

## EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Participant:	Freguesia de Buarcos
PIC number:	867997323
Project name and acronym:	<b>EcoActive:</b> Citizens for a Sustainable Europe

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	1st
Event name:	Coastal sustainability: the sea, the land and the community
Type:	Workshop
In situ/online:	[in-situ]
Location:	Buarcos, Portugal
Date(s):	February 25 – 28th, 2026
Website(s) (if any):	<a href="https://www.jf-buarcos.pt/autarquia/projetos/9-1o-encontro-buarcos-figueira-da-foz-ecoactive-citizens-for-a-sustainable-europe-25-a-28-de-fevereiro-de-2026">https://www.jf-buarcos.pt/autarquia/projetos/9-1o-encontro-buarcos-figueira-da-foz-ecoactive-citizens-for-a-sustainable-europe-25-a-28-de-fevereiro-de-2026</a>
Participants	
Female:	21
Male:	41
Non-binary:	0
From country 1 Bulgaria:	1
From country 2 Croatia:	2
From country 3 Cyprus:	1
From country 4 Finland:	1
From country 5 France:	2
From country 6 Hungary:	1
From country 7 Italy:	1
From country 8 Latvia:	1
From country 9 Malta:	1
From country 10 Poland:	1

From country 11 Portugal:	43		
From country 12 Romania:	1		
From country 13 Slovakia:	4		
From country 14 Spain:	2		
Total number of participants:	62	From total number of countries:	14

### Description

*Provide a short description of the event and its activities.*

The first transnational meeting of the project *EcoActive Citizens for a Sustainable Europe* took place in Buarcos (Figueira da Foz, Portugal) from 25 to 28 February 2026, bringing together 62 local and international participants from 14 European countries.

As the kick-off event of the project, it played a fundamental role in establishing a common vision among partners, strengthening trust and cooperation within the consortium, and setting the methodological, thematic and organisational foundations for the implementation of the project over the following months.

The meeting focused on coastal sustainability, addressing the interdependence between marine ecosystems, land management, and community engagement, and highlighting the role of citizens and local authorities in advancing sustainable and climate-conscious practices in line with European priorities.

The event was designed as a comprehensive and balanced programme combining institutional engagement, knowledge transfer, participatory methodologies and intercultural exchange. It ensured that participants were not only passive recipients of information, but active contributors to discussions, learning processes and the co-creation of knowledge.

The diversity of profiles involved including local authorities, civil society representatives, environmental experts, educators, and active citizens, enriched the debates and guaranteed a multidisciplinary perspective throughout all activities.

**Day 1:** was dedicated to the reception of participants arriving from different European countries. Transfers were organised from Porto Airport to Buarcos, followed by accommodation and a welcome dinner. This first informal moment played a key role in creating a positive and collaborative atmosphere, allowing participants to establish initial contacts, exchange expectations and begin building interpersonal relationships that would facilitate cooperation during the following days.

**Day 2:** It began with an institutional welcome involving local authorities, reinforcing the political dimension of the project and its connection to local governance structures. Participants then presented their organisations and countries, creating a structured space for mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue, and allowing each partner to contextualise their work and expectations within the project.

The day also included thematic workshops and conferences focused on sustainable fishing practices and coastal sustainability, providing participants with evidence-based knowledge and practical insights into marine resource management. These sessions were complemented by study visits to key local sites such as the Port of Figueira da Foz and the Salt Museum, where participants could observe concrete examples of how environmental sustainability is addressed at local level.

**Day 3:** was centred on knowledge exchange, participatory learning and collective reflection. Participants attended a conference on blue literacy for sustainable development, which emphasised the importance of education, awareness and citizen engagement in promoting sustainable behaviours and environmental responsibility. A key component of the day was the exchange of good practices, where each partner presented initiatives from their country related to circular economy, sustainable resource management or environmental protection.

Participants also contributed to the creation of shared knowledge outputs, reinforcing the long-term impact of the project beyond the event itself. In addition, the programme included the symbolic brotherhood ceremony, a highly significant moment in which all partners formalised their commitment to cooperation, collaboration and shared European values.

Cultural activities were also organised, providing opportunities for informal interaction, strengthening group cohesion and promoting intercultural understanding. The day concluded with evaluation and coordination sessions, where participants reflected on the outcomes of the meeting, identified strengths and areas for improvement, and contributed to the planning of future project activities.

**Day 4:** was dedicated to final coordination tasks, informal exchanges among partners, and the departure of participants. This closing phase ensured a smooth transition towards the next stages of the project and allowed participants to consolidate contacts and commitments established during the meeting.

Overall, the event successfully combined institutional dialogue, expert knowledge, practical learning and citizen participation, creating a dynamic and inclusive environment for transnational exchange. It contributed to raising awareness on key environmental challenges, strengthening European identity and shared values, and empowering participants to act as multipliers within their communities.

By fostering cooperation between local authorities, civil society and citizens, the meeting reinforced the role of local actors in addressing global environmental challenges and contributed to building a more sustainable, inclusive and engaged Europe.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).



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## FINAL REPORT – MEETING I - PORTUGAL - NETWORK OF TOWNS – CERV – PROJECT N° 101449580

Buarcos – Figueira da Foz (Portugal) – 25-28 February 2026





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# 1. PROJECT SUMMARY

*EcoActive Citizens for a Sustainable Europe* is a transnational initiative promoted by the **Junta de Freguesia de Buarcos** (Portugal) under the **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme** of the European Commission, developed in collaboration with **14 partner organisations from 14 EU member states**.

The project places municipalities, local entities, and citizens at the very heart of climate action — transforming environmental challenges into concrete opportunities for engagement, cooperation, and lasting change. Its core ambition is to encourage active citizen participation in decision-making processes related to climate and environmental issues, contributing to the construction of a **climate-neutral, green, fair, and social Europe**.

Over the course of **18 months**, the project brings together communities from Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Malta, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Slovakia, Latvia, Cyprus, and Finland around a shared commitment: protecting our natural ecosystems and building a more sustainable future — together.

Through **6 thematic transnational meetings** held across Europe — in **Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Malta, and Hungary** — participants engage in conferences, round tables, workshops, site visits to democratic and business institutions, and the exchange of good practices. Each event is rooted in the local identity and environmental heritage of its host community, creating a rich tapestry of knowledge that travels across borders.

The project further aims to build **European networks of environmentally aware and committed citizens** capable of generating a domino effect of positive environmental impact across their regions. By investing in the Circular Economy, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity protection, and the improvement of air and water quality, *EcoActive* bridges local action with European vision.

With the participation of a **different profile of citizens** throughout its duration, the project produces tangible outputs — including e-books, awareness campaigns, and documented good practices — that ensure its legacy extends well beyond the final event. Because here, small local actions truly generate great global changes.



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## 2. OBJECTIVES

To encourage **citizens' participation in decision-making** related to climate and environmental challenges and, consequently, the future of the EU — with the priority of building a **climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe**.

- Invest in ecological initiatives aimed at **improving air and water quality**
- Promote **sustainable agriculture** and preserve environmental systems and biodiversity
- Create **European networks of citizens** who are aware of and committed to environmental protection and sustainability, capable of promoting a domino effect of environmental impact across different European regions
- Reinforce Europe's commitment to **environmental protection**, raising awareness of priority issues related to sustainable economy
- Invest in the **Circular Economy** and sustainability models
- Raise awareness in communities of the **fundamental role of every citizen** in practices that benefit the environment — modifying our own behaviour and encouraging change in others
- Promote **active citizenship, European cooperation**, and the building of a more sustainable future through transnational exchange
- Foster **civic and democratic participation** at local level, in line with CERV programme priorities

### Cross-cutting Objectives

- Strengthen **European identity and shared values** among citizens of different member states
- Develop **sustainable networks of towns** with a long-term vision for European integration
- Ensure **inclusive participation**, incorporating gender equality and non-discrimination considerations throughout all activities

### 3. PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

The opening event of EcoActive Citizens for a Sustainable Europe set the bar high from the very first day. Held in Buarcos and Figueira da Foz, Portugal, this four-day meeting brought together representatives from 14 EU countries around one of the most pressing challenges of our time: coastal sustainability and the relationship between the sea, the land, and the communities that depend on them. The programme combined academic rigour with participatory methodologies, offering delegates a rich blend of conferences, workshops, institutional visits, and hands-on knowledge exchange — all designed to translate European environmental policy into tangible local action.

The intellectual backbone of the event was provided by outstanding experts from the University of Coimbra, one of Europe's oldest and most prestigious academic institutions. Researcher Ivan Viegas delivered a compelling workshop on "Sustainable Fishing – Preservation of Marine Resources", while Ana Cristina Rocha and Irene Gutiérrez, both affiliated with MARE (Marine and Environmental Sciences Centre) and ARNET (Aquatic Research Network), led a high-level conference on "Blue Literacy Training for Sustainable Development". Their participation guaranteed that scientific excellence and evidence-based knowledge were at the heart of the exchange. Complementing the academic programme, participants visited the Salt Museum, Docapesca/Formar, and the Marefoz Environmental Quality Laboratory — a field-leading facility managed by the University of Coimbra — providing direct, real-world contact with marine ecosystem management in action

#### **Wednesday, 25 February 2026 — Arrival Day**

- Arrival of participants at Francisco Sá Carneiro Airport (Porto)
- Transfer by bus/minivan from Porto Airport to Buarcos (approx. 1h 30 min)
- Check-in and accommodation
- Welcome speech by Rosa Batis
- Welcome dinner

#### **Thursday, 26 February 2026**

*Venue: University of Coimbra – Figueira da Foz Campus*

08:45 Departure from accommodation

09:15 Welcome — University of Coimbra, Figueira da Foz Campus

09:30 Presentations of the 14 participating organisations and countries (5 minutes per country — first 7 countries)

10:15 Workshop / Conference: "Sustainable Fishing – Preservation of Marine Resources" (Ivan Viegas, researcher, University of Coimbra)

10:45 Coffee break

11:15 Continuation of country presentations (remaining 7 countries)

12:30 Official Reception by the Municipality of Figueira da Foz

13:30 Lunch

15:00 Visit to the Salt Museum + Presentation by MARE-UC: "Contribution of MARE-UC to the Marine Ecosystem in Figueira da Foz"

16:00 Visit to Docapesca / Formar – Port of Figueira da Foz

17:30 Free time

20:00 Dinner



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## **Friday, 27 February 2026**

*Venue: Trindade Theatre, Buarcos*

09:15 Departure from hotel

09:45 Conference: "Training in Blue Literacy for Sustainable Development" (Speakers: Ana Cristina Rocha and Irene Gutiérrez — MARE, ARNET, University of Coimbra)

10:30 Coffee break

11:00 Creation of the 1st E-Book — Reading of texts by country representatives on best practices

12:00 Signing of the Friendship Pact (Brotherhood Ceremony) + Group photo

13:00 Brotherhood Lunch

15:00 Cultural visit to Buarcos / Marine Museum

17:00 Free time

20:00 Farewell dinner

## **Saturday, 28 February 2026 — Departure Day**

10:00 Departure of participants

— Transfer to Porto

— City visit to Porto



## 4. PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

As the opening and kick-off event of EcoActive Citizens for a Sustainable Europe, Event I called for the highest level of institutional representation from each partner organisation. Coordinators and partners agreed in advance that, wherever possible, elected officials, board members, or senior representatives of each entity should attend, given the symbolic and strategic nature of the first meeting. This decision proved fundamental, as the highlight of the event was the signing of a Symbolic Brotherhood Pact — a solemn commitment between all 14 partner organisations to foster future collaboration in the fields of environment, youth, arts, education, and culture, with no economic boundaries, and with a shared vision of building a more sustainable and united Europe.

