

Food4CE



# Strengthening Innovation Capacities Among Central European Alternative Food Networks

# DRIVING INNOVATION IN ALTERNATIVE FOOD NETWORKS

Over the past few months, the Food4CE project has achieved important milestones towards strengthening Central European Alternative Food Networks (AFNs). The launch of the **Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP)**, the **Matchmaking Platform (MP)**, and the establishment of **5 Innovation Hubs** in all participating countries (Slovenia, Austria, Italy, Hungary, and Poland) mark a significant step forward in fostering collaboration, sharing logistics expertise, and supporting sustainable food systems.

The **Innovation Hubs** serve as local development centers tailored to address the specific needs of AFNs in each region. These hubs foster regional innovation and community engagement, enabling stakeholders to co-create solutions that benefit both producers and consumers. To facilitate knowledge transfer, co-create innovative solutions, and foster matchmaking opportunities among AFN stakeholders, Innovation Hubs will provide their members with two essential tools: the **Knowledge Transfer Platform** and the **Matchmaking Platform**.



The **Knowledge Transfer Platform** serves as an **online tool, designed to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices among AFNs**, addressing logistical challenges and fostering short, sustainable food supply chains.

It offers a range of features, including **knowledge transfer on logistic solutions**, **showcases best practices**, has **interactive learning materials** and an **interactive AFNs map**. The platform aims to optimize AFN activities, reduce costs, and improve resource management, strengthening the connection between local producers and consumers within a circular and sustainable economy.



The **Matchmaking Platform**, designed as a **web-based 'marketplace' tool**, aims to **facilitate the development of new logistical solutions and services for AFNs** by fostering innovative partnerships, enhancing logistics services, and promoting sustainable practices. In doing so, it will play a key role in transforming the alternative food sector, making it more efficient, sustainable, and equitable.

In the upcoming months, Innovation Hubs will also expand its activities, further strengthening their role as key drivers of local innovation and collaboration. Additionally, **the groundwork for the creation of a Transnational Innovation Hub is being prepared**, which will bring together stakeholders from across Central Europe to promote cross-border collaboration and drive systemic change.

In this newsletter we provide an outlook of the launch activities for each Innovation Hub, as well as an update on the main activities carried out by the consortium, along with the latest news and upcoming events.



# FOOD4CE INNOVATION HUBS

## Slovenian Innovation Hub - ORbITaLA

The ORbITaLA Innovation Hub is a dynamic platform designed to tackle some of the most pressing challenges facing AFNs in Slovenia - **digitalization, advanced logistics, and transport.**

By fostering collaboration, innovation, and practical problem-solving, the hub provides stakeholders with the tools and expertise needed to overcome their daily challenges of delivering goods to their customers.

Through real-world examples of best practices, tailored solutions, and personalized support, the ORbITaLA brings together experts from the logistics sector and research to collaborate with AFNs, working to overcome these challenges effectively. **Practical workshops, co-creation sessions, and advisory services** are at the heart of this approach, ensuring that solutions are not only innovative but also actionable and relevant.



The ORbITaLA Innovation Hub aspires to become **Slovenia's leading training and advisory centre for AFNs**, supporting their growth at every stage of development and paving the way for a more sustainable and efficient future in food supply chains.

## Sustainable solutions for local food and logistics

The launch event of the ORbITaLA Innovation Hub was held on **November 14th** online. The aim of the event was to present the activities that will be carried out within the Innovation Hub. Guest speakers at the event included:

- **Danijela Kocuvan**, Innovation Hub Local Point at RDA Podravje;
- **Maršenka Marksel**, UM FGPA;
- **Klemen Hartman**, Krapše, d. o. o.;
- **Simona Sternad Vogrin**, Kmetijska zadruga Rače;
- **Gorazd Kocbek**, Oljarna Kocbek; and
- **Martin Pečar**, OmniOpti.

