



COHEIRS

Civic Observers for Health and Environment: Initiative for Responsibility and Sustainability

e-HANDBOOK



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Objectives

COHEIRS envisages to achieve the following objectives:

- To empower citizens to play a full part in their communities' life
- To foster citizens' participation through volunteering
- To foster citizens' sense of ownership of the EU
- To tackle environmental and health related issues both at local and European level
- To encourage environment friendly policies
- To promote intercultural dialogue
- To contribute to an inclusive society

Activities

COHEIRS foresees 8 steps, having impact both at the local and at the European level:

- Preparatory phase
- Local workshops and set up of citizens' panel
- Training of multipliers
- Establishing of information and coordination units at the local level
- Local thematic workshops
- International thematic workshop
- Local dissemination events
- Dissemination campaign

Partnership

Coordination partner

Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA)

Implementing partners

Euro Mediterranean Scientific and Biomedical Institute (ISBEM)

Foundation for Partnership and Civil Society Development

Coalition of youth organizations SEGA

The Mountain Community Iezer Muscel Association (MCIMA)

International Development Alliance (IDA)

Birgu Local Council

Association for Developing Voluntary Work Novo Mesto

Center for Research Cooperation and Development (CRCDD)

Expert partners

French Society of Environmental Medicine (ISDE France)

Italian Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE Italy)

Dissemination partners

Recreatura arts & culture

Amministrazione Comunale di Lecce

Municipality of Monfalcone

Patto Territoriale Soc. Cons. A.r.l. Oristano

Central and Eastern Europe Citizen Network (CEEEN)

Civil Kollégium Alapítvány (Civil College Foundation), CKA (CCF)

Previous projects

Methodology successfully tested in the following projects, within the programme Europe for Citizens, Action 1 – Measure 2: Citizens' projects and support measure:

- i. **EUR-Action (2006-2007)** one of the first pilot project based on the innovative methodology (the results of the project have been taken into consideration for the program Europe for Citizens).

The main aim of the project "EURaction – Citizens acting for Europe" was to include "ordinary citizens" in the debates about Europe and to give them a voice in European politics. Five citizens' panels were set up in Lithuania, Poland, Cyprus, Italy and France for this aim. The results of the citizens' panel meetings are partly gathered in this handbook (cf. Activities section) and will be reported back to the European institutions and other European stakeholders.

Specific objectives of the project:

- To promote the participation of citizens who would not have spontaneously taken part in projects of a European nature by directly involving them in the citizens' panels.
- To encourage a bottom-up approach to allow citizens to express their views on European topics and the European Union
- To promote trans-national mobility opportunities among the citizens of the countries involved

- ii. **ALL4EU (2008)** in cooperation with Region Istria, focused on citizens' participation in shaping the future European Union.

It is a common belief that Europe should promote the participative democracy as one of its characterizing values and should offer to its citizens and to civil society instruments to exchange ideas on the future of the European Union. The promotion of trans-national projects and trainings can undoubtedly contribute to get Europe closer to its citizens.

ALL.4.EU is a project consisting in the setting-up of citizens' panels (groups of ordinary citizens, not spontaneously involved in European issues) in 7 different places in Europe. This specific methodology is used to give the opportunity to people to be involved and play an active role in the construction of Europe.

- iii. **Bandiar (2008)** led by ASAEL, focused on participation of women in political life

The aim of BANDIAR project was to raise awareness about participation of woman in political life in the local level. European Union needs also to be built from a bottom-up perspective, involving local authorities. We would like to stress this point as a way to make local civil servants, local politicians and public in general to feel part of the EU. BANDIAR project pretends to put a wide range of ideas, experiences and modalities about gender issues in common to stimulate their active participation in the processes of representative democracy at local, national and even international level. It works in a European perspective, rooted in the diversity of local realities.

- iv. **E-Panels (2009-2010)** focused on ICT for improved participation

The E-panels project was designed to address the issue of bridging the gap between citizens and the European Union in an innovative way. The new method proposed by this project is to create

electronic panels (“E-panels”) to increase the number of citizens from different ages, nationalities and backgrounds who could finally find an opportunity to express themselves on matters related to EU policies that affect their daily life by these online panels. The aim is to test this new dimension of the citizens’ panels’ methodology to see if it is a relevant instrument to foster citizen participation.

- v. **GOAL (2011-2012)**, Granting Opportunities for Active Learning, focused on migration and participation.

This project aimed at promoting citizen participation in the construction of a tighter-knit, democratic, world-oriented and united Europe, tackling the challenge of immigration and emigration as opportunities to develop active citizenship and sense of ownership of the EU, whilst enhancing tolerance, solidarity and mutual understanding. The project presents a set of activities that grants citizens the chance to interact – both at the local and at the European level – and offers them the occasion to “work” together towards a common aim.

A. Composition

A citizens’ panel is a group of citizens who are not often engaged in public life or do not spontaneously participate in projects of European nature but are willing to do so. While setting up the panel, a special attention is paid to involving people of different demographic, social and professional background. It shall include a wide range of profiles and focus on the whole spectrum of society: volunteers, teachers, NGOs representatives, professionals and experts, disadvantaged people, elderly people, youngsters, etc. We wish to include at least 8 countries per project and implementing partners, to secure diverse views on the topic concerned by the project and a wide European perspective to the recommendation.

B. Target group, Activators & Multipliers

1. **Target group:** citizens not often engaged in the public life or European projects but willing to do so. All citizens over 16 years of age from different walks of life fall into the target group.

2. **Activators:** citizens already engaged in the public life or European projects, with different profiles in terms of demographic, social and professional background. Their main role is to activate and facilitate the engagement of the target group.

3. **Multipliers:** the European project COHEIRS has introduced the role of multipliers as specific actors within the group of activators. Indeed, multipliers act not only as facilitators but also as resource persons. And have been trained specifically for this purpose in topics of concern to the project (health and environment).

C. Selection of participants & activators

Timeline:

Citizens’ panels participants and activators are selected by applying the following procedure:

1) Selection of citizens’ panels activators

Citizens’ panels activators are identified and selected by the partners among civil society and local authorities’ representatives, already active at local level and preferably come from different walks of life; special attention is given to the involvement of leading citizens of different demographic, social and professional background. Their main role is to activate and facilitate the engagement of the target group in the public life or European projects.

2) Training of activators

The goal of the training is to provide the activators with the necessary information and tools to act as facilitators and resource person. In order to ensure their full participation in the training, the activators should preferably have a working level of English.

The European project COHEIRS further developed the methodology of citizens' panels by introducing the role of multipliers. Each partner shall identify and select 5 multipliers within its group of activators. A tailor-made training programme is set up to enable the multipliers to acquire relevant information and tools on promoting civic engagement as well as a more scientific knowledge on the addressed topic. Therefore, multipliers act not only as facilitators but also as resource persons. They spread the information and tools previously acquired within the group of activators, thus leading and improving their capacity of addressing the target group

3) Selection of citizens' panels participants

The activators will put into practice the information and mechanisms acquired during the training on civic engagement. Citizens' panels participants are selected on a voluntary basis; their selection follows two different strategies in order to involve the highest number of citizens from different walks of life:

- through the activators, who are asked to involve 10 persons each
- through an open call, publishing the event on an extensive basis at the local level.

D. Draft of recommendations

Timeline:

Following the selection process, the citizens panels' participants will draft recommendations to be submitted both to local, national and European authorities:

1) Local and national level

In a series of local events, citizen panel participants will identify the issues and actual needs of their own community and will exchange views and opinions on how to tackle them. The ideas will be collected and will be channelled into the form of recommendations to be addressed to their local and national authorities.

2) European level

After the local events, the gathering of all partners is of special importance for the citizens' panels. It represents both an incentive to take part in local activities and an opportunity to exchange views and opinions with other citizens' panels from other countries.

It grants a real European dimension to the work of the panels and will allow the drafting of common recommendations to EU institutions, based on those drafted at the local level.

E. Role of citizens' panels activators

Citizens' panels activators have a key role to play:

- information providers
- facilitators

- motivators
- bridges between local authorities, European institutions and citizens
- guide
- communicators
- network providers
- among the activators, 5 multipliers are also resource people on the addressed topic

F. Role of partners

Partners have a fundamental role to play in supporting and facilitating the setting-up and the work of the citizens' panels (logistics, materials, advice, etc).

G. Citizens' panels and Politicians

Politicians and elected representatives may be involved in the process and in citizens' panels meetings as resource people. The framework and aims of their interventions and contributions should be clearly defined.

H. Citizens' panels and EU institutions

Representatives from EU institutions shall be informed and invited to participate both in local and international activities, in order to allow citizens to directly interact with them.

I. Functioning of the citizens' panels

A neutral place should be provided for the meeting:

- municipalities may provide their meeting rooms
- educational institutions
- NGOs sites

Meetings should preferably take place during the weekends or in the evening (Tuesday-Thursday) so as to reach a higher number of people.

J. Further development of the methodology

The methodology of citizens' panels leaves room for widening the civic engagement through ICT tools. ICT applications are being studied to provide all members of the target group not directly involved in the drafting of recommendations with a concrete means to express their opinion on the addressed topic.

Activities

a. *Set up of civic observers group*

- i. Italy
- ii. Croatia
- iii. Macedonia
- iv. Romania
- v. Bulgaria
- vi. Malta
- vii. Slovenia
- viii. Albania

i. Istituto Scientifico Biomedico Euro Mediterraneo, Italy

The Euro Mediterranean Scientific and Biomedical Institute (ISBEM) held two local workshops to shape the group of civic observers. The first workshop took place in Maglie on 30 April 2013 and was an occasion to introduce the project to the participants and define the general framework of intervention, with special focus on the key role of civic observers. Stemming from participants' strong interest shown throughout the first meeting, ISBEM held a second workshop taking place in Mesagne on 7 June 2013. The goal of the second meeting was to involve in the process further associations and participants coping with health and environmental issues at local level and to draft the action plan of next activities.

