

Food4CE



Strengthening Innovation Capacities Among Central European Alternative Food Networks

THE NEED FOR INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

Over the past few months, the Food4CE project has achieved significant progress in supporting Central European Alternative Food Networks (AFNs). The efforts have focused on sharing **efficient logistics practices** to promote short food supply chains, **reduce the environmental impact** of food distribution, and **connect producers directly with consumers**.

To understand the current state and needs of AFNs in Central Europe, **nearly 400 AFNs were identified and analysed** across five regions: **Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Hungary, and Italy**. The results of these analyses were presented in **national posters**, highlighting the unique characteristics of AFNs in each country. These posters detailed the locations, common forms, complexity levels, transport methods, storage and distribution techniques, challenges faced, and logistics solutions already implemented or needed to enhance business efficiency.



The Food4CE consortium has begun identifying **logistics solutions best practices** already in place within Central European AFNs, categorizing them into **advanced logistics, sustainability, transparency, local focus, and digitalization**. These first results were showcased in five national posters, and a transnational poster, which highlighted common challenges and opportunities across the regions.

The research revealed various challenges for SFSC in Central Europe, including managing cold

storage, navigating transportation complexities, and integrating advanced IT tools. Despite the difficulties in maintaining effective **cold storage** across regions, significant opportunities exist to enhance these networks, such as enhanced **collaboration** through direct retail, food cooperatives, and producer-consumer partnerships, which can **improve efficiency and sustainability**. Building strong customer relationships through personal interactions and community engagement, while leveraging partnerships with local farmers, retailers, and IT platforms, can further strengthen SFSCs and create a more resilient food supply system.



The project is now entering into an exciting phase of the project with the upcoming launch of **five National Innovation Hubs** and the **Transnational Innovation Hub**. These hubs will facilitate the **exchange of logistics knowledge and best practices** among all relevant stakeholders. Additionally, the Knowledge Transfer Platform and the Matchmaking Platform will be introduced, designed to create a unique mutual support network for Central European AFNs, both of which are featured in this newsletter.

Over the past six months, the project has focused on laying the groundwork for AFNs to help create a more sustainable and resilient food supply system. With the new tools almost ready for testing, we're excited to see the positive impact they're likely to have. Read on to learn how these innovations could change the future of food logistics in Central Europe.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PLATFORM

The Food4CE Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP) will be a **user-friendly online tool** designed to transform and support Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) in Central Europe. The primary purpose of the KTP is to **facilitate knowledge exchange** and **share best practices**, enabling AFNs to overcome logistical challenges and improve the efficiency of local food supply chains. By centralizing valuable information and resources, the platform helps AFNs streamline their operations and adopt shared solutions. This, in turn, leads to more sustainable and resilient food networks, benefiting both producers and consumers across Central Europe.

By offering practical insights into innovative business models, logistics solutions, digitalization, delivery optimization, and environmentally friendly transport, the KTP will provide invaluable resources to AFNs and other relevant stakeholders. The comprehensive wiki, interactive quizzes, and learning courses will be designed to make acquiring this knowledge straightforward and engaging.

The Knowledge Transfer Platform is essential for advancing AFNs' logistics in Central Europe, ultimately building a strong, supportive network that benefits AFNs across the region.

FEATURES

Knowledge exchange on short supply logistics solutions and business models to target audience.

Best practice display of AFNs to facilitate collaboration and/or adoption.

Generating and sharing of new knowledge for short food supply chains (open access).

Interactive user engagement, e.g. through short quizzes, learning courses, certifications, etc. to foster collaboration and active participation.



The platform will feature an interactive map that allows users to explore identified AFNs across Central Europe. By navigating this map, one can access detailed descriptions of their best practices, gain insights into innovative strategies and methods. Additionally, users can learn about the most effective logistics solutions these networks have implemented, providing valuable knowledge to enhance its own logistical operations and sustainability efforts. The KTP ensures that users can easily find and apply proven solutions tailored to their needs.