### SELECTION CRITERIA

Participants were selected by their respective organisations on the basis of jointly agreed guidelines established during the project preparation phase. To be eligible, participants were required to:

- Understand and actively defend European citizenship and its fundamental values
- Be able to present the good practice selected by their country on the event's thematic focus
- Commit to full participation in all activities throughout the four days
- Demonstrate an active, collaborative, and open attitude towards intercultural exchange
- Be able to communicate in Portuguese, Spanish, or English (translation support was provided)
- Be willing and able to disseminate the activities through social media and within their professional and community networks

### Composition of the Group

A total of more than 60 participants took part in Event I, representing 14 EU member states. The group was composed of 28 women and 32 men, reflecting a balanced and inclusive representation across genders and professional profiles. The diversity of backgrounds enriched every session, ensuring that academic knowledge, political decision-making, grassroots activism, and technical expertise all had a voice at the table.

### The participants included:

- Elected officials and political representatives — mayors, vice-mayors, local councillors, and municipal presidents from several partner municipalities, who attended specifically for the Brotherhood Ceremony and represented the formal institutional commitment of their territories
- Presidents and board members of civil society organisations — senior representatives of NGOs, youth associations, and cultural entities forming part of the consortium
- Environmental technicians and experts — professionals with direct experience in coastal management, biodiversity conservation, marine resource monitoring, and climate adaptation
- Experts in European projects — project managers and coordinators with extensive experience in EU-funded programmes, capable of contributing to the strategic and administrative dimensions of the network
- Youth organisation leaders — representatives responsible for youth engagement policies and programmes within their municipalities or entities
- Volunteers from environmental NGOs — active citizens committed to grassroots environmental action, bringing practical field experience and community-level perspectives
- Teachers and professors — academic staff engaged in environmental education and sustainability research, several of them affiliated with the University of Coimbra, whose presence added significant intellectual value to the sessions

Students from the University of Coimbra and vocational training schools in Figueira da Foz — young participants who brought energy, curiosity, and a forward-looking perspective to the debates and workshops



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## PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT

Beyond their formal roles, participants demonstrated a high level of engagement throughout all activities — from plenary conferences and workshops to cultural visits and the Brotherhood Ceremony. Their diverse geographic, cultural, and professional origins transformed every session into a genuinely transnational exchange, where local good practices became shared European learning. The active involvement of political decision-makers alongside educators, students, and civil society representatives ensured that the outcomes of Event I were simultaneously grounded in academic rigour, civic commitment, and institutional accountability.

MUNICIPALITY / ENTITY	COUNTRY	PARTICIPANTS
Junta de Freguesia de Buarcos	Portugal	45
Asociación Xuvenil Vrenza	Spain	2
Kunsill Lokali Safi	Malta	1
One Tirrene International	Cyprus	1
Rezeknes Novada Pasvaldibas Iestade Maltas Apvienibas Parvalde	Latvia	1
Association pour le Soutien à la Citoyenneté Européenne	France	2
Municipiul Curtea de Argeş	Romania	1
Gmina i Miasto Lwówek Śląski	Poland	1
The Organization for Poverty Alleviation & Development	Finland	1
Grad Klanjec	Croatia	2
Hehalom Község Önkormányzata	Hungary	1
Obec Bušince	Slovakia	4

## 5. SEMINARY OF GOOD PRACTICES AND INITIATIVES – 1ST EBOOK

The presentation of good practices constituted one of the most dynamic and enriching components of Event I. Each partner organisation formally presented the initiative selected from their country, defending its relevance, methodology, and impact in front of the full group of delegates. Representatives did not merely describe their practices — they advocated for them, contextualised them within their local and national realities, and engaged openly with questions and observations from their peers. Participants from all 14 countries took careful note of each presentation, recognising their potential for replication and adaptation across different European contexts.

The volume and quality of the debates generated during the sessions proved so substantial that the presentations had to be extended across two working days — a clear sign of the genuine interest and intellectual engagement of the group. This scheduling also brought an added institutional value: the presentations delivered on Thursday, 26 February took place in the presence of representatives of the Municipal Council of Figueira da Foz (Câmara Municipal de Figueira da Foz), who attended the morning sessions, lending official recognition to the exchange and reinforcing the event's connection to local political structures.

The 14 good practices — all focused on the thematic axis of coastal and riverside sustainability — were compiled and formally published in two formats: a printed handbook distributed to all participants and institutional stakeholders, and a digital edition made available for wider dissemination. Both versions were produced in English to ensure accessibility across all partner countries. The handbook is designed not only as a reference document for the project network, but as a policy-oriented tool — a concrete resource to inform and support decision-making by political leaders, municipal authorities, and institutional representatives in the communities and countries involved. In this way, the knowledge exchanged during Event I travels beyond the meeting room and into the spaces where real environmental policy is shaped.

Below the summary of the proposals listed:

### 5.1. PORTUGAL

#### *Dalia Project: Continuous Monitoring System for the Mondego Estuary*

The Dalia Project, implemented by the Municipality of Figueira da Foz, represents a high-tech leap in riverside and estuarine sustainability. Adapting innovative methodologies from the European "Dalia – Danube Region Water Lighthouse Action", it establishes a sophisticated real-time environmental monitoring system that tracks water quality, sediment dynamics, and hydrological fluctuations. Funded by the European Dalia programme with a budget of approximately €99,897, the project trains municipal staff to analyse complex data sets integrated directly into environmental management tools, enabling proactive climate adaptation strategies — including responses to sea-level rise and extreme weather events affecting the Mondego Estuary.

### 5.2. FRANCE

#### *The Martinique Marine Nature Park: Preserving Island Marine Heritage*

Established in 2017, the Martinique Marine Nature Park (PNMM) covers approximately 47,000 km<sup>2</sup> — the second-largest marine park in the French overseas territories. Governed by a strategic management plan extending to 2035, it balances the preservation of marine biodiversity, including coral reefs and seagrass meadows, with the sustainable development of maritime activities. Through large-scale species monitoring, sustainable fishing practices, and public awareness campaigns, the PNMM serves as a flagship model for maritime sustainability in the Caribbean, demonstrating how large-scale marine protected areas can safeguard natural heritage while supporting local livelihoods.



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### 5.3. SPAIN

#### *Sustainable Turbot Aquaculture — Stolt Sea Farm, Galicia*

Stolt Sea Farm S.A., based in Boiro and Rianxo (A Coruña, Galicia), operates the world's largest land-based turbot aquaculture production system, producing over 6,500 tonnes annually. By completing the entire turbot lifecycle in controlled facilities without extracting fish from coastal ecosystems, the initiative directly reduces pressure on Atlantic wild turbot stocks — with the result that 99% of turbot consumed in Spain now comes from Galician aquaculture. With an estimated investment of €20 million and over 300 stable jobs created, the project combines advanced recirculation aquaculture systems, strict biosecurity, and collaboration with research centres such as CETGA, positioning sustainable aquaculture as a key solution for long-term coastal resilienc

### 5.4. ITALY

#### *Sustainable Salmonid Farming in Lubietova*

Fish Farm Lubietova utilises a local mountain stream to breed rainbow trout, brown trout, and Siberian sturgeon year-round at 491 metres above sea level, providing the specific high-oxygen, temperature-controlled environment these species require. The project promotes local engagement by allowing families to catch fish and observe farm animals, creating an educational and recreational experience focused on riverside sustainability. Operating independently of financial institutions with a budget of €100,000, its future vision includes establishing a local restaurant serving fresh trout, addressing low per capita fish consumption while reinforcing community ties to sustainable water resources.

### 5.5. SLOVAKIA

#### *Sustainable Salmonid Farming in Lubietova*

Fish Farm Lubietova breeds rainbow trout, brown trout, and Siberian sturgeon using a local mountain stream, operating year-round at 491 metres above sea level in a fully controlled, high-oxygen environment. The project fosters community engagement through recreational fishing and farm visits, offering an educational experience tied to riverside sustainability. With a self-funded model and a budget of €100,000, the initiative's vision of a local restaurant serving fresh trout addresses Slovakia's low per capita fish consumption while reinforcing sustainable water resource management at the community level.

### 5.6. POLAND

#### *Development of Gravel Pit Reservoirs in Rakowice Małe and Wielkie*

This project transforms former gravel extraction sites into functional, publicly accessible recreational spaces through an innovative public-private partnership model, in which the local government leases land to private investors over the long term. Alongside water sports infrastructure, the programme creates and expands green areas to ensure that increased human activity does not compromise local ecosystems. By rehabilitating post-industrial land without overburdening the municipal budget, it serves as a solid model demonstrating how private investment and public management can unite to create spaces that are attractive, functional, and environmentally responsible.

### 5.7. HUNGARY

#### *PET Cup: Clean Water and Professional Waste Management for the Tisza River*

The PET Cup is a large-scale international river protection programme that transforms local clean-up efforts into a competitive and scientifically grounded initiative. Volunteers and experts build functional boats from collected plastic waste to navigate and clean the Tisza River's floodplains, while a sophisticated logistics system ensures that 60% of recovered waste is reintegrated into the circular economy. Through the "Trash Hunter" mobile application and extensive media coverage, the initiative engages

thousands of citizens in active environmental monitoring, serving as a flagship European model for the sustainable protection of major inland waterways.

## 5.8. FINLAND

### *Community-Led Coastal Resilience and Sustainable Blue Economy Initiative*

OPAD Finland's integrated sustainability programme strengthens environmental protection and climate adaptation in coastal communities by combining coastal clean-up campaigns, climate education workshops, and blue economy innovation hubs. The initiative empowers local residents — especially youth and women — to take active roles in managing coastal resources and developing climate-resilient infrastructure. By supporting sustainable seaweed farming and eco-tourism as alternatives to intensive industries, it creates a scalable model for coastal resilience aligned with the EU Green Deal and the Sustainable Development Goals.

## 5.9. LATVIA

### *Restoration of Habitats and Shoreline Management in Lake Rāzna*

This initiative, funded at approximately €3.5 million (85% EU-funded), focused on the conservation and restoration of Lake Rāzna within the Rāzna National Park, addressing the overgrowth of dense reed beds and increasing shoreline erosion. Key measures included reinforcing the shoreline with natural boulders, creating pedestrian paths to manage human impact, and cutting reeds across 35 hectares to restore natural water movement. Special care was taken to protect nesting areas of the Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), demonstrating a balanced approach between active engineering and ecological maintenance that serves as a vital model for managing large inland water bodies.