A coordination meeting of civic observers aimed at further define the action plan for the activities to be carried out in the territory was held on 29 August 2013 at the initiative of the association Coppula Tisa, that has been one of the main associations to join ISBEM in pursuing the objectives of COHEIRS in the Apulia region.

ii. Foundation for Partnership and Civil Society Development, Croatia

The local workshop kicking-off the process of setting up the group of civic observers on environment and health was organised by the Foundation for Partnership and Civil Society Development on 4 June 2013 in Pula. The meeting took place as side event of the Solidarity Purchasing Group rally because it represents the place where activist and environment and health aware people started to cooperate in Istria. As many as 28 participants attended the event and got informed about the project as well as their duties and responsibilities as civic observers and activators. Five multipliers were also identified to take part in the training in Brussels on 18-20 June.

iii. Coalition of Youth Organisations SEGA, Macedonia

The Macedonian youth organisation SEGA organised the one day workshop in Skopje on 10 June. As many as 20 citizens attended the event in a voluntary basis, following the invitations sent out through different dissemination channels. This initial gathering also represented the core of the civic observers group. Participants were mainly ordinary citizens interested in the topics of health and environment and willing to have a say as well as experts in the field.

The workshop run upon two main pillars. The first session was dedicated to introduce to participants the overall framework of the project, the set of activities to be implemented for achieving the objectives and the expected outcomes. The second part of the meeting focused on presenting the roles and responsibilities of civic observers and their multiplying effect in involving the broad citizenship to the panels. As final result of the event, an open debate on health and environment was launched in order to identify the main issues affecting the community. GMO production and consumption came up as main threat of the public health according to participants and

exchange of experiences were made on the topic. The gathering was also an occasion to set the criteria for the identification of the 5 multipliers to attend the training in Brussels. Leading citizens of different demographic, social and professional background were therefore selected in accordance with the guidelines of the citizen panels methodology.

iv. The Mountain Community Iezer Muscel Association, Romania

The Mountain Community Iezer Muscel Association organised a one day workshop on the topics of environment and health in Godeni on 6 June. The 24 participants (both specialists in the field and ordinary citizens) took part in the activity. The meeting was an occasion to present the project, in particular its objectives and activities to local authorities and stakeholders active or simply interested in the field. Particular emphasis was given to showcase the role of civic observers and citizens could be involved in the decision making process through the instrument of recommendations, presented as the final outcome of the local process. Participants had also the opportunity of introducing themselves and outline their activities in the field of health and environment as well as to debate over the main challenges and issues affecting their territory.

The selection of the five multipliers was a key moment of the meeting. A wide dissemination campaign was launched in order to involve associations coping with environment and health issues in the whole territory. The 5 multipliers were chosen taking into account the role of the Iezer Muscel Association, giving its strength of reuniting several mountain communities, and the debate held within the workshop. In choosing the 5 multipliers, particular attention was given to the level of English, the knowledge of it being a key competence to participate and contribute to the training of trainers in Brussels fully.

v. International Development Alliance, Bulgaria

The workshop for setting up the civic observers' group was organised on 3 June. It reunited 18 representatives of NGOs, governmental organisations and ordinary citizens working or interested in the field of environment and health. The aim of the meeting was to identify key issues, observations and assessments regarding the national characteristics, related to the topic of environmental protection and public health.

Following the presentation of the Europe for Citizens programme as the general framework of the initiative, the project COHEIRS, its objectives and activities were introduced to the participants. Particular attention was also given to the presentation of the Article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Participants then introduced themselves and showcased the main initiatives of their own organisations on health and environmental matters. The meeting was also an opportunity to share opinions, observations and assessments on the state of play of civil participation in Bulgaria as far as environment and health are concerned. The setting of a network of civic observers made up of representatives of key stakeholders on health and environment in the country was the main achievement of the workshop. The role of civic observers was discussed into more details in order to involve as many citizens as possible in the panels and provide them with up to date information on health and environment. The meeting was also an occasion to identify the 5 multipliers to be sent to Brussels to attend the training of trainers in order to also act as resource persons. The following objectives were achieved in the meeting:

- Establishment of a national civic observers' group
- Involvement of local stakeholders in the project and dissemination of the project itself
- Health and environmental issues to be tackled identified
- Tools and methodologies agreed
- Draft of an action plan on the local process

vi. Birgu Local Council, Malta

The Birgu Local Council invited all those citizens in the locality who are active at local level in environmental and health issues to set up the group of civic observers in connection with the project. A letter was sent to

professionals and volunteers in the sectors, where information about the COHEIRS project, especially its aims and objectives was explained. Information was also given about civic observers and multipliers' role within the project, and the need to set up this group which will have the responsibility to lead ordinary citizens and promote the involvement of the broader citizenship, while also choosing 5 multipliers to participate in the opening conference in Brussels. Those interested were asked to send their details to the Birgu Local Council. Although these citizens are actively involved in the locality, it is not often that they spontaneously participate in European projects. The opportunity to be part of this project was welcomed with enthusiasm. Numerous letters of acceptance were received at the Birgu Local Council. Special attention was given to involve people of different demographic, social and professional backgrounds. After this was taken into consideration, the civic observers group was set up and 5 multipliers were identified.

vii. Association for Developing Voluntary Work Novo Mesto, Slovenia

The Association for Voluntary Work Novo Mesto kicked-off the process of setting up the group of civic observers on health and environment by holding a dedicated workshop on 3 June 2013 in the city of Novo Mesto. As many as 22 representatives of CSOs active on the aforementioned issues gathered together for identifying and discussing the main environmental and health problems affecting their own community. The event was also the occasion for setting up the group of civic observers, made up of 20 activators and for choosing the 5 multipliers who will attend the training in Brussels on 18-20 June 2013.

Mitja Bukovec, coordinator of the project COHEIRS presented the programme Europe for citizens and the European Year of Citizens 2013. He also introduced the applicant partner ALDA and all the implementing, dissemination and expert partners as well as the aims of the project, its objectives and activities and the role of the Slovenian civic observers group.

viii. Center for Research Cooperation and Development, Albania

The meeting took place on 03 June 2013 in Vlora. As many as 29 people from different demographic, social and professional backgrounds participated in the event. The aim of the meeting was to set-up the core of civic observers' group by inviting participants to work together, to share their ideas, their opinions and their suggestions on environmental and health issues that citizens face everyday in their community. They identified many issues and needs at local level and exchanged their views and opinions on how to tackle them. Participants discussed potential successful tools on how to raise citizen's awareness, promote the broader involvement of citizens and establish the communication bridge with local authorities as far as such important topics are concerned. CRCD presented the project objectives, its local and international activities and the participatory approach of citizens' panels. Because of the interest in the topics raised by the project, several participants volunteered to be part of the multipliers/activators group. Participants concluded that topics of vital interest such as safe and drinking water, recreational parks and green areas for youngsters and elderly, wider promotion of massive sports' activities, etc having impact on the quality of life should further be promoted.

Participants analysed and discussed their actual local situation, as based on their perception. Their suggestions were the following:

1. Raise awareness on the environmental situation affecting the local community.
 2. Promote the coordination with and the responsibility of local institutions.
 3. Educate citizens on how to raise environmental and health awareness among their peers
 4. Find ways to proceed and grant funds for community projects
- Citizens need to be constantly informed about the risks and damages that pollution can cause to drinking water and air quality, as well as the importance of BIO food consumption, and other similar problems.
 - How to find ways to collect funds for additional recreational sports facilities, for widening green spaces and parks for children and seniors. Sports are very important because they help the physical and emotional

development of children. These environments are well suited to every age group so that they can have a healthy life by being active in a clean environment.

- Volunteering should be encouraged to promote actions for a clean city
- “Civic education for a healthy environment” is a key issue to be addressed
- Dissemination of information, especially in schools, via traditional and social media. We want to spread information to youth about drinking water, the negative impacts
- on the environment, health, sports etc.
- How can we encourage the citizens’ report action against those harming the environment?

b. *Training of trainers*

Training of multipliers in Bruxelles

The “training of multipliers” took place from 18-20 June 2013 in Brussels. The event brought together 55 participants as representatives of 31 organisations coming from 12 different countries in wider Europe. The aim of the meeting was to train participants on how to implement ALDA’s methodology of citizens’ panels locally as well as to provide them with scientific information and tools on environmental and health protection so that they can act both as facilitators and resource persons.

On June, 18, Mr Aldo Xhani, ALDA Project Manager, welcomed the participants and opened the session by delivering a presentation of both ALDA and the project COHEIRS. The floor was then left to Mr John MacDonald, from the Task Force of the European Year of Citizens 2013 (EYC2013), who held a keynote speech on the EYC2013 as such and on the several tools that the DG Communication has been applying for fostering citizens’ participation in the EU democratic life.

The first session of the training, held in the morning of June 18, aimed at making participants feel bonded to each other and at promoting intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. Split into six different groups of approximately 9 people and representing at least 7 countries, participants got to present themselves, their organisations and, above all, their expectations from the training. Mr Marco Boaria, ALDA Resource & Development Unit Coordinator, addressed the expectations of the participants and presented them the overall timetable of the training.

The afternoon was entirely dedicated to the project steering committee, as the partners agreed upon it prior to move to Brussels. The steering committee was in particular requested for further defining some issues related to the narrative and financial reporting. Many documents and templates were drafted during the online meetings, the physical steering committee was therefore an occasion to present and discuss them, adopt the amendments proposed and agree upon a definitive toolkit. Besides this, the partners also had the opportunity of bringing in their feedback on the workshops held at local level for setting up the core of the civic observers’ groups.

In order to address the expectations raised earlier on by the participants, the training was structured in three different sessions. The aim of the first session was to define the general framework of both the project and the activity. Mr Marco Boaria delivered the training by providing participants with detailed information on the Europe for Citizens’ programme, on the perspectives of the new programming period 2014-2020 as well as on ALDA’s methodology of citizens’ panels as applied in previous successful projects such as EURAction, ALL4EU, Bandiar, E-Panels and GOAL. The general framework was completed by Mr Prisco Piscitelli, health expert from the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE Italy), who introduced the prevention and precautionary principles as stated in the article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Mr Piscitelli called participants for a more active role as today’s citizens. The principle of prevention is an important tool for contrasting environmental misconducts. It claims that those practices and actions scientifically proven as dangerous for human health must be banned and citizens should require its full application. The principle of precaution has further contributed to protect human health by contrasting potential risks, too. Citizens have therefore the means to act for their communities’ well being and to stand against environmental violations affecting human health.

