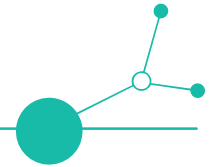


D2.1.2. Pilot operation of Innovation Hubs in Austria, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Slovenia



02 2026





Food4CE

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Executive Summary

Structural changes, rapid technological development, and shifting consumer behaviour (increased concerns about sustainability, health, and the locality of food) have led to the establishment of alternative food networks (AFNs). AFN networks are understood as (mostly SMEs) that challenge traditional food supply chains through innovative marketing channels or distribution systems. The successful organization of new AFN networks requires innovations that result in the creation of new business models and actors.

The project partners have set up 5 regional innovation hubs using the Living Lab approach, across Slovenia, Austria, Italy, Poland, and Hungary. The hubs foster collaboration between different stakeholders including researchers, business experts, food producers, logistics operators and policy makers. The network of links will improve the functioning of the AFN network in Central Europe and ensure the sustainability and efficiency of food distribution systems. The document shows how the project partners have set up the Regional Innovation Hubs and covers the governance of the Innovation Hub, stakeholder engagement, services and continuous improvement processes of the Hubs.

Within the project, one transnational and five regional/local hubs are being established, following a common methodology that we, as the activity lead, developed in collaboration with other partners for the establishment and operation of innovation hubs. Based on the methodology, we designed the activities necessary to establish the hubs, including inviting various stakeholders to participate in the advisory board, planning activities for the inauguration of the innovation hub, and promotional activities for the occasion. The activities differ slightly between partners, as the needs of alternative food networks vary from country to country. The services of the innovation hubs and the basis for co-creation workshops will also be developed based on AFN needs. The knowledge platform and networking platform will be a significant support for these activities.



1. Set-up of regional Innovation Hubs based on Living Lab Methodology

The IH is understood as a concept referring to a collaborative environment where various stakeholders are brought together to foster innovation in a specific domain. It is used as a platform for knowledge exchange, networking, and support for innovative projects. Resources, expertise, and a supportive ecosystem are provided by the IH to facilitate the development and implementation of innovative ideas and solutions.

A joint methodology for the setup and operation of regional and transnational Innovation Hubs guides the partners in establishing and operating the IH, organized as living labs that enable active knowledge transfer among researchers, business experts, food producers, logistics operators, and policymakers, with the goal of creating conditions for the improved functioning of Alternative Food Networks (AFN) in Central Europe.

Innovation Hubs were created and tested (as pilots) in participating CE regions and at a transnational level, with the aim of establishing better conditions to support SMEs with logistics knowledge, solutions, and best practices. The involvement of AFN actors has been facilitated to stimulate the exchange of needs and ideas, thus creating opportunities to improve their services. AFN actors in participating regions were invited to engage and make use of the support and services provided by the IH.

Within the Food4CE project the five IH organised as Living Labs (LL) set-up and operational by the following project partners:

1. Regional Development Agency for Podravje - Maribor (SI) setting up **ORBITaLA** Innovation Hub.
2. UAS BFI Vienna (AT) setting up **Austrian Future Food Connective Innovation Hub**.
3. Institute for Transport and Logistics Foundation (IT) setting up **Localog** Innovation Hub.
4. Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Science (HU) setting up **FOOD4Health** Innovation Hub.
5. Poznan University of Life Science (PL) setting up **PULS** Innovation Hub.



Table 1: Regional Innovation Hubs in Project Food4CE

Country	Name of the Innovation Hub	Responsible stakeholder	Key Focus	Operating hours
Slovenia	Innovation Hub ORBITaLA	Regional Development Agency for Podravje - Maribor	A supportive environment for development and progress of AFN.	On-line: every day Physicly: Wednesday: 8.00 - 13.00
Austria	Austrian Future Food Connective Innovation Hub	UAS BFI Vienna	Providing collected knowledge, connecting stakeholders.	Virtual
Italy	Localog Innovation Hub	Institute for Transport and Logistics Foundation	Capacity building and development of collaborative logistics solutions for AFNs.	Virtual & physical
Poland	Innovation Hub PULS	Poznan University of Life Science	Business plans, analyses of the profitability of production, increasing/ decreasing/ greening the intensity of production, assessing the sustainability of farms, assessing logistics costs in Agri-Food Sector.	Virtual (physical in the future)
Hungary	FOOD4Health Innovation Hub Budapest	Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Science	Automation, digitalisation	Virtual & physical



2. Services and Tools Offered within the Innovation hubs

The Innovation Hubs (IHs) established in Austria, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Slovenia as part of the Food4CE project served as localised environments for knowledge exchange, stakeholder collaboration, and practical experimentation with innovative tools aimed at strengthening logistics capacities in Alternative Food Networks (AFNs). Three key tools were piloted and integrated within these hubs:

- Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP): <https://www.openenlocc.net/food4ce/>
- Tool for Mapping of AFNs' Logistics Solutions and Best Practices: <https://www.openenlocc.net/food4ce/docs/a-tool-for-mapping-best-practices/>
- Matchmaking Platform (MP): <https://food4ce-mp.eu/en>

2.1. Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP)

The Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP) was designed to support AFNs, SFSCs, logistics actors, and policymakers by providing open access to best practices, logistics models, case studies, and educational materials in a centralised, multi-lingual repository.

Key features and services:

- A curated **knowledge base** of logistics solutions and challenges from across participating regions, continuously updated through stakeholder contributions.
- **Interactive elements** including downloadable guides, and translatable content aimed at increasing digital and operational capacity for small food producers.
- The platform content was **organized by themes and practical use cases**, making it easy for various stakeholder groups (e.g., producers, logistics providers, coordinators) to **navigate and access relevant materials** based on their operational focus.
- Integration with the Innovation Hubs' **co-creation processes**, where outcomes, **best practices** and **logistic solutions** of workshops directly fed into the platform.

