



# UGAIN

Urban **G**Ardens for the social  
**I**Ntegration of migrants

## **Garden:**

**Huertas Acoge. Project of community gardens for coexistence, learning in ecological agriculture and self-sufficiency.**



## Internet links

- ✓ [www.huertasacoge.wordpress.com](http://www.huertasacoge.wordpress.com)
- ✓ [www.asturiasacoge.org](http://www.asturiasacoge.org)

## 1. Introduction

Asturias Acoge Association began its activity in 1994 with the mission of welcoming migrant people who came to Asturias from other countries and cultures, to improve their lives and their integration into Spanish society. Since 2013, the “Huerta Acoge Project” has been developed for the creation of a garden oriented towards integration, training and growing food, and mainly aimed at the migrants and people at risk of social exclusion.



*“We would like to have more land to be able to take on more migrants joining the project and create a bank of gardens available for the users who finish in the project and want to continue with the development of a garden.”*

**Organiser quote**

*“For people who did not have a job and liked to work with the land it was very good to learn about traditional agriculture in Asturias. Also, the possibility of learning how to make compost since in Ukraine we used cow dung”*

**Migrant gardener quote**

## 2. Garden data



**Location - coordinates:** Fundación Docente de Mineros Asturianos (Fundoma)  
C/Ernesto Winter nº 2 | 33.012 Oviedo.

**Garden description:** Huertas Acoge Project takes place in a greenhouse and classroom property of Fundoma Foundation through a collaboration agreement with Asturias Acoge.

During 2018, 13 migrants comprised of 4 women and 9 men from Morocco, Senegal, Ecuador and Syria participated in the project.

The greenhouse is approximately 250 m<sup>2</sup> and outside by the side of the greenhouse there is also a plot about 100 m<sup>2</sup>. The greenhouse and the outdoor land are divided into 8 individual plots.

Each plot is assigned to at least one beneficiary of the project for the cultivation of vegetables under organic principals. During the project, in addition to the individual work of each gardener, activities of cooperative work, training and intercultural activities are developed, in which each gardener is committed to participate in order to guarantee the maintenance of the garden and achievement of the objectives of the project.

The garden is rented by Asturias Acoge from Fundoma by a peppercorn rent of 1 € / Month assuming the costs of supplies (water and electricity). The contract is renewed annually. The initial costs were approximately 250 €: Fundoma provided the installed greenhouse and some basic tools.

The greatest effort was in cleaning, fertilizing and preparing the land that had been abandoned for several years.

Annually the expenses are approximately 700 € for rent and supplies (water and electricity), 200€ for materials (tools, some seeds and seedlings), 300 € for salary and social security (person hired by the association for coordination of activities). Sometimes this cost increases because new projects linked to Huertas Acoge are developed, for example in 2018 the project was developed: a garden workshop for schoolchildren through an agreement with the City of Oviedo endowed with 3000 € and a project which is called Medrando, aimed at minors of migrant families who benefit from the activities of the association with another 3000 €.

These costs are supported by the partner's contributions, donations and grants (Oviedo City Council and Social Services and Rights Council). The garden has a greenhouse with plots, a classroom for the development of workshops and meetings, a changing room and toilets.

The main production of the garden is seasonal vegetables and aromatic plants.

### 3. Social integration and empowerment of migrants



**Data and considerations:** All the 30 migrants who have been beneficiaries of the project recognise the therapeutic use of the urban vegetable garden.

During 2018 the Project involved 19 people, of whom 6 were volunteers (4 women and 9 men) and 13 migrants, 4 women and 9 men.

This garden was created with a double purpose: on the one hand to serve as a meeting point and as a possible dynamic resource when it comes to increasing employability in the future.

As a meeting point, we find the need for users to find a place to feel comfortable and integrated into the Asturian society.

The team formed by volunteers of the NGO offers the necessary caring and emotional component to these people.

Thanks to Asturias Acoge, this garden has become the main meeting point of the migrant people in Oviedo, becoming a place free of prejudice, in which each person can express themselves freely and feel safe with the help of volunteers who help in all the tasks that the garden requires.

In addition, it is important to note the social and emotional side of the garden, there is also an approach aimed at professional training of migrants in organic farming, which will benefit them when they enter the workplace.

It is vital to highlight the educational work that this garden has on all visitors: on the one hand it serves as an example to adults of how can they become good business people thanks to the effort and work in agriculture. In working with school children, they managed to teach how vegetables are grown in a healthy and respectful way to protect the environment. Both functions, educational and awareness raising, are united in this urban garden.