In order to provide participants with a fecund environment for debating, the organisers applied the World Café method in the second part of the session. Its aim was to fill in the general framework with detailed information on the multipliers' role. By freely moving from one table to another every 15 minutes, participants contributed to discuss six topics: the values of multipliers, their skills, the tools they should be equipped with, the strategies and methodologies for engaging citizens, the involvement of local stakeholders and the political and social recognition of multipliers. As for the skills, the participants highlighted the need of both being a good event manager and a resource-knowledge person familiar with health and environmental policies and legal frameworks. The field of tools was deeply analysed too. The participants discussed on physical and virtual tools, on contacts and accesses to citizens, institutions and networks, on assessment tools such as SWOT analyses and statistics, on instruments to get feedback from the participants and on the ethical code. The multiplier should also be recognised as a values holder. The participants identified his/her characteristics as being objective and tolerant, visible and credible within the community, emphatic, open-minded and rational, available, responsible and a wallbreaker in terms of creativity and innovation. As for the strategies, the participants agreed upon holding different approaches in relation to the target group addressed, in particular in terms of age as youngsters and elderly respond differently to a given input. Among the many proposals, particular emphasis was put on the need to create the interest, to address specific issues within the community and to award participation. The importance of engaging and working in cooperation with a wide network of stakeholders was the main result raised from the dedicated working group. Citizens, municipalities, NGOs, schools and local networks were deemed as key to promote a concrete citizen participation in the topics of the project. The political and social recognition of multipliers' role strongly benefited from the Italian participants who brought in their action plan of registering civic observers in national lists at the prefecture so as to provide them with legal tools when taking action. The results of the working groups were further discussed in plenary and got the feedback and amendments of all participants.

The second session focused on health and environmental challenges and brought in a both local and European perspective. Participants identified the main issues affecting their local communities, brought them together in a national perspective and had the opportunity of freely discussing them in a not structured frame. The session was supported by scientific information provided by Mr Prisco Piscitelli and got an academic and scientific feedback from Prof. Dot. Dominique Belpomme who stressed the importance of the link between environment and health and introduced the **Paris Appeal** to the audience.

As final tool for setting up the citizens' panels at local level, participants were called in the third session to discuss and define common national guidelines. National groups were therefore set up among the "implementing partners" while the "disseminating partners" gathered together to debate and propose their strategy for giving visibility to the outcomes of local workshops.

A specific session was dedicated to the European Citizen Initiative (ECI) as new tool of citizen participation. Mr Jerry Van Den Berge from the European Federation of Public Service, introduced the successful initiative "Water is a human right!" and gave the floor to the audience for an interactive questions and answers session.

The support of the European Commission was key for the success of the meeting. Besides Mr MacDonald's contribution, the participants were welcomed to discuss the outcomes of the three days' training with Joana Viera da Silva, policy officer at the Unit Citizens' Policy of the DG Communication. The meeting was also an opportunity to exchange views on efficient means providing visibility to European policies in EU member countries.

c. Thematic workshops

i. Istituto Scientifico Biomedico Euro Mediterraneo, Italy

Local thematic workshop - 29 June 2013

The first thematic workshop has been held in Mesagne on 29 June 2013. The main objectives of the COHEIRS project have been presented to all those participating for the first time. Following the welcome speech of

ISBEM's President, Prof. Alessandro Distante, Dr. Prisco Piscitelli introduced Dr. Agostino DI CIAULA (ISDE Italy), who presented very critical data about the main environmental emergencies currently ongoing in the Apulia region. Particularly, data available at national level rank Apulia at the first place for the emission in the air of several compounds with a well known human toxicity (i.e. dioxin, NO, cadmium, nickel and other metals).

A specific focus has been dedicated to the situation being experienced in Taranto due to its iron and steel implant and to the waste treatment cycle based on the incineration. After the presentation held by Dr. DI CIAULA, all participants have been invited to split into 3 focus groups dedicated to the following topics: environmental emergencies in Apulia; Challenges to people's health; Possible citizenship initiatives. Within each focus group, all participants have introduced themselves and their associations. At the end, the results emerged from each working group have been presented to the participants and common strategies in terms of citizenship initiatives have been proposed to address environmental and sanitary emergencies. All the associations participating in the workshop have been invited to provide a list of civic observers. Also young people attending their last year of high school have been invited to participate as civic observers within specific agreements with the schools.

Local thematic workshop - 16 November 2013

In coordination with ISDE Italy, the Italian group of civic observers organised a local workshop in Naples on 16 November, given the well documented cases of high level of diseases due to environmental violations. The meeting reunited several experts, representatives of associations dealing with the wide spread issue of toxic waste management, in particular in what is known as "la Terra dei Fuochi".

The project COHEIRS and its objectives was first presented to the participants in order to provide them with the general framework of the initiative. Following Dr. Alessandro Distante welcoming of participants on behalf of the Italian delegation COHEIRS as well as of the whole partnership, Dr. Prisco Piscitelli introduced the issue of cancer primary prevention and the precautionary principle which is the basis of COHEIRS project. Dr. Donato CAFAGNA, the representative of the Ministry for Internal Affairs devoted to the environmental emergency in Campania region, presented the most important proposals from public institutions to address environmental emergencies. In particular, he introduced a proposal of regional law that will forbid the use of any ground/soil that will be found full of wastes or toxic substances. The proposal of law will lead people to deny the use of their properties for illegal disposal of wastes or substances. Dr. Luigi MONTANO showcased the Italian National Research Council (CNR, Institute for Food and Nutritional Sciences, Avellino, Campania) Food&Fertility project, which will involve many people in order to determine environmental influence of male fertility throughout epigenetic damages. Then Dr. Gaetano RIVEZZI presented the main sanitary issues related to environmental causes in Campania Region.

Following the informative session, a round table was organised in order to give the possibility to representatives of local associations and ordinary citizens to raise their voice and give their opinion on the issue. The session was facilitated and led by Vincenzo DE LUCA, Lucio IAVARONE, Claudio PELLONE and Franco MATRONE. All participants managed to express their views and exchange with both each other and the experts to formulate their proposals. The former dean of the host University, recently appointed in the national board of CNR, Prof. Gennaro FERRARA concluded the meeting. All associations participating in the workshop have been invited to provide a list of civic observers. A communication office, a legal office, a secretary office and a scientific committee have been settled.

Local thematic workshop - 24 January 2014

The third local thematic workshop took place in Rome, at the premises of the EU Commission Representation to Italy on 24 January. The meeting aimed at gathering together all associations dealing with environmental and health issues and launch the first "National Forum on Citizenship, Environment and Health" as a permanent forum whose sustainability will be ensured also after the ending of the project.

Mr Vittorio Calaprice, Representative of the European Commission to Italy, Ms Antonella Valmorbida, Director

of ALDA and Prof. Alessandro Distante, President of ISBEM welcomed the participants and highlighted the importance of the meeting as first step of a long lasting forum to influence the decision making process at local, regional and national level in the field of environment and health. Dr. Prisco Piscitelli showcased to the participants the objectives of the project COHEIRS and the state of play of its implementation at European level. A very attractive speech on the role of environmental exposures in the development of several diseases was delivered by Dr. Eduardo Missoni, representative of ISDE based in Geneva. Mr Antonio Gaudio, Secretary General of the National Directory Cittadinanza Attiva, underlined the interest of the organisation in cooperating within the COHEIRS framework. Dr. Prisco Piscitelli introduced then the precautionary principle both in terms of scientific contents and legislative aspects at European level. Key experts followed his intervention: the Environment and Prevention Chief officer of the Italian Higher Healthcare Institute (ISS), Dr. Loredana Musmeci, held a speech about the need of primary prevention in oncology; Prof. Giuseppe Altieri stressed the need of introducing a more comprehensive biological agriculture; Prof. Adriana Bonifacino from St Andrea Hospital in Rome and Prof. Massimo Crespi from Collegium Ramazzini (both oncologists) underlined the need of focusing on primary prevention of breast cancer.

The session continued with exchanges and interactions among participants in order to collect main ideas and reflections. A key outcome of the meeting was that several associations from Rome and Naples expressed their interest within the COHEIRS and the Forum framework in pursuing the precautionary principle through citizenship activities at local level. The “manifesto” of citizens for health and environment, developed in the weeks preceding the meeting with all the participant organisations, has been presented and distributed.

ii. Foundation for Partnership and Civil Society Development, Croatia

Local thematic workshop - 19 October 2013

The first local thematic workshop was held in Pazin on 19 October. As many as 38 ordinary citizens interested in the field of environment and health preservation attended the event and brought in their ideas on the topic.

A lecture was held on the topic related to improving health in everyday life through the consumption of the right food. The community supported agriculture groups were introduced and promoted as an alternative form of organisation of producers and consumers of food, developing in this way local organic farming and promoting the environmental protection.

The event succeeded in informing and educating participants on the importance of the food in public health. It also achieved the objective of showcasing the role of the aforementioned agriculture groups and the possibilities of joining them. Particular attention was given to local organic products and to the positive relation between organic practices, environmental protection and public health.

Local thematic workshop - 8/9 November 2013

The event “Watch what you eat” was held on 8th and 9th November 2013 in Pula in coordination with the Association Istrian eco product and Ethnographic museum of Istria. The event consisted of lectures on the topic of traditional and organic food, traditional food workshops, storytelling and creative workshops, documentaries and exhibition sections where visitors could buy organic products directly from the manufacturers. The theme was dedicated to growing and eating healthy (regional) food in the cities. The final objective was to reach individuals and groups who are passionate and engaged in raising awareness about healthy and traditional food, whether their actions are locally in the community or at national level to spread their knowledge and best practice to common people.

The whole event, beside the exhibition section, had also art workshops for children, workshops on the preparation of pasta, storytelling and two films: “Waste land” and “Confessions of an eco-terrorist”. The main subject was community and urban gardens, developed through various lectures and debates.

Key experts invited by the civic observers group delivered information on the topic to a wide public. In particular, Dr.Sc. Tihana Rubić from the Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology and Association Parkticipacija presented urban gardens anthology whose release is expected in early 2014. She also spoke about the concept of joint university and school gardens and showcased examples of realised and planned academic and school gardens in Zagreb. Mr Goran Hanžek, a representative of the Association Gredica from Varaždin, presented their social garden project "Wonderful gardens." The lecturer presented its concrete realisation, its functioning and the future plans regarding the social garden. Ms Sunčana Pešak from the Green Network of activist groups spoke about food sovereignty in Croatia and abroad. She also introduced the idea of localisation of the food system and the need of restoring personal relationships in trade. In particular, she highlighted a number of problems and reasons that led to the current situation, from unnecessary imports/exports, excessive production and transportation and low-quality food.