KTP was actively demonstrated, deployed and populated during IH sessions, and feedback loops from users were used to continuously refine the platform content and usefulness. This process included a variety of facilitation approaches, such as:

- **Integrated presentation during co-creation and training sessions.** The KTP was actively introduced and demonstrated during in-person and online Innovation Hub meetings, including co-creation workshops, training events, stakeholder roundtables. Practical examples were shown, such as:
 - How to download a case study relevant to cold chain transport,
 - Where to find guides on order coordination or shared warehousing models,
 - How to access translated content relevant for local users.



- **Support for follow-up learning:** IHS used the KTP to extend the learning experience beyond physical workshops. After each session, stakeholders were:
 - Directed to specific KTP content aligned with workshop topics,
 - Encouraged to explore case studies and infographics as homework or reference,
 - Given access to custom resource lists curated by hub coordinators for local needs.
- **Hub-level contributions and knowledge feeding:** Each Innovation Hub actively contributed knowledge to the KTP, such as **translated reports**, outcomes from **workshops**, **best practice summaries** or regional **logistic solutions**. This **bottom-up feeding process** helped tailor the KTP to regional contexts and ensured that the platform reflected real-world use cases relevant to stakeholders from Austria, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Slovenia.
- **Demonstrating connections to other tools/solutions:** The KTP was also presented as the entry point to other Food4CE tools:
 - It hosted and linked to the **Tool for Mapping Best Practices**,
 - provided contextual information about the **Matchmaking Platform**, and
 - offered background documents and reports generated within WP1, WP2 and WP3.
- **External access and long-term availability:** One of the critical values of the KTP is that it is open and accessible to external users beyond the consortium. This was emphasized in Innovation Hubs as part of sustainability messaging – participants were encouraged to:
 - Revisit the platform after the end of local workshops,
 - Share the link with their networks,
 - Use the platform to document and disseminate their own solutions.

This reinforced the KTP's role as a living knowledge environment, not just a static library, supporting the wider replication and scalability of logistics innovations across the AFNs.

2.2. Matchmaking Platform (MP)

The **Matchmaking Platform (MP)** was introduced as a digital tool to facilitate **networking and collaboration** among key actors in the short food supply chain ecosystem, including **AFNs, small farmers, large consumers (public institutions), logistics service providers, research institutions**.

It was specifically designed to **enable connections between small farmers and existing AFNs, AFNs and logistics operators**, and other relevant stakeholders, promoting **collaborative logistics arrangements, shared services, and regional synergies** within and across Innovation Hubs.

Its core functionalities included:

- A **searchable directory of stakeholders** within the Food4CE community, categorized by region, sector, and logistical role.
- A **matchmaking function** that helps users identify relevant partners based on expressed logistics needs and collaboration interests (e.g., shared storage or transport solutions).
- **Integrated contact features**, allowing users to initiate discussions, propose partnerships, and explore joint logistics initiatives.
- A structure that encourages **peer-to-peer exchange and visibility of actors**, strengthening networking opportunities within and across Innovation Hubs.



MP was positioned as a dynamic extension of the co-creation and networking activities in the IHs, where offline workshops were complemented by the online potential for scaling collaboration and innovation across borders. MP was actively demonstrated, deployed and populated during IH sessions in various ways, such as:

- **Demonstration and onboarding during Innovation Hub sessions:** The MP was introduced during co-creation sessions, workshops and stakeholder meetings across all five **regional Innovation Hubs**, where facilitators:
 - Provided **live demonstrations** of the platform,
 - Showed how to **create and update basic user profiles**,
 - Guided users through the **search functions** to identify logistics or AFN partners,
 - Explained the types of **collaborative arrangements** the platform could help initiate (e.g., joint transport, shared storage, cross-regional AFN alliances).
- **Support for local and transnational networking:** The platform was used to extend the reach of networking beyond in-person IH activities, particularly by:
 - **Connecting small producers with AFNs**, especially in regions where coordination was weak,
 - Facilitating contacts between **AFNs and logistics providers** for joint service delivery,
 - Supporting **transnational matchmaking**, especially where logistics needs (e.g., shared cold chain infrastructure) were common across borders.
- **Facilitator guidance and strategic promotion:** IHs members played a key role in:
 - **Identifying stakeholders most likely to benefit** from matchmaking (e.g., isolated small-scale producers or AFNs in need of matchmaking services),
 - Encouraging platform registration and **helping users formulate clear collaboration interests**,
 - Promoting **specific use cases**, such as a public institutions seeking to cluster logistics services or a food hub coordinator looking for delivery partners.
- **Positioning MP as a long-term collaboration tool:** The platform was also presented as part of the Food4CE digital legacy, with emphasis on:
 - Its continued availability post-project,
 - The potential for new users to **join the network** and initiate logistics partnerships,
 - Its integration with the Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP), which provides the **methodological and best-practice context** to support collaboration efforts.

2.3. Tool for Mapping AFN's Logistic Solutions and Best practices

As part of the Food4CE toolbox, a **Mapping Tool** was developed to support the **identification, benchmarking, and transfer of logistics best practices** within AFNs and SFSCs. This Excel-based tool was originally used during project research and co-creation activities to structure and compare logistics characteristics across regions, such as warehousing, distribution models, coordination mechanisms, and digital tools.

