

PRESS RELEASE

Food4CE consortium meeting in Budapest to plan next activities, including the setup of Innovation Hubs to facilitate the exchange of logistics knowledge and best practices among AFNs in Central Europe

Study visit to the Budapest Market Hall, virtuous example of sustainability and meeting point between local producers and end consumers

On 22nd and 23rd of May, Food4CE project partners met in Budapest for the **project review meeting** during which, in the presence of the Project Officer, they discussed the activities carried out over the last few months and those that will involve the consortium in the upcoming months. The activities in future will focus on setting-up the five local Innovation Hubs and the transnational Innovation Hub, and the development of the two innovative tools: Knowledge Transfer Platform and the Matchmaking Platform.

The project review meeting started with an analysis of the activities of WP1, which involved the **identification and classification of existing Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) in Central Europe**, as well as the **analysis of the characteristics and needs of the Short Food Supply Chain (SFSCs) of AFNs**. The main results of the analysis carried out by the project partners in the **five regions involved - Austria, Slovenia, Italy, Hungary and Poland** - through desk analysis and surveys, highlight the main characteristics of AFNs in each country, as well as the main challenges and opportunities. The main conclusions have been gathered on posters, which are available [here](#). The best practices and data from the analysis conducted will be used to optimise the logistical efficiency of AFNs through **the creation of two innovative tools: the Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP) and the Matchmaking Platform (MP)**.

The aim of both platforms is to **facilitate the transfer of knowledge and exchange of business practices between different actors and regions**, in order to further facilitate the creation of a unique mutual support network for AFNs in Central Europe.

In particular, the aim of the Knowledge platform is to effectively gather and disseminate information collected by the Food4CE project to Alternative Food Networks, logistics service providers, and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. intermediaries, chambers of commerce, etc.). The platform will thus encourage the **exchange of good logistics practices and knowledge** concerning logistics among stakeholders in the specific countries, but also in the whole Central European region, as it is an interconnected platform.

On the other hand, the Matchmaking platform will **facilitate new B2B logistics solutions and services**, thus facilitating direct connections between farmers and consumers, between farmers and specialised logistics providers, and between AFNs and large-scale consumers.

Beta version of both platforms will be finalised in the upcoming months and made available in the autumn, when the Innovation Hubs will start. Organised as Living labs, the IHs will enable active knowledge transfer between researchers, business experts, food producers, logistics operators and policy makers to advance the creation of new and developed SFSCs solutions across Europe and beyond.

The pilot activity will therefore focus on collecting knowledge, experience and good practices in the field of logistics operations for AFNs, in order to develop a useful tool for creating a repository of appropriate solutions and concepts for small-scale alternative food producers and logistics operators. The development of Food4CE methodologies, learning actions, capacity building and pilot actions will be based on a joint transnational dialogue integrating partners' needs, ideas, priorities and actions. Focus groups and semi-direct face-to-face or online interviews with network managers, producers and retail shop representatives will be organised to identify key logistics challenges and result in innovative approaches for SFSCs and logistics solutions. Local innovation hubs will share their knowledge and needs with other innovation hubs (in participating countries), thus creating a unique transnational support network for Short food supply chains in the EU.

Local Innovation Hubs will be established in the five regions involved in the project. The ultimate goal is to ensure that the collaboration between parties, established during the project, will continue even beyond the project lifetime.

The Budapest meeting was also an opportunity for the project partners to take a closer look at a virtuous example of sustainability and a meeting point for local producers and consumers through a **study visit at the historic Budapest Market Hall**.

The Budapest Market Hall Ltd., a 100% owned company of the Municipality of Budapest, is **the most important market in the city and in Hungary, where local products of all kinds arrive to be processed and sold to the public**. The study visit was a good opportunity to take a closer look at how efficient and effective logistics management can foster the relationship between local AFNs and end consumers, who can thus enjoy fresh and sustainable products.

The next meeting of the Food4CE consortium will be held in Vienna on 26 and 27 September to analyse the state of the art of activities and define the next steps.

The Food4CE project in a nutshell

Food4CE is a European project funded by the INTERREG Central Europe programme, aimed at supporting Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) in their efforts to create sustainable and resilient food supply system. AFNs are essential for promoting short food supply chains and reducing the carbon footprint of food distribution. However, they face challenges such as lack of knowledge on logistics collaboration, digitalisation and distribution/delivery system, which are exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Food4CE seek to address these challenges by establishing 5 local and 1 Transnational Innovation Hub (IH), bringing together actors from different sectors including researchers, business experts, food producers, logistic and transport operators, and policy makers. These hubs will focus on advancing AFNs logistics efficiency through the development of innovative tools and solutions.