The showcased best practice logistics solutions will be categorized in five sections:



Digitalization



Transparency



Local Focus






Advanced Logistics

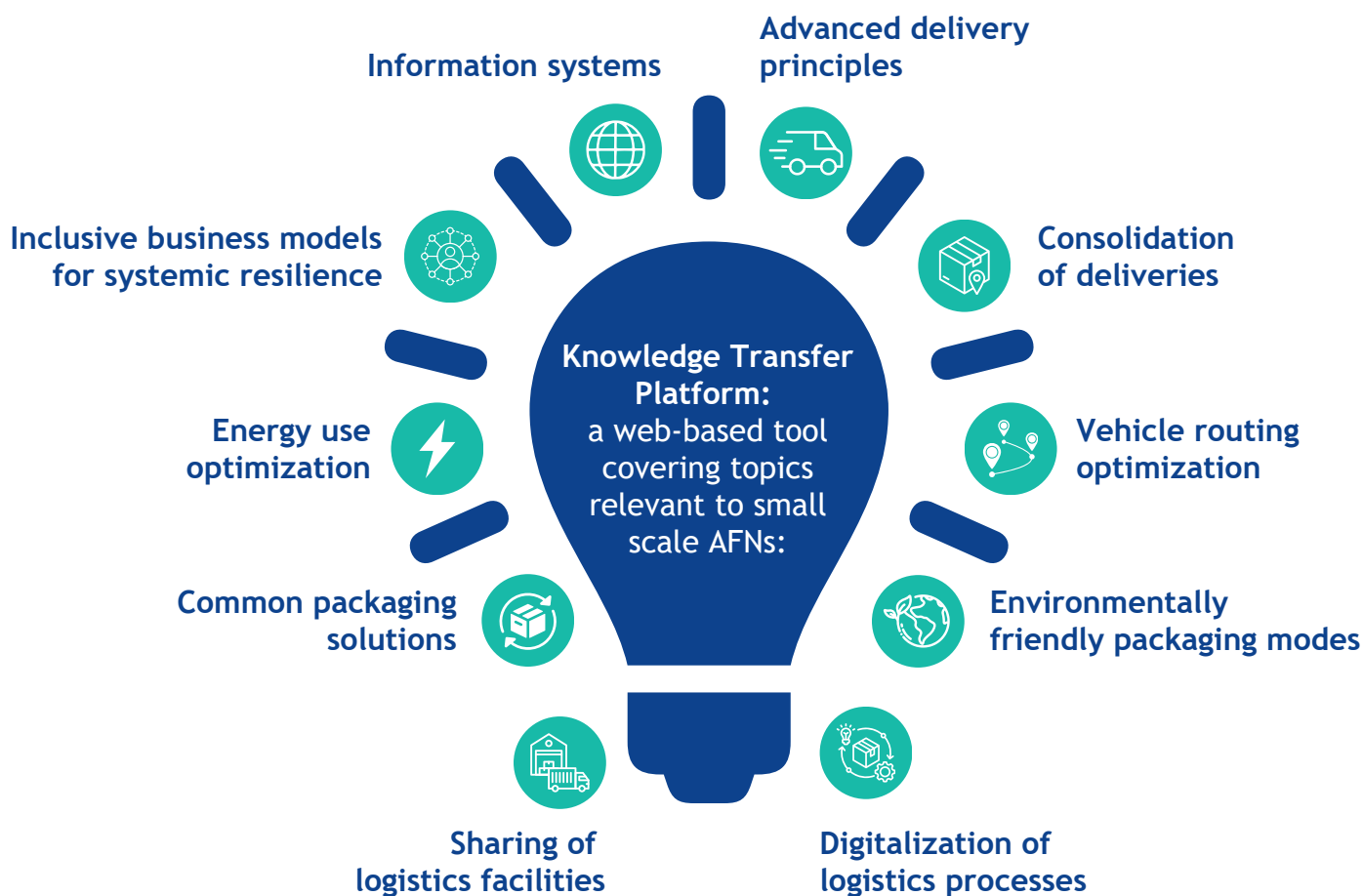


Sustainability

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PLATFORM

KEY BENEFITS:

