

**Topic:**

Linking Food Systems and Evidence-Based Teaching Kitchen through a Gastronomic Landscape: An Example from Central Europe

**Sub-Theme:**

Cultural Heritage of the Central European Cuisine and its Impact on Planetary and Human Health

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1. Taste of Central Europe Initiative - launched by the Swiss Association for Cooperation on Food Education

**Affiliations:**

- Culinology: Research Chef Association
- NNEdPro Europe: Swiss Regional Network
- ChefChain Research Project
- The Slovak Academy of Sciences
- The Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Culture
- The Slovak Embassy in Bern, Switzerland

**Background**

Global dynamics of food systems and current consumption patterns in the Central European region (including German speaking and Balkan countries) affect meeting the sustainability targets and alignment of national nutritional guidelines and achievement of behavior change for better diets.

**Objectives**

Taste of Central Europe Initiative, therefore, combines and creates a complex model/blueprint studying food systems, landscape ecology and consumer behavior and re-exploring and democratizing traditional concepts of Transalpine and Central European cuisine by integrating the evidence-based Teaching Kitchen model to foster the development within gastronomy and community education.

**Methods**

The initiative commenced with an extensive background review, surveys and interviews between January 2022 - August 2024. These activities were structured into the following main sections: i) position of the Central European cuisine within the current global culinary map; ii) culinary, food and consumers trends and national dietary guidelines; iii) actions implemented by culinary and hospitality professionals; iv) the role of private sector in nutrition and public health; v)

engagement of communities and outcomes

### **Results**

Based on the experts' opinions and community perceptions, creativity and collaboration will be required in order to build a future in which planetary health diets are not only possible, but also mainstream. Second, local products were considered as quality products using traditional knowledge, but their socio-economic and health outcomes remain limited. Third, food education sessions should become more accessible. Moreover, time and educational limitations create barriers to implement sustainable and measurable tools by chefs. Finally, the general awareness about the Central European cuisine/diet needs to be increased.

### **Conclusion**

The recent research activities have provided a knowledge base to start rethinking how we manage our landscapes by integrating the Central European cuisine blueprint and have resulted in a launch of educational activities, knowledge exchange (e.g. by presenting the concept and new menu approach during the Culinary Olympics 2024 with more than 2 000 chefs) and public-private consulting opportunities through the launched collaboration initiative. Gastronomy is not just about fine dining; it has the potential to become an important tool to create deeper connections between people, health and their environments and re-explore the traditional knowledge and contribute to complex sustainable solutions and better local decision making.