[Read more](#)



*As the demand for locally produced food grows, new business opportunities open up for AFNs and suppliers to deliver food directly to consumers. This approach benefits the wider community and boosts the local economy.*

*Danijela Kocuvan, RDA Podravje*

### ORbITaLA contact information

**Regional Development Agency for Podravje - Maribor**

#### Location:

Virtual & physical  
(RDAPM, Pobreška cesta 20, 2000 Maribor)

#### Operating hours:

On-line: every day  
Live: Wednesday, 8:00-13:00

#### Contact point:

mag. Danijela Kocuvan,  
danijela.kocuvan@rra-podravje.si



# FOOD4CE INNOVATION HUBS

## Austrian Innovation Hub - Future Food Connective

The Future Food Connective Innovation Hub serves as a **dynamic platform for connecting diverse stakeholders, enabling them to collaboratively address challenges and enhance their operations** through interactive problem-solving.

These processes are integrated into the Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP), ensuring alignment with broader innovation and development goals.

Involved stakeholders include **higher education and research institutions**, as well as innovative SMEs and business support organizations like WKW.

Additionally, the Innovation Hub engages with **public authorities at all levels**, including local entities like Stadtwerke, regional counterparts, and national authorities, such as the Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation, and Technology.



By fostering collaboration across these sectors, the Austrian Innovation Hub aims to **drive sustainable innovation, strengthen stakeholder networks, and contribute to the development of impactful solutions** for the region.

## Building stronger local food networks through better logistics

The activities carried out by the Austrian Innovation Hub were also reported in one of the country's leading newspapers, **Die Presse**.

[Read more](#)



*In Austria, we have great competence of alternative food networks at all levels, but each participant also has weaknesses - either in logistics, sustainability or efficiency improvement measures.*

*David Strauß, UAS BFI Vienna*

## Future Food Connective contact information

**BFI University of Applied Sciences in Vienna**

### Location:

UAS BFI Vienna, Wohlmutstraße 22, 1020 Wien

### Operating hours:

Monday - Thursday, 10:00-16:00 (online, via mail)

### Contact point:

David Strauß, David.Strauss@fh-vie.ac.at





# FOOD4CE INNOVATION HUBS

## Italian Innovation Hub - Localog

The Localog Innovation Hub is committed to fostering collaboration among Alternative Food Networks and other stakeholders to **advance a sustainable and resilient regional food system**.

Its primary goals include **providing continuous support to AFNs** as they grow and evolve, while also **facilitating the development of collaborative initiatives and innovative projects** that contribute to long-term systemic change.

The Innovation Hub aims to **identify and promote best practices and innovative solutions**, particularly in logistics and business models, while engaging stakeholders through a participatory process to develop a comprehensive regional action plan.



The Innovation Hub envisions playing a key role in shaping a shared vision for a sustainable and resilient food system. It will provide a dedicated support for the progress of AFNs, helping them overcome challenges and seize new opportunities. Localog will also prioritize the **design and implementation of collaborative initiatives and projects that further strengthen the regional food ecosystem**, ensuring long-term impact and sustainability.

## Sustainable logistical solutions for the short supply chain

The Localog Innovation Hub was launched on **November 19th** in Bologna. During the launch event, the two key tools developed within the Food4CE project - the Knowledge Transfer Platform and the Matchmaking Platform - were presented for the first time.

[Read more](#)



*ITL has been working for years to promote innovation and sustainable development in logistics and transport. Through this project, we aim to strengthen the logistical, economic and environmental capacities of the entities involved in the sector.*

*Lorenzo Cello, ITL*

### Localog contact information

**ITL - Institute for Transport and Logistics Foundation**

#### Location:

Viale Aldo Moro 38, Bologna

#### Operating hours:

Monday - Friday, 10:00-17:00 (online, via mail)

#### Contact point:

Lorenzo Cello, [lorenzo.cello@fondazioneitl.org](mailto:lorenzo.cello@fondazioneitl.org)



# FOOD4CE INNOVATION HUBS

## Hungarian Innovation Hub - Food4Health

The FOOD4Health Innovation Hub is committed to **enhancing the competitiveness of producers and processors** by expanding their market opportunities and fostering greater integration, digitalization, and education.

Its goal is to **optimize the management of agricultural products along the food value chain** through advanced digital tools and data-driven decision-making.

The hub provides a comprehensive range of services, including **data management, automation, and communication solutions**.



By leveraging these technologies, FOOD4Health Innovation Hub aims to **empower stakeholders to make informed, data-based decisions, driving efficiency and innovation across the Agri-Food sector**.



## Supporting AFNs in Hungary

The Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences (MATE) proudly inaugurated the Food4Health Innovation Hub on **December 5th** during the International Food Industry Professional Days conference held at the MATE Buda Campus in Budapest. During the event, the inaugural meeting of the Food4Health Advisory Board was also held.