Lectures and workshops were very well attended and visitors expressed their desire to organise such events more often, even in a more practical way. Besides the direct attendees, the event managed to reach a wide audience as it was well promoted in all local media. As many as 500 citizens were involved in the event activities.

The result of the evaluation showed that all participants were very satisfied with the usefulness and quality of the workshops. They also stressed that more similar activities are needed in order to exchange with each other through participative methodologies.

Local thematic workshop - 3 February 2014

The third local workshop on the topic "The impact of today's society on health and the environment - the role of organic farming" was held on 3 February 2014 at the premises of the Department of Economics and Tourism" Dr. Mijo Mirkovic" in Pula. The common denominator of the activity was organic farming, an issue of strong interest to the whole community nowadays. As many as 71 ordinary citizens and stakeholders (representatives of the Community supported agriculture group, local farmers, agricultural associations and others) had the opportunity to receive inputs from experts in the field and to reflect on the impact that society has on the natural processes, with special focus on the link between food production and consumption and public health.

In the second part, organized by the Foundation for Partnership and Civil Society development, and financed under the project "COHEIRS"(Civic Observers for Health and Environment: Initiative for Responsibility and Sustainability), there were two lectures.

After the presentation of the project COHEIRS, in particular its objectives and activities, two lectures were delivered in order to provide participants with up to date information on the topic of food and public health. The first presentation on "Food sovereignty in the world and in Croatia" was held by Sunčana Pešak from ZMAG. Ms Andrea Vugrinović from the Organic farming cluster focused on the legal framework and delivered a very interesting speech on: "The EU regulation - opportunities and threats". Further information was delivered on the outcomes of the previous workshops and an open debate was then launched in order to present citizens' opinions, exchange with each other and structure all collected ideas into recommendations to be presented to local, regional and national decision-makers. The document was also showcased at the transnational seminar in Mesagne as key outcome of the whole Croatian process of involving citizens into the panels.

iii. Coalition of Youth Organisations SEGA, Macedonia

Local thematic workshop - 29 October 2013

On 19 November 2013, at the municipal hall of Local Government Sveti Nikole, the civic observers' group launched the public forum on the "Impact of GMOs on the population, especially the youth." Debate panelists were Prof. Dr. Zoran Popovski - Head of Department of Biochemistry and Genetic Engineering at the Faculty

of Agriculture and Food, and Dr. Slagana Velkov. Ms Aleksandra Kocevka – member of the Organization of women in Sveti Nikole moderated the discussions.

In order to provide participants with key information concerning the link between environment and health, Prof. Dr. Zoran Popovski tackled the following issues: “The basic concepts for genetic modification”, “Modification process through commercialisation”, “Legislation in Macedonia and EU with regard to GMO”, “Way to take control of GMOs” and “Risks and benefits in the using of GMOs”.

In order to provide balanced information, Dr. Sladjana Velkov took the floor to present and debate with the attendees on “What is GMO and GMO impact on the health”, “Economic consequences” and “Environmental consequences”. Indeed, the two panelists have opposing views in relation to GMOs and delivering two opposed perspective was key to stimulate the debate.

As many as 86 participants attended the meeting and had the chance to express their views in the matter. The event gathered mainly ordinary citizens and representatives of the local government, health sector, education, civic associations, food inspectors (at local level) and representatives of companies active in the manufacturing and food processing. As GMOs was identified as the main topic of concern to the citizen group, the workshop was an opportunity to get acquainted on the topic and get to know more about the current legislation at both national and European level. The following recommendations and conclusions came up as outcomes of the public debate:

Required actions are needed to raise awareness and to inform the population about the impact of GMOs on environment and human health;

In Macedonia there are not licensed laboratories for conducting research and studies on the concrete use of GMOs in the country. Licensed laboratories should be open;

It is necessary to establish mechanisms for greater protection of illegal importation of GMO foods. It is necessary to better control the import – export process;

It is necessary to amend the legal framework of GMOs production and consumption in Macedonia by taking the new studies into account. In particular, the competencies are not well defined along institutional bodies in charge of controls: some institutions have overlapping tasks whereas some other sectors are not regulated by law yet. This causes failures in the control of food and the presence of GMOs in food;

A mandatory labelling of food containing GMOs should be applied;

More efforts should be made at EU level to ban GMOs

The final evaluation of the workshop underlined that participants highly rated the quality of the debate and believe that actions of this kind are very useful and relevant and that the interaction between information and participatory sessions was key for the success of the activity. The event had a significant coverage and was broadcasted by the local radio - Radio Sveti Nikole and the local TV - TV Svet, therefore underlying the interest of the community to the topic.

Local thematic workshop - 30 October 2013

The second workshop was held in the City Library of Prilep on 30 October. The meeting followed the same structure as the previous workshop in Sveti Nikole and its aim was to inform the local community about the influence of GMO on public health, the legislative framework regulating the matter both at national and EU level and controlling mechanisms put into place in Macedonia. Coalition of youth organizations SEGA on 30.10.2013 conducted panel discussion in the City Library in Prilep, Macedonia, on the subject “The influence of the GMO on the human health, especially on the young people” part of the project COHEIRS “Civic Observers for Health and Environment: Initiative for Responsibility and Sustainability”. The goal of the panel discussion was to inform the local community about the influence of GMO on people, legislative policies in EU and Macedonia, State control of GMO and how GMO effects on people health.

An introduction session was held and information were delivered by Ms Tatjana Tasevska – Food Technologic engineer who addressed the topics of “What’s GMO” and “Law legislative in Macedonia”, Ms Ruzica Jagurnoska - Agronomic Engineer who held very attractive presentations on “GMO and agriculture, advantages and

disadvantages” and Mr Martin Josheski - Veterinary medicine doctor, who talked about the influence of GMO to animals and human beings by showcasing some concrete effects caused by GMOs.

Upon this basis, an open debate was then launched where 61 participants coming from different walks of life had the opportunity of bringing in their own experience and exchange with each other while getting the feedback of the experts. The opinions were collected and listed in form of recommendations.

Local thematic workshop - 5 November 2013

Based on the significant interest at local level, the civic observers group organised a workshop on the topic of GMOs and public health in Bitola on 5 November. More than 70 participants attended the event and local media broadcasted it quite widely. The information session was held by Dr Sladjana Velokv and university professor Dr Zoran Popovski who brought in their expertise through different approaches, according to their specific area of interest. The information session, as in the previous workshops led to open discussions with citizens and pros and cons of GMOs production and consumption were showcased. The event was an opportunity to acquire up to date information on the topic by considering the phenomenon through different perspectives. A particular interest was shown about the regulations for the products in the markets and the labelling of GMOs which have been introduced quite recently in the country but not much information has been provided. The debate among participants very much focused on this aspect of the topic and experts were constantly addressed to give their feedback. The meeting contributed to spread the interest in the topic and further meetings were asked to be held given the lack of information and competence of official institutions in the country.

Local thematic workshop - 14 November 2013

The first workshop in Skopje was held on 14 November in the student dormitory “Goce Delchev”. Based on the success of the previous workshops, the meeting addressed the topic of “The influence of the GMO over the health of the people, especially the health of young people - benefits or negative impacts”. The civic observers’ group organised the debate in cooperation with the union of the resident students in the dormitory. 30-40 students were expected to attend the event but reality went beyond the expectations and more than 70 youngsters contributed to its success. Given the lack of information in the sector, the organising group strengthened the introductory session, as in the upcoming meetings. Prof. Dr. Zoran Popovski, from the Faculty for agricultural science and food, and Dr. Slagjana Velkov, doctor of medicine were the main experts invited to bring in their expertise. After panelists’ presentations, an open space was organised in order to collect students’ voice and make them exchange with each other and the experts. As previously, the event showed once more the lack of information on the topic despite young people being more able to find the information on the internet. In particular, more awareness campaigns on how the products are tested and where they are imported from were requested. The high level of participation and debate was also favoured by the different perspectives the topic was addressed by the two speakers, therefore providing participants with balanced information.

Local thematic workshop - 20 November 2013

Based on the positive outcomes of the previous meeting, a second workshop was organised in the student dormitory “Kuzman Josifovski Pitu” of Skopje on 20 November. Prof. Dr. Zoran Popovski, from the Faculty for agricultural science and food, and Dr. Slagjana Velkov, doctor of medicine were re-invited to “continue” the discussions with the students. Mr Gjoko Vukanovski, from the Volunteer Centre Skopje and member of the civic observers group moderated the panel and facilitated the debate. The Union of students had an important role in the organisation of the event and strongly contributed to disseminate the information among their peers. the use of social media boosted the participation and around 80 participants attended the workshop, mainly young people but also citizens interested in the topic. Two sessions were held, based on the structure of the agenda of the previous meeting that brought positive feedback. the informative session was organised in a more participative approach by giving the possibility to participants to interact with the speakers rather than simply receiving the information. The second part of the event was dedicated to the open discussion among

participants, as a moment to collect their views and opinions. Many pro-organic youngsters and ordinary citizens attended the event and a strong impact was given to the need of not producing and not importing under any circumstances GMOs products in Macedonia.

Local thematic workshop - 26 November 2013

Based on the success of the two previous events, the experience was exported in the student dormitory of “Stiv Naumov” in Skopje. The event took place on 26 November and Prof. Dr. Zoran Popovski, from the Faculty for agricultural science and food, and Dr. Slagjana Velkov were invited as experts. In order to disseminate the event as widely as possible, the Union of students was requested to contribute to the organisation of the meeting. The workshop was less attended than the previous ones and no more than 50 participants were counted in the venue. After the presentations of the panelists, an open space for discussion and interaction with the experts was then launched. The students attending the meeting declared being quite uncertain about their opinion on GMOs, which was also partly caused by the different angles from which the presentations were made. The event was less successful in terms of active participation and interaction between participants and experts. The open debate among students themselves was not as fruitful as the previous ones, despite the facilitation provided and the agenda being the same.

Local thematic workshop - 28 November 2013

A second workshop was held in Sveti Nikole on 28 November at the premises of the municipal hall of Local Government. An introductory session aimed at delivering information on the topic was led by Professor. Dr. Zoran T. Popovski - Head of Department of Biochemistry and Genetic Engineering at the Faculty of Agriculture and Food, and Slagana Velkov – Medicine Doctor. The panel was moderated by Alexandra Kocevska - member of the Organization of Women based in Sveti Nikole, who also facilitated the debate in the second session. The group of participants was mainly composed of students and teachers of the High School Koco Racin and the Faculty of Agriculture, University Goce Delchev as well as representatives of the agricultural, veterinary and chemical-biological sector and ordinary citizens. Of particular relevance was also the participation of people with cancer illness, as members of “self help group” at the Women’s Organization of Sveti Nikole. The event was also significantly disseminated by local media, in particular by the local television TV Svet.