## 5.10. CROATIA

### *Nature Connections: Sustainable Management of the Sutla Riverside Ecosystems*

The "Nature Connections" project focuses on the sustainable management and cross-border protection of the Sutla River, a vital natural artery between Croatia and Slovenia. Targeting a protected area of 192 hectares with high biodiversity — including 29 native fish species, many of them endangered — the initiative implements conservation and restoration measures within the Natura 2000 network. By combining scientific monitoring with active habitat management and international cooperation, it serves as a successful model for cross-border river governance that protects essential freshwater resources for future generations.

## 5.11. MALTA

### *Environmental Education and Sustainability for Young Generations in Hal Safi*

In collaboration with Environment Malta, Project Green, and the Eco-Skola organisation, the Hal Safi Local Council integrated a robust environmental education programme into the primary school curriculum for children aged 7 to 10. The initiative combines practical conservation activities — including the protection of the Maltese bee and hands-on circular economy projects using recycled materials — with active citizenship exercises that connect young students to local environmental challenges. By investing in the environmental literacy of the next generation, Hal Safi aims to create a long-term cultural shift towards sustainability and a greener Europe.

## 5.12. ROMANIA

### *RetuRO: Romania's National Return Guarantee System for Sustainable Packaging*

Established in 2022 as a unique partnership between the Romanian state and major private sector associations — including brewers, soft drink producers, and retailers — RetuRO manages the national lifecycle of beverage packaging to significantly reduce waste entering Romania's rivers and natural landscapes. Operating through a nationwide network of collection points, the system incentivises public participation in the recovery of glass, plastic, and metal materials, reintegrating them into the circular economy. As a strategic pillar of Romania's sustainable development, RetuRO demonstrates how efficient public-private collaboration can achieve national environmental targets and comply with European sustainability standards.



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### 5.13. CYPRUS

#### *Cyprus Integrated Marine and Coastal Management Initiative*

Spearheaded by the Cyprus Marine and Maritime Institute (CMMI), this initiative addresses coastal erosion and marine pollution through a combination of advanced satellite monitoring and community-driven conservation. By establishing "Blue Flag" corridors and strict waste management protocols, it balances a thriving tourism industry with the preservation of fragile Mediterranean marine ecosystems. A key outcome has been the restoration of seagrass meadows (*Posidonia oceanica*) through local "Sea Guardians" volunteer groups, demonstrating how scientific innovation and grassroots action can together safeguard coastal heritage.

### 5.14. BULGARIA

#### *Restoration and Sustainable Management of the Belene Island Wetland*

Located within the Persina Nature Park on the largest Bulgarian island in the Danube River, this project restored the natural water cycle of marshes disrupted by historical drainage and dyke construction. By installing modern sluices and hydraulic infrastructure, the initiative allows controlled flooding that has revived biodiversity — providing spawning grounds for native fish and nesting sites for rare waterfowl such as the Dalmatian Pelican. Developed in collaboration with the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB) and WWF, it demonstrates how technical engineering and community participation can together protect the Danube's unique natural heritage.

## 6. EVALUATION

The coordination team implemented a continuous evaluation model throughout the event, holding a brief internal review meeting at the end of each working day. These daily debriefs brought together the organisers and available team members to assess the flow of activities, share observations, identify any incidents or logistical challenges that had arisen during the day, and agree on adjustments for the following sessions. Issues such as minor delays in the programme schedule, room configuration needs, or translation requirements were identified promptly and resolved on the spot, ensuring that the overall experience remained smooth and professional for all participants. These sessions also served as a space to highlight positive moments, acknowledge the contributions of speakers and delegates, and maintain the team's motivation and coordination throughout the four days.

In addition to the daily debriefs, all participants were invited to complete an anonymous online satisfaction survey at the end of the event, covering a comprehensive set of items related to both the logistical and programmatic dimensions of the meeting. The survey was designed to capture honest, individual feedback and to generate actionable insights for the organisation of future events within the project. It included a final open-ended section inviting participants to freely propose improvements, raise criticisms, or share suggestions for upcoming meetings.

#### **PRIOR INFORMATION AND INFOPACK**

The vast majority of participants rated the prior information received as excellent. Most highlighted that the Infopack was clear, complete, and well-structured, giving them full confidence about what to expect before travelling. Several noted that having the programme, logistics, and financial guidelines in a single document was particularly helpful.

#### **COMMUNICATION WITH THE ORGANISERS**

Participants expressed a very high level of satisfaction with the responsiveness and professionalism of the organising team. Most indicated that emails were answered quickly and that any doubts regarding travel or registration were resolved efficiently. A number of respondents specifically praised the use of WhatsApp as a direct communication channel in the days leading up to the event.

## FLIGHTS AND TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

The management of flight tickets received very positive feedback overall. Participants appreciated that the coordinator handled all bookings centrally and communicated itineraries clearly. A small number of participants noted that their travel times were long due to connecting flights, though they acknowledged this was a natural consequence of the geographical diversity of the group.

## INTERNAL TRANSFERS

The transfers from Porto Airport to Buarcos and between venues were rated as comfortable, punctual, and well-organised. Participants highlighted the professionalism of the transport coordination and the fact that arrival and departure logistics were handled without incident. Several delegates mentioned that the transfer times were a pleasant opportunity to begin connecting with colleagues from other countries.

## QUALITY OF FOOD

This item received some of the highest scores across the entire survey. Participants were enthusiastic about the quality and variety of Portuguese cuisine offered throughout the event. The selection of traditional restaurants was widely praised, and several respondents specifically mentioned the seafood, the *bacalhau*, and the quality of the brotherhood lunch as highlights.

## HOTEL COMFORT

The Hotel Exe Wellington received consistently positive evaluations. Participants described their rooms as clean, comfortable, and well-equipped. The buffet breakfast was appreciated for its variety and quality.

## FLOW AND ORGANISATION OF ACTIVITIES

The overall structure and rhythm of the programme was rated highly. The decision to extend the good practices presentations across two days was perceived not as a disruption but as a natural and enriching consequence of the depth of the debates. Several respondents highlighted that the programme never felt rushed or overly dense.

## QUALITY OF SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

This item generated some of the most enthusiastic responses in the survey. The participation of researchers and professors from the **University of Coimbra** — particularly the sessions led by **Ivan Viegas**, **Ana Cristina Rocha**, and **Irene Gutiérrez** — was singled out by a large majority of participants as one of the most valuable elements of the entire event.

## COMFORT OF ACTIVITY VENUES

Both the University of Coimbra Figueira da Foz Campus and the Trindade Theatre in Buarcos received positive assessments. The Trindade Theatre, in particular, was noted for its atmosphere and symbolic value as a venue for the Brotherhood Ceremony.

## CULTURAL VISITS

The visits to the Salt Museum, Docapesca/Formar, and the Marine Museum in Buarcos were warmly received. Participants highlighted how these experiences complemented the academic content of the event, allowing them to see sustainability practices in real local contexts.

## MEETINGS WITH POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES

The official reception by the Municipality of Figueira da Foz and the presence of local political representatives was rated as one of the most meaningful institutional moments of the event. Participants valued the signal that local authorities were genuinely engaged with the project's objectives.

## OPEN SPACE — SUGGESTIONS, CRITICISMS AND PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE EVENTS

The open section generated a rich range of constructive comments. The most recurring suggestion was to allocate more structured time for bilateral exchanges between partners. Several participants proposed including a dedicated session for young participants and students, and a short video summary of each event for social media dissemination. A small number of observations related to logistics were also noted: one participant mentioned that the menu — rich in meat and fish, as is traditional in Portuguese gastronomy — differed from the plant-based diet more common in their home country, and two participants requested a change of room due to the configuration of their twin beds, which was resolved immediately by the team by arranging individual rooms. These are minor points that have been duly recorded and will inform the planning of future events. **Organising meetings in small, authentic communities like Buarcos is one of the most distinctive values of this project — and the team is committed to maintaining that spirit while continuing to refine the logistical experience for all participants.**



Funded by  
the European Union



## 7. DISSEMINATION COORDINATOR

PORTUGAL

<https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1AdhTv3cA9/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/14W8fH4PTwu/?mibextid=wwXlfr>



FREGUESIA DE BUARCOS  
Portugal



KUNSILL LOKALI  
HAL SAFI  
MUNICIPALITY OF SAFI  
Malta



ОБЩИНА СУХИНДОЛ  
MUNICIPALITY OF SUHINDOL  
Bulgaria



MUNICIPALITY OF LWÓWEK ŚLASKI  
Poland



MUNICIPALITY OF BUSINCE  
Slovakia



THE ORGANIZATION FOR POVERTY  
ALLEVIATION & DEVELOPMENT  
Finland



otigroup.org  
ONE TERRENE INTERNATIONAL GROUP  
Cyprus



MUNICIPALITY OF KLANJEC  
Croatia



MALTAS APVIENĪBAS PĀRVALDE  
MUNICIPALITY OF REZEKNE  
Latvia



MUNICIPALITY OF CURTEA DE ARGES  
Romania



MUNICIPALITY OF HÉHALOM  
Hungary



ASSOCIATION POUR LE SOUTIEN  
A LA CITOYENNETE EUROPEENNE  
France



C.E.P.H.I.  
CENTRO EDUCATIVO DI  
PROGETTAZIONE E HOSTING  
INTERNAZIONALE  
Italy



ASOCIACIÓN XUVENIL  
VRENZA  
ASOCIACION XUVENIL VRENZA  
Spain



## Best practices for coastal or riverside sustainability: the sea, the land and the community

- 1 MUNICIPALITY OF SUHINDOL - Bulgaria
- 2 MUNICIPALITY OF KLANJEC - Croatia
- 3 ONE TERRENE INTERNATIONAL GROUP - Cyprus
- 4 THE ORGANIZATION FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION & DEVELOPMENT - Finland
- 5 ASSOCIATION POUR LE SOUTIEN A LA CITOYENNETE EUROPEENNE - France
- 6 MUNICIPALITY OF HÉHALOM - Hungary
- 7 CENTRO EDUCATIVO DI PROGETTAZIONE E HOSTING INTERNAZIONALE - Italy
- 8 MUNICIPALITY OF REZEKNE - Latvia
- 9 MUNICIPALITY OF SAFI - Malta
- 10 MUNICIPALITY OF LWOWEK SLASKI - Poland
- 11 FREGUESIA DE BUARCOS - Portugal
- 12 MUNICIPALITY OF CURTEA DE ARGES - Romania
- 13 MUNICIPALITY OF BUSINCE - Slovakia
- 14 ASOCIACION XUVENIL VRENZA - Spain



FREGUESIA DE BUARCOS  
Portugal

## Dalia Project: Continuous Monitoring System for the Mondego Estuary

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The Dalia Project, implemented by the Municipality of Figueira da Foz, represents a high-tech leap in riverside and estuarine sustainability. This initiative adapts innovative methodologies from the European "Dalia - Danube Region Water Lighthouse Action" to the specific local context of the Mondego Estuary. The primary goal is to establish a sophisticated, real-time environmental monitoring system that tracks water quality, sediment dynamics, and hydrological fluctuations. By deploying advanced sensors and data-gathering tools, the project provides a constant stream of reliable information that is essential for sustainable territorial planning and the protection of sensitive aquatic habitats. This technical framework allows the municipality to move beyond traditional, periodic sampling toward a proactive management model that can respond immediately to environmental changes or pollution risks.