**Chances/Opportunities:** The project highlights the opportunity to have a space where migrants can spend their time, learn and practice what they have learned, and resume their experience in agriculture, since most of them have had family gardens in their countries. At least 6 people have acquired, after participating in the garden, a plot of land to continue with the cultivation of vegetables for family consumption. They also highlight the space of coexistence with other beneficiaries of the project from other countries as well as the relationships that are established with the volunteering of the project, sharing knowledge and experiences on agriculture from different countries and cultures and everything that involves the process of communication and interaction between people with different cultural identities. In the same way, they have always valued collaborations with other people and entities through visits to vegetable gardens and projects related to organic farming. For some people it has made it easier to acquire basic training in organic farming that can improve their options for accessing a job linked to agriculture. At least 4 people have been working as temporary workers in the picking of soft fruits.

**Threats/Challenges:** Teamwork and collaborative work have been a challenge probably due to cultural and language differences as well as the different degree of interest and motivation for the project. To mitigate this challenge, the beneficiaries sign a commitment to participate in the activities that take place in the garden. In recent months, monthly meetings have begun to evaluate the degree of participation of each person among other issues. This year we have begun to use a new methodology in the meetings, and the beneficiaries are the ones who call the meetings, lead them and make decisions regarding the project.

There is a threat to the project as the agreement with Fundoma has not yet been finalised. It would be difficult to locate another location on well-connected urban land which people can walk to. Given the profile of the beneficiaries of the project and the limited possibilities of financing the project to cover transfer costs, it is necessary that the land is accessible on foot or bicycle in the end.

**General consideration:** It is very important the location of the garden in the urban area of the municipality of Oviedo, allow the beneficiaries to walk in few minutes from the centre town. The impact that the project and the activities developed in it have meant for the beneficiaries, highlights the importance for the gardeners to participate in the cultivation of a plot as an occupational therapy and a meeting place that facilitates the consolidation of a network of contacts and friendships in the absence of one's family and social network. For each of them it is an opportunity to be able to go to a space and develop certain manual and social skills with local people and from other countries. In the same way, through the visits they are allowed to value their knowledge and experience in the garden as well as in other areas in which they have worked or have developed since during the visits. It is always about opening a space of trust to exchange opinions and personal experiences. In this case it is important to highlight the role of women in the garden, many of them without work experience but with many skills, especially in working with the community to grow and cook vegetables. Huertas Acoge revalues their skills and abilities improving their autonomy and self-esteem thus facilitating their inclusion and employability.



**Knowledge/attitudes/skills/training:** For the development of the initiative it is important to have a coordinated and multidisciplinary team with training and experience in organic farming and project management. People with skills to create networks with other organisations who have similar aims and projects with which they can collaborate, as well as people with initiative, autonomy and communication capacity capable of coordinating, leading and adapting the project to the circumstances of each year. It is important to have some basic training in organic farming as well as the resources and a network of

suitable contacts for the exchange of knowledge and experiences that can enrich the project.

It is also essential to have training in project management as well as the use of tools to disseminate it including the use of social networks, communication with media ... etc).

All the volunteers of the association receive annual training related to issues related to immigration. Volunteers of the project also receive training in organic farming together with the beneficiaries of the project.

# Partners

Technical  
University  
of Munich



Technical University  
of Munich  
(Germany)  
[www.tum.de](http://www.tum.de)



anstiftung  
(Germany)  
[www.anstiftung.de](http://www.anstiftung.de)



On Projects Advising SL  
(Spain)  
[www.onprojects.es](http://www.onprojects.es)



Asociación Cantabria Acoge  
(Spain)  
[www.cantabriaacoge.com](http://www.cantabriaacoge.com)



Folkuniversitetet  
(Sweden)  
[www.folkuniversitetet.se](http://www.folkuniversitetet.se)



Social Farms & Gardens  
(UK)  
[www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk)



GärtnerInnen der Welt kooperieren

Gartenpolylog  
(Austria)  
[www.gartenpolylog.org](http://www.gartenpolylog.org)

## Social Media



/UGAIN.EU  
<https://www.facebook.com/UGAIN.EU/>



/UGAIN\_ERASMUS  
[https://twitter.com/UGAIN\\_ERASMUS](https://twitter.com/UGAIN_ERASMUS)

## Project Website

[www.ugain.online](http://www.ugain.online)



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