-  **Enhanced knowledge sharing:** The platform facilitates the transfer of logistics knowledge and best practices among AFNs, researchers, business experts, and policymakers, fostering a collaborative environment.
-  **Improved logistics efficiency:** KTP offers tailored logistics solutions to meet the specific needs of AFNs, enhancing their operational efficiency and competitiveness in the market.
-  **Support for local food producers:** By providing access to advanced logistics knowledge and practical solutions, the platform directly supports local food producers and AFNs, empowering them to thrive.
-  **Sustainability and resilience:** The platform promotes sustainable practices and business models, contributing to the resilience and long-term viability of local food systems.
-  **Transnational collaboration:** KTP encourages transnational collaboration, enabling the exchange of ideas and the co-creation of innovative solutions across Central Europe.



The official launch of the Knowledge Transfer Platform (beta) is scheduled for October 2024.

MATCHMAKING PLATFORM

The Matchmaking Platform will be a **web-based tool** designed to connect various stakeholders, and aims to foster collaboration and development of new solutions. The platform will serve as a virtual bridge, seamlessly linking diverse players in the alternative food sector to facilitate cutting-edge B2B logistics solutions and services.

The platform will play a crucial role in **connecting different stakeholders** (farmers, consumers, logistics providers and online marketplaces involved in the alternative food sector) with the resources and expertise needed to **optimise logistics needs, improve efficiency, promote collaboration, create new partnerships and develop new or improved logistics services.**

By fostering new partnerships and developing advanced logistics services, the MP aims to significantly enhance the overall functionality and effectiveness of the supply chain.

The platform will therefore serve as a **dynamic hub** that connects, supports, and empowers key players in the alternative food market. By facilitating direct connections, optimizing logistics, and leveraging online marketplaces, the platform fosters a thriving ecosystem.

Through this innovative platform, farmers, consumers, and the broader food industry will be able to **collaborate more effectively**, and drive towards a more sustainable and equitable food system.

The Matchmaking Platform will not only enhance operational efficiency but also nurture a community dedicated to advancing sustainable practices and inclusive business models, ultimately contributing to the resilience and growth of the alternative food network.



Meeting and event space will provide details on networking opportunities, conferences, and seminars, enabling users to stay engaged, share knowledge, and drive the sector forward.

FEATURES

Meet your match will provide options to connect with potential stakeholders across the alternative food sector, aiming to foster innovative partnerships and build a strong network.

Bulletin board will provide access to new business opportunities within the alternative food industry either being investment opportunities, potential collaborations, or helping businesses grow and innovate.

Designed as a web-based "marketplace" tool, the Matchmaking Platform will be meticulously crafted to foster innovative partnerships, enhance logistics services, and promote sustainable practices.

By achieving these goals, **the Matchmaking Platform (MP) will play an important role in transforming the alternative food sector, making it more efficient, sustainable, and equitable.**

MATCHMAKING PLATFORM

KEY BENEFITS:



Enhanced collaboration: By connecting diverse stakeholders, the platform fosters innovative partnerships, enabling farmers, consumers, logistics providers, and online marketplaces to collaborate effectively and share expertise.



Optimisation of operations: The platform provides tailored logistics solutions and streamlined processes, helping users optimize their operations and improve overall efficiency.



Sustainable practices: The Matchmaking Platform promotes the adoption of sustainable and inclusive business models. By facilitating the exchange of innovative ideas and practices, it supports the development of environmentally friendly and socially responsible food systems.