The tool is **publicly available via the KTP**. It can be freely used by **external stakeholders**, including policymakers, regional coordinators, logistics providers, and AFNs themselves to:

- **Map their own practices** against transnational benchmarks,



- **Identify transferable logistics models,**
- **Document innovations** for inclusion in broader regional planning or policy development.

The Tool for Mapping AFNs' Logistics Solutions and Best Practices was not only developed as a stand-alone analytical instrument but was also actively embedded into the functioning of the IIHs as a practical, participatory tool for co-creation and stakeholder engagement. Deployment of the Mapping Tool within Innovation Hubs, was carried out in various ways, such as:

- **Use in co-creation sessions, workshops and for one-on-one consultations:** Within each regional IH, the tool was introduced and used during co-creation sessions, stakeholder workshops, and thematic meetings to:
 - **Structure discussions** on logistics-related challenges faced by local AFNs,
 - Visually map current practices across same region or different regions
 - Facilitate **peer-to-peer learning** and benchmarking among participants.
- Stakeholders, such as farmers, food cooperatives, logistics operators, and local authorities, were guided by hub facilitators in **filling in the tool's framework** collaboratively. This process supported:
 - A **shared understanding of regional logistics patterns,**
 - Identification of **gaps, bottlenecks, and innovation opportunities,** and
 - Surfacing of **case-based best practices** relevant to other actors in the region or transnationally.
- **Capacity building and demonstration:** Hub facilitators used the tool as part of **capacity-building activities,** demonstrating how it could be reused by stakeholders after the end of the project. By working through real examples during IH sessions, participants learned:
 - How to document and analyze their own logistics practices,
 - How to compare across other Food4CE regions (using anonymized benchmarks), and
 - How to propose improvements or policy inputs grounded in structured data.
- **Bridge to policy and platform integration:** Data and insights from the mapping exercises were:
 - Translated into **regional logistics solutions**
 - Uploaded to the **Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP)** as part of knowledge sharing efforts, and
 - Used as evidence in developing **policy recommendations** and strategic inputs from the hubs to regional authorities.



2.4. Training and Capacity Building for tools

A core function of the IHs in the Food4CE project was to not only demonstrate tools developed under the project, but to build lasting stakeholder capacity to apply them in practice. Each of the three tools—the **Tool for Mapping AFNs' Logistics Solutions and Best Practices**, the **KTP**, and the **MP**—was integrated into regional IH activities through **training workshops, guided demonstrations, and hands-on sessions**.

As reported in D2.2.3, the KTP was actively used during IH sessions as a **digital knowledge hub**.

Training activities included:

- Live navigation through the platform,
- Guided search for relevant logistics practices and resources,
- Instructions on how to use the multilingual interface,
- Introduction to the integration between KTP content and other tools (e.g., links to the mapping tool and project outputs).

These training sessions were crucial in enabling **independent use of the platform** by stakeholders post-project, and in promoting continuous learning within AFNs.

Training for the MP focused on **enabling effective use of its networking and collaboration features**.

IH participants were trained on:

- Creating and managing a stakeholder profile,
- Searching for relevant actors by region and function,
- Initiating contact and proposing partnerships,
- Exploring examples of potential logistics collaborations (e.g., shared delivery routes or cold chain pooling).

Hands-on walkthroughs helped stakeholders understand how the MP could **extend networking beyond physical IH meetings and foster long-term collaboration** across regions.

The Mapping Tool was introduced through **facilitated workshops and group exercises** within the IHs. Stakeholders—including small producers, AFNs, coordinators, and logistics providers—were trained on how to:

- Collect and input logistics-related data,
- Use the tool to analyze their logistic efficiency based on five criteria (digitalization, advance logistics, transparency, suitability and local focus)
- Compare practices with transnational benchmarks,
- Identify transferable best practices.

Training emphasized not only **technical use** of the tool but also its value in **strategic planning, partnership building, and logistics innovation**.

Across the five Innovation Hubs, a total of **45 events** were organised between July 2024 and February 2026. These activities included workshops, conferences, stakeholder meetings, roundtables, seminars, and expert consultations, all linked to the deployment of the **Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP)**, the **Matchmaking Platform (MP)**, and the **mapping tool**. The events are gathered in Table 43.



3. Insights form innovation hubs

3.1. Austrian Future Food Connective Innovation Hub

The **Austrian Future Food Connective Innovation Hub** has played a strategic role in advancing innovation and sustainable practices within Austria's alternative food networks (AFNs) by positioning itself as a connector of knowledge, stakeholders, and practical expertise. From its preparatory phase onward, the hub focused on understanding the specific structural and operational characteristics of Austria's AFN landscape.

Austria's AFN ecosystem is characterized by high-quality local production and a strong culture of innovation, yet it operates under significant competitive pressure. It became evident that strengthening resilience in short food supply chains requires structured collaboration between AFNs, logistics providers, public authorities, research institutions, and business support organizations. The hub therefore defined its core mission as facilitating targeted knowledge transfer while fostering meaningful connections among stakeholders who traditionally operate in fragmented environments.

A key contribution of the hub lies in its intermediary function. Through webinars, advisory board involvement, targeted stakeholder sessions, and conference participation at national and international level, the hub increased visibility for Food4CE, short food supply chains, and sustainable logistics solutions. By responding flexibly to the realities, the hub created accessible formats for co-creation, stakeholder exchange, and solution-oriented dialogue.

The thematic focus on last-mile logistics, sustainable mobility, transport optimization, and best-practice exchange reflects the operational priorities of Austrian AFNs. By systematically identifying challenges and integrating best practices into the Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP), the hub ensured that regional insights contribute to broader transnational learning processes.

