstream the conversation about food:

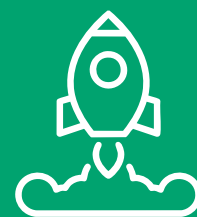
while your intervention may be focused on a specific issue, target group or location, you can highlight the importance of the topic by talking about food and its relevance for different themes of urban development, such as climate, health, green spaces, social cohesion. Mainstreaming the conversation about food allows you to build onto the momentum of existing initiatives in other departments. For instance, the Living Lab in Guldborgsund tied the topic of food to the city's Climate Action Plans by spearheading an intervention in the canteen of the municipality, which aimed to decrease the CO2 impact of the municipal meals through a reduction of food waste as well as the increase of organic purchases and skills development for canteen staff. The initiative worked wonders in terms of people talking about climate and food in the municipal building. And thus it paved the way for MORE talk, more discussion, more interest in food.

Drive attention of local politicians and policymakers to your project:

people don't always understand how to influence policy, but sometimes it's easier than we imagine. Involve people from the community, bring them together and give them a platform to voice their concerns. Bring these concerns (and the people!) to the policy makers. Especially at the local level, moments of encounter are easier to organise and have the most impact. Involve local media during your interventions and attract the attention of local politicians. Contact them often so that they know who you are and can recognise you.

Step 6

Generate robust evidence to evaluate impact



Demonstrating the impact of planned interventions is essential, not only to showcase areas of improvement to funders and policy makers but also to give back to the community by creating conditions for long-lasting systemic change. Therefore, impact needs to be planned from the early design phases of an intervention and integrated through the whole intervention process. Ask yourself: What change do you want to see in your city, community, or target groups? What short-term changes will result immediately from the intervention; for example, setting up a community garden? What long-term impacts could emerge, such as sustained community involvement in land stewardship or better access to fresh and healthy vegetables over time? Integrating impact assessment into your interventions is crucial for demonstrating the cross-sectoral nature of food systems. Consider how the intervention you are leading can generate positive co benefits across multiple sectors. For example, enabling access to fresh vegetables and fruits in communities contributes to long-term reductions in public health expenditures by preventing diet-related diseases. Developing tenders that enable small-scale farmers to participate in the bidding and strengthening of local food economies.

There are multiple ways to measure impact, both qualitative and quantitative. Setting a baseline of what you would like to measure, how and why is key to understanding your starting point.

- **Qualitative methods** - such as fieldwork, focus groups, and interviews - can be time - intensive but offer powerful stories of change, giving voice to the people driving the interventions.
- **Quantitative measures**, often framed as datasets, allow for broader comparisons and hypothesis testing and are frequently used to inform policy makers.

Ideally, a mix of methods is used to collect, analyse, and communicate the impact achieved on the ground. It would be ideal to design the evaluation in a simple way that means you and your team can do the data collection and analysis based on the skills you have but there could be instances where this is not possible. In some cases, impact measurement can be an overwhelming process that involves expert knowledge.

For example, developing consent forms and setting up evaluation methods. Therefore, it is helpful to work with trained professionals. This can be achieved, for example, through collaboration with universities, where PhD students or postdocs conducting relevant research can contribute to setting up impact assessment frameworks.

Example in FEAST: Healthy and Sustainable Diets and Food Education

In achieving impact through the interventions, FEAST has served as an enabler for many LLs, fostering better dialogue between city departments and various food sector stakeholders, including small-scale producers, school canteen staff, catering companies, and food organisations. This in many of the FEAST LL, has led to improving access to and affordability of healthy, sustainable meals across public institutions such as schools and elderly homes.

FEAST Living Labs have achieved a variety of outcomes, including:

- Bringing social and political attention to the most precious investment for the future: children
- Making children agents of change by involving them in decisions about their own diets, participating in the reduction of food waste
- Empowering vulnerable groups to identify durable tools for food accessibility
- Emphasizing the diversity of knowledge and the collective intelligence as community empowering tool

For example, in Alto Minho, ten municipalities joined forces to coordinate their school meal programs, ensuring that procurement processes support local farmers. Similarly, in Avignon, procurement criteria were reshaped to prioritize small-scale food producers, leading to an increase in local and seasonal food consumption in schools. In Lodz, menus in elderly homes were redesigned to increase the number of fresh vegetables served, ensuring that meal changes align with both the dietary and taste preferences of the elderly. Meanwhile, in Prilep, a revision of national nutritional guidelines was undertaken, incorporating food education to school meals programmes. While procurement might be seen as a low-hanging fruit, its co-benefits are emerging from the FEAST LL, particularly in strengthening local food economies. By creating demand for local, seasonal, and homegrown food, procurement supports small-scale food producers, who often struggle to obtain a fair income in a sector where jobs are in decline.

TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS



Types of interventions

The twelve FEAST Living Labs have approached the topic of healthy and sustainable diets through different angles. This is due to the different geographical contexts and target groups of their activities. As the process of co-creation in each Living Lab was anchored in the local reality and the needs of the target groups, the resulting interventions differed in focus and scope.

Nevertheless, the interventions can be grouped in four broad typologies:



Type 1: Food education

- Children and students
- With parents
- With professionals
- With elderly people



Type 2: Work with smallholder farmers

- Access to resources
- Valorising cultural products



Type 3: Food environments

- Addressing food deserts and food swamps
- Designing physical food spaces
- Shaping food environments through governance and research



Type 4: Public food procurement

- Changing menus and suppliers for healthy and appealing school meals
- Improving food quality for people and planet

This section presents insights from the Living Labs for each of these typologies.



Food education is one of the elements needed to empower people and communities to choose nutritious and sustainable food – teaching people about food production, nutrition, cooking, and sustainability opportunities and challenges. This approach can equip individuals with the skills to make informed decisions to optimize their nutritional intake, reduce food waste, and support the transition towards sustainable food systems. The ultimate objective of food education is to empower individuals and communities to decide consciously and responsibly about their food choices and cultivate lifelong habits that promote good health. Food education starts with children: attitude forming is easier than attitude change. However, learning is a lifelong activity and food education can also target adults and elderly populations.