The aim of the event was twofold: on the one hand to provide information on a topic of interest to the community and, on the other hand, to collect citizens’ opinions and views. After the presentations of the panelists, attendees had the opportunity, firstly, to raise questions, comments, remarks and suggestions, and secondly to debate openly among themselves. This second session was dedicated to the analysis and further elaboration of the recommendations drafted in the previous meeting. The document was slightly revised and introduced a few further recommendations:

Further scientific studies should be made to deeply analyse the link between GMOs and public health
GMO should become a topic of study from the secondary school in order to raise youngsters’ awareness
The import process of foods should be better regulated by introducing further controls and the German and French cases should be taken as best practices
Do not allow the introduction of GMOs food in Macedonia as a requirement for its entry into the EU
As main outcome of the workshop, the civic observers group deduced that, in terms of institutional capacity, financial health, agricultural engineering and citizens’ view Macedonia is not willing yet to allow entry, production and use of GMOs in food.

Local thematic workshop - 3 December 2013

The fourth panel discussion on “The influence of the GMO over the health of the people, especially the health of young people - benefits or negative impacts” in Skopje was held at the EU Info Center on 3 December. The group of civic observers invited as main experts Prof. Dr. Zoran Popovski, from the Faculty for agricultural science and food, Dr. Slagjana Velkov, doctor of medicine and Dr. Igor Esmerov, from the Veterinary Faculty in Skopje. The panel was moderated by Mr Zoran Ilieski, Executive director of the Coalition of youth organizations

SEGA and Mr Gjoko Vukanovski who both facilitate the open debate of the second session. Besides ordinary citizens, considered as the main target group, the event was also attended by representatives of youth organisations, local municipalities and state and public institutions. The informative session was reduced as many participants already attended the previous meeting whereas more emphasis was given to the debate and collection of citizens' opinions. The main objective of the workshop was to reflect upon the first draft of recommendations prepared on the basis of the debates and opinions expressed in the previous workshops in order to present a coherent document to be integrated with those of the workshops in Bitola, Sveti Nikole and Prilep.

Local thematic workshop - 19 December 2013

The second workshop in bitola was organised on 19 December in order to acquire information and debate on the topic of "air pollution and public health". The informative session was led by renowned experts such as Dr. Renata Radenkov and University Professor Mr. Hristina Tomevska, who brought in their expertise through different approaches. The event was attended by a high number of participants and widely broadcasted through the media, in particular the local TV, therefore covering a significant number of citizens. Following the introduction part and the questions and answers session, an open debate was open in order to collect participants' views on the topic. Air pollution levels in the city are regularly ten times higher than the average in the country and the debate was quite rough given the fully registered cases of diseases significantly linked to air pollution. Despite the difficulties, the presence of representatives of local authorities was appreciated as a concrete approach to take citizens' voice into serious consideration.

Local thematic workshop - 25 December 2013

The second workshop organised in Prilep at the City Library on 25 December gathered around 100 participants and it was a further proof of the interest of citizens to food and public health. The general topic of discussion was "Healthy food and environment issues" even though the debate focused mainly on the GMOs issue. The aim of the event was to raise citizens' awareness, in particular among young people, on the importance of healthy life styles. Key information was delivered by Dr. Sladzana Velkov who showcased how food effects one's health. Her presentation also focused on the GMO factor by analysing pros and cons of the phenomenon. The informative session allowed participants to acquire information and triggered the debate. The opinions raised during the session were collected and structures in the form of recommendations. They were further analysed and debated by the participants in order to achieve a consensus on the document..

iv. The Mountain Community Iezer Muscel Association, Romania

Local thematic workshop - 16 October 2013

The first local workshop launched by the group of civic observers, led by the representatives of the Iezer Muscel Mountain Community Association, was organised in Godeni on 16 October. It reunited around 70 participants to debate on the topic of "Protecting environment, we protect ourselves". The participants belonged to a wide range of social entities such as Arges Rural Ecological and cultural Association; Rural Women National Association - Arges branch; Romanian Villages Association, local leaders, mayors and, above all, ordinary citizens interested in the topic.

The aim of the workshop was to identify those aspects that endanger both environment and inhabitants' life and collect citizen's views and opinions as well as their proposals and solutions. Firstly, the civic observers group presented the project COHEIRS, its objectives and activities in order to provide the participants with the general framework of the initiative. A special session was dedicated to provide information on the role of civic observers, in particular their duties and responsibilities in order to widen the group as largely as possible and to involve the general citizenship in the project. Then, after presenting themselves, participants engaged in an open debate on the main environmental issues affecting public life in the community. The main issues identified were waste management and water pollution as generated by the irresponsible forest cutting. The

added value of the debate was that ordinary citizens, stakeholders in the community and local authorities gathered together so as citizens' concerns and proposals could be directly expressed to the decision makers. The recommendations drafted within the meeting called for local authorities to:

- organise local services for garbage management;
- adopt a more realistic policy regarding the environment;
- implement an ecological education programme

Local thematic workshop - 20 November 2013

The second workshop was organised in Godeni on 20 November on the topic of "Ecological food - source of healthy life and community welfare". The meeting reunited as many as 70 participants as representatives of different social organisations in the area: women association; farmers; rural tourism guesthouses owners; local leaders, specialists in ecological food and many ordinary citizens interested in the topic.

The aim of the workshop was to promote eco food as a healthy way of living by supporting, at the same time, local ecological food producers. Three main topics of discussion were established in order to collect citizens' opinions: ecological food – concept and definition; healthy way of eating; ecological food in the Iezer Muscel Mountain Community Association area. The speakers described different ways of living and eating healthy. The specialists introduced the best eco farmers in the area – cheese and fruits producers, in particular. An open debate on the main outcomes of the groups followed in order to identify common responses to the local challenges.

The unanimous conclusion was that local authorities should support and promote eco producers in favour of the inhabitants' healthy life.

Local thematic workshop - 12 December 2013

The third local workshop was organised in Godeni on 12 December and brought together around 70 participants. The topic of the meeting was "Clear environment for a healthy future - ways of reaching it". Based on the discussions of the previous events, two main challenges were addressed: waste management and drinking water quality. An overall introduction on the legal framework on waste and water management was provided by the representatives of local authorities of the mountain area.

Participants had the opportunity to interact both with local authorities and experts in order to find feasible solutions on the two challenges mostly affecting the community. In particular, the event was the occasion to bring in the opinions and recommendations collected in the previous workshops and to further elaborate them. The civic observers also exchanged with local authorities on their role in the decision making process and were recognised as a key stakeholder on health and environmental issues as far as they formally invited to take part in the next meetings of the local councils to bring in citizens' voices.

The set of recommendations handed to local authorities were based on three main pillars. They call authorities to:

- to organize local services for garbage management;
- to implement an ecological education programme;
- to support and promote eco producers in favour of the inhabitants healthy life

v. International Development Alliance, Bulgaria

Local thematic workshops

Three national thematic workshops were organised in Bulgaria from the civic observers' group: in Ruse on 11 September 2013, in Sofia on 8 February 2014 and in Gabrovo on 6 March 2014. Holding the workshops in 3 different cities was key to involve a high number of citizens with different backgrounds. More than 210

participants as representatives of NGOs, local authorities, local, regional and national institutions, other stakeholders and, above all, ordinary citizens attended the events.

The topics of the first workshop were related to environmental protection, statistics and national surveys on the link between environment and health. It was an opportunity for the participants to identify and discuss environmental and health issues directly affecting their community. Facilitators stimulated the debate and collected citizens' opinions. A first draft of recommendations to be submitted to local authorities was then prepared and further discussed.

The second workshop promoted in Sofia aimed at collecting citizens' experiences on how they perceive the relation between environment and health. Through the participation of experts, analysis and studies on the aforementioned link were showcased. As final outcome of the meeting a set of guidelines for civic observers was discussed and presented to the plenary as well as a list of recommendations stemming from the exchanges and debates within the panel.

The third workshop was related to the analysis of the guidelines, the objectives and the recommendations drafted during the first 2 workshops. The collected views and opinions were presented at the final meeting of the project. The presence of media strongly contributed to disseminate the project and significantly involve the citizenship.

vi. Birgu Local Council, Malta

Local thematic workshop - 31 October 2013

The first local workshop was organised in Birgu on 31 October. The community as a whole as well as local authorities and major stakeholders at local level were invited. The main topic discussed was the environment we live in. Expert speakers in the field were invited to make presentations in order to help the community understand the importance of living in a healthy environment. The Minister for the Environment was also present and greatly appreciated this project and the initiatives taken by the Birgu Local Council group of civic observers.

The Community had the chance to voice its concerns in relation to environmental issues and the problems they face as a community living in densely populated city. Various issues were mentioned and solutions discussed. The participation of the community was high. This showed the great desire that the community has to be involved in issues related to their well-being as well as in the correspondent decision taking processes. It was noted that they found this workshop interesting. Although those present came from different social background, the various difficulties mentioned were common. It was healthy to see different types of people discussing to try and find the best solution for the benefit of all. The opinion of the citizens was collected and a report drafted to be addressed to local and national decision makers.

Local thematic workshop - 19 November 2013

The second local workshop was held in Birgu on 19 November. Local authorities, main stakeholders as well as the community as a whole attended the event. A thematic workshop was held where the community, local authorities and major stakeholders at local level were invited. The main topics discussed were the direct hazards to the environment Maltese live in and health problems arising as a consequence of living in such an environment. Experts in the field were invited to bring in information and help the community understand the importance of living in a healthy environment. Malta's leading specialist in respiratory problems was also present and shared with the community very detailed and interesting information about asthma. He stated that he greatly appreciated this invitation to be able to give this information to the public. A presentation was also done by the Director of Genista Research Foundation, a foundation which has been recently set up

with the aim of coordinating a pioneering project on sustainable farming to demonstrate practical systems in various sectors of farming and other sustainable practices where one is expected to take greater care of the environment and the health of the consumer. He mentioned various risks and hazards to the environment and ways to reduce these risks. The Environmental Authority provided detailed information about the major violations to the environment and health citizens face in the Maltese Islands, especially in the Southern Region. She also discussed various solutions to reduce these hazards.