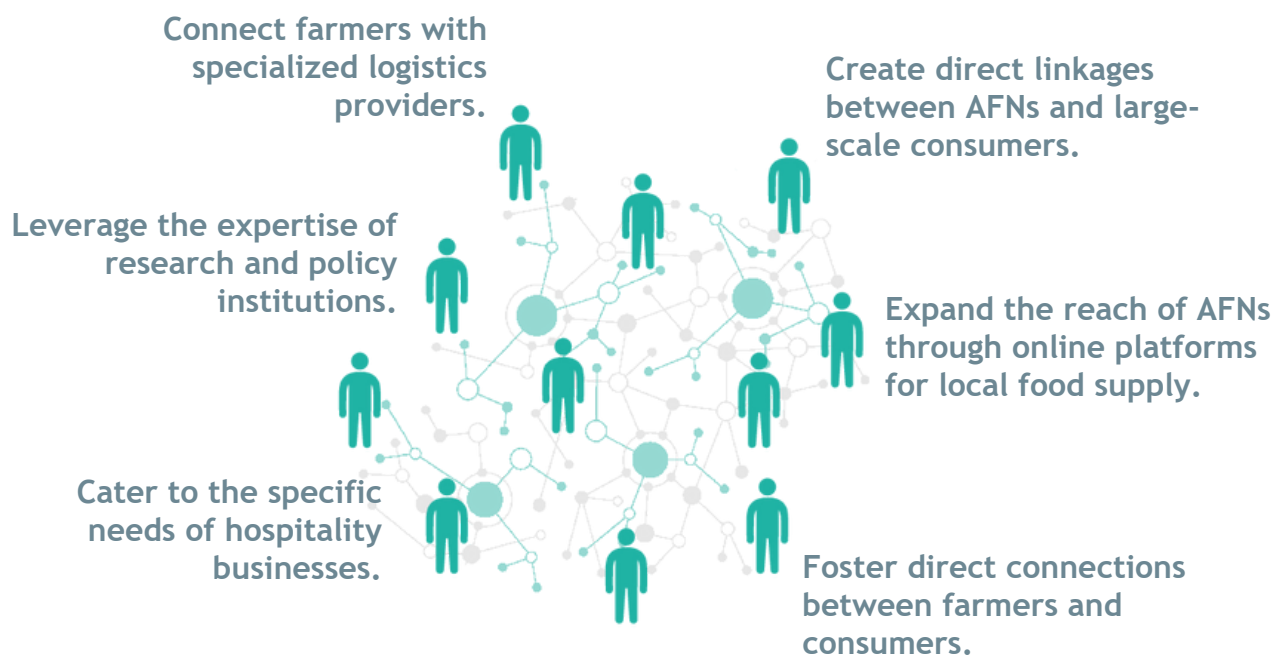
Business practice exchange: The platform serves as a hub for sharing experiences and expertise. Through events, meetups, and collaborative projects, stakeholders can learn from each other, driving continuous improvement and innovation in the sector.



Increased visibility: Businesses and individuals can gain greater visibility within the alternative food network, attracting potential partners and customers, and expanding their reach.



Community building: The platform not only connects individual stakeholders but also builds a supportive community. By encouraging collaboration and joint projects, it strengthens the network of alternative food players, fostering a sense of shared purpose and mutual support.



The official launch of the Matchmaking Platform (beta) is scheduled for February 2025.

THE LAUNCH OF INNOVATION HUBS

THE ROLE OF INNOVATION HUBS

Organised as **Living Labs**, the Innovation Hubs will enable active knowledge transfer between researchers, business experts, food producers, logistics operators and policy makers in order to:

- **advance the creation of new and developed SFSC solutions** throughout Europe and beyond,
- **improve the functioning of AFNs in Central Europe** and, finally,
- **ensure sustainability and efficiency in food distribution systems.**

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 ultimate goal is to ensure that the collaboration between parties, established during the project, will continue even after the project ends.

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.

TRANSNATIONAL INNOVATION HUB

In addition to the 5 local Innovation Hubs, the Food4CE project will also establish one Transnational Innovation Hub. Both Transnational and National Innovation Hubs will play crucial yet distinct roles in advancing short food supply chains and AFNs in Central Europe.