In conclusion, the **Austrian Future Food Connective Innovation Hub** has demonstrated how a knowledge-driven, stakeholder-oriented model can strengthen regional food systems. By combining evidence-based analysis, continuous stakeholder dialogue, and structured co-creation, the hub contributed to more connected, efficient, and sustainable short food supply chains in Austria. Its experience confirms that resilient local food systems emerge not only from innovation itself, but from the deliberate orchestration of collaboration across sectors and governance levels. A follow-up conference in collaboration with the City-Suburban-Management in 2026 with AFNs and other actors in the realm of SFSC is great success to these efforts.



3.2. Hungarian Food4HEALTH Innovation Hub

The **Food4HEALTH Innovation Hub (IH) from Hungary** has played a pivotal role in advancing the objectives of the Food4CE project in Hungary by acting as a bridge between research, policy, and practice within alternative food networks (AFNs) and local food systems. Throughout the pilot operation period, the hub successfully established itself as a national focal point for stakeholder engagement, knowledge exchange, and policy-oriented innovation.

Through targeted workshops, expert consultations, and policy dialogues, the hub contributed to identifying systemic barriers affecting local food systems and translating grassroots experiences into concrete policy recommendations. Its active involvement in consultations with the Ministry of Agriculture ensured that project outcomes were not only evidence-based but also aligned with regulatory realities and national strategic priorities.

The hub's added value lies in its role as a trusted intermediary. It facilitated dialogue across sectors that traditionally operate in silos, fostering mutual understanding between policymakers, market actors, and local communities. This intermediary function proved essential for advancing systemic innovation, particularly in a context where regulatory complexity and administrative burdens often limit experimentation by small actors.

In conclusion, the Food4HEALTH Innovation Hub has demonstrated how regionally embedded, mission-oriented hubs can effectively support innovation and sustainability transitions in the agri-food sector. By combining bottom-up stakeholder engagement with top-down policy interaction, the hub contributed to more inclusive and adaptable governance of local food systems. Its experience provides a strong foundation for future scaling and institutionalization of Innovation Hub models, both in Hungary and across Central Europe.

3.3. Italian Localog Innovation Hub

The **Localog Innovation Hub** from Italy has played a pivotal role in strengthening the Alternative Food Network (AFN) ecosystem in Emilia-Romagna by combining stakeholder mapping, needs analysis, capacity-building, and policy dialogue. The initial phase focused on building a comprehensive understanding of the regional AFN landscape, resulting in a database of over 60 actors and the identification of key institutional, research, and civil society stakeholders. Through continuous one-to-one engagement, focus groups, surveys, and in-depth interviews, the Hub gained a detailed understanding of AFNs' logistical, distributional, and digitalization needs, which informed a tailored programme of capacity-building activities.

A central achievement of the Hub was the establishment of a multi-actor Advisory Board, bringing together representatives from regional clusters, research institutions, local authorities, and the solidarity economy ecosystem. This structure ensured strategic guidance throughout the process, from defining the training calendar to shaping the policy recommendations and Regional Action Plan. The presentation of the Italian policy recommendations to the Regional Forum for Solidarity Economy – and the opportunity to engage directly with the Regional Minister responsible for the Digital Agenda and the Solidarity Economy – marked a significant milestone in embedding the project's outcomes within regional policy processes.



In conclusion, the Localog Innovation Hub demonstrated the value of a structured, participatory approach that connects AFNs with institutions, knowledge providers, and digital tools. By linking grassroots realities with regional governance and platforms such as the Matchmaking Platform (MP) and the Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP), the Hub has contributed to laying the foundations for more coordinated, resilient, and digitally enabled short food supply chains in Emilia-Romagna.

3.4. Polish PULS Innovation Hub

The **PULS Innovation Hub from Poland** significantly contributed to reshaping the architecture of the Polish food system. In a context characterised by a high concentration of the distribution system and the weakening bargaining power of farmers against large retailers, the PULS IH addressed structural imbalances affecting Alternative Food Networks (AFNs). At the same time, growing consumer openness to non-mass, locally embedded food products created favourable demand-side conditions for AFN development.

Despite this increasing interest, market mechanisms alone have not ensured sufficient access to alternative products. Key barriers identified by the PULS IH include limited logistical infrastructure, resistance to organisational change, and financial constraints faced by small producers. Through analytical activities, stakeholder meetings and networking initiatives, the PULS IH systematically identified these challenges and stimulated cooperation among AFN actors.

The impact has been twofold. Among AFN stakeholders, the PULS IH strengthened awareness of the necessity of cooperation, collective action and digital tools. Among consumers, it increased understanding of how to access and engage with alternative food systems. Moreover, the PULS IH contributed to policy dialogue, raising awareness among public authorities and potentially influencing the creation of more supportive regulatory frameworks.

The activities of the PULS IH clearly demonstrate a growing need for coordinated support of AFNs in Poland. As the country remains at an early stage of AFN development compared to other regions, continued efforts are essential. Sustained cooperation, policy alignment and innovation support will be crucial for building a more resilient and sustainable regional food system.

3.5. Slovenian ORbITaLA Innovation Hub

The **ORbITaLA Innovation Hub from Slovenia** has established itself as a central platform for strengthening alternative food networks (AFNs) in Slovenia by creating a structured environment for collaboration, knowledge transfer, and practical experimentation in short food supply chain logistics. From the preparatory phase onward, the hub focused on mapping the needs of Slovenian AFNs and building a broad multi-actor network that includes producers, logistics providers, public institutions, research organisations, and advisory bodies. This inclusive approach enabled the hub to identify systemic barriers and translate them into concrete capacity-building and policy-relevant actions.