Once again, ordinary citizens had the chance to voice their concerns in relation to environmental issues and the problems they face as a community. The health session was much appreciated mainly by those who have young children. Various issues were mentioned and solutions discussed. Same as in first workshop, it could be easily noted that the public found this workshop beneficial as also shown by the high participation of the community. The event further stressed community's will to be involved in issues related to their well-being and the appreciation that someone is giving heed to their needs. They had many suggestions to put forward and queries which they wanted to clarify especially with Ms Camilleri as Enforcement Officer at the Malta Environment and Planning Authority.

Numerous questions were raised to Prof. Stephen Montefort as regards the respiratory problems and what can be done to ameliorate the environment citizens live in for the benefit of the younger generation.

Citizens' opinions were collected and a report drafted to be addressed to local and national decision makers.

Local thematic workshop - 28 January 2014

The third local workshop took place in Birgu on 28 January 2014.

The topic discussed was the air quality surrounding the city and citizens. Experts in the field were invited to provide information and showcase the link between air pollution and public health in order to raise awareness in the community and together discuss solutions for a less polluted air. Throughout the presentations, the emphasis was put on the main causes of air pollution and its consequences on citizens' lives. Several solutions were proposed and discussed. It was also stated that the European Union has raised the importance on the issue and several actions are being taken, both in Malta and at European level.

The public had the opportunity to speak up and express their concerns in relation to the topic as the southern region is the most hit by air pollution issues. Citizens actively participated throughout the session and this was a further proof, as shown in the previous workshops, of citizens' aspiration to be involved in issues related to their well-being and in the decision taking processes in order to promote environmental friendly policies.

The workshop was well evaluated and it especially succeeded to gather together experts, representatives of local authorities and ordinary citizens from different walks of life. This was key for achieving the objective of bringing in the voices of different sectors of the society in the drafting of recommendations. The event was an occasion to both collect opinions on air pollution issues and to put together what proposed in the previous workshops. The document was handed over to local and national authorities and it represents the main outcome of the whole local process in Malta.

vii. Association for Developing Voluntary Work Novo Mesto, Slovenia

Local thematic workshop - 24 October 2013

The first local thematic workshop was organised in Novo Mesto on 24 October. Mr Tomaž Golob, President of the Association Novo mesto, the leading civic observer and coordinator, welcomed participants and presented the project COHEIRS, in particular its objectives, aims and structure. Key introductory contributions were

delivered by environment and health experts. Water supply and quality of drinking water in the Municipality of Novo mesto was tackled by Mr Istok Zorko, head of the water supply Public utilities Novo mesto, who pointed out that the biggest issues in water supply are caused by the increased turbidity of drinking water which occurs in two major water sources: Jezero and Stopiče. Dr. Dušan Harlander, spec. doctor of Medicine and Director of the Institute for Healthcare Novo mesto, showcased the impact of risk factors in the environment on human health. Through a skype presentation, Mr Vojko Bernard tackled the NGO impact on the protection of the environment and nature Alpe Adria Green.

Participants from different institutions, associations, local authorities and faculties debated on different topics through world café methodology. The final evaluation showed that this was the most productive and participatory session and set the direction for further actions of Civic observers and the Novo mesto information and coordination unit.

Civic observers and COHEIRS local unit identified clearly the main local and regional health and environment issues and defined a set of tools and methods to tackle them. Representatives of the Municipality of Novo mesto gave a clear signal that the “COHEIRS method” is the way to tackle the local problems. They invited civic observers group to be part of the municipality working group on the programme for environmental care – a concrete environmental issue that occurred to be solved more effectively by civic help.

Local thematic workshop - 21 November 2013

The second local workshop was organised in Novo mesto on 21 November. Mr Tomaž Golob, civic observer and coordinator, presented the outcomes and recommendations of the first workshop. Ms Izidor Jerala, the representative of Spatial planning and Environmental project office at the Municipality Novo mesto, gave an insight of the concept of Environmental responsibility both as a right and duty, that requires the civic contribution of professional institutions, the public institutions, the media and the whole society. Social and personal responsibility in waste management was presented by Dr. Jani Zore, professor at Vocational College for Environmental Protection and Communal Studies.

Through the World Café methodology, participants debated and recommended on different main topics related to health and environment that were brought in the first workshop. Moderators from different organisations opened the debates on: The role of NGOs in the field of civic education, ICT (information communication technology) contribution to our personal and civic responsibility (education), Importance of food self-sufficiency and its sustainable production, Sustainable consumers and Responsibility on dealing with waste.

All stakeholders in the field of environmental protection need to apply the principles of sustainable development and ensure a transparent and publicly verifiable work taking into account the universal principles of law and ethics.

One of the main roles of NGOs in the field of responsible citizenship in terms of environmental and health protection is to inform the general public about environmental and health issues and implementation of monitoring of the contaminants.

Civic responsibility is a primarily responsible attitude to the “common” and the precondition for achieving this goal is personal responsibility. As a main outcome of the workshop, participants stressed the idea that the educational system should play a greater role than ever before in this field.

In order to follow the principle of sustainable development, we should change the existing mind-set on society level as a whole as well as at individual level and at the same time intensively search the possibility of solving the waste problem at the source.

Local thematic workshop - 16 January 2014

The third local workshop took place in Novo Mesto on 16 January 2014. The Deputy Mayor of the Municipality of Novo mesto, Mag. Mojca Špec Potočar, welcomed the 71 participants. The workshop was introduced as a

summary of the two previous whose aim is to draft and adopt the final conclusions and recommendations for decision makers on all levels. Mr Tomaž Golob made a brief report on the first two workshops held in 2013. Dr. Med. Bonia Miljavac, head of the OE National Institute of Public Health, portrayed the environment as a key factor of public health by underlying that health is influenced by general socio-economic, cultural and environmental conditions, such as living and working conditions (working environment, education, agriculture and food production, unemployment, drinking water and public utilities, health care and housing), social networks and individual lifestyle factors. Mag. Mateja Jaklič, presented the (Non) influence of civil society on decision-makers through the measures that can be activated.

Through the World Café methodology, participants debated and recommended on different main topics that brought into the previous workshops and via observers' recommendations. Moderators from different organisations opened the discussions on the topics "Contribution of civil society to economic, social, spatial and cultural development", "Roles of NGOs in a vision of development of Novo mesto", "Improvement of cooperation between NGO and public administration at national and local level", "Environmental problems that were identified in Novo Mesto", "Spatial development of Novo mesto and influence on the quality of the life in urban environment".

The Municipality of Novo mesto acknowledged the Civic observers and its "Information and coordination unit" of COHEIRS as an important stakeholder of both the community and the municipality. The observers are part of the municipal working group of the environmental protection programme.

The Municipality of Novo mesto and the Slovenian Environment Agency of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment also invited the COHEIRS Civic observers at a professional meeting, that took place on 18 March 2014 in Novo mesto on the subject of "Air quality and human health - a common interest of all of us". The Environmental Agency presented the state, pressures and impacts of air pollution on human health and established a dialogue with the various stakeholders, such as civil society decision-makers. This is all in the context of the Year of air which was celebrated in 2013 on a proposal from the European Commission.

viii. Center for Research Cooperation and Development, Albania

Local thematic workshop - 11 October 2013

The meeting took place on 11 October 2013 in Vlora as first thematic workshop organised after the establishing of the "Information and Coordination Unit". The main topics proposed by the Unit, in collaboration with the multipliers and citizens were as below:

- Green spaces in the city, the reality and challenges
- Air quality and water is a human right for everyone
- Sport facilities are necessary to our well-being
- Healthiness and environment
- Urban waste and pollution in the environment
- Local policies and citizen opinions regarding the organizational structures
- Social education improves co-existence within the community

The meeting was attended by "ordinary" citizens groups with different professional background, as well as by employees of local authorities and civil society organisations. The workshop was organised by applying the world café methodology and each participant was involved in at least three different themes according to individual choices.

The methodology applied was positively assessed by the participants because it gave them the opportunity to express their main concerns about the environmental and health situation in Vlora. Several specific topics were discussed and the following conclusions were raised:

Green spaces in the city, the reality and challenges

Green spaces in the city are a necessity for the entertainment and the well-being of all ages, because they help the psycho-physic individual development and the improvement of quality of life. Also, they are a challenge, since the contempt of local government has shown that is much easier to cut a tree and to remove a garden than to increase green spaces.

The citizens proposed to involve voluntary organisations in order to increase voluntarily actions in cleaning and safeguarding the city. They also expressed the need for more gardens and green spaces between buildings as well as in the neighbourhoods of the city.

Sports facilities are necessary to our well-being

The participants within this group presented the problems related to the local authorities' lacking of action and the non-awareness of DAR, as the closest authority to schools and students, for the importance of the sport activities in this category. Also, it is very important to make children aware of the consumption of healthy foods and encourage them into sport activities outside the school.

It was proposed the opportunity of using the gyms of public schools for citizens of different ages, in the late hours of the afternoon.

Sports facilities are available in the city, but the citizens must be aware of the fact that these activities should be done not only in the proper closed areas, but also outdoor activities in the nature, in parks or other green spaces.

Air and water quality

Within this group, the citizens identified the problems of the city related to drinking water and air quality. The city of Vlora has many water resources, but it must face with the challenge of the management of these resources. The issue of drinking water is a human right for everyone and each participant was active on that by providing ideas and bringing in opportunities and different cases.

The increasing of urbanization and the absence of a regulatory plan for the city of Vlora leads to disrespecting the criteria of constructions. The latest indicators based upon the norms of air quality for Vlora city that Institute of Public Health presented via the speech of Regional Directorate of Health specialist raised a great concern among the participants.

Another identified problem was the seawater pollution due to malfunctioning of the sewage network. The biggest polluter of water, land and air that we breathe everyday is man himself. Vlora does not have big factories that may cause major pollution, and therefore possibilities for improving air quality by man are numerous.