Many FEAST Living Labs work on food education with different groups:

Children and students

The **Avignon Living Lab** organised cooking classes and lessons on food systems for elementary school children in collaboration with chefs from local restaurants. The chefs came up with a menu that included local and seasonal ingredients and taught the recipes to the children in a pedagogical kitchen located in a social centre. Because of the limited capacity of the kitchen and safety requirements, while half of the children were cooking, the other half took part in more theoretical classes on nutrition and healthy diets. At the end of the cooking class, all the children and the chef shared the meal they cooked.

In **Guldborgsund**, the FEAST Living Lab partnered with a private food school to provide a series of cooking classes for all the students in 5th and 6th grade in 13 public schools. The municipality paid for the cooking classes and the schools organised the transport to the location of the cooking courses.

The **Tuscany Living Lab** co-designed lessons on sustainable and healthy diets with around 100 middle and high school students from Piana di Lucca and Valle del Serchio. These lessons, organized in seven thematic modules including theoretical and practical activities, aimed to foster a healthy and aware approach towards food and nutrition in the students and were co-designed through a questionnaire and in-depth meetings. At the end of the co-design process, a “classroom pact” was drafted and signed by all students to collectively agree on the concept of the course and the topics to be covered. This secured the agreement and cooperation of the students throughout the course of the lessons.

With parents

In **Oxfordshire**, the FEAST Living Lab is working with five community groups to examine the barriers that make it difficult for parents with children under 5 to adopt healthier and more sustainable eating habits, and to identify and implement innovative strategies that enable these groups to integrate healthier and more sustainable food choices into their daily lives. Their intervention explored both community cooking interventions, where parents could learn quick and easy healthy recipes for the whole family and a digital hub of healthy family friendly recipes, evidence based nutritional advice and meal plans. The **Tuscany Living Lab** set up an outpatient paediatric nutrition clinic within the Piana di Lucca District Zone to promote healthier and more conscious food choices by providing children and their families with useful knowledge,



With professionals

strategies and tools that they can integrate into their daily routine. The service is free of charge and aimed at children and adolescents aged 5 to 16 for needs concerning nutrition, such as overweight and obesity. To access the outpatient clinic, a request from the general practitioner or the paediatrician is needed.

The **Prilep Living Lab**, whose project was titled “Building Healthy Eating Habits Amongst Preschool Children,” is a critical initiative aimed at creating sustainable food systems in North Macedonia. By equipping kindergarten teachers with comprehensive training on nutritional pedagogy, the Living Lab empowers educators to instill healthy eating habits from an early age. The “Magic Plate” tool, along with policy guidelines and interactive workshops, form the core of the intervention.

The **Guldborgsund Living Lab** developed an intervention at the public canteen level with the aim of making them more environmentally sustainable. Two talented chefs organized a comprehensive training program that went in-depth into taste, texture and ingredients, and put it all into a climate perspective. The municipality then invited the dietary managers of the municipality’s daycare center to participate in the training alongside the municipality canteen chefs. At the end of the project, they published a collection of sustainable food recipes and made them available to other kitchen professionals in the municipality. Many people in Guldborgsund are looking for inspiration and knowledge on how to cook ‘greener food’ in public kitchens.

The **Leuven Living Lab** organised a series of activities for cooks, community workers and visitors of four social restaurants in Leuven in collaboration with its partners. The activities aimed at opening the dialogue and strengthening existing knowledge. During a six-month trajectory, (cooking) workshops were organised, community workers were connected via the interactive community action platform and a study on communication and the perception of healthy and sustainable food was performed.

With elderly people

The **Lodz Living Lab** organised lessons on healthy diets for the residents of a daycare home for older people. The classes started from the basics, with basic terminology around food and nutrition, what a healthy, balanced diet means, and why people over 60 need a special diet. The Living Lab adopted a holistic approach to health: they did not only focus on the residents’ diet, but also addressed physical health, mental health, psychological safety, physical activity, and attention to group dynamics. For example, they organised yoga classes combined with a healthy and sustainable breakfast, and an intergenerational picnic where the residents of the daycare home could meet students for the city’s university.

In **Tuscany**, the **Living Lab** organised a series of events for elderly people named “Health in the third age: prevention strategies for healthy and active aging”. They paired nutrition with other topics such as mental well-being, physical activity, proper use of antibiotics and adherence to vaccination and screening campaigns. The series of events created a fruitful informal discussion space between health professionals and citizens in which useful strategies, tools, materials and information were shared that can be carried and applied in everyday life.



To achieve a more sustainable food system and support healthier diets, it is paramount to work with the people who are actually producing the food that reaches our table. Small-scale farmers represent nearly 40% of farmers in the EU. They ensure sustainable and more secure access to fresh, diverse and seasonal food, which can strengthen the resilience and cultural significance of the city-region food systems. They are the main promoters of sustainable agricultural practices that support biodiversity and soil health. However, they are often the ones that face the strongest challenges in finding secure land or a market for their products, making a fair income, or accessing the resources that they need to succeed.

The importance of working with smallholder farmers was recognised by some of the Living Labs, whose activities focused on:

Access to resources

The **Living Lab of CIM Alto Minho** worked with the smallholder farmers in the region to ensure that they would be able to supply schools with the products they needed for school meals. They conducted market dialogues where they asked farmers the types and quantities of products they would be able to provide, with the intent of tailoring the menus in the schools. Moreover, they geomapped many of the producers in the area to ensure that potential customers could find out about them. Both of these actions aimed to provide local smallholder farmers with access to new markets.

The **Cork City Living Lab** focuses on setting the stage for urban agriculture by supporting farmers in accessing land, creating a network and developing skills. Firstly, they set up a 1-acre plot of land that functions as an incubator. The Test Site incubator started with a group of skilled growers: two market gardeners freshly graduated from the local school of horticulture, two community gardeners learning intensive market garden techniques with them and two allotment gardeners supporting with tasks such as watering, weeding, composting, etc. The group is developing an innovative model of community market gardening, where market gardeners can develop an activity with the help of community gardeners, directly inspired by people’s contributions to a preliminary consultation and co-design process. As a new community group, they tied in with the existing network of horticulturalists and food growers from Cork City’s 29 community gardens, to keep each other informed on developments about urban agriculture in the city, and actively work together. Finally, they have developed the Biodiversity Hub, an educational centre where the people from the network and beyond can gather and share their knowledge and build each other’s capacity. The project evolved from offering land as a resource to giving access to a natural space and networks to co-create a new community of growers. The community aspect turned out to be paramount as opposed to location or quality of land.