A major achievement of ORbITaLA lies in its role as a facilitator of cooperation between actors who traditionally operate separately. Through co-creation workshops, targeted meetings with producers and logistics providers, regional events connecting public institutions with local suppliers, and the deployment of digital tools such as the Knowledge Transfer Platform and the Matchmaking Platform,



the hub strengthened both practical competencies and stakeholder trust. The strong participation of public institutions – including ministries, advisory services, and food service organisers – ensured that operational challenges in logistics, procurement, and digitalisation were directly linked to policy dialogue.

The hub also significantly increased the visibility of AFNs and sustainable logistics solutions in Slovenia. Communication activities, regional workshops with high stakeholder attendance, and continuous engagement with advisory board members created a stable ecosystem for long-term cooperation. By systematically documenting challenges such as infrastructure gaps, administrative burdens, limited digitalisation, and insufficient coordination, ORbITaLA provided an evidence base for future regional action plans and policy adjustments.

In conclusion, the ORbITaLA Innovation Hub demonstrated how a regionally embedded, stakeholder-driven model can accelerate innovation and sustainability transitions in local food systems. By combining hands-on logistics support, digital knowledge sharing, and structured dialogue with policymakers, the hub contributed to more coordinated and resilient short food supply chains in Slovenia. Its experience confirms that sustainable food innovation emerges not only from technological solutions, but from sustained collaboration, trust-building, and institutional alignment across the regional ecosystem.

4. Conclusions

Across five national contexts, the Innovation Hubs have collectively illustrated that the future of regional food systems lies in connectivity. Whether addressing logistics bottlenecks in Austria, regulatory barriers in Hungary, digital capacity gaps in Italy, structural market imbalances in Poland, or coordination challenges in Slovenia, each hub has contributed to redefining how Alternative Food Networks can operate within increasingly complex food economies.

A shared insight emerges: resilience is built through relationships. The hubs did not merely provide training or analysis; they created spaces of trust, dialogue, and structured cooperation where fragmented actors could align their efforts. By embedding evidence-based analysis into participatory governance processes, they transformed local challenges into transnational learning opportunities. In doing so, they strengthened not only short food supply chains, but also the institutional ecosystems that sustain them.

The legacy of these Innovation Hubs extends beyond project timelines. They offer a replicable model for systemic food innovation – one that integrates local knowledge, digital tools, policy engagement, and multi-actor collaboration. If sustained and scaled, this approach has the potential to reshape regional food governance in Central Europe, making it more adaptive, inclusive, and sustainability-driven in the years to come.



5. Basic information on IHs

5.1.1. ORbITaLA IH (Slovenia)

1. PLANNING AND INITIAL SET-UP OF IH BASED ON LL METHODOLOGY

Table 1: Governance Structure / Advisory Board

Innovation HUB ORbITaLA, Advisory Board Members

	Contacts
Regional Development Agency for Podravje - Maribor Faculty of Civil Engineering, Transport Engineering and Architecture Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia (KGZS) - Institute of Agriculture and Forestry Maribor Cooperative Dobrina Post of Slovenia Krapše d.o.o.	Danijela Kocuvan Tomislav Letnik, Maršenka Marksel Tadeja Kvas Majer Andreja Borec Irena Leonida Kropf Milojka Fekonja Alen Kahvedžoč Nada Krapše

2. Innovation Hub/LL Contact List

Regional IH	Innovation Hub ORbITaLA
Location	Pobreška cesta 20, 2000 Maribor, Slovenia
Operating hours	On-line: every day Physicly: Wednesday: 8.00 - 13.00, Pobreška cesta 20, Maribor, Slovenia
Contact point	Danijela Kocuvan
Contact details	danijela.kocuvan@rra-podravje.si +386 41 630 678

2. OWNERSHIP, LOCATION AND STAFF

Table 2: Criteria for Innovation Hub/Living Lab within Food4CE project

Key IH/LL focus	A supportive environment for development and progress of AFN, business plans tailored to the AFN, different expertise, creating solutions that meet the needs and aspirations of the target groups.
Leading stakeholders	AFNs, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Institute of Agriculture and Forestry Maribor, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Transport Engineering and Architecture
Field of interest	Upgrading existing business models, adapting innovative solutions in a specific field to the local environment in which AFN operates, SFSC logistics solutions, promotion of best practices, reduction of AFNs logistics costs, increasing the visibility of AFNs for consumers, business relationships between AFNs built on shared principles and based on trust.
Services offered	KTP & MP. Individual support for AFN according to their needs, achieving farm sustainability, organization of local events.



Real-life environment	On-line and fixed
Special equipment, tools, software	Telephone, computer, table, chairs
Main objective (medium to long-term)	Short-term: exchange of best practices, knowledge and experience, identification of innovations and new solutions among AFNs in the field of logistics, marketing etc. Long-term: continued support to the AfN in the light of their development and progress, preparation of project documentation for various calls for tenders (local, national and international projects).
Citizens engagement	Involving citizens from different NGOs (meetings, opportunities for cooperation).
Multi-stakeholder approach (hard requirement)	A stakeholder matrix and record their strength, interest, key findings and intended involvement in IH will be created. Comprehensive approach that includes ongoing communication, listening, and collaboration, Living Lab approach.
Co-creation with the end-users (ideation/co-design/validation/evaluation)	A stakeholder matrix and record their strength, interest, key findings and intended involvement in IH will be created. Comprehensive approach that includes ongoing communication, listening, and collaboration, Living Lab approach.

