

Onboarding Session Summary

Date: 9 October 2025

Time: 11:00–12:30 CET (online)

1. Session overview

The onboarding session marked the launch of the *From Policy to Table: building capacity for sustainable food systems* training programme, jointly organised by **Eurocities Academy** and the **City of Parma**.

The session was introduced and moderated by Guillem Ramírez Chico, Coordinator of the Eurocities Academy, with welcoming remarks from Carlotta Beghi, Food Policy Officer at the Municipality of Parma. The meeting brought together city representatives from across Europe, combining both political and technical profiles.

Objectives:

The session aimed to:

- Welcome participants and introduce the purpose and structure of the training.
- Present the partnership between Eurocities and the City of Parma.
- Facilitate introductions among participating cities.
- Outline expectations, main learning components, and the *Action Plan* tool.
- Clarify next steps before the second online session and the in-person training in Parma.

Agenda structure:

1. Welcome and introduction by Eurocities and the City of Parma.
2. Participant introductions and city presentations.
3. Overview of the training programme.
4. Introduction to the Action Plan.
5. Discussion of next steps and practical information.

2. Programme presentation

The *From Policy to Table* programme is a joint initiative by Eurocities Academy and the City of Parma, developed to strengthen municipal capacity for designing and implementing sustainable food policies. It is built around three learning components: **expert knowledge**, **peer learning**, and **applied learning**.

Participants were reminded that the training responds to increasing demand among cities for integrated food strategies linking **climate action**, **social inclusion**, and **economic development**. The programme is based on methodologies from the Eurocities Academy, emphasising participant-centred and practice-oriented learning, and with the expertise from city officials and experts from the University of Parma.

Structure and timeline:

- **Session 1 – Onboarding (9 October):** introductions and orientation.
- **Session 2 – Thematic introduction (30 October):** overview of urban food policy trends within the Eurocities Working Group Food, and preparations for Parma.
- **In-person training (13–14 November, Parma):** two full days combining expert presentations, city case studies, thematic sessions, and group work on the Action Plans.
- **Optional follow-up (post-training):** online session to review and finalise Action Plans.

The in-person training in Parma will explore five main thematic blocks:

1. Urban food policy governance and systems.
2. Food justice and food insecurity.
3. Sustainability and resilience.
4. Gastronomy, tourism and economic development
5. Funding and implementation.

Methodology:

The Eurocities Academy's learning approach combines expert input with structured peer exchange. Participants will learn from experienced cities and university experts, while also contributing their own cases. The format is interactive and collaborative, ensuring that each session feeds directly into participants' Action Plans and that all knowledge acquired is translated into practical steps applicable to their municipal contexts.

3. Action Plan component

The **Action Plan** is the central applied tool of the programme. As outlined by Eurocities, it is not a formal city policy but a **learning document** allowing each participant to test strategies, structure ideas, and connect the training's insights to their city's reality.

Participants are expected to complete the first sections (city context, vision, challenges, and preliminary objectives) **before the Parma training**. During the in-person sessions, they will work in small groups to refine these plans through peer feedback and facilitator support, focusing on **actions, partners, and timelines**.

The Action Plan will guide reflection throughout the programme, ensuring that learning outcomes are tangible and city-specific. A final optional online session after Parma may be organised to present and review the completed Action Plans.

4. City introductions and expectations

Each city representative presented their local food context, ongoing initiatives, and expectations from the training. The group included both municipalities with consolidated policies (e.g. Bologna, Dortmund) and others at the initial stages of policy design (e.g. Campobasso, Alba).

Common themes included the need to improve cross-departmental coordination, integrate social and environmental dimensions, strengthen governance structures, reduce food waste, and address inequalities in food access. Many cities highlighted the importance of public procurement, school canteens, and local food systems as entry points for change.