After conducting interviews with olive farmers, the **Sitia Living Lab** understood that farmers face strenuous conditions because of the impact of climate change on their crops, and the harvest losses have a negative impact not only on their income, but also on their diets. Because of the rising prices of olive oil due to poor harvests, olive farmers opt to not use olive oil for their own consumption, thus altering their cultural Mediterranean diet, with dire impacts on their health. To counter this, the Living Lab set up olive oil panels where people can taste olive oil produced locally and recognise its quality.

In **Avignon**, all the meals served in the city's schools are produced in one central kitchen run by the municipality. The **Living Lab** decreased the amount of meat served in the school canteens and developed a partnership with local meat producers to provide products of higher quality to the central kitchen and support the local food economy. This enabled the Avignon Living Lab to push for less and better meat, from local producers who raise animals in a more ethical manner than industrial livestock producers.



Sitia Living Lab



Avignon Living Lab



Cork Living Lab

The concept of food environment defines where people interact with food and make decisions about what to eat. This includes both physical places, such as supermarkets, canteens, and farmers’ markets, and the food messaging people are exposed to, such as awareness campaigns and advertisements. Food environments are shaped by physical, economic, political and socio-cultural factors that influence peoples’ dietary preferences.¹¹

FEAST Living Labs work on food environments in different ways, both in terms of physical spaces and food messaging:

Food deserts and food swamps

The **Ghent Living Lab** is working in two lower-income neighbourhoods. In one neighbourhood, the Living Lab, including the poverty organisation [SIVI](#), partners with a CSA farm to grow vegetables with people from the neighbourhood. The harvest will be processed in long-life products and meals to be redistributed. In the other neighbourhood, the Living Lab set up a local farmers’ market to increase residents’ access to fresh fruits, vegetables, eggs and milk. Mindful of the financial barriers that people often face when accessing fresh and, especially, organic products, the farmers at the market do not sell exclusively organic produce - the meat and dairy sold are organic, while the fruits and vegetables are not. While this trade-off may decrease the sustainability impact of the intervention, it will nonetheless shorten the supply chain and increase influx of healthy foods in the neighbourhood, while also increasing the accessibility of lower-climate impact plant-based foods. In addition, the Living Lab is planning to set up a social restaurant in the canteen of a local hospital, which would become accessible to all residents.

Design physical food spaces

In **Lodz**, the FEAST **Living Lab** redesigned the space of the senior home by planting vegetables, herbs, flowers and encouraging seniors to do more gardening. The team built two gardens where the residents of the senior day centre could grow their own vegetables. One of the two gardens is a raised bed that was custom built by the Living Lab team to be used by people with limited mobility. The vegetables and herbs from the garden were for the residents’ meals and as part of the cooking classes they were involved in.



Lodz Living Lab



Lodz Living Lab



After launching the discussion document outlining the vision for the Sustainable and Healthy Cork Food Strategy in August 2024, the **Cork City Living Lab** initiated a participatory consultation process with the public and local food system stakeholders to refine and define the vision for Cork's Sustainable and Healthy local Food Strategy. The strategy aims to address the current shortage of locally grown food and the high reliance on food imports. Additionally, by fostering cross - departmental collaboration, the Living Lab has begun aligning with health - related projects to pilot the use of the Place Standard Tool - Food Lens. This tool aims to engage and support food - disadvantaged communities within the Sláintecare Healthy Communities¹² program in assessing their local food environment. Findings from this pilot study will further inform the development of the food strategy.



Ghent Living Lab

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In Europe, local and regional public authorities play a key role in the implementation of sustainable food systems, and they have the mandate to procure food or catering services for their institutions and bodies, such as schools, daycares, hospitals, and beyond. Not only do they command the budgets, and thus have the power to exert market pressure, they have the responsibility to be exemplary in how they spend taxpayers’ money. Sustainable procurement involves looking beyond short-term needs and considering the longer-term impacts of each purchasee ([Buy Better Food Manifesto](#)).

Some of the Living Labs have focused on improving public food procurement through different means including:

Changing menus and suppliers for healthy and appealing school meals

The **Avignon Living Lab** has been working to improve the quality of food in municipal schools by directly influencing the supply from the central municipal kitchen, which serves approximately 6,000 meals daily. By introducing vegetarian options twice a week and collaborating with local meat suppliers to offer higher-quality meat, the Living Lab aims to provide children with more sustainable and nutritious meals. These efforts have led to an overall improvement in meal quality while also reducing costs. However, the initiative faced challenges, particularly pushback from some parents and school canteen staff regarding the reduction in meat portions. To address these concerns, the Living Lab began distributing newsletters to parents highlighting the benefits of the changes and offering insights into the local producers supplying the high-quality ingredients. Additionally, some students and canteen staff had the opportunity to meet local producers and take photos, giving them a deeper understanding of where their food comes from.

By engaging a wide range of local stakeholders at the Korneuburg campus—including school administrators, teachers, kitchen staff, parents, municipal representatives, and nearby food providers—the **LEADER Weinviertel-Donauraum Living Lab** is working to make school food more attractive, healthy and sustainable. A survey among students and parents, and talks with school personnel revealed that many teenagers skipped the canteen in favour of nearby junk-food options, leading to both nutritional and environmental concerns. Through collaborative workshops and feedback sessions, the Living Lab wants to identify specific barriers (e.g., menu variety, taste preferences, portion sizes) and co-develop strategies to address them. These range from small menu adjustments and better communication about ingredients to improved meal presentation and potential price incentives. In the next phase, the Living Lab will align with local food suppliers and nutrition experts to source higher-quality, regionally produced foods—helping to reinforce a healthier, more appealing food environment on the campus.