[Read more](#)



*Food4Health IH aims to serve as a collaborative space for diverse stakeholders. It will promote short supply chains, encourage digitalization, and facilitate knowledge-sharing to address the challenges of sustainable food production and distribution.*

*Géza Hitka, MATE*

## FOOD4Health contact information Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Science

### Location:

H-1118 Budapest, Villányi út 29-43, Building D

### Operating hours:

On-line: every day

Live: Friday, 8:00-13:00

### Contact point:

Géza Hitka, [hitka.geza@uni-mate.hu](mailto:hitka.geza@uni-mate.hu)





# FOOD4CE INNOVATION HUBS

## Polish Innovation Hub - PULS

The PULS Innovation Hub is dedicated to **driving innovation** and **sustainability** within the **Agri-Food sector** by addressing key challenges and opportunities.

Its objectives include **developing comprehensive business plans**, **conducting profitability analyses**, **optimizing production intensity** - whether increasing, decreasing, or transitioning to greener practices - and **evaluating the sustainability of farms**.

Additionally, the hub focuses on **assessing and reducing logistics costs** to enhance the efficiency of short food supply chains. A core focus of the innovation hub is identifying the strengths and weaknesses of farms operating within short food supply chains.



By analyzing these dynamics, the hub aims to improve overall efficiency, strengthen the role of short supply chains in the agri-food sector, and enhance their competitiveness. A key priority is fostering greater integration and collaboration among stakeholders involved in short supply chains, creating a more cohesive and resilient ecosystem.

## Innovative and sustainable solutions for local food logistics

On **November 27th**, the Poznań University of Life Sciences (PULS) officially launched the Polish Innovation Hub. The event focused on the theme “Sustainable logistics solutions in local food supply chains”.

[Read more](#)



*We are excited to launch the Polish Innovation Hub, which represents a significant step towards strengthening short food supply chains in Poland, promoting sustainable logistics solutions, and fostering the adoption of digital tools to optimize local processes.*

*Alina Nowotarska, PULS*

## PULS contact information Poznan University of Life Science

### Location:

60-637 Poznań, ul. Wojska Polskiego 28/823

### Operating hours:

On-line: every day

Live: Monday, 12:00-14:00; Wednesday, 10:00-12:00

### Contact point:

Alina Nowotarska,  
alina.nowotarska@up.poznan.pl





# FOOD4CE TRANSNATIONAL INNOVATION HUB

## The role of local Innovation Hubs and the importance of transnational collaboration

In addition to the 5 local Innovation Hubs, the Food4CE project will also establish one Transnational Innovation Hub (TIH).