This program is developed through an international knowledge transfer framework, fully funded by the European Dalia program with a budget of approximately €99,897. The implementation focuses on strengthening local technical capacity, training municipal staff to analyze complex data sets that integrate directly into environmental management tools. This evidence-based approach is crucial for designing effective climate adaptation strategies, such as managing the impacts of sea-level rise and extreme weather events on the estuary's ecosystem. By fostering collaboration between international experts and local authorities, the project ensures that the Mondego Estuary remains a healthy, productive environment. It serves as a flagship model for European coastal cities, demonstrating how digital innovation and trans-European cooperation can safeguard vital water resources and promote a sustainable blue economy for the future.



MUNICIPALITY OF KLANJEC  
Croatia

## Nature Connections: Sustainable Management of the Sutla Riverside Ecosystems

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The "Nature Connections" project focuses on the sustainable management and cross-border protection of the Sutla River, a vital natural artery between Croatia and Slovenia. This initiative targets a protected area of 192 hectares characterized by its high biodiversity, including 29 native fish species, many of which are endangered. The primary idea is to implement targeted conservation and restoration measures within the Natura 2000 network to ensure long-term riverside sustainability. By protecting aquatic species and enhancing habitat connectivity, the project maintains the ecological balance of this sensitive river system, preventing degradation caused by human activity and ensuring that the river remains a healthy corridor for wildlife.

The program's development relies on professional research and the implementation of specific ecological guidelines to manage the riparian zones effectively. A key objective is to improve the conservation status of endangered freshwater species while fostering international cooperation for shared water resources. The initiative not only preserves the biological richness of the Sutla River but also raises awareness about the importance of riverside ecosystems for regional climate resilience. By integrating scientific monitoring with active habitat management, this Croatian practice serves as a successful model for cross-border river governance, demonstrating how coordinated local actions can protect essential freshwater resources for future generations.

## Cyprus Integrated Marine and Coastal Management Initiative

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The Cyprus Marine and Maritime Institute (CMMI), in collaboration with local authorities, has spearheaded an innovative initiative focused on the sustainable management of Cyprus's coastal zones. The project addresses the critical challenges of coastal erosion and marine pollution through a multifaceted approach that combines advanced satellite monitoring with community-driven conservation efforts. By establishing "Blue Flag" corridors and implementing strict waste management protocols along popular shorelines, the initiative successfully balances the demands of a thriving tourism industry with the urgent need to preserve fragile Mediterranean marine ecosystems. The project's scientific framework provides real-time data on water quality and sea-level rise, enabling more resilient urban planning for seaside municipalities.

Beyond technical monitoring, the program places a significant emphasis on environmental education and active citizenship among coastal residents. Local "Sea Guardians" groups, composed of volunteers and students, participate in regular underwater clean-ups and biodiversity surveys, fostering a deep sense of ownership over the island's natural heritage. This participatory model has led to the restoration of several key seagrass meadows (*Posidonia oceanica*), which are essential for carbon sequestration and providing habitats for local marine life. By integrating scientific innovation with grassroots action, Cyprus provides a scalable model for coastal sustainability that ensures the long-term health of its maritime environment for future generations.



THE ORGANIZATION FOR POVERTY  
ALLEVIATION & DEVELOPMENT  
Finland

## Community-Led Coastal Resilience and Sustainable Blue Economy Initiative

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The Community-Led Coastal Resilience Initiative, implemented by OPAD Finland, is an integrated sustainability programme designed to strengthen environmental protection and climate adaptation in coastal communities. The initiative focuses on protecting marine ecosystems while creating green livelihood opportunities for vulnerable populations. Through coastal clean-up campaigns, climate education workshops, and blue economy innovation hubs, the project promotes sustainable fisheries and marine biodiversity conservation. By combining environmental protection with poverty alleviation strategies, the initiative ensures that sustainability efforts generate both ecological and social benefits, aligning with the EU Green Deal and Sustainable Development Goals.

This programme emphasizes community ownership and participatory planning, collaborating closely with municipalities, research institutions, and civil society actors. It empowers local residents, especially youth and women, to take an active role in managing coastal resources and developing climate-resilient infrastructure. The initiative also supports the development of sustainable seaweed farming and eco-tourism, providing alternatives to traditional intensive industries. By fostering local leadership and providing technical training, OPAD Finland creates a scalable model for coastal resilience that can be adapted to other Baltic and European regions facing similar environmental and economic challenges.



ASSOCIATION POUR LE SOUTIEN  
À LA CITOYENNETÉ EUROPÉENNE  
France

## The Martinique Marine Nature Park: Preserving Island Marine Heritage

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The Martinique Marine Nature Park (PNMM), established in 2017, is a vital tool for the protection and sustainable management of the island's exceptional marine environment. Covering approximately 47,000 km<sup>2</sup>, it is the second-largest marine park in the French overseas territories. The project's core idea is to balance the preservation of marine biodiversity with the sustainable development of maritime activities. By focusing on scientific research, habitat protection, and the regulation of human impact, the park ensures that Martinique's natural wealth—including its coral reefs and seagrass meadows—remains resilient against environmental pressures while continuing to support the local culture and economy.

The program is governed by a long-term strategic management plan that extends until 2035, emphasizing a collaborative approach that involves professional fishers, tourism operators, and scientific experts. Key actions include large-scale monitoring of marine species, the implementation of sustainable fishing practices, and extensive public awareness campaigns to foster a culture of marine stewardship. By integrating ecological conservation with social and economic objectives, the PNMM serves as a flagship model for maritime sustainability in the Caribbean. It demonstrates how large-scale marine protected areas can successfully safeguard heritage while guaranteeing the long-term viability of human activities linked to the sea.



MUNICIPALITY OF HÉHALOM  
Hungary

## PET Cup: Clean Water and Professional Waste Management for the Tisza River

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The PET Cup is a professional environmental initiative designed to combat severe plastic pollution in the Tisza River caused by seasonal floods. This project transforms local clean-up efforts into a large-scale international river protection program by combining ecological restoration with competitive sporting events. Volunteers and experts work together to build functional boats made entirely from collected plastic waste, which are then used to navigate and clean the river's floodplains. Beyond the physical removal of tons of debris, the initiative focuses on scientific mapping of pollution sources and developing long-term engineering solutions to maintain the health of the river's ecosystem.

The program's development relies on a sophisticated logistics system that involves the sorting, baling, and recycling of all collected materials, ensuring that 60% of the recovered waste is reintegrated into the circular economy. Through high-profile media coverage and the "Trash Hunter" mobile application, the PET Cup engages thousands of citizens in active environmental monitoring. This participatory model not only restores biodiversity and vital habitats along the Tisza but also fosters a deep sense of environmental responsibility across borders. By integrating social engagement with technical waste management, the initiative serves as a flagship European model for the sustainable protection of major inland waterways.



## Summary of the LIFE Lagoon Refresh Project (Venice, Italy)

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The LIFE Lagoon Refresh project represents a critical advancement in the field of coastal ecosystem restoration, specifically within the Venice Lagoon, which is the largest coastal wetland in Italy and a recognized UNESCO World Heritage site. This initiative was implemented between 2017 and 2022 with a total investment of 3.5 million €, primarily funded by the EU LIFE Programme. The project was coordinated by the Veneto Region in conjunction with CORILA, emphasizing a multidisciplinary approach to environmental management.

The primary objective of the program was to restore the natural salinity gradient that had been lost over centuries. Since the 16th century, major rivers were diverted to protect the city of Venice from sedimentation, which inadvertently eliminated the freshwater inflows necessary to maintain the balance between fresh and salt water. This lack of balance led to the degradation of the ecosystem and the disappearance of vital habitats such as salt marshes and reedbeds. To reverse this damage, the project utilized sustainable hydraulic engineering to reintroduce 1,000 liters per second of freshwater from the Sile River into the lagoon.

The technical implementation involved the use of biodegradable materials, such as coconut fiber and jute, to create natural barriers that slowed water dispersion and supported the establishment of new vegetation. Specifically, around 20 hectares of reedbeds were successfully restored through the transplantation of native *Phragmites australis* and other aquatic plants. These efforts were designed not only to recover lost habitats but also to improve overall water quality and increase local fish populations.

A fundamental aspect of the project's success was its participatory governance model. Scientists worked in direct collaboration with local stakeholders, including fishermen and hunters' associations, involving them in the restoration, monitoring, and maintenance of the site. This approach ensured that traditional community knowledge was integrated into the scientific process, fostering a sense of ownership and long-term sustainability. Ultimately, the LIFE Lagoon Refresh project serves as a replicable model for other coastal lagoons worldwide facing similar environmental challenges.

## Restoration of Habitats and Shoreline Management in Lake Rāzna

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The initiative focused on the conservation and restoration of Lake Rāzna, a key natural asset within the Rāzna National Park known for its biodiversity. In recent years, the lake faced significant environmental challenges, including the overgrowth of dense reed beds that transformed sandy shores into marshes and increased shoreline erosion. To combat this, the Nature Conservation Agency of Latvia, with a budget of approximately € 3.5 million (85% EU funded), implemented a series of management measures. These included reinforcing the shoreline using natural boulders to prevent erosion and creating pedestrian paths to manage human impact while preserving the scenic and ecological value of the area.

A critical component of the project was the targeted cutting of reeds across 35 hectares to restore the natural water movement and prevent the shallow areas from becoming over-fertilized. Special care was taken to protect the nesting areas of the Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) by leaving strategic clumps of reeds as "islands" for habitat preservation. This practice demonstrates a balanced approach between active engineering—such as building natural reinforcement cores—and ecological maintenance. By combining biodiversity protection with sustainable public access, the project serves as a vital model for managing large inland water bodies and protecting sensitive ecosystems against climate-induced changes.



## Environmental Education and Sustainability for Young Generations in Hal Safi

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The Hal Safi Local Council, in collaboration with Environment Malta, Project Green, and the Eco-Skola organization, has implemented a robust environmental education program integrated into the primary school curriculum. This initiative focuses on fostering environmental respect and sustainable development among children aged 7 to 10. A central pillar of the project includes practical methods for the conservation of the Maltese bee and hands-on activities that promote the circular economy. By teaching students how to create everyday items, such as greeting cards, from recycled materials, the program instills lifelong habits of waste reduction and ecological responsibility from an early age.