By integrating these insights into the overall school-meal planning process, Korneuburg aims to reduce junk-food consumption among students, support local producers, and inspire other municipalities to adopt similarly holistic approaches to fostering healthier and more sustainable eating habits.

Guldborgsund Living Lab is working hard to set up free school meals for all children in the municipality, which so far do not exist in the context of rural Denmark. It is a long process that requires a lot of considerations not only in terms of finances but also in logistics, responsibilities, cooperation, and administration. In the meantime, the Living Lab set up another public procurement intervention to support the green transition of the municipal canteen where all public servants can have lunch. For a few months, food purchases were measured and weighed very carefully to calculate CO2 accounts for all product groups, including meat, fruit and vegetables, dairy products, groceries and everything else that is purchased to keep the canteen supplied. This guided the change in products purchased, opting for more seasonal and local products, which, alongside cooking trainings for the chefs, delivered a change towards healthier and more sustainable meals for the people who will work on setting up the school meals system for children.

In **Lodz**, the Living Lab is negotiating with the manager of the senior care centre to drive a change in the institution’s procurement procedure, to increase quality requirements for purchased meals. This would not only benefit the health and wellbeing of the seniors eating the food, but also the environmental impact of the meals they are served.



Guldborgsund Living Lab



IN-DEPTH CASE STUDIES





In-depth case studies

Lodz Living Lab



Lodz Living Lab

Background

Healthy eating is part of healthy aging. The LL in Lodz is helping to improve diets in a senior home to demonstrate how food procurement can be improved in this institutional setting, aiming at a higher - level policy change inspired by the LL's successes.

Intervention

The LL was focusing on awareness raising and education of seniors and staff. In addition to incorporating healthier, more nutritious and more sustainable meals in Senior Homes, the LL wanted to improve access to self-grown herbs and vegetables, to increase knowledge of healthy diets, and of the nutritional needs of people 60+, and to support a holistic approach to seniors' well-being through increasing physical activity, reducing social isolation and strengthening the bonds with other seniors in the senior home. To this end, the LL organized workshops, games, participatory discussions and mini-lectures, and provided audiovisual materials and the opportunity to taste new food. Regarding the improvement of meals at the senior home, the project modified the procurement procedure, based on in-depth interviews on food habits and meal satisfaction with seniors, and the manager of the facility delivering food to the senior home.

Impact measurement approach

The impact of this intervention was measured by a questionnaire measuring food knowledge, food habits, food attitudes and well-being administered to the senior home where the intervention took place as well as to two other senior homes as control group. The study included 76 participants spread across the Control and Intervention groups as follows: 32 from Control Group 1 (62.5% women, average age 79), 27 from Control Group 2 (59.3% women, average age 80), and 16 from the Living Lab in Tuszyn that was exposed to the intervention (LL, 68.8% women, average age 78).

Outcomes

Meals are now more diversified, and three quality requirements were added to the procurement announcement: a) at least one vegetarian lunch per week, 2) seasonal fruit added to lunch, c) salads prepared accordingly to special needs of elderly (chewing problems). Meal satisfaction is now higher than before, and the sense of food agency has increased. Residents of the Senior Home targeted by the Living Lab rated their meal quality much higher than those of the two other Senior Homes (Control Group 1 [CG1], Control Group 2 [CG2]). 75% rated it as very positive, compared to 9.4% in CG1 and 22.2% in CG2. Additionally, 75% of Living Lab participants felt that the quality of their meals had recently improved, compared to 28.1% in CG1 and 29.6% in CG2. Moreover, Living Lab participants were more open to trying new foods, with 81.3% expressing such interest, compared to 56.3% in CG1 and 74.1% in CG2. Importantly, Living Lab participants more frequently reported that they eat healthily (68.8%) compared to 34.4% in CG1 and 14.8% in CG2. Additionally, a larger portion of Living Lab participants (62.5%) believed they know how to eat healthily, compared to 43.8% in CG1 and 29.6% in CG2. The average self-assessed health score was also higher in the Living Lab group (8.06/10) compared to 5.56/10 in CG1 and 5.74/10 in CG2.

Living Lab participants also stood out in terms of their fresh vegetable consumption – 68.8% reported eating vegetables several times a day, compared to 40.6% in CG1 and 37% in CG2. The trend was not as pronounced with fresh fruit but the Living Lab participants still reported consuming more fruits, with 56.3% of Living Lab participants consuming them several times a day, compared to 21.9% in CG1 and 51.9% in CG2. Residents of the Senior Home targeted by the Living Lab also had a significantly higher knowledge of healthy products. On a list of 14 items (hummus, chickpeas, avocado, guacamole, mango, turmeric, coconut milk, sushi, oat milk, flaxseed oil, black cumin, ginger, stevia, erythritol), Living Lab participants recognized an average of 12 items, while participants from CG1 and CG2 recognized just 5 items. A similar trend was observed in actual consumption, with Living Lab participants consuming an average of 13 out of 14 items, compared to just three in CG2 and five in CG1. While these outcomes are promising, work will continue in Lodz to strengthen the evidence on impact – particularly by ensuring baseline measures are taken before implementing the intervention and also increasing the number of people who receive the holistic intervention seniors in Tuszyn received.

In-depth case studies

Tuscany Living Lab

*Tuscany Living Lab*

Background

To foster a healthy and conscious approach toward food and nutrition, the Tuscany LL was working in middle and high schools with about 100 students attending a special food course. The background of these activities is growing obesity and overweight in regional youth populations. Moreover, many students report unhealthy eating practices such as leaving out breakfast and eating little fruits and vegetables.

Intervention

A food course was designed and included several lessons in seven thematic modules ranging from theoretical to practical, interactive activities. To prepare it, a questionnaire to measure food literacy, adherence to the Mediterranean Diet as well as food beliefs, habits, attitudes and obstacles to change these was developed. Moreover, in-depth discussions with students about their food habits took place. A classroom pact was signed before the lessons to ensure shared understandings.