Local Innovation Hubs will be established in the five regions involved in the project and will be set-up by:



Regional Development Agency for Podravje - Maribor



UAS BFI Vienna



Institute for Transport and Logistics Foundation



Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Science



Poznan University of Life Science

Regional Innovation Hubs, incorporated in the transnational one, will contribute to the overall goal of promoting knowledge transfer, co-creation of innovations, and fostering improved AFNs within CE.

The Transnational Innovation Hub will enable cross-border collaboration and mutual support, give an overview on the activities and/or information provided in the regional hubs, while the focus of regional hubs will be on local engagement, knowledge transfer, and integration into support services within their respective regions or countries.

LATEST NEWS

Food4CE project review meeting in Budapest



On 22nd and 23rd May 2024, the Food4CE project review meeting was held in Budapest, hosted by the Hungarian partner Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences - MATE. At the meeting project's progress and important steps to be taken in the upcoming months were discussed. The meeting was also a good opportunity for a study visit to the Central Market Hall, the largest marketplace in Hungary.

[Click for more](#)



[Watch the video](#)



The first Food4CE project press release



The first press release dedicated to the upcoming activities of the Food4CE project, including the creation of Innovation Hubs to facilitate the exchange of logistics knowledge and good practices among Central European AFNs, is available on the project website in English and in all local languages of the countries involved in the project.

[Click for more](#)



LATEST EVENTS

Webinar on Regional Food Logistics, hosted by ECONSULT and UAS-BFI (AT)



On 19th March 2024, a webinar was organised by Food4CE partners UAS-BFI Vienna and ECONSULT to engage potential stakeholders on the topic of regional food logistics. The webinar was the preliminary activity for the national Innovation Hub, which will be launched in September.

[Click for more](#)



Webinar on challenges and opportunities for SFSC in logistics, hosted by RRAPM (SI)

On 14th May 2024, a webinar on challenges and opportunities for AFNs in logistics was organized by RRA Podravje - Maribor, focusing on the significance of high-quality local food for a resilient food supply system. The aim was to highlight the importance of locally produced food for health and resilience, discuss challenges and opportunities in logistics for AFNs, present successful case studies and research findings, facilitate networking and collaboration among stakeholders and, finally, explore financial incentives and support for AFNs.

[Click for more](#)



Logistik Dialog 2024 in Vienna (AT)



On 16th and 17th May 2024, the Austrian Logistics Conference “Logistik Dialog 2024” was organized by Food4CE partner ECONSULT. The event was an important opportunity to meet and exchange ideas and knowledge on logistics issues. Tomislav Letnik, PhD, University Maribor, presented logistics challenges in CE region, focusing on Alternative Food Networks and Short Food Supply Chains, during the talk “Commerce Transformation”.

[Click for more](#)



UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Food4CE Consortium prepares for the next project meeting in Vienna (AT)



On 26th and 27th September, the next project meeting will be held in Vienna, Austria. The aim of the meeting is to review progress and outline work plans for the upcoming months. As customary, the meeting will include a study visit, offering participants valuable insights and hands-on experience.

Food4CE to establish 5 Local and 1 Transnational Innovation Hubs

Preparatory activities are well under way for the launch of five local Innovation Hubs and a transnational Innovation Hub, set for October 2024. These hubs will play a crucial role in fostering knowledge transfer, co-creating innovations, and promoting improved Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) throughout Central Europe. Stay tuned for further updates and announcements!



The launch of the Knowledge Transfer Platform



The next months will be important for the Food4CE project as we move towards implementing the first of the developed solutions. A key milestone is the launch of the Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP), set to go live this autumn. We are excited to announce that the KTP will be publicly available by the end of October 2024. Stay tuned for more updates as we approach this significant launch!

STAY TUNED!

PROJECT CONSORTIUM



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Alternative Food Networks seek to transform food supplies by connecting ethical producers and consumers more directly. Systematic policies to support such networks are widely missing in central Europe and it is time to change this.

The Food4CE project will establish local and transnational hubs for the food and logistics sectors, for stakeholders to exchange good practices and take up innovative technologies. The hubs will be integrated into the European network of logistics competence centres.

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