Health and the environment

The citizens that worked within this group, also referring to the inputs from the Health Specialist of the Regional Directorate of Public Health (RDPH), identified these issues:

Dominance of diseases of blood system, tumors, gastrointestinal
Causes: environmental pollution (air-LNP, PM10, NO2)

Gastrointestinal infectious diseases
Causes: Contamination of drinking water due to failure of water system and sewage
Not providing 24 hours of drinking water

Green spaces: 7-8 m2/inhabitant Fact rate: 0.78 m2/inhabitant
Causes: City cemented, reducing the greenery - damage of air quality - various diseases

Urban waste and pollution in the environment

Vlora does not manage its urban wastes, so the situation related to this theme is critical. Waste are collected in dumping sites near the city in an inappropriate place and there is no landfill for their treatment. Consequently there are:

- Collection of the wastes and their burning in the populated area, causing many respiratory diseases
- Irresponsibility of the local government and lack of local policies on waste management
 - Punishment for violators
 - Construction of a landfill at regional level
 - Recycling of waste
 - Separation of waste: -Plastic -Glass -Paper
 - Better management of the municipality, not burning
- Raising awareness keeping the city clean and throwing any waste into the designated location

Local policies and citizens' opinions regarding the organisational structures

Citizens identified the following issues:

1. Policies taken are insufficient and often dictated by the electoral needs (flower plots rehabilitated only in specified areas)
2. Lack of transparency in the management of funds for this issue (media debate on investment of Vlora Municipality)
3. Total lack of appropriate policies for the treatment of wastes and wastewater
4. Abuse of water resources and other natural resources and lack of policy related to that

Recommendations made by them are as below:

1. More accurate information by means of electronic and writing communication (television, newspapers) in favour of a citizens` debate
2. Using the tools of direct democracy (referendums, petitions, surveys)
3. Investing in the education system in order to create a green consciousness (especially in the younger generations)
4. Informing citizens about the consequences of environmental pollution of certain industrial works (i.e Power Station)
5. Decisions of the citizens should not be ignored by the decision-making structures through the creation of a citizen monitoring committee

Social education improves co-existence within the community

These problems were discussed during the workshop:

- Negligence in environmental education and incomplete information
- Awareness of social groups, not only school education and participation in the activities "pro-environment"
- Lack of a proper environmental education, however some awareness has been raised especially among the young generation
- The school textbook provides maximum information to protect the environment, but practical implementation is not always the best
- Activities on important days contribute to raise environmental awareness and community education

Local thematic workshop - 25 December 2013

A key meeting took place on 25 October in Tirana in order to boost civic participation in the local workshops in the country. The aim of the event was firstly to give visibility to the outcomes of the successful citizens panel held on 11 October in Vlora. The coordination Unit invited ALDA and representatives of civil society associations and local authorities across Europe active in the field of citizen participation, health and environment in order to boost the visibility of the local process and have more impact when handing the recommendations to

public authorities. It was also an occasion to discuss about the main factors of the success of the activity organised in Vlora and export the practice within the network of civic observers in the other countries. Two sessions were therefore held. In the first session, Ms Antonella Valmorbidia presented the methodology of citizen panels and provided participants with hints and tips stemming from the eight year experience in applying the methodology. Ms Biljana Zasova, head of programmes, showcased successful practices stressed in projects such as EUR-Action, All4EU, Bandiar, E-Panels and GOAL. The latter was a key example as it collected positive and negative elements experienced by LDA Albania and NGO Horizont in applying the methodology in the country in 2011 with specific focus on migration. The Macedonian case was also showcased by Ms Ivana Dimitrovska and helped bringing in further key elements to increase the impact of the local process: in particular, she stressed that citizen panels held in Macedonia considered an added value the participation of local authorities in the panels while this was not the case in other countries' experiences. ALDA Macedonia also contributed to the organisation of the meeting.

A local workshop on the topic of "Health & Environment: what role for citizens in the policy making process?" contributed to further improve the first draft of recommendations produced in Vlora. The event was an occasion to bring together international experts on participatory methods, health and environment and local citizens. ALDA Director, Ms Antonella Valmorbidia, introduced the concept of active citizenship and the cooperation between local authorities and citizens as key to promote good governance and foster the process of integration to the European family. Keynote speakers brought in their expertise in active citizenship, health and environment by showcasing concrete examples of successful practices from Italy, France and UK. Following these inputs, participants were split into working groups according to the World Café methodology, evaluated by Albanian civic observers in their workshop in Vlora as one of the main positive elements in providing citizens with a real opportunity to expressing their views and ideas. The aim of the session was to collect comments on the draft of recommendations produced in Vlora. Therefore, seven working groups were promoted, respectively on: 1. Green spaces in the city, the reality and challenges, 2. Air quality and water is a human right for everyone, 3. Sport facilities are necessary to our well-being, 4. Healthiness and environment, 5. Urban waste and pollution in the environment, 6. Local policies and citizen opinions regarding the organizational structures, 7. Social education improves co-existence within the community. The results were further elaborated during the open debate in plenary. All comments were collected, synthesised and sent to the Unit in Vlora as further contribution to improving the final document.

Local thematic workshop - 17 December 2013

CRCD organised the local thematic workshop "Urban Waste, also a citizenship responsibility" in Vlora on 17 December. At first, the Coordination and Information Unit, together with the multipliers and other civic activists, discussed the problems related to the quality of the public services faced by the citizens of Vlora. The Urban Waste theme was chosen as first because it has a direct impact on the environment and citizens' health. A lot of people participated in the workshop and they were very active in discussing the chosen theme. In this activity, representatives came from various local government entities, such as the Vlora Municipality, Vlora Region and Prefecture, Public Health Directory, Educational Institution, also businesses, students from the University of Vlora, elderly people and others from different areas of society. Such participation led to a dynamic development for the workshop. The debate around the tables helped in proposing the solutions and identifying the barriers that caused the deterioration of the situation and malfunctioning of cleaning services of urban waste.

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The participants were divided into tables under certain themes related to urban waste. At the beginning, the citizens realised that the failure of this service was not only the responsibility of the local government or the contracting firms but also the citizens should play an important role in the whole process.

First subtopic: Waste prevention, the responsibility of everyone

The citizens addressed these issues:

- The role of Central Government: Undertaking appropriate policies combined with financial costs and based on the law.
- The role of Local Government: Implementing the Central Government's platforms giving priority to the tourism development in Vlora. (Applicability)
- The role of businesses and entrepreneurs: Awareness campaigns for providers of products, as well as for their recipients in order to minimize the use of plastic bags.
- The role of institutions that create medical waste: the law must be implemented strictly and it should take sanctioning measures for those firms who do not obey.
- Industry: It creates waste such as from different wine cellars, oil etc. It should take precautionary measures by managing waste under the environmental protection laws.
- Awareness of children and citizens in the workshops, discussions with experts organised by NGOs.
- Recycling Entrepreneurs: It should open to as many as possible

Second subtopic: Sorting of urban waste, the responsibility of everyone

The citizens addressed these opinions:

- Public awareness is the key to avoid pollution (Awareness campaigns, Advertisements, School Engagement)
- The role of Local and Central Government and the obligatory implementation of the recommendations made for separating and selecting waste at the source.
- Ideas that provide solutions:
- Opening "Shops" where recyclable waste can be brought for an economic benefit.
- A similar initiative such as the collection of plastic caps or other recycle objects that can be donated for charity
- Low costs as a result of the selection of waste from the household
- Examples of benefits that comes from the sorting of urban waste: Economic Benefit/Biodiversity Conservation

Third subtopic: Recycling urban waste, the responsibility of everyone

The citizens addressed these opinions:

- Sorting of urban waste by colours, materials in different bins in line with European standards.
- Establish incentives for businesses by adjusting them to the environmental legislation
- Building public awareness (School, NGOs)
- Businesses in recycling area "tax-free"
- Student Arrangements
- Promoting a recycling company that will bring economic and environmental usefulness to this process

Fourth subtopic. Burning of urban waste, the responsibility of everyone

The citizens addressed these opinions:

- According to statistics in Vlora, 43,000T/year or 120T/day of urban waste is generated. From these, only 21% are biodegradable and 40% are paper, plastic and glass. Also, 53,000 T/year or 220 T/day of inert waste is generated and this is still an unmanaged sector
- The burning of waste in Vlora is done in waste collection bins as well as in fields located very close to the populated neighbourhoods of the city. Emergency measures should be taken to move these "collecting areas" away from the city
- There is legislation for sanctioning abusive firms but there is no political will to improve this situation
- We all know the damages to the environment caused by the burning of waste, due to the gases released in the atmosphere (greenhouse effect).
- Waste management is important for the Tourism Development Strategy that will improve the situation

Fifth subtopic. Landfill and the approach with European countries

The citizens addressed these opinions:

- The role of Central government:
 - It has the obligation and the main responsibility for building landfills
 - It should take long-term policies to support local authorities that are financially weak
- The role of Local Government:
 - Decision making and coordinating the locations for the collection of urban waste
 - Designing a regional and detailed plan for waste collection (landfill)
- The role of citizens, schools, NGOs:
 - They should be sensitized as a fundamental obligation for a better coexistence in society
 - They should not continue the incineration of urban waste because it pollutes the environment
- The role of industry:
 - Selecting and sorting waste at the source
 - Using more recyclable material which can reduce the exploitation of natural resources

Local thematic workshop - 3 March 2014

The final local workshop was held in Vlora, on 3 March with the aim to bring together the drafted recommendations, to further analyse them and define the final document to be presented to local and regional authorities. Participants were divided into working groups and were able to contribute to each topic thanks to the World café methodology applied. The final outcomes were then presented in plenary in order to reach a wide consensus on the document.

d. International thematic workshop

Final International Conference in Mesagne, Apulia Region

The international workshop of the the project COHEIRS – Civic Observers for Health and Environment, Initiative for Responsibility and Sustainability – took place last 13-15 March 2014 in Mesagne, in the Apulia Region. The event brought together more than 60 international participants and 50 locals to debate on environmental and health issues. It was an occasion to share common issues and to exchange good practices on how local authorities and civil society organisations can work together to tackle such violations.

The international conference on Europe, Health & Environment – Bottom up approaches for environmental and health policies – kicked off the session. Renowned European, national and regional public figures took the floor and addressed the issue under different angles. In particular, Mr Raffaele Baldassarre highlighted EU's environmental and health policy and provided up to date information on European programmes that citizens can make use of in order to promote the environmental protection of their territories. His presence was also key to call on participants to be active citizens in their territory and to act not only at local level but also at the European one. He stressed the importance of participating in the European elections to be held next 22-25 May as a further tool to impact on Brussels' policies on health and environment.