Module 1: “The nutrients that compose our food”

- The macro and micronutrients: what are they and what are they for?
- The five food groups

Module 2: “Quality, variety and quantity: the three musketeers of our diet. Part 1”

- Principles of the Mediterranean diet pyramid
- The importance of the 5 meals in daily lives

Module 3: “Quality, variety and quantity: the three musketeers of our diet. Part 2”

- Healthy eating in daily life: where to start?
- The effects of our food choices on daily life

Module 4: “Taste, Flavor and Sustainability”

- What does sustainable diet mean?
- Organic vs. conventional agriculture

Module 5: “Taste, Flavor and Sustainability: it’s the turn of fruit and vegetables”

- Benefits in consuming seasonal fruits and vegetables
- How many places for fruit in your food day!
- Taste and vegetables: a good match

Module 6: “Taste, Flavor and sustainability: it’s the turn of legumes”

- The world of legumes: an interesting discovery!
- Practical examples of how to increase legume consumption in daily life

Module 7: “In the jungle of food labels”

- Packaging and food labels
- Tips for making informed choices



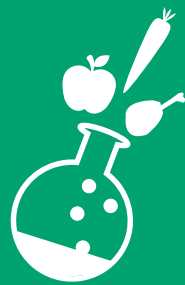
Impact measurement approach

A questionnaire measuring adherence to the Mediterranean diet, food habits, knowledge and attitudes was filled out by 110 students before the intervention, with a slight drop in respondents after the intervention.

Outcomes

Lessons promoted adherence to the Mediterranean Diet, increased knowledge about food and nutrition, and mitigated barriers to eating practices, and facilitated enabling factors. 30% of the students reported an increase in the level of adherence compared to the beginning of the intervention and a significant increase in the presence of students in the high adherence-category after the intervention (43%) as compared to the baseline (24.55%). The consumption of vegetables regularly once a day increased from 59% to 68%, as did eating legumes more than once a week, which increased from 54% to 73%.

RESOURCES



Useful toolkits to develop food interventions:

[FOOD2030 Toolkit for public engagement \(2024\)](#): A toolkit designed to involve stakeholders in Food Systems related activities proposing a broad range of tools, from guidelines that can help co-create new projects, to ideas and props that can be used during stakeholder engagement events.

[FOOD2030 Toolkit for education \(2024\)](#): A toolkit supporting formal, non-formal, and informal educators in exploring our complex food systems by covering a range of topics from planetary health to sustainable diets.

[Sustainable Food Places Toolkit](#): A toolkit offering strategies and processes on how to build partnerships and strategies in Food Systems.

[Foodshift Transition Toolkit \(2023\)](#): A toolkit showcasing different success stories of food system innovations that took place in different cities across Europe.

Additional resources on involving experts by experience:

[Telling stories and shaping solutions \(2020\)](#): A toolkit showing techniques, strategies and best practices to empower people who have lived experience of food poverty.

[Involving experts by experience \(2016\)](#): A guidebook explaining how to involve experts by experience in policy influencing activities and events

Additional resources on communication:

[Positive communication toolkit \(2021\)](#): A toolkit exploring how to implement positive and optimistic communication strategies around environmental and animal conservation topics

[Food citizenship: a communication toolkit \(2017\)](#): A toolkit for organization in the agrifood sector aiming to improve their communication towards citizens rather than consumers.



Additional resources on developing co-design events:

[The power of many \(2024\)](#): A guide for city officials and policymakers on how to design co-creation processes involving different stakeholders for environmental sustainability and social justice related projects.

[Getting participation right \(and wrong\) \(2023\)](#): blog article showcasing success and unsuccess stories of recruitment processes in co-design and group decision-making activities.

[Equitable events handbook \(2023\)](#): A handbook providing guidelines to organize non-discriminatory, equitable and inclusive events.

Storytelling as listening method

Storytelling

Storytelling is the practice of using narratives to convey experiences, ideas, and emotions in a compelling and meaningful way. It helps people connect with information on a personal level, making complex topics more relatable and memorable.

Co-creating interventions in the Food Health & Sustainability Sector

Storytelling can play a crucial role in co-designing more inclusive and effective interventions by connecting people to places, issues, and perspectives they may not have previously considered.



When co-creating a community garden, asking participants why they want it can reveal diverse needs—one may seek fresh food, another a green space for children. These insights might inspire a kids' gardening workshop. By integrating personal stories, organizations can design more impactful programs, communicate effectively, and ensure initiatives truly serve the community.

Retrieving useful data and insights

Storytelling can uncover insights that numbers and data often overlook, especially when participants share their food-related experiences. By comparing different stories—like those about food access, community gardens, or shared meals—hidden patterns and challenges emerge, providing a deeper understanding of the issues and opportunities within food systems and community well-being.



In school canteens, for example, it could be possible to better understand how to change menus to make them more nutritious, healthier and more sustainable by asking the kids to draw what they would like to eat as a healthy school meal. Then, the canteen nutritionist could compare the drawing to understand which elements recur more often and develop a menu starting from this exercise.

Inspiring behaviour change - within the intervention itself

Storytelling can be a powerful catalyst for behaviour change, especially when it is woven into the intervention itself. By sharing authentic, relatable, and emotionally compelling stories, people are more likely to connect with new ideas, reflect on their own behaviours, and feel motivated to change. Here's how storytelling can inspire behaviour change within an intervention:



A storytelling workshop can support the launch of a mobile fresh food market in a low-income community by inviting residents to share personal stories about their relationships with food. By reflecting on their experiences, people build connections, celebrate cultural food traditions, and feel more invested in the market. Their stories and recipes could be compiled into a community cookbook, reinforcing engagement and making healthy eating feel more accessible and relevant. This storytelling approach would drive participation and long-term success.

In these ways, storytelling doesn't just serve as a tool for communication—it becomes an active part of the intervention that inspires and sustains behaviour change.

Showcasing the impact

Stories effectively capture the real impact of food interventions by showcasing personal experiences and community perspectives. When individuals share their narratives—about food access, waste reduction, or improved eating spaces—patterns emerge, revealing both successes and challenges.