Beyond classroom learning, the project encourages active citizenship by connecting young students with local environmental challenges and nature-based solutions. These activities provide a platform for children to practice sustainable development in a way that is both educational and community-oriented. By investing in the environmental literacy of the younger generation, Hal Safi aims to create a long-term cultural shift towards sustainability. This participatory model serves as a vital tool for ensuring that future citizens are equipped with the knowledge and motivation to protect their local ecosystems and contribute to a greener Europe.



MUNICIPALITY OF LWÓWEK ŚLĄSKI  
Poland

## Development of Gravel Pit Reservoirs in Rakowice Małe and Wielkie

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This project, led by the Municipality of Lwówek Śląski, focuses on the long-term transformation of former gravel extraction reservoirs into functional, attractive, and publicly accessible recreational spaces. The initiative stands out for its innovative public-private partnership model, where the local government leases land to private investors over the long term. This approach allows for the funding of modern infrastructure for tourism and water sports without overburdening the municipal budget, while ensuring orderly spatial development. By giving new value to these post-industrial areas, the program improves the quality of life for residents and turns a degraded site into a local economic engine based on responsible leisure.

The program's development places a special emphasis on preserving the landscape's natural values. Alongside recreational facilities, the project includes the creation and expansion of green areas, ensuring that increased human activity does not compromise the local ecosystem. Infrastructure for water sports and active relaxation has been designed to coexist with environmental protection measures, fostering a balance between tourism exploitation and biodiversity. This practice serves as a solid model for other regions seeking to rehabilitate industrial lands, demonstrating that private investment and public management can unite to create spaces that are attractive, functional, and environmentally respectful.



## Restoration and Sustainable Management of the Belene Island Wetland

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The "Restoration of the Belene Island Wetland" project focuses on the sustainable management of the largest Bulgarian island in the Danube River, located within the Persina Nature Park. The primary goal was to restore the natural water cycle of the marshes, which had been disrupted by historical drainage and dyke construction. By installing modern sluices and hydraulic infrastructure, the project allows for the controlled flooding of the marshes during high Danube levels. This restoration of the "riverside's lungs" has successfully revived biodiversity, providing essential spawning grounds for native fish species and nesting sites for rare waterfowl, such as the Dalmatian Pelican.

Beyond ecological restoration, the project emphasizes social and economic sustainability through the "Danube Sturgeon" initiative and local eco-tourism development. The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB) and the WWF collaborate to monitor the ecosystem while engaging the local community in conservation efforts. This practice serves as a vital model for riverside sustainability, demonstrating how technical engineering and community participation can work together to protect the Danube's unique natural heritage. The initiative not only preserves the environment but also strengthens the regional identity by promoting the responsible use of natural resources.



MUNICIPIUL CURTEA DE ARGES  
Romania

## RetuRO: Romania's National Return Guarantee System for Sustainable Packaging

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The RetuRO Return Guarantee System is a landmark initiative in Romania's transition toward a circular economy and sustainable water resource protection. Established in 2022 as a unique partnership between the Romanian state and major private sector associations—including brewers, soft drink producers, and retailers—the system was created to manage the national lifecycle of beverage packaging. Its primary goal is to ensure the efficient collection and reuse of single-use containers, significantly reducing the amount of waste that ends up in Romania's rivers and natural landscapes. By formalizing the return process, the system provides a structured response to the environmental impact of industrial packaging, fostering a culture of accountability among both producers and consumers.

The program operates through a highly organized administrative framework designed to optimize the recovery of glass, plastic, and metal materials. By creating a nationwide network of collection points and incentivizing public participation, RetuRO minimizes the leakage of non-biodegradable waste into the environment, thereby protecting vital ecosystems and improving overall urban and rural cleanliness. This collaborative model demonstrates how the public and private sectors can work together to achieve national environmental targets and comply with European sustainability standards. Ultimately, RetuRO serves as a strategic pillar for Romania's sustainable development, proving that efficient resource management is essential for preserving the country's natural heritage for future generations.



## Sustainable Salmonid Farming in Lubietova

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Fish Farm Lubietova utilizes a local mountain stream to breed rainbow trout, brown trout, and Siberian sturgeon year-round. Located at 491 meters above sea level, the farm provides the specific high-oxygen and temperature-controlled environment these species require. The project promotes local engagement by allowing families to catch fish with rods and observe various farm animals, creating an educational and recreational experience focused on riverside sustainability.

The initiative operates independently of financial institutions, relying solely on direct sales and self-funded infrastructure repairs. With a total budget of 100,000 EUR, the future vision includes establishing a local restaurant to serve fresh trout. This goal addresses Slovakia's low per capita fish consumption by providing high-quality, local food options while reinforcing the community's connection to sustainable water resources.



## Sustainable Turbot Aquaculture

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Stolt Sea Farm S.A., based in Boiro and Rianxo (A Coruña, Galicia), operates the world's largest land-based turbot aquaculture production system, producing over 6,500 tons annually. This good practice helps reduce overfishing by providing a sustainable alternative to wild capture, completing the entire turbot lifecycle from egg to harvest (18–24 months) in controlled facilities without extracting fish from coastal ecosystems. The company combines advanced recirculation aquaculture systems (RAS) with seawater flow-through systems, supported by strict disease monitoring, traceability, and water management protocols. As a result, 99% of turbot consumed in Spain now comes from Galician aquaculture rather than wild fishing, proving its effectiveness in protecting marine biodiversity.

The initiative aims to reduce pressure on Atlantic wild turbot stocks, strengthen coastal economic resilience by creating more than 300 stable jobs, and ensure environmental responsibility through certification standards aligned with ASC. Its operations rely on integrated facilities with continuous water-quality monitoring, biosecurity measures, and innovation in aquaculture technology. The program also works closely with research centers such as CETGA and regional marine authorities to improve sustainability and assess environmental impacts. With an estimated investment of €20 million, Stolt Sea Farm promotes transparent and premium seafood supply chains, distributing sustainably farmed turbot across European markets and positioning aquaculture as a key solution for long-term coastal sustainability.



# Collaborators



PROMOTER



Junta de Freguesia de Buarcos  
Portugal



Funded by  
the European Union

PROMOTER



Junta de Freguesia de Buarcos  
Portugal

## NETWORK OF TOWNS

Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme

CERV PROGRAMME Project n° 101249580

# EcoActive Citizens for a Sustainable Europe

Meeting 1

25-28 February 2026

**BUARCOS - FIGUEIRA DA FOZ**  
• PORTUGAL •



Funded by  
the European Union



Welcome to Portugal!

It is with great joy that we welcome participants from 16 countries visiting Buarcos, Figueira da Foz, for the first activity of the European project 'Eco-Active Citizens for a Sustainable Europe.'

Promoted by the Parish Council of Buarcos (Junta de Freguesia de Buarcos), this project reflects a deep pride in a land shaped by the Atlantic, its maritime roots, and the people who, generation after generation, have learned to live in balance with the sea. The ocean is part of the identity of Buarcos — a source of livelihood, culture, resilience, and inspiration — and today, it is also a symbol of our collective responsibility to protect our planet.

In this place where the sea unites people and stories, we welcome cultures, ideas, and experiences from across Europe with a common goal: to promote active citizenship, environmental awareness, and the building of a more sustainable future. May this gathering be a space for sharing, cooperation, and learning, guided by the values of community, solidarity, and respect for nature.

The Buarcos Parish Council expresses its profound gratitude to the European Union, within the framework of the CERV 2025 Programme - Citizens' Town - Network of Towns, for the approval of the project "Eco-Active Citizens for a Sustainable Europe", a recognition that reinforces the importance of civic participation, European cooperation, and commitment to environmental sustainability and the fundamental values of the European Union.

May the sea of Buarcos and the Atlantic Ocean inspire each participant to take home new ideas, new bonds, and the certainty that small local actions can generate great global changes.

Together, we are Eco-Active Citizens for a Sustainable Europe.

**ROSA MARIA MARTINS FERREIRA BAPTISTA**  
President of Junta de Freguesia de Buarcos

## Project Summary

The "EcoActive Citizens for a Sustainable Europe" Project is an initiative promoted by the Buarcos Parish Council, Portugal, which aims to place municipalities and local entities at the center of climate action, transforming climate and environmental challenges into opportunities.

In line with the priorities of the European Union and the European Commission's CERV programme, this Cities Network project has the general objective of encouraging citizens' participation in decision-making related to climate and environmental challenges and, consequently, the future of the EU, and as a priority, building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe, investing in ecological initiatives aimed at improving air and water quality, promoting sustainable agriculture and preserving environmental systems and biodiversity.

At the same time, the aim is to create European networks of citizens who are aware and committed to environmental protection and sustainability and who can promote, in a domino effect, an environmental impact in the different European regions involved.

The project is intended to be developed over 18 months, in collaboration with 14 entities from 14 EU countries, and the organization of 6 thematic meetings, namely in Portugal, Italy, Spain, Malta, France and Hungary, with the participation of more than 4,000 citizens.

Through conferences, round tables, workshops, presentation/contact with good practices, visits to democratic and business institutions, data collection, advertising campaigns, debate and reflection sessions, we aim to reinforce Europe's commitment to environmental protection, raising awareness of priority issues related to environmental protection and sustainable economy, investing in the Circular Economy and sustainability models, as well as raising awareness in communities of the fundamental role of everyone in practices that benefit the environment, modifying our own behavior and encouraging change in others.

## NETWORK OF TOWNS

### What is CERV?

The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme is an EU funding programme launched in 2021 with a duration of seven years. CERV funds projects aimed, among other things, at protecting diversity and civil rights, combating gender-based violence, strengthening citizens' democratic life, and valuing European history.

Its main objectives include protecting and promoting the rights and values enshrined in the EU Treaties, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and various international human rights conventions. In practice, this means promoting and developing open, democratic, equal, inclusive societies based on rights and the rule of law. It also means fostering a dynamic and empowered civil society at local, regional, national, and transnational levels, encouraging democratic, civic, and social participation, and nurturing the rich diversity of European society in line with common values, European history, and collective memory.

- Promote exchanges between citizens of different countries, particularly through networks of towns, to give them practical experience of the wealth and diversity of the Union's shared heritage and raise awareness that this constitutes the foundation for a common future.
- Develop sustainable networks of towns, deepening and intensifying their cooperation, while outlining common activities to promote Union values and fundamental rights, as well as their long-term vision for the future of European integration.
- Inclusively support citizens' engagement and participation in democratic life and public policymaking at the local level.

Among other priorities, the programme will support:

- Encouraging citizen engagement and democratic participation at local, national, and EU levels, promoting European citizenship, shared values, and democratic standards.
- Supporting citizens' involvement, including children, in public life, and promoting democratic participation, gender equality, and representation in local decision-making.
- Promoting democratic participation through cultural activities, including projects inspired by or aligned with the New European Bauhaus initiative.

Activities may include, among others: workshops, seminars, conferences, training activities, coaching, expert meetings, webinars, awareness-raising activities, high-visibility events, data collection and consultations, development, exchanges, and dissemination of good practices among authorities and civil society organisations, development of communication tools, and the use of social media.