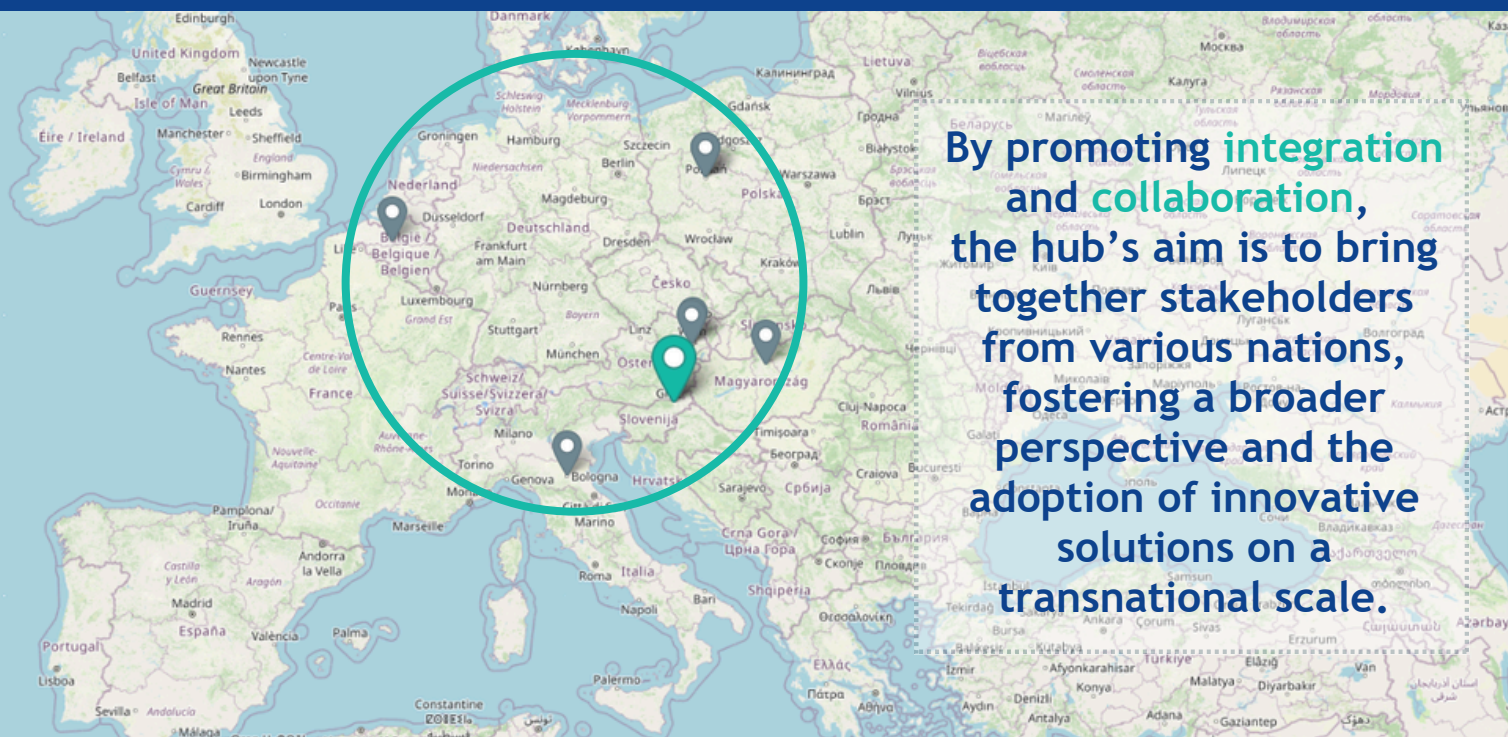
Both transnational and national Innovation Hubs will play crucial yet distinct roles in advancing short food supply chains and AFNs in Central Europe.

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

TIH as a collaborative platform will enable sharing of experiences, best practices, and needs across national borders, enhancing collective knowledge.

Additionally, the hub will foster a unique mutual support network, encouraging cooperation among regional hubs from different countries in order to address common challenges, share insights, and improve the overall functionality of AFNs in Central Europe.

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.



# KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PLATFORM

## All you need to know about the KTP

Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP) is a new digital tool, designed to support Alternative Food Networks in Central Europe. This innovative platform helps local food networks overcome logistical challenges, promote sustainability, and enhance the resilience of short food supply chains.

## What is the KTP and how does it work?

The KTP is an interactive online platform, designed to facilitate knowledge exchange and best practices among AFN stakeholders, including local producers, cooperatives, farmers' markets, logistics operators, and sustainability-conscious consumers. Its main goal is to centralize information, solutions, and tools that can optimize business models and improve the efficiency of short food supply chains.

## Who can benefit from the KTP?

The platform is designed for all actors involved in short food supply chains, including:



**Local producers**, searching for solutions on how to improve logistics efficiency.



**Cooperatives and solidarity purchasing groups**, seeking more efficient and sustainable logistics models.



**Logistics operators and digital marketplaces**, interested in developing new solutions for short supply chain distribution.



**Policymakers and researchers**, who can use the platform to analyze and support AFNs in the transition toward more sustainable food systems.

## FEATURES

**Access a collection of best practices** implemented across European countries to improve AFNs logistics, shown on an interactive map.

**Explore a range of logistics solutions** in areas, such as transport, warehousing, and packaging, and find the one that suits best to your needs.

**Utilize training materials** to deepen your understanding of local food supply chain management.

**Discover innovative business models** with a focus on digitalization, sustainability, and transparency in food supply chains.



Watch the promo video



Visit the KTP





# MATCHMAKING PLATFORM

## A digital tool to support the development of business solutions and logistics services

The Matchmaking Platform (MP) is a new digital tool designed to support the development of business solutions and logistics services for AFNs.

This online space will serve as a **connection hub for producers, consumers, transport operators, and marketplaces**, fostering strategic partnerships and improving the efficiency of sustainable food logistics.