City	Current practices / initiatives	Challenges and expectations
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Guimarães (Portugal)	The municipality has developed an integrated food policy structured around four priorities: sustainable agriculture, healthy diets, food waste reduction, and circular economy. Key initiatives include mapping local producers to shorten supply chains, maintaining a 10-acre community garden, running volunteer programmes to redistribute surplus food, and promoting sustainable practices through local campaigns.	Guimarães aims to strengthen its evidence base through integrated data collection and monitoring systems to inform future decisions and assess impact. The city expects to acquire new governance tools and strategic approaches to improve policy coordination and evaluation.
Alba (Italy)	As a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, Alba links food, agriculture, and tourism. Local actions include educational programmes in primary schools and numerous gastronomic events. Concerns include climate change effects on agriculture (wine, truffle), and gastronomical tourism.	The city aims to coordinate its diverse food-related activities into a more coherent framework that connects agriculture, education, and tourism while improving sustainability
Bucharest (Romania)	The city has initiated a local reflection on food systems, starting in District 6 with the creation of a living lab. Activities include stakeholder mapping, diagnosis of the local food system, and cooperation with the City of Bergamo on food governance models. A draft vision is integrated into the district's green strategy.	Building on this groundwork, the municipality and its partners aim to define clearer structures for governance, coordination, and funding of food-related actions. The training offers an opportunity to strengthen these dimensions and connect emerging initiatives to broader city strategies.
Dortmund (Germany)	Dortmund is developing an integrated approach to sustainable food systems through its Environment Department. Current work focuses on public catering and access to healthy food, particularly in schools and kindergartens, combining ecological and social criteria.	The city is exploring how to balance environmental goals with social inclusion and affordability in food provision. It is also working on tools to monitor food poverty and on ways to integrate this evidence into its broader food strategy.
Bologna (Italy)	The municipality has adopted a Metropolitan Food Policy Charter and established a local Food Democracy Table bringing together institutions, associations, and citizens. Ongoing work includes urban gardens, food education in schools, and support to local producers.	Bologna plans to use the training to exchange experiences on public procurement models, co-design processes, and citizen participation mechanisms that can further strengthen its existing food policy framework.
Rimini (Italy)	The city implements food-related measures across several departments, including education, social services, and	Rimini aims to improve coordination among departments and connect municipal practice with academic

	<p>economic activities. Initiatives address school meals, food waste reduction, and social solidarity networks, and the local university campus conducts research on healthy diets and well-being.</p>	<p>expertise. It also seeks to establish a structured framework linking food, health, and social inclusion.</p>
Mannheim (Germany)	<p>Within its Local Green Deal framework, Mannheim integrates food into its climate and sustainability agenda. Measures address organic consumption, short supply chains, food waste reduction, and support for urban gardening and circular economy initiatives.</p>	<p>The city aims to consolidate these dispersed efforts into a strategic roadmap that connects departments and clarifies responsibilities. The training is seen as an opportunity to exchange approaches for inter-departmental coordination and stakeholder engagement.</p>
Stavanger (Norway)	<p>Located in one of Norway's main food-producing regions, Stavanger combines agricultural and aquaculture production with urban development. Food has become part of the city's economic strategy following a recent municipal merger.</p>	<p>The administration is working to integrate food considerations into spatial and economic planning and to improve coordination among municipal departments and regional actors. The training is expected to support this process and provide models for cross-sectoral governance.</p>
Campobasso (Italy)	<p>The city has identified initial priorities focused on access to healthy and sustainable food and on strengthening short supply chains. Pilot activities include actions in school canteens and municipal markets.</p>	<p>Campobasso aims to formalise these initiatives into a structured policy, mobilising resources and engaging local stakeholders such as farmers, schools, and catering companies. The training will help clarify internal processes and participatory mechanisms.</p>
Turku (Finland)	<p>The municipality is developing "Food First", a concept that links food aid with digital booking tools and personalised social support. Prototyping has combined surplus food redistribution with municipal guidance services.</p>	<p>The city seeks to refine this model and explore how to integrate food assistance within broader social and sustainability policies. The training will provide external perspectives on governance, design, and implementation.</p>
Parma (Italy)	<p>As a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, Parma is consolidating its initiatives on food, culture, and sustainability under a unified local food policy. The municipality works closely with the University of Parma and local stakeholders.</p>	<p>The city intends to use the training to structure and systematise its food policy, learning from other municipalities' experiences on governance, integration across departments, and stakeholder participation.</p>

5. Next steps

- **Second online session:** Thursday, **30 October 2025**, 11:00–12:30 CET.

This session will present an overview of Eurocities' work on food policy, introduce key thematic trends, and provide final logistical details for the Parma workshop.

- **Before the Parma training (13–14 November 2025):**

- Participants to submit a **first draft of their Action Plan** (city vision, goals, and main challenges).
- Share relevant project presentations or materials with Eurocities for inclusion in the shared learning space.
- Finalise travel arrangements to Parma (suggested routes via Bologna or Milan).