## · CERV PROGRAMME ·

# MEETING “Coastal Sustainability: the sea, the land and the community”

### February 25 – Wednesday

- Arrival of participants at Porto Airport.
- Transfer to Buarcos and accommodation.
- Welcome speech.
- Dinner.

### February 26 – Thursday

- 08:45** Departure from accommodation.
- 09:15** Welcome (University of Coimbra – Figueira da Foz Campus).
- 09:30** Presentation of the 7 participating countries (5 minutes per country).
- 10:15** Workshop/Conference: “Sustainable Fishing – Preservation of Marine Resources” (Ivan Viegas, researcher at the University of Coimbra).
- 10:45** Coffee break.
- 11:15** Presentation of the remaining 7 countries.
- 12:30** Reception by the Municipality of Figueira da Foz.
- 13:30** Lunch.
- 15:00** Visit to the Salt Museum / Presentation–Contribution of MARE-UC to the marine ecosystem in Figueira da Foz.
- 16:00** Visit to Docapesca/Formar.
- 17:30** Free time.
- 20:00** Dinner.

### February 27 – Friday

- 09:15** Departure from the hotel.
- 09:45** Trindade Theatre – Buarcos;  
**Conference:** Training in Blue Literacy for Sustainable Development. (Speakers: Ana Cristina Rocha and Irene Gutierrez, MARE, ARNET, University of Coimbra)
- 10:30** Coffee break.
- 11:00** Creation of the 1st e-book. Reading of texts by representatives of the countries about the work done for the creation of the book.
- 12:00** Signing of the Friendship Pact.  
Group photo.
- 13:00** Lunch.
- 15:00** Visit to Buarcos / Marine Museum.
- 17:00** Free time.
- 20:00** Dinner.

### February 28 – Saturday

- 10:00** Departure of participants.  
Transfer to Porto.  
Visit to Porto.



**MEETING 1**  
Buarcos / Figueira da Foz  
Portugal • 25 - 28 February 2026



**MEETING 2**  
Santiago de Compostela  
Spain • 1 - 4 March 2026



**MEETING 3**  
Martinique / Fort de France  
France • 5 - 9 May 2026



**MEETING 4**  
Treviso / Venice  
Italy • 28 Sep. - 1 Oct. 2026



**MEETING 5**  
Safi - La Valletta  
Malta • 15 - 18 December 2026



**MEETING 6**  
Héhalom / Budapest  
Hungary • 19 - 22 February 2027

## PARTNERSHIP



1. FREGUESIA DE BUARCOS - Portugal
2. MUNICIPALITY OF KLANJEC - Croatia
3. MUNICIPALITY OF SAFI - Malta
4. MUNICIPALITY OF REZEKNE - Latvia
5. MUNICIPALITY OF SUHINDOL - Bulgaria
6. MUNICIPALITY OF CURTEA DE ARGES - Romania
7. MUNICIPALITY OF LWOWEK SLASKI - Poland
8. MUNICIPALITY OF HÉHALOM - Hungary
9. MUNICIPALITY OF BUSINCE - Slovakia
10. ASSOCIATION POUR LE SOUTIEN A LA CITOYENNETE EUROPEENNE - France
11. THE ORGANIZATION FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION & DEVELOPMENT - Finland
12. CENTRO EDUCATIVO DI PROGETTAZIONE E HOSTING INTERNAZIONALE - Italy
13. ONE TERRENE INTERNATIONAL GROUP - Cyprus
14. ASOCIACION XUVENIL VRENZA - Spain



# INFO PACK – MEETING I

## NETWORK OF TOWNS - CERV PROGRAMME EcoActive Citizens for a Sustainable Europe

**PROMOTER:** Junta de Freguesia de Buarcos (Figueira da Foz - Portugal)

**PROJECT NUMBER:** 101249580

**HOST:** Junta de Freguesia de Buarcos

**VENUE:** Buarcos (Portugal)

**TOPIC :** Coastal sustainability: the sea, the land and the community

### DATES OF THE ACTIVITY

EVENT	ARRIVAL DAY	DEPARTURE DAY	DURATION
Event I – Portugal	25 February 2026	28 February 2026	3 nights

### PARTNERSHIP AND PARTICIPANTS FUNDED

MUNICIPALITY / ENTITY	COUNTRY	PARTICIPANTS
Junta de Freguesia de Buarcos	Portugal	Host partner
Asociación Xuvenil Vrenza	Spain	2
Kunsill Lokali Safi	Malta	1
One Tirrene International	Cyprus	1
Rezeknes Novada Pasvaldibas Iestade Maltas Apvienibas Parvalde	Latvia	1
Association pour le Soutien à la Citoyenneté Européenne	France (Martinique)	1
Municipiul Curtea de Argeş	Romania	1
Gmina i Miasto Lwówek Śląski	Poland	1
The Organization for Poverty Alleviation & Development	Finland	1
Grad Klanjec	Croatia	2
Hehalom Község Önkormányzata	Hungary	1
Obec Bušince	Slovakia	4

### REGISTRATION FORM

- Please register the participants selected by your organization to participate in the event.
- It is important to type correctly the name and surname as we will purchase the tickets using this information.
- If you have any special needs, do not hesitate to mention. The information is strictly confidential

**DEADLINE:** 15 of January



Funded by  
the European Union

MEETING I – BUARCOS (FIGUEIRA DA FOZ – PORTUGAL) - 25-28 FEBRUARY 2026

**EcoActive Citizens for a Sustainable Europe**

## TRAVELLING TO BUARCOS

- As soon as you fill in the registration form, the organizers will send you the best itinerary matching the budget and the comfort of the participants. If you agree with the itinerary, the flights will be purchased and send them to you. Ideally, we will all fly to Porto airport (OPO).
- **REMEMBER:** flight tickets will be bought in economical class including hand luggage (10kg) + small bag fitting under the seat.
- Your final destination will be Porto (POR), the nearest airport to the beautiful city of Buarcos (Figueira da Foz).

**IMPORTANT** if one of the participants does not attend the meeting the sending organization will have to pay for the entire ticket. The European Commission only pays the travel costs for attending participants.

**EXCEPTIONS ARE** hospitalization or death of the person or a first degree relative (duly justified).

During the project we will be discovering the region around Figueira da Foz and its wonderful Atlantic area. **UNFORTUNATELY**, there will not be time to visit Porto, however, we invite you to stay longer in Portugal (on your own expenses) making the most of this experience.

## TRANSFERS FROM / TO AIRPORT

- Transfers by bus or minivan from Sa Carneiro Porto Airport (OPO) to Buarcos will be arranged during the arrival day
- It will take about 1h 30 minutes to arrive. Same to take you back to Porto airport on the return.
- TRANSFERS will be arranged once all the flight tickets are purchased and we will duly inform you the schedule.

## INSURANCE POLICY

- Participants will have travel insurance from the 25-28 February. This insurance will be sent before the meeting to the participants.
- We also recommend you issue your European Health Card as it is valid in Portugal
- The policy will also cover against loss or baggage damage, fatal accidents and repatriation or the hospitalization of a first degree relative

## ACCOMMODATION



All participants will be hosted at the following hotel

**HOTEL EXE WELLINGTON \*\*\*\***

Participants will be allocated in double twin rooms sharing with another participant **UNLESS** they mark “single room” on the registration form.

Buffet breakfast will be served on the hotel.

**IMPORTANT** - The items in the minibar are not covered by the project. You must pay for them when checking out.



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MEETING I – BUARCOS (FIGUEIRA DA FOZ – PORTUGAL) - 25-28 FEBRUARY 2026

**EcoActive Citizens for a Sustainable Europe**

## MEALS

- The organizers have selected a range of traditional restaurants to give to know the delegations the rich kitchen.
- Every meal will be based on a first course, main dish and dessert plus water. Other beverages can be order and paid by the participants.
- Do not forget to mention if you have any diet restrictions.

## PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANT SELECTED

Your entity is responsible for selecting **one participant** to attend this first event. It will be the kickoff meeting and we kindly ask you to invite the maximum authority (mayor-vice-mayor-councilor or president, vice president) as there will be a symbolic brotherhood ceremony (see next point). If no elected person can attend, it will be valid if the Mayor appoints another person.

Regarding the profile of the participants, we would appreciate it they could communicate in English/Portuguese or Spanish.

Apart from that, every citizen is welcome, politicians, young leaders, project managers, teachers, entrepreneurs...

Of course, as it is a project funded by European Commission, every participant must respect other cultures, people and the principle basis of the European Union.

## DRESS CODE

Apart from the brotherhood ceremony, where the legal representative or the appointed person is invited to dress up, the other activities will be implemented in a non formal dress code.

Remember to pack warm clothes as it is winter, although we are in the South of Europe.

## GIFTS

During the brotherhood ceremony our Mayor will give every partner a symbolic present.

In total, we wouldn't recommend you to bring more than three presents:

- President of Buarcos
- Mayor of Figueira da Foz
- National Deputy of the Portuguese Parliament

## CONTACTS

[network.buarcos@gmail.com](mailto:network.buarcos@gmail.com)

## WHAT TO PREPARE

- A little presentation of your entity and country. Free format: oral, presentation, video etc. You will have to present it in front of the other delegations and students from Buarcos .
- By the 19 of January, we need from you a little description of one good practice (initiative, measure), in your country regarding Circular Economy and Sustainable Resource Management
- Send us your logo in good quality to start designing the materials: leaflets, photocalls, banners, roll-ups, lanyards and other documents.