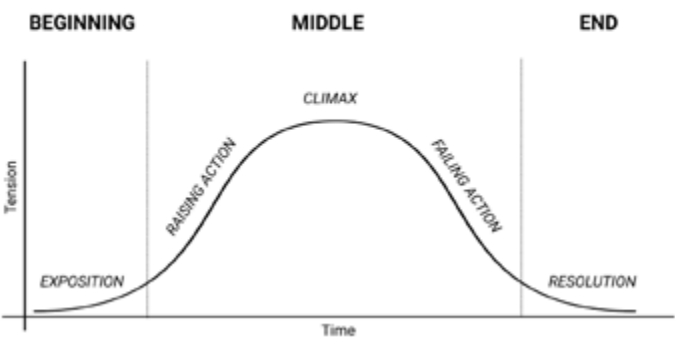
Storytelling can effectively showcase the impact of a public diner for vulnerable groups. Diners could share their experiences through recorded testimonials, written reflections, or artwork. One person might describe how the diner provided a warm meal when they had nowhere else to turn, while another could highlight how it helped them rebuild social connections and confidence. Staff and volunteers might share how their interactions with guests deepened their understanding of food insecurity and changed their views on poverty and food justice. These stories offer valuable insights into the diner's success and areas for improvement, helping to refine services to better serve the community.

Storytelling. How to do it?

Any story has a few elements that are always present:

- **Audience:** Who is the target for the story (E.g. citizens, policymakers, stakeholders, etc.)
- **Plot:** What happens? What is the arc of action? (E.g. The set up of a community garden, lecture on food waste in a school, etc.)
- **Setting:** Where and when is the story is set? (E.g. Nowadays, in a European municipality, etc.)
- **Point of view:** Who is telling the story? (E.g. A legislator, a farmer, a consumer, etc.)
- **Conflict:** What drives the story forward? What is the problem that the characters are facing? (E.g. Food insecurity, food waste, etc.)

Any story follows a particular scheme that evolves around conflict, as it shows in the graph below.



In FEAST, the Living Labs have been taught on how to use storytelling in their interventions during the first Building Capacity Session in April 2024, which focused on methodologies and mechanisms for co-creating interventions.

Community workshop to co-design solutions for better access to healthier and more sustainable food

The FEAST project, funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe program, aims to support transitions toward healthier and more sustainable diets. Working with living labs is one of the core elements of FEAST because they promote **co-creation** while leveraging **the participation of end-users (citizens, including vulnerable groups)** by gathering their real-world insights and local knowledge.

The **co-design workshop for Living Labs** is designed to actively engage communities and stakeholders in developing actionable solutions to address food-related challenges in their communities.

Workshop overview:

The workshop enables participants to collaboratively identify barriers to healthier and more sustainable eating and design solutions that cater to their specific community needs. It is based on participatory methods, emphasizing the co-creation of interventions that encourage better dietary behaviour.

Key components in three rounds:

- **Graph over time and dream:** Participants visualize how food-related challenges have evolved in their community and envision future scenarios.
- **Mapping barriers and qualities:** Using a cognitive mapping approach, participants collaboratively identify barriers to healthier and more sustainable food consumption and existing strengths within the community.
- **Solution pathways:** Groups brainstorm and develop potential interventions, make the connection with the bottlenecks and qualities and identify key stakeholders for implementation. .



Outcomes and benefits for Living Labs:

- **Identify challenges and opportunities:** Through structured exercises, participants map bottlenecks and qualities that might be supportive in solving the problem and focus on points for improvement.
- **Tailored approach:** In the workshop the participants create common understanding of the challenge the living lab is facing. The workshop can be adapted to focus on specific community needs, such as childrens' nutrition or local food environments.
- **Co-create solutions:** The workshop encourages participants to design practical solutions that are feasible and impactful for the community.
- **Actionable outcomes:** The solution(s) are connected with the bottlenecks and qualities. The solutions generated have a strong support base and are directly applicable, with a focus on interventions that can be implemented within the community. The workshop facilitates an holistic approach to food systems. The level of responsibility (micro, meso or macro) is clear.
- **Empower local people:** The workshop can involve only citizens, but can also include a mix of inhabitants (including vulnerable groups) and key stakeholders (e.g., policymakers, school officials) or solely stakeholders. It fosters cooperation among diverse groups, ensuring that all voices are heard.

How to get involved:

Living Labs interested in running a co-design workshop can use this structured process to foster healthier and more, sustainable eating within their communities. FEAST provides resources, including facilitator guidelines, templates, and tools, ensuring that the workshop is easy to implement.

For more information, see the [handbook](#) of the workshop and the [outcomes and insights from FEAST Living Labs report](#) based on workshops that were held during the FEAST program in different Living Labs across Europe.

Hack for Food, Hack for Good! methodology



Berlin Living Lab

Hack for Food Hack for Good! is a hackathon series designed and hosted by OpenDot from 2022 to 2025 in 5 European cities, with a co-design approach that harnesses collaborative innovation to address challenges in food and health.

Developed within the framework of OpenDot's co-design practices, this methodology emphasizes inclusive, participatory design that brings together diverse stakeholders - from individuals with specific needs to healthcare professionals, designers, and researchers - to co-create solutions tailored to real-world challenges. Through an iterative process of ideation, prototyping, and testing, it ensures that innovations are practical, scalable, sustainable, and aligned with users' lived experiences.

The results were 6 prototypes that addressed different needs in each local context for different users and vulnerable groups, and institutions or professionals that work with and for vulnerable populations.

Co-design is at the heart of this methodology. In this process end-users and stakeholders actively contribute to the design and development of solutions, ensuring that the outcomes are tailored to real needs. **This participatory approach empowers individuals by valuing their lived experiences, fostering a sense of ownership, and improving the likelihood of long-term adoption and impact.**

Key principles

- **Inclusion** - Engaging all relevant stakeholders, especially those directly affected by the challenge, as end-users (vulnerable groups) and “experts of the need”.
- **Networking and Stakeholder Activation** - Identifying key actors in the ecosystem and facilitating their engagement through formal partnerships and shared objectives, including experts and researchers in each field of intervention.
- **Prototyping for Validation** - Using rapid prototyping to test ideas, processes, and products, ensuring feasibility before full implementation.
- **Iteration** - Testing solutions in real-world settings, refining them through continuous feedback.
- **Sustainability** - Ensuring that proposed solutions are practical and aligned with long-term goals.
- **Open Knowledge** - Open-source sharing of insights and solutions to foster wider adoption and adaptation.