Table 3: Vision and Specific Objectives of IH/LL

Vision	To become the leading training and advisory centre for AFNs in Slovenia in a specific field of activity. This will be achieved through a personalised approach and experts from different fields who will monitor and support the progress of AFN at different stages of its development.
Specific Objectives	Provide a real-world environment for stakeholders to collaborate, test, and co-create innovative logistic and other solutions that will contribute to the development and upgrading of the AFNs.



5.1.2. Austrian Future Food Connective Innovation Hub

1. PLANNING AND INITIAL SET-UP OF IH BASED ON LL METHODOLOGY

Table 1: Governance Structure / Advisory Board

Innovation HUB, Advisory Board Members	
	Contacts
UAS BFI Vienna	Strauß, David
ECONSULT	Hartmann, Gerda
Federal Ministry Republic of Austria - Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK)	Franz Schwammenhöfer
Chamber of Commerce (WKW)	Andrea Faast

2. Innovation Hub/LL Contact List

Regional IH	Austrian Future Food Connective Innovation Hub
Location	UAS BFI Vienna, Wohlmutterstraße 22, 1020 Wien
Operating hours	Monday - Thursday, 10:00 - 16:00 (online)
Contact point	David Strauß
Contact details	E-Mail: david.strauss@fh-vie.ac.at Telefon: +43 6608556944 LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/david-strauss-fh-bfi/

2. OWNERSHIP, LOCATION AND STAFF

Table 2: Criteria for Innovation Hub/Living Lab within Food4CE project

Key IH/LL focus	Providing collected knowledge to interested stakeholders while fostering meaningful connections among them ensures a cohesive exchange of ideas. This approach promotes collaboration and facilitates the effective dissemination of information.
Leading stakeholders	Higher education and research organizations (e.g. UAS sector in Austria), SME (AFNs see List), Business support organization (e.g. WKW), Local public authority (e.g. Stadtwerke, WKW), Regional public authority (e.g. Stadtwerke, WKW), National public authority (e.g. Federal Ministry Republic of Austria - Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK))
Field of interest	The connection between authorities, higher education institutions, research organizations, and AFNs creates a framework for interdisciplinary collaboration, fostering knowledge exchange and innovation. This collaboration and exchange align institutional priorities with sector-specific advancements to address modern challenges of alternative food systems.
Services offered	Fostering knowledge and networking opportunities between all stakeholder (AFNs, authority's, business support organizations, higher education and research) through getting to know the needs and perspectives on the topics SFSC & AFNs



Real-life environment	Given the widespread distribution of AFNs across the eastern regions of Austria, effective stakeholder engagement can only be achieved through online frameworks. This approach ensures accessibility and fosters meaningful collaboration despite geographical challenges.
Special equipment, tools, software's	/
Main objective (medium to long-term)	Connecting stakeholders while providing targeted, audience-specific knowledge ensures effective collaboration and tailored information exchange.
Citizens engagement	Citizen engagement is fostered through higher education and research organizations by leveraging dissemination efforts and active involvement of their stakeholders.
Multi-stakeholder approach (hard requirement)	The multi-stakeholder approach brings together key actors such as AFNs, logistic providers, public authorities, and research organizations to facilitate collaboration. To ensure alignment and identify synergies, stakeholders are thoroughly assessed through direct stakeholder dialogs (co-creation sessions and workshops), where information's are exchanged (see below) before being strategically connected.
Co-creation with the end-users (ideation/co-design/validation/evaluation)	Central to these stakeholder dialogues is the identification of needs and overlaps, alongside the development of tailored solutions for AFNs, end-users, logistic providers, and other stakeholders within the Food4CE project. Equally important are continuous feedback loops involving the entire project team and insights from regional experiences. Ongoing listening and communication with field-experienced stakeholders remain crucial to leveraging their expertise effectively.

Table 3: Vision and Specific Objectives of IH/LL

Vision	The Innovation Hub focuses on fostering knowledge exchange and networking among all relevant stakeholders, enabling the sharing of practical expertise. Its primary goal is to make short food supply chains (SFSCs) more sustainable and efficient through collaborative efforts. By connecting diverse stakeholders, the Hub creates opportunities for innovation and impactful solutions in the field.
Specific Objectives	The specific objectives include understanding the logistical and operational challenges faced by AFNs and gaining insights into stakeholders' expertise, perspectives, issues, and activities. By connecting these stakeholders, the aim is to enable them to collaboratively address challenges or improve their operations in an interactive manner. Best practices identified through these processes are integrated into the Knowledge Transfer Platform (KTP) to ensure broader dissemination and application.



5.1.3. Localog IH (Italy)

1. PLANNING AND INITIAL SET-UP OF IH BASED ON LL METHODOLOGY

Table 1: Governance Structure / Advisory Board

Innovation HUB, Advisory Board Members	
	Contacts
Fondazione Istituto sui Trasporti e la Logistica Regional Forum on Solidarity Economy Cluster AGRIFOOD Art-er	Lorenzo Bertoncini, Lorenzo Cello Francesca Marconi Marco Foschini Lorenzo di Benedetto
Department of Agrifood sciences and technologies - University of Bologna Bologna Appennine Biodistrict Municipality Council of Bologna	Matteo Vittuari Davide Zarri Franco Cima

2. Innovation Hub/LL Contact List

Regional IH	Localog
Location	Bologna, Italy
Operating hours	Monday to Friday, 9AM-6PM
Contact point	Lorenzo Bertoncini
Contact details	lorenzo.bertoncini@fondazioneitl.org