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MEETING I – BUARCOS (FIGUEIRA DA FOZ – PORTUGAL) - 25-28 FEBRUARY 2026

**EcoActive Citizens for a Sustainable Europe**

## DAILY DRAFT PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

### COASTAL SUSTAINABILITY: THE SEA, THE LAND AND THE COMMUNITY

#### WEDNESDAY 25 FEBRUARY

- Arrival to Porto Airport
- Transfer to Buarcos
- Check-in
- Welcome dinner

#### THURSDAY 26 FEBRUARY

- Breakfast
- Departure from the hotel
- Welcome meeting with the Mayor of Figueira da Foz

#### GROUP PICTURE

- Presentation of every entity & country

Portugal – Spain – Malta – Cyprus – Latvia – France

#### COFFEE BREAK

- Presentation of every entity & country

Romania – Finland – Poland – Croatia – Hungary – Slovakia

#### LUNCH TIME

- Visit to the Port of Figueira da Foz: a competitive factor for the Coimbra Region
- Connecting to the origins: museum of salt

#### DINNER TIME

#### FRIDAY 27 FEBRUARY

- Breakfast
- Departure from the hotel
- Meeting with technicians of Marefoz Laboratory:
- WORKSHOP – Sustainable Fishing – Preservation of Marine resources
- CONFERENCE – Blue Literacy Training for sustainable development
- Understanding sustainable fishing at the fish and seafood market

#### LUNCH

- Brotherhood signature ceremony
- Opening speech by National Deputy of the Portuguese Assembly
- Traditional Portuguese Folklore
- Closing speech by Rosa Baptista, president of Buarcos
- Evaluation of the meeting and preparation of next events

#### SATURDAY 28 FEBRUARY

- Breakfast
- Check in



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MEETING I – BUARCOS (FIGUEIRA DA FOZ – PORTUGAL) - 25-28 FEBRUARY 2026

**EcoActive Citizens for a Sustainable Europe**

PROMOTER



Junta de Freguesia  
de Buarcos - Portugal



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## NETWORK OF TOWNS

Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme

CERV PROGRAMME Project n° 101249580

# EcoActive Citizens for a Sustainable Europe

## Meeting 1

25-28 February 2026

**BUARCOS - FIGUEIRA DA FOZ**  
**• PORTUGAL •**



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DE BUARCOS  
Portugal

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UVENIL VRENZA  
Spain

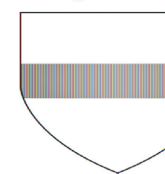


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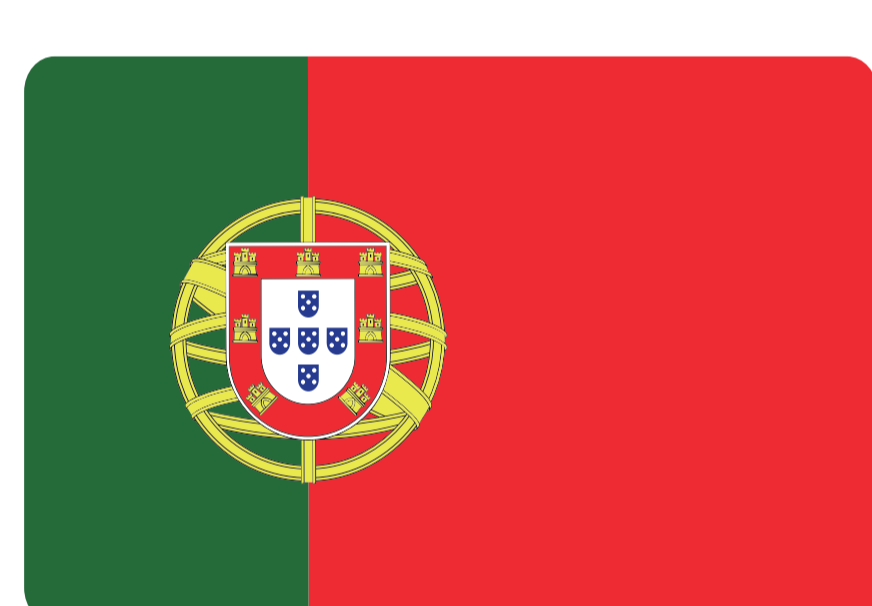
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Citizens, Equality,  
Rights and Values Programme

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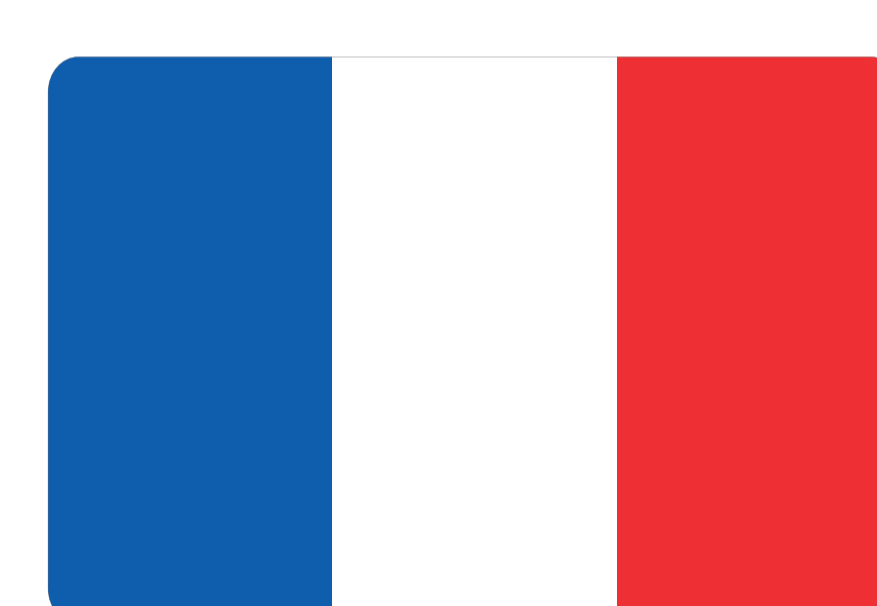
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MEETING 1



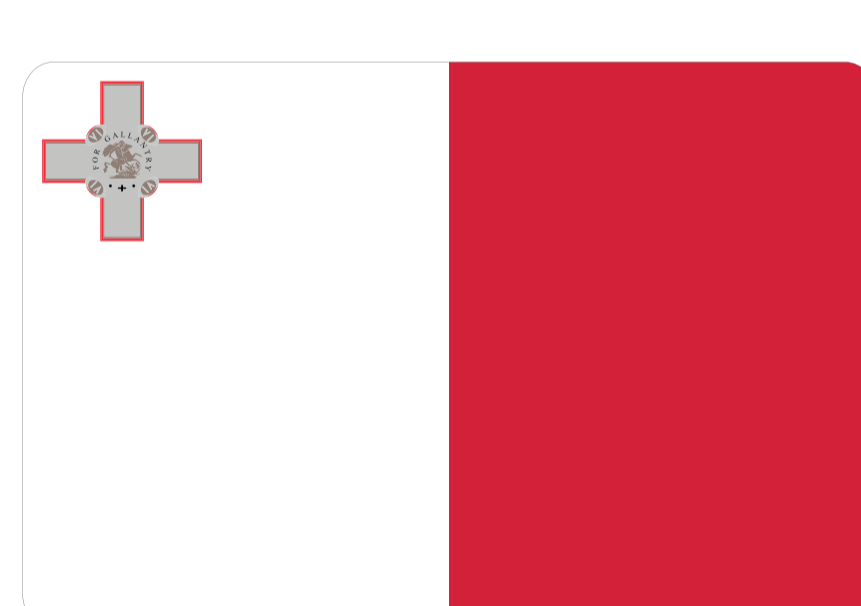
MEETING 2



MEETING 3



MEETING 4



MEETING 5



MEETING 6

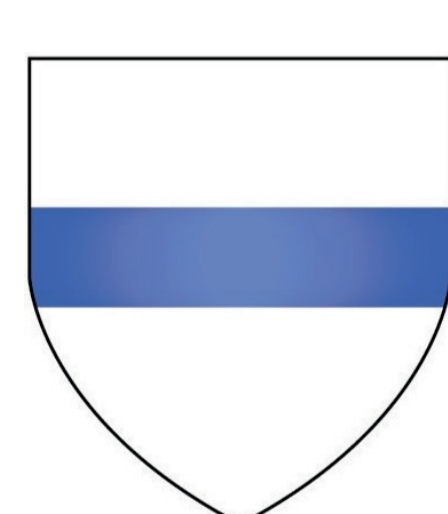
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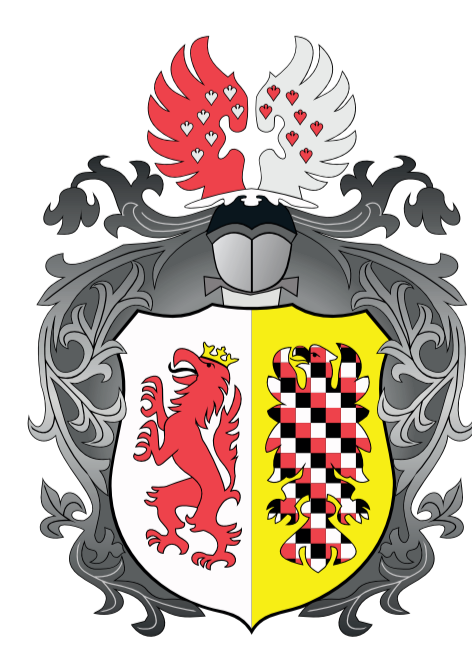
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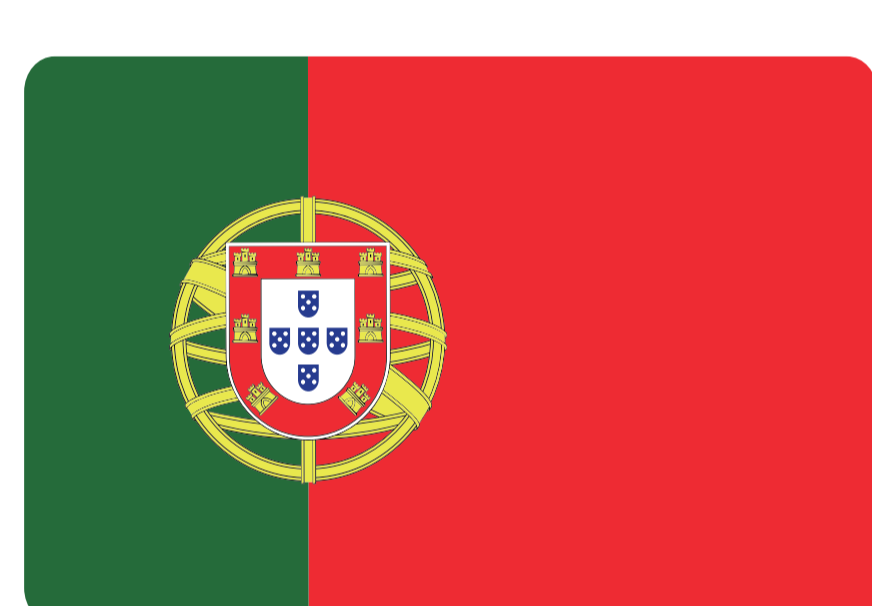
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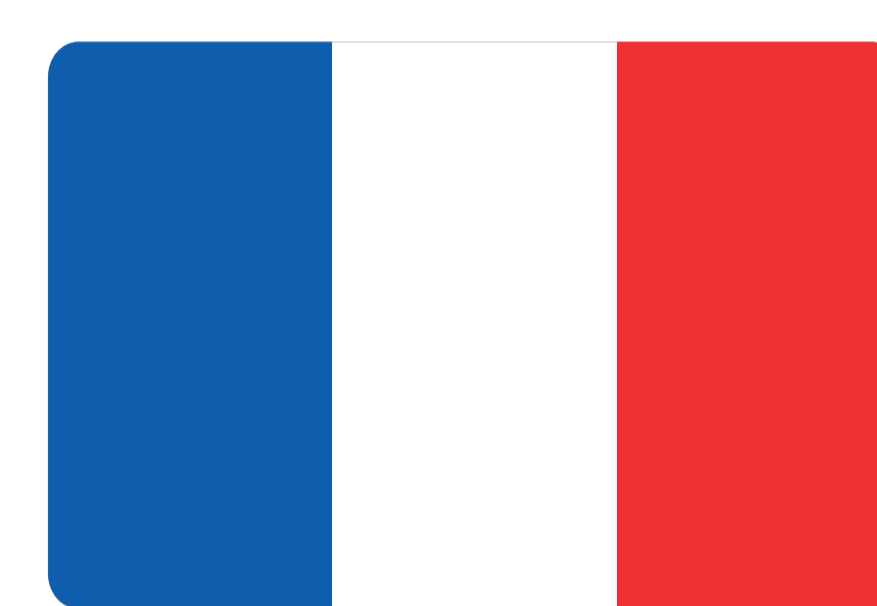
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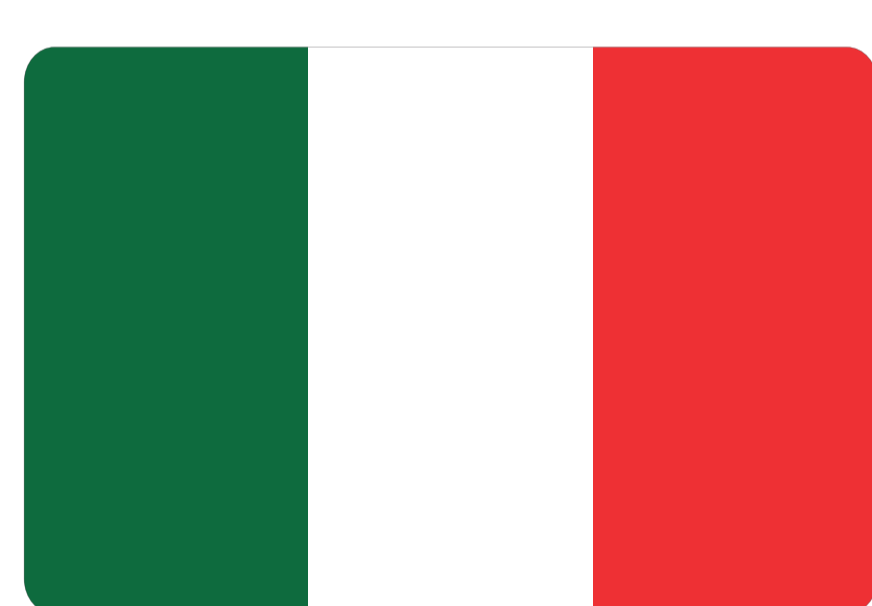
MEETING 1