Human-Centered Design and Co-design

A fundamental pillar of the “Hack for Food, Hack for Good!” methodology is **Human-Centered Design (HCD)**, which prioritizes **empathy, user engagement, and real-world applicability**. Unlike conventional top-down design approaches, HCD ensures that the end-users are actively involved throughout the development process, from identifying needs to refining solutions.

HCD is an **iterative design methodology** focused on understanding users’ experiences, challenges, and aspirations. It relies on research techniques to immerse in the users’ context to gather insights and define the problem space - such as **interviews, ethnographic observations, and co-creation workshops** to generate insights that guide solution development. HCD then goes beyond designing for users - **it designs with them**, ensuring solutions are functional but also impactful, feasible, meaningful, and sustainable in their specific contexts for specific needs.

Co-design is a subset of HCD and further extends this principle by promoting **direct collaboration between designers and users**. This participatory approach **not only enhances the relevance of solutions but also empowers individuals, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to the outcomes**. Co-design involves multi-stakeholder engagement, where diverse perspectives contribute to more inclusive and innovative solutions.

By integrating HCD and co-design, this methodology **bridges the gap between design expertise and lived experience**, leading to solutions that are more effective, adaptable, and widely accepted by the communities they serve.

The process - from Challenge to Solution, from Concept to Prototype: organization and implementation.

The methodology was structured in distinct phases (see the following page)

The “Hack for Food, Hack for Good!” initiative applies this methodology to food-related challenges, particularly focusing on inclusive actions, sustainable food systems, and nutritional education. The initiative leverages co-design to create tools, resources, and environments to support specific needs.

The “Hack for Food, Hack for Good!” hackathon series held between 2023 and 2024 for the Feast project generated 6 projects, including analog products and services (made thanks to digital manufacturing) and digital ones, in the form of functional and testable prototypes.

The end goal reached is the co-creation of personalized physical tools, specific methodologies, and interactive digital systems, to support health experts, caregivers, patients, and people in vulnerable conditions, envisioning a future of effective food and health innovation through co-design and prototyping.

For further details about the solutions, we refer to the sites of feast2030.eu and opendot.it



Berlin Living Lab



From Challenge to Solution, from Concept to Prototype: organization and implementation.

1. Set the collaboration with local partners

It is crucial to construct a network of local partners that will collaborate in the process at least 12 months before the date of the event

2. Understand the need

From the earliest stages, it is good to actively engage with users and stakeholders, explaining the process, the roles and the goals

3. Host citizen engagement sessions

Setting collaborations within the local context is important from the outset, both to prepare for participation in the whole process and to ensure that everyone's needs and interests are aligned.

4. Define a thematic and one or more challenges

This step is dedicated to setting the thematic boundaries of the project - in collaboration with all the stakeholders - to tackle the right challenge, interesting both for the public and the private sectors, the institutions and the communities involved

5. Design of the format of the hackathon event

Considering the participants and the city context, it is important to adapt timing and sessions based on the ideal audience, the theme, and the challenge.

6. Launch open calls and invitations

Launch an open call for participants, designing it based on the challenge and the possible and desirable output. The usual audience of this process can include a very different type of audience, ranging from young students, innovators, startups, researchers, consultants, or simply curious people.

7. Host a Co-Design Event - the Hackathon format

The format comes right from the computer-technology field: a short-time event where teams of people engage to compete with each other, to find solutions to one or more "challenges", with a view to innovation and improvement. It also allows people from different disciplines to be involved in a challenge, emphasizing a collaborative mode that must express maximum effectiveness to lead to a satisfactory solution.

8. Mentoring and Prototyping sessions

After each event, it is possible to include a mentoring or educational session from 3 months to 12 months (depending on the complexity of the project), to enable participants of the winning ideas to develop personal skills, develop design systems and brand-a-like solutions, empower their team and communities involved. This helps to design and realize physical and digital prototypes of the solutions, using a wide range of technologies and digital fabrication methods). The emphasis on translating ideas into tangible prototypes is a core strength of this methodology.

9. Test and refinement of the solution

This phase can start during the prototyping: in an iterative way, it is useful to test the solution, involving primarily end users and experts and local stakeholders, testing early-stage concepts, functionalities and features in real environments, incorporating feedback and improving designs through repeated sessions; in a second moment test also with end users from other contexts.

10. Implement the solution

After testing, it is possible to modify and correct the prototype, deploying a finalized solution.

11. Host online and onsite events

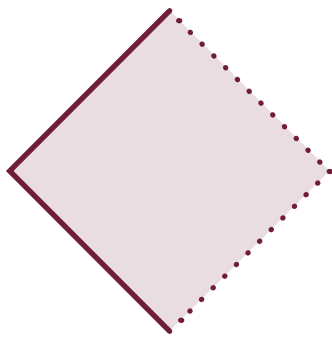
These actions enable to foster engagement and collaboration during the whole process, and facilitate the test, dissemination and scalability of the results.



Triggering creativity in participatory processes

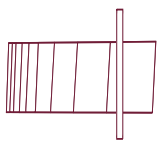
Turning ideas into tangible solutions requires a structured yet flexible approach that allows for both creativity and practicality. Creativity in participatory design is not just about generating ideas - it's about guiding innovation through structured phases of exploration and refinement. And an ideal design journey balances creative, first, and then practical thinking.

The creative process leverages various ideation techniques to refine initial thoughts into workable ideas. It's important to collect the ideas in a free and open way, engaging all the stakeholders involved, from designers to institutions to final users. Then, there will be time to select ideas, ensuring that the final ones are not only innovative but also feasible sustainable, and aligned with real-world needs.