Institutional figures such as Mr Franco Scoditti, the Mayor of Mesagne and Mr Fabio Romito, the Provincial councillor on EU policies contributed to the session by showcasing the framework of regional and local policies in Apulia region. Key inputs were also provided by environmental and health experts such as Prof. Alberto Basset and Prof. Ferdinando Boero, from UniSalento, Prof. Alessandro Distante, President of ISBEM, Mr Prisco Piscitelli, from the Italian Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE Italy) and Mr Maurizio Fogar, President of the MIANI Circle. The conference was also an opportunity to debate on the key role of citizens. Significant contributions were brought in by Mrs Biljana Zasova and Mr Marco Boaria who highlighted ALDA's programme on active citizenship with special focus on the ladder of citizen participation as well as by Mrs Larina Venezia, delegate of Cittadinza Attiva in Taranto who showcased the association's work on environmental issues in southern-east Italy.

The visit to Taranto was a key moment of the three day activity. Participants had the opportunity of being informed on the several diseases caused by the ILVA plant. The in-field visit led to the meeting between international participants and representatives of local associations as a moment of exchange of experience.

The local and European recommendations being the final outcome of the event, specific sessions were dedicated to showcase the environmental violations affecting public health in partners' territories. The presentations were key inputs in order to identify common problems, exchange experience and good practices and draft recommendations to be submitted to the European institutions. Six working groups were set on the following topics: 1. enhancing citizen participation in the environment and health field, 2. urban sustainable development, green spaces and public health, 3. waste management and public health, 4. agriculture and public health, 5. air pollution and public health, 6. water pollution and public health. The results were presented and further discussed in plenary and a coherent set of recommendations was the final outcome of the session.

Based upon the previous working groups, participants brainstormed on the follow up of the project. Four main topics were analysed: 1. Developing an environmental friendly formal and formal education, 2. Institutionalisation of the civic observers, 3. Communication campaigning and 4. Enhancing networking activities of environmental stakeholders. The outcomes were collected both from ALDA and ISBEM and will be the inputs for future project proposals and actions.

e. Dissemination actions

- **Spain**

Dissemination activity - 21/22 March 2014

On 21 and 22 March, the Spanish cultural association RECREATURA_arts&culture organized its dissemination event within the COHEIRS project on Civic Observers for Health and Environment: Initiative for Responsibility and Sustainability in Valencia (Spain).

RECREATURA had decided to link the event to the theme of urban gardens, a phenomenon which has been growing worldwide since the year 2008 and which has gained particular popularity in Valencia.

Although gardens have always existed where people settled, the trend to have vegetable gardens within the city centres or even on the roof tops is rather new and can also be connected to the new culture of sharing which manifests itself in networks such as couchsurfing, car-pooling or swapping clothes. Valencia is a city known for its long tradition of vegetable gardens and the knowledge of how to grow fruit and vegetable is now passed on to the new generation of urban gardeners. And often the urban gardens are a place of exchange where children play, their parents meet for a barbecue or somebody may even give language classes. In the current crisis, they are also spaces of survival which help to provide those in need with food.

But setting up an urban garden is not always easy – many of them start illegally with the occupation of public land which is no longer used. With the end of the construction boom in Spain, there are many such derelict areas spread all over the city, some of them are full of waste. Other urban gardens were created as a private entrepreneurial initiative where the owner rents out pieces of land of 50m² to people. Yet others were actually initiated by their own local governments, as is the case of Godella, a small city close to Valencia. And one successful example of active citizenship are the urban gardens of the neighbourhood of Benimaclet which had been fighting for almost 15 years for a legalization of an urban garden which at last was made legal by the local government last year and now counts up to 600 gardeners.

All these different forms of urban gardens were discussed during a round table debate with politicians and civil society representatives on the 21 March. The nutritionist Marta Ribó also linked the debated to the question

of eating habits and why organic farmed vegetables are more healthy for us. The event was accompanied by an exhibition and a small networking reception.

On the second day, the participants were given the opportunity to visit some of the urban gardens in and around Valencia by bike and taste some organic vegetables during a final barbecue in one of the gardens. Have a look [here](#) at this nice feature story by the photographer Pavla Vanicka. The event was a great success with more than 80 people participating on the two days and RECREATURA is already thinking of repeating the bicycle tour this summer.

- **Italy**

Apulia Region, Dissemination event - 28 March 2014

As one of the main initiators of the project, ISBEM organised a dissemination initiative in Mesagne on 28 March within the framework of its Mini Medical School. The event was launched given the important eco in the Region about the drafting of recommendations on health and environment to be submitted to the EU institutions. The event strongly benefited by the successful visibility campaign promoted through one of the most read newspaper in the Region as well as in the whole country, "La Repubblica" where a whole page was dedicated to the project COHEIRS and its outcomes.

the meeting in Mesagne was twofold: on the one hand, to reunite the citizenship, in particular all those who did not attend the international event, and present the recommendations in order to widen the consensus around them and get further feedback for their potential improvement. Moreover, it was an occasion to invite the local media and spread the information more deeply in the entire Apulia Region. A particular attention was given to the "MANIFESTO dei CITTADINI per la SALUTE e l'AMBIENTE". The document was adopted at the occasion of the third thematic workshop in Rome on 24 January as one of the main outcomes of the national process to influence the decision making process.

On the other hand, the meeting brought together all civic observers who worked on the project and was an occasion to further evaluate the project and work on the sustainability of the network in the long term. Particular emphasis was given to the relation with regional and local authorities and how to best hand them the recommendations drafted throughout the one year project.

Municipality of Monfalcone, Dissemination initiatives

The Municipality of Monfalcone organised a dissemination event at local level with the aim of presenting to its community and citizens the recommendations produced at the occasion of the international workshop in Mesagne, in the province of Brindisi, as well as of having feedback and comments from them. The event was the first step of a broader strategy aimed at building consensus on the recommendations and involving the wider citizenship in the process.

The Municipality of Monfalcone contributed within the partnership to define a joint communication and media strategy in order to disseminate as wide as possible the project results and to submit the recommendations produced to the broad European citizenship.

The aim was to promote the results through an information campaign and to collect expression of support for the recommendations according to the principles expressed by the article 11 of the Lisbon Treaty, by also introducing to the public, in scale, the concept of the European Citizens Initiative.

Within this framework, three initiatives were pursued: a workshop to present the project COHEIRS to local authorities and stakeholders, a meeting with the local youth to introduce the project to the younger generation and a wide information and awareness campaign.

The workshop was held in the City Hall of Monfalcone on 4 April 2014. The general framework of the project as well as its contents and outcomes and the final document gathering the results of the project and the recommendations to be submitted to the EU institutions on the topics related to health and environment. Local authorities representatives, stakeholders as well as ordinary citizens interested in the topic attended the event.

In particular, the project COHEIRS has been widely showcased by Mr Alessandro Perelli, Vice-President of ALDA. The event was also an occasion to debate on the replicability of the project within the new programming period 2014-2020. Examples on the opportunities offered by the new programmes were showcased by Mr Franco Frigo, representative of the European Parliament and Mr Giorgio Tessarolo, expert on European policies of the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia. The following debate highlighted the importance of COHEIRS in bridging the gap between Europe and its citizens in a key moment of the European integration process. Particular emphasis was also given to the need of disseminating the outcomes of the project in the region, especially the recommendations given that the environmental issues affecting the region are common to those of the other partners.

To emphasize the importance of the workshop - which benefited of a wide and qualified participation of citizens - the initiative was publicised on the regional newspaper "Il Piccolo", which has a large spread in Friuli Venezia Giulia. The workshop was also widely circulated in the media, particularly on local radio and regional television.

The contents and outcomes of the project were presented by Mrs Rada Orescanin, member of the Scientific Committee of ALDA and Mr Umberto Ademollo, Delegate of the Agency for Local Democracy Verteneglio. The meeting was an opportunity to bring out the interest of the younger generation toward the EU policies and the key global issues such as health and the environment.

A wide dissemination campaign was also realised with the preparation, printing and distribution of dissemination material giving visibility to the outcomes of the project, mainly the final recommendations. The campaign was very successful as a wide coverage was given through the regional newspaper "Il Piccolo" that reaches thousands of readers. In all dissemination material, citizens were called on giving their feedback on the recommendations through a dedicated link and express their support before submitting them to the European institutions. The materials have also been distributed to libraries, civic centers and social services.

Patto Territoriale Soc. Cons. A.r.l. Oristano, Dissemination initiatives

The P.T.O. Patto territoriale of Oristano organised on 27 March 2014, in the headquarters of the Province of Oristano, a dissemination event at local level with the aim of presenting to the Community of the Province of Oristano and to all its citizens, the recommendations produced at the occasion of the international seminar in Mesagne and of having feedback and comments from them. This event has been the first step of a broader strategy aimed at building consensus on the recommendation and has really involved the wider citizenship in the process. Following the welcome speech of the Vice President of the P.T.O., Ms Ester Feola showcased the role of the Local development Agency within the Territory of Oristano. Ms Stefania Carletti, who actively participated and contributed to the outcomes of the event in Mesagne, presented the summary of the Project Coheirs and specifically the final recommendations to be addressed to the European Union. The floor was then taken by Mr Giuseppe Oppo, Director of Pulmonology at ASL of Oristano, who held a speech Mr Giuseppe Oppo Director of Pulmonology at ASL of Oristano. Another renowned expert in the territory such as Mrs Valentina Marras, Medical director of ASL Lanusei, introduced the "Public health impact of plant protection". An open debate followed with exchanges among participants and experts. All participants were also asked to fill in a questionnaire in order to collect their opinions and comments as well as their support on the recommendations.

The event was part of a wide dissemination strategy to spread the project in the territory. Brochures were also produced and spread and the project was reported on the regional newspaper Unione Sarda with more than 65 000 units of coverage.

- **Slovakia**

Central and Eastern Europe Citizens Network, Dissemination initiatives

The Central and Eastern Europe Citizens Network organised two main dissemination initiatives respectively in Zvolen on 27 March and in the Community Center of Sasova Neighbourhood Banska Bystrica on 14 April 2014.

The CEE Citizens Network conducted the first dissemination event on the 27 March in Zvolen. The Zvolen Zapad Citizens Initiative held its annual meeting where 150 participants including the leadership of the Initiative, the Vice-Mayor, several members of City Council, the Chief of Police, the Head of Planning, several other city employees and more than 100 citizens including students. The recommendations from the final event had been translated to Slovak and were distributed to all the participants. A presentation was made about the project, the methodology, the participation at the local Slovenian event and the request that participants rate the recommendations by choosing their top two choices in each of the six categories. More than 80 questionnaires were completed that evening and