2. OWNERSHIP, LOCATION AND STAFF

Table 2: Criteria for Innovation Hub/Living Lab within Food4CE project

Key IH/LL focus	Supporting AFNs in Emilia-Romagna with capacity building activities, and a networking platform among them and with other stakeholders to improve their logistic capacity, and foster the development of cooperative projects, pilot actions, and solutions among them.
Leading stakeholders	Research institutions (Fondazione Istituto sulla logistica e i trasporti, Università di Bologna), open-innovation organizations (Arter, FoodHub), AFNs (solidarity purchase groups, community supported agriculture organizations, peasant markets, agri-food SMEs, local e-commerce platforms, food-coops, bio-district), public-private association (Cluster AGRIFOOD), NGOs (Open Food Network), political stakeholders (Bologna municipality council member), Slow Food.
Field of interest	Cooperative logistics and digitalization, sustainable logistics (including transportation, warehousing, distribution).
Services offered	Capacity building activities, facilitating networking among stakeholders, research/consultancy for AFNs.
Real-life environment	Only online, some meetings held in ITL offices.
Special equipment, tools, softwares	none



Main objective (medium to long-term)	Supporting the AFN ecosystem by improving the sustainability of its overall logistics structure and functions.
Citizens engagement	Solidarity Purchasing Groups are citizen groups that are active part of the AFNs. Citizens are included in the AFNs.
Multi-stakeholder approach (hard requirement)	All stakeholders engaged are updated on the main activities with both targeted communication and invitations to open meetings.
Co-creation with the end-users (ideation/co-design/validation/evaluation)	The first phase of the Innovation Hub consisted of focus groups, interviews and surveys submitted to AFNs to grasp their interests in terms of content, process and timing of the Innovation Hub. ITL team summarized the results of this “need and interest analysis” and translated into a calendar of activities, with the help of the Advisory Board,

Table 3: Vision and Specific Objectives of IH/LL

Vision	To become the logistics and digitalization knowledge and networking hub for alternative food networks and solidarity economy networks in Emilia-Romagna.
Specific Objectives	<p>Increase the knowledge on the AFN ecosystem in the Region, and its needs.</p> <p>Facilitate knowledge sharing on logistics and digitalization to support AFNs.</p> <p>Facilitate networking between AFNs and other stakeholders to improve the sustainability of the logistics of the alternative food system in the region.</p> <p>Produce policy recommendations to local and regional policymakers for supporting regional AFNs.</p>



5.1.4. PULS IH (Poland)

1. PLANNING AND INITIAL SET-UP OF IH BASED ON LL METHODOLOGY

Table 1: Governance Structure / Advisory Board

Innovation HUB, Advisory Board Members

	Contacts
1. Project Management Personnel, PULS, Associate PULS Prof., Benedykt Pepliński	1. benedykt.peplinski@up.poznan.pl
2. Research and Development Personnel, PULS, dr Michał Gazdecki	2. michal.gazdecki@up.poznan.pl
3. Head of Department of Law and Enterprise Management in Agribusiness, PULS, Associate PULS Prof. Rafał Baum	3. rafal.baum@up.poznan.pl
4. Research and Development Personnel, PULS, Associate PULS Prof. Magda Kozera-Kowalska	4. magdalena.kozera@up.poznan.pl
5. Director of the Agricultural Experimental Plants (RZD) Przybroda, UPP, Filip Mazur	5. filip.mazur@up.poznan.pl
6. CEO of Agointegracja Sp. Z o.o. , Wojciech Styburski	6. w.styburski@agointegracja.pl
7. Project Partner, Poznań Institute of Technology, dr Piotr Nowak	7. piotr.nowak@pit.lukasiewicz.gov.pl
8. Member of the Agricultural Advisory Centre in the Wielkopolska Region (WODR), Maciej Zacharczuk	8. maciej.zacharczuk@wodr.poznan.pl
9. Research and Development Personnel, PULS, Associate PULS Prof. Darek Pieńkowski	9. dariusz.pienkowski@up.poznan.pl
10. Deputy Director of Pilski Food Bank, Emil Żerebito, przedstawiciel PBŻ	10. emil.zerebito@bankizywnosci.pl
11. Director of the Agricultural Experimental Farm Swadzim, PULS, Arkadiusz Wojciechowicz	11. arkadiusz.wojciechowicz@up.poznan.pl
12. Project Partner PULS, Communications manager, Alina Nowotarska	12. alina.nowotarska@up.poznan.pl
13. Research and Development Personnel, dr Paulina Wiza-Augustyniak	13. paulina.wiza@up.poznan.pl

2. Innovation Hub/LL Contact List

Regional IH	Centrum Innowacji PULS
Location	Poznań , Poland, Wojska Polskiego str. 28, 823 room, 60-637 Poznań
Operating hours	Monday - Thursday, 9:00 - 15:00 (no in person office, just via Mail)
Contact point	Alina Nowotarska
Contact details	alina.nowotarska@up.poznan.pl ; +48 61 8487110, https://www.linkedin.com/in/alina-nowotarska-3b999210a/