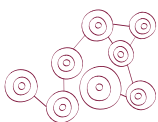
In the first phase, participants expand their thinking, exploring a wide range of possibilities through brainstorming, research, and collaborative ideation. This is the creative stage, where ideas flow freely, and unexpected connections emerge. There are a lot of techniques that help structure this exploration, pushing beyond conventional solutions, and expanding creative and lateral thinking.

To nominate a few:



Background Research

Before diving into ideation, gathering background information is crucial. Researching existing studies, case examples, and market trends helps teams understand the landscape of their challenge. This phase ensures that new ideas are informed, feasible, and built on a foundation of knowledge, often leading to unexpected insights and innovative connections.



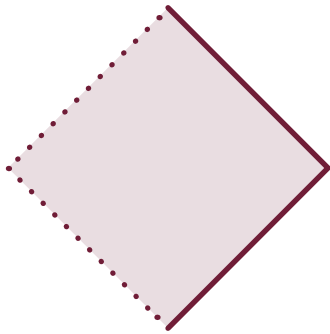
Mind Mapping

Mind mapping is a visual technique that encourages non-linear thinking. A core idea is placed at the center of a page, with related concepts branching outward. This method helps in structuring thoughts, connecting seemingly unrelated ideas, and uncovering potential opportunities that might not emerge in a traditional brainstorming session.



Crazy Eights

This rapid ideation exercise challenges participants to think quickly and expansively. A sheet of paper is divided into eight sections, and within eight minutes, participants sketch out eight different ideas. The goal is not perfection but rather volume-breaking out of habitual thought patterns and embracing new possibilities.



In the second phase, creativity shifts towards tangible and testable outputs. Here, ideas are refined, evaluated, and selected based on feasibility and impact. This phase transforms abstract concepts into concrete prototypes, ensuring that innovation remains both visionary and applicable.

By alternating between these open-ended explorations and focused refinements, participatory design ensures that creativity is not only encouraged but also channelled into meaningful, real-world solutions.

Place Standard Tool:

Food in My Area - the Food Lens

Location plays a significant role in shaping individual food choices. Factors such as accessibility, availability, and proximity, all influenced by place, impact how easily people can purchase healthy food. Additionally, local traditions and culture shape attitudes and intentions around food, influencing buying preferences. Beyond individual choices, food also serves a social and economic function within communities, fostering job opportunities and a sense of belonging. Therefore, when designing local initiatives to promote healthier and more sustainable food choices, it is essential to measure both how place affects food access and how food, in turn, contributes to the character of a place.

The Place Standard Tool (PST) Food Lens is a tailored adaptation of the PST methodology, originally developed by Public Health Scotland, to facilitate community discussions about local food environments. Designed for use by both communities and professionals, this interactive and group-based methodology helps assess food accessibility in specific areas, whether neighbourhoods, towns, or parts of cities, across urban, rural, and island settings. By providing participants with handouts covering 13 themes, the tool encourages users to evaluate the food environment within a place and its suitability for accessing healthy food for all. Each theme includes a guiding question to steer discussions, followed by a 7-point rating scale to evaluate the place. Participants are also asked to identify strengths and suggest potential improvements for the area. Additionally, each theme provides optional, non-binding questions to further support reflection and discussion.

The 13 themes to reflect about the local food place:

- 1. Moving Around:** How easy is it to move around my area to get food?
- 2. Public Transport:** What is the public transport like in my area to get to the supermarket, eat out or get to the local food producers?
- 3. Traffic and Parking:** How does the traffic and parking in the area impact on the food you buy?
- 4. Streets and Spaces:** Does food play a role in the design of our buildings, streets or spaces?
- 5. Play and Recreation/ Natural Spaces:** What is the food like in the spaces we play and socialize in?
- 6. Facilities and Services:** How well do facilities and services in my area provide and promote good food?
- 7. Work and Local Economy:** What opportunities are there in the area to work, volunteer or train in food?



8. Housing and Community: Do the homes in the area meet everyone's needs around food and do we have a strong community spirit around food?

9. Social Interaction: how good are the opportunities to enjoy good food when I'm meeting and spending time with others in my area?

10. Identity and Belonging: To what extent does this area have a positive identity around food?

11. Feeling Safe: How do I feel about buying and preparing food safely?

12. Care and Maintenance: Is your neighbourhood clean and tidy?

13. Influence and Control: Do people listen to what you say and include you in decision making?

Benefits and opportunities for Living Labs

The PST-Food Lens is a resource-efficient interactive and group-based methodology for Living Labs to identify the opportunities to improve the local food environment and identify priority areas within which to develop actions, which could take the form of a "local place plan". Furthermore, the PST-Food Lens can be a useful monitoring tool to assess differences in the perception of place before, during and after the implementation of local actions. This facilitates the measurement of progress and identification of corrective measures that need to be put in place to adjust the direction of the intervention to achieve desired outcomes.

As part of FEAST, the Cork Living Lab hosted a series of five workshops in the Sláintecare Healthy Communities – North Cork City, bringing together community organization representatives and local residents to explore food in their area. The Healthy Cities Coordinator (and member of the Cork Food Policy Council) guided the consultation process, the results of which will contribute to the workplan of the recently appointed local Community Food and Nutrition Worker. The insights gathered will support the food mapping requirement in the area, build local relationships as well as contributing to shaping the Cork Food Policy Council's food strategy for Cork City and its surrounding areas.

GLOSSARY





Glossary

- ^{DEF} **Living lab:** Living Labs: Practice-driven organisations that facilitate and foster open, collaborative innovation and real-life environments or arenas where both open innovation and user innovation processes can be studied and subject to experiments and where new solutions are developed ([SCAR, 2023](#)).
- ^{DEF} **Vulnerable groups** Dependent on the context these groups may include children, pregnant or lactating women, indigenous communities, elderly population, farmers, people living in remote areas and people with lower socio-economic status based on education levels and/or income. Conceptually, vulnerable groups can be characterized as those with high risk and low resilience (Exner, et al., 2016).
- ^{DEF} **Food environment** The physical, economic, political and socio-cultural context in which consumers engage with the food system to make their decisions about acquiring, preparing and consuming food (HLPE, 2017).

For more definitions see: <https://feast2030.eu/glossary>

www.feast2030.eu



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