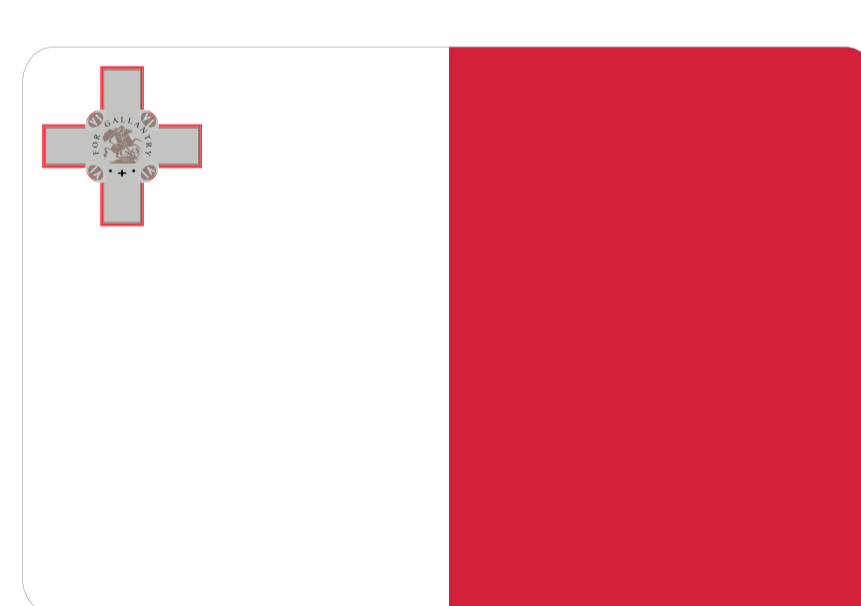
MEETING 2



MEETING 3



MEETING 4



MEETING 5



MEETING 6

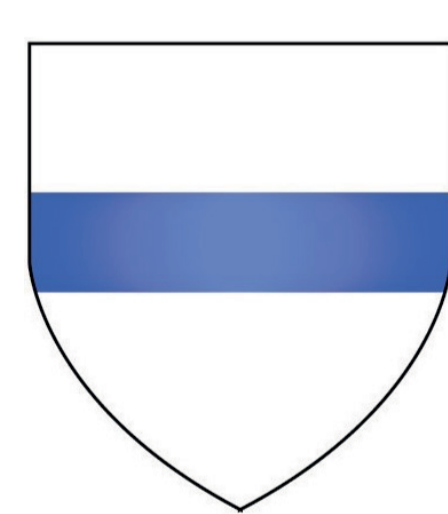
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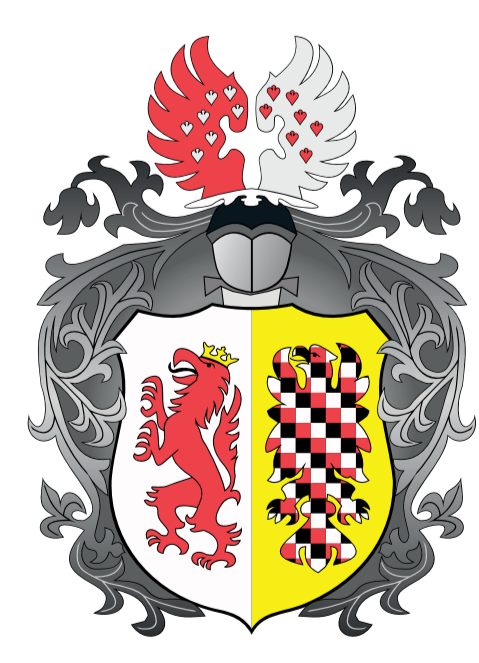
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# EcoActive Citizens for a Sustainable Europe

## EVENTS



### MEETING 1

Buarcos / Figueira da Foz  
Portugal • 25 - 28 February 2026



### MEETING 2

Santiago de Compostela  
Spain • 1 - 4 March 2026



### MEETING 3

Martinique / Fort de France  
France • 5 - 9 May 2026



### MEETING 4

Treviso - Venice  
Italy • 28 Sep. - 1 Oct. 2026



### MEETING 5

Safi - La Valletta  
Malta • 15 - 18 December 2026



### MEETING 6

Héhalom / Budapest  
Hungary • 19 - 22 February 2027

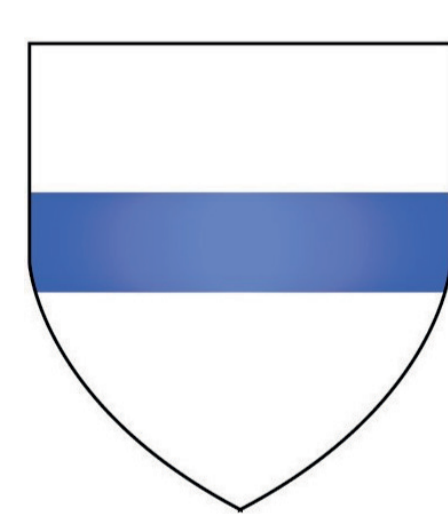
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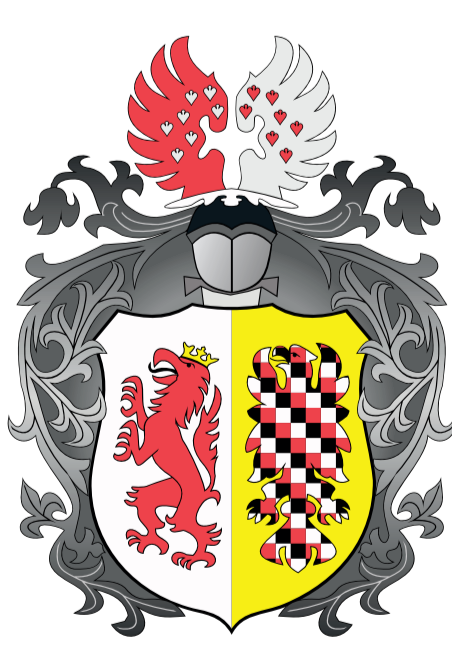
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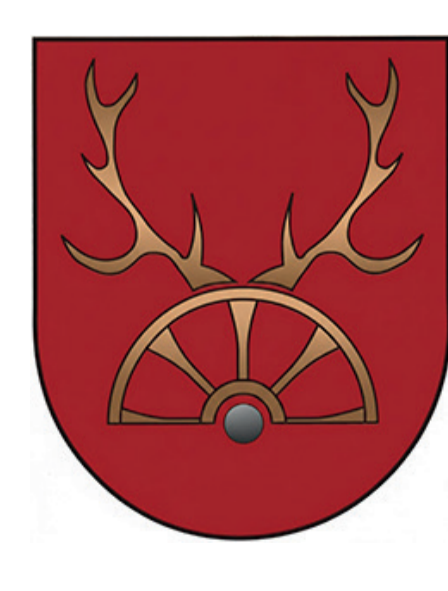
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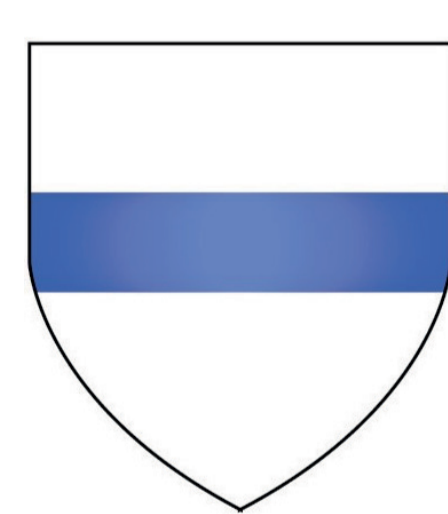
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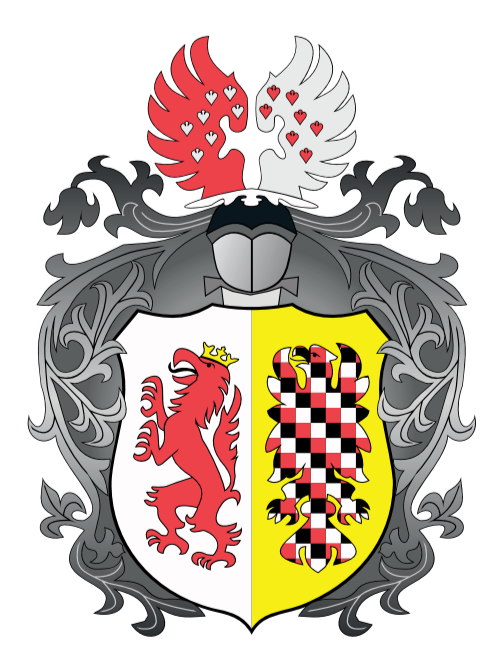
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