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

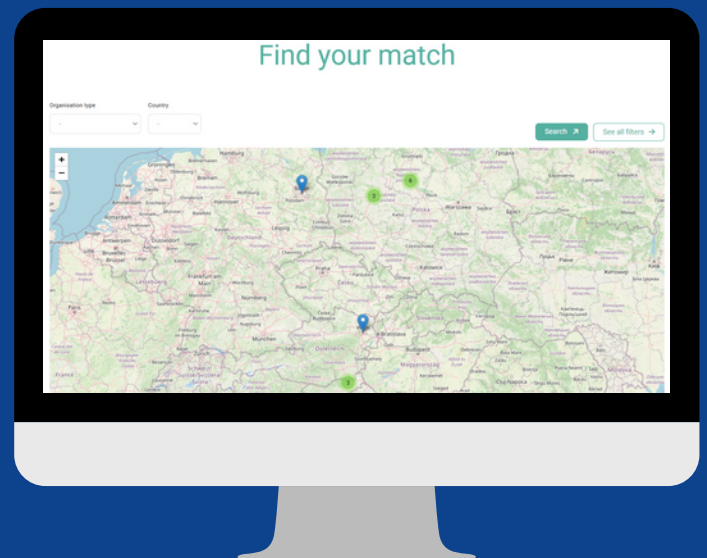
By achieving these goals, the Matchmaking Platform (MP) will play an **important role in transforming the alternative food sector**, making it more **efficient, sustainable, and equitable**.

## FEATURES

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

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

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



Home Find your match Business opportunities Events & meetups About Dashboard



MATCHMAKING PLATFORM



Visit the MP



# LATEST NEWS

## Food4CE project meeting in Vienna



On 27th and 28th of September 2024, the Food4CE project meeting was held in Vienna, hosted by the Austrian partners UAS BFI Vienna and ECONSULT. At the meeting project's progress, goals achieved, and important steps to be taken in the upcoming months were discussed.



The meeting served as a good opportunity to learn about several real case demonstrations from various operators, who are bringing their sustainable innovations to city logistics in Vienna, and beyond.



[Click for more](#)



[Watch the video](#)



# LATEST EVENTS

## Food4CE at the International Agriculture and Food Fair in Gornja Radgona, Slovenia



Food4CE joined the AGRA 2024 Agricultural and Food Fair, held from August 24th to 29th in Gornja Radgona, Slovenia. The Regional Development Agency for Podravje - Maribor, in cooperation with its partners, organised a varied and stimulating programme that attracted numerous visitors and enriched the event. The event addressed key challenges and opportunities in agriculture, sustainable food production and tourism.

[Click for more](#)



## Food4CE at the 2024 Agrifood Innovation Festival in Bologna, Italy

On November 14th the Italian partner ITL presented Food4CE at the Agrifood Innovation Festival in Bologna, Italy, organized by Food Hub. The event was a great opportunity to connect with innovative start-ups, corporates, researchers and professionals operating in this field.

[Click for more](#)



## Food4CE at the Conference on Current Trends in Organic Agriculture 2024 in Maribor, Slovenia



On October 16th the Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Maribor became a hub for expert dialogue as it hosted the 12th conference on Current Trends in Organic Farming 2024. Mag. Danijela Kocuvan from RDA Podravje - Maribor delivered a presentation on Alternative Food Networks.

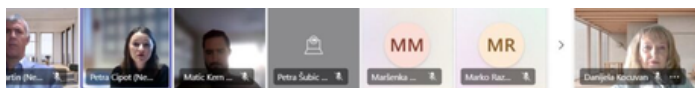
[Click for more](#)





# LATEST EVENTS

## Sustainable logistics highlighted at the webinar organised by the ORbITaLA Innovation Hub



### MURSKA SOBOTA TRANSPORT D.O.O. - STORITVE (PREVOZ)

- Vozila omogočajo dvorežimski temperaturni sistem (+5 °C/-20 °C), kar pomeni, da lahko hkrati prevažajo hrano pri dveh različnih temperaturnih režimih. Ena stran vozila je ohlajena za zamrznjena živila, druga pa na višji temperaturi za hladjena živila.
- Pri tem imajo:
  - hladilnike,
  - dvorežimske priklole za najem (+5/-20 °C) vzpostavljen HACCP in IFS za skladišče (nehlajeni del) in kamione.



On January 29th, the Slovenian Innovation Hub ORbITaLA successfully organized the first co-creation workshop, which explored key opportunities for optimizing transport costs, promoting the use of electric vehicles, and efficiently integrating outsourcing into logistics processes. The workshop focused on practical examples to show, how to accurately calculate costs for different vehicle types, distances and shipment sizes.

[Click for more](#)



## Food production and distribution, safety and logistics aspects webinar organized by PULS

On September 11th, the second webinar dedicated to the creation of the Polish Innovation Hub was organized. The discussion covered key topics, such as the Matchmaking Platform, new technologies for fruit storage and logistics, and the impact of logistics and promotion on market success. Additionally, insights on healthy eating and short food supply chains were shared."

[Click for more](#)



### II WEBINARIUM

Tytuł projektu: **Strengthening Innovation Capacities Among Central European Alternative Food Networks** (tłum.PL: Wzmacnianie innowacyjnego potencjału środkowoeuropejskich alternatywnych sieci żywności)

Akronim projektu: **Food4CE**

Rodzaj konkursu: Interreg Central Europe 2021-2027

Okres realizacji projektu 36 miesięcy.

Data rozpoczęcia projektu: 01.03.2023.

Data zakończenia projektu: 28.02.2026.



Check out our website  
to stay updated  
on the latest  
Food4CE  
events!





# UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

## Food4CE Consortium prepares for the next project meeting in Bologna, Italy

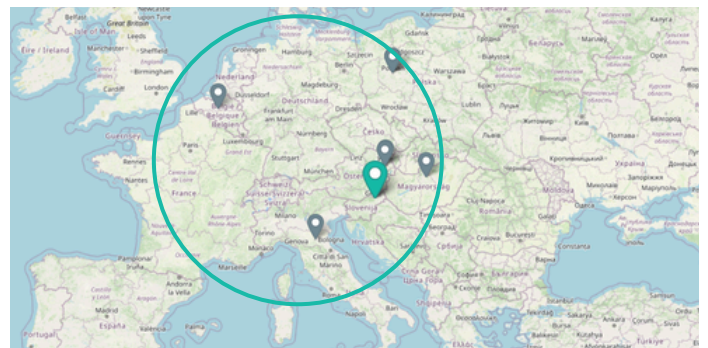


On April 2nd and 3rd 2025, the next project meeting will be held in Bologna, Italy, hosted by the Italian partner ITL- Institute for Transport and Logistics Foundation.

At the plenary meeting project progress will be reviewed, as well as planned activities for the upcoming period. As customary, the meeting will include a study visit, offering participants valuable insights and hands-on experience into logistics practices.

## Food4CE establishes the Transnational Innovation Hub

Preparatory activities are well under way for the launch of the Transnational Innovation Hub. The national Innovation Hubs, incorporated in the transnational one will contribute to the overall goal of promoting knowledge transfer, co-creation of innovations, and fostering improved Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) throughout Central Europe. Stay tuned for further updates and announcements!



## The launch of the Matchmaking Platform



The upcoming days will be important for the Food4CE project as we approach the implementation of the second of the project solutions. After the launch of the Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP), we are excited to share that the Matchmaking Platform will also be available to the public in its beta version soon. Stay tuned for further updates ahead of this important launch!

**STAY TUNED!**

# PROJECT CONSORTIUM



University of Maribor

University of Maribor  
(Lead partner)  
Maribor - Slovenia (SI)  
[www.um.si](http://www.um.si)



Regional  
Development Agency  
Podravje  
Maribor - Slovenia (SI)  
[www.rra-podravje.si](http://www.rra-podravje.si)



Institute for Transport  
and Logistics  
Foundation  
Bologna - Italy (IT)  
[www.fondazioneitl.org](http://www.fondazioneitl.org)



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[www.uni-mate.hu](http://www.uni-mate.hu)



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[pit.lukasiewicz.gov.pl](http://pit.lukasiewicz.gov.pl)



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[www.fh-vie.ac.at](http://www.fh-vie.ac.at)



European Network of  
Logistics Competence  
Centres  
Bruxelles - Belgium (BE)  
[www.openenlocc.net/](http://www.openenlocc.net/)



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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