2. OWNERSHIP, LOCATION AND STAFF

Table 2: Criteria for Innovation Hub/Living Lab within Food4CE project

Key IH/LL focus	Identify challenges and opportunities for AFNs in Poland. Promote knowledge exchange and the sharing of best practices among AFN stakeholders. Strengthen collaboration among existing AFNs and support the development of new networks. Promote AFN activities and raise awareness of the value they provide to consumers.
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Leading stakeholders	Higher education and research organizations (e.g. PULS, PUEB), AFNs, Business support organization (e.g. The SME ombudsman), Local public authority (e.g. WODR, KPODR; WIR; Pilski Food Bank), Regional public authority (e.g. Marshal's Office), National public authority (e.g. WFR: Wielkopolska Development Fund)
Field of interest	Stakeholder cooperation has a significant impact on the effective functioning of the AFN. They actively participate in sharing knowledge and experience through the IH's main IT tools, i.e., KTP and MP, and promote PULS IH within their structures. They present their results and best practices during seminars and online meetings.
Services offered	Cooperation, knowledge exchange, particularly in the areas of logistics and digitalization, establishing contacts between interested parties, consulting and support for AFN.
Real-life environment	Online, some meetings held in IH PULS offices.
Special equipment, tools, softwares	Standard office equipment, conference rooms
Main objective (medium to long-term)	The establishment of a regional Hub to become the logistics and digitalization support for Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) through the support of experts from various fields and a personalized approach.
Citizens engagement	Implementation of information activities and active involvement of stakeholders in initiatives (co-creation sessions, workshops, etc.) supported by higher education institutions and research units.
Multi-stakeholder approach (hard requirement)	Stakeholder engagement is based on a multi-stakeholder approach, integrating key actors, including AFN, logistics service providers, public authorities, and research organizations. Stakeholders are identified and assessed through direct conversations and meetings, such as co-creation sessions and workshops, which enable the exchange of knowledge and experience. These activities aim to strengthen cooperation and develop satisfactory measures to strengthen the AFN network.
Co-creation with the end-users (ideation/co-design/validation/evaluation)	The dialogue with stakeholders aims to identify needs and common areas, as well as to develop tailored solutions for AFN, end users, logistics providers, and other stakeholders. Continuous feedback through communication with stakeholders is equally important.

Table 3: Vision and Specific Objectives of IH/LL

Vision	The establishment of a regional Hub to become the logistics and digitalization support for Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) through the support of experts from various fields and a personalized approach.
Specific Objectives	Identify challenges and opportunities for AFNs in Poland. Promoting knowledge transfer platform and matchmaking Platform through the organization co-creation sessions of innovations, workshops and supporting the development of AFN in Poland, responding to current needs through a personalized approach, with the participation of experts from various fields in communication with stakeholders. Enabling them to solve problems together and improve their activities to strengthen their operations. Promote AFN activities and raise awareness of the value they provide to consumers.



5.1.5. FOOD4Health IH (Hungary)

1. PLANNING AND INITIAL SET-UP OF IH BASED ON LL METHODOLOGY

Table 1: Governance Structure / Advisory Board

Innovation HUB, Advisory Board Members	
	Contacts
MATE, Institute of Food Science and Technology CIBUS Hungaricus foundation Ministry of Agriculture Institute of Agricultural Economics Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture National Association of Interest Representations for Small-scale producers and service providers Association of Responsible Food Manufacturers SmileyMed Ltd. Capriovus Ltd. The Fismarket Ltd. Kifli.hu Shop Ltd. Auchan Magyarország Ltd. SPAR Magyarország Ltd. National Food Chain Safety Office Campden BRI Ltd. Bonafarm Plc. COOP Plc.	Quang Duc Nguyen László Friedrich Beáta Felkai Pál Goda Tamás Szécsényi Katalin Kujáni Attila Vörös Boglárka Alpár Csaba Németh Péter Palotás Andrea Bajkai Ildikó Balázs Ferenc Horváth Imre Nemes Adrienn Hegyi Nóra Krzyzewsky István Rédei

2. Innovation Hub/LL Contact List

Regional IH	Food4HEALTH Innovation Hub
Location	1118 Budapest, Villányi út 29-43. Building D.
Operating hours	On-line: every day Live: Friday, 8.00 - 13.00
Contact point	Géza Hitka, PhD
Contact details	Geza.hitka@uni-mate.hu Tel/Fax: +36-1-305-7662 https://foodscience.uni-mate.hu/ https://www.facebook.com/eelmszertudomany/ https://hu.linkedin.com/company/institute-of-food-science-and-technology-hungary

2. OWNERSHIP, LOCATION AND STAFF

Table 2: Criteria for Innovation Hub/Living Lab within Food4CE project

Key IH/LL focus	automation, digitalisation
Leading stakeholders	MATE, Cibus Hungaricus, National Association of Interest Representations for Small-scale producers and service providers, Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture
Field of interest	Developing the digital short supply chain (dREL) concept, supporting the shortening of the food supply chain, reducing the sales risk for producers.
Services offered	Data management, Auto-matisation, robotisation, communication Data-driven decision-making
Real-life environment	Office in Buda Campus of MATE, virtual showroom if it is required.
Special equipment, tools, softwares	Robotic laboratory/showroom, Intelligent shop (under construction)



Main objective (medium to long-term)	The aim of the IH is to increase the competitiveness of producers and processors, to expand their market opportunities by promoting their integration, digitalisation and education, to manage agricultural products on the food product pathways with the tools of digitalisation and data-based decision-making.
Citizens engagement	short conferences, meetings with stakeholders, be part of fairs
Multi-stakeholder approach (hard requirement)	A stakeholder matrix and record their strength, interest, key findings and intended involvement in IH will be created. Comprehensive approach that includes ongoing communication, listening, and collaboration, Living Lab approach.
Co-creation with the end-users (ideation/co-design/validation/evaluation)	Trust in local food and local producer will be increased by involving end users in co-creation sessions.
Table 3: Vision and Specific Objectives of IH/LL	
Vision	To become the leading training and advisory centre for AFNs in Hungary in a specific field of activity. This will be achieved through a personalised approach and experts from different fields who will monitor and support the progress of AFN at different stages of its development.
Specific Objectives	Manage agricultural products on the food product pathways with the tools of digitalisation and data-based decision-making