



Essen (Germany)

596,973 inhabitants



Raised awareness on systemic change

Nutrition, quality, taste, freshness, seasonality

Improved access to nutritious and affordable food

Food Strategy Networks to Drive Food System Change

What? To promote food education, e.g. education on food origins, production and supply chains. To foster public discussions through local network and social participation building stakeholder connections.

When? 2023 - ongoing

Who? All food system actors, including schools (administration), youth, kitchen staff, the environmental agency, procurement department, civil-society organisations, etc.

The challenge?

Major changes to school food procurement were not feasible in the short term due to existing administrative and political conditions. The first priority was therefore to build a shared understanding of school meal systems and responsibilities across the administration to lay the groundwork for change.

The solution!

The Food Strategy Network strengthens departmental cooperation and political support for sustainable food practices. By connecting committed stakeholders, the initiative builds continuous dialogue to gradually influence long-term procurement policy, requiring ambition, patience, and interdisciplinary collaboration to lay foundations for the future.

The results:

It is remarkable to see how much change can be driven through strong networks and committed people.

Since October 2023, Essen's Food Strategy Network has built immense momentum, bringing together over 50 organisations, associations, federations, administrative departments, and civil society groups.

- **Economic impact:** Connects diverse sectors to build a sustainable food system for the wider population, driving long-term economic change.
- **Social impact:** Fosters regular collaboration and a shared mission statement, uniting dedicated people to benefit future generations.
- **Environmental Impact:** Directs joint knowledge exchange and thematic priorities toward creating a draft Food Strategy for Essen by spring 2026.



Key Takeaways for Cities:

Communicate!

Communicate what you are doing (how and why) towards others within and outside your municipality – for better mutual understanding and transparency!

Be inclusive:

Invite the general public to join you and share their perspectives!

Implement structures for regular meetings with all people interested, while making sure these are moderated and guided by an assigned responsible person and supported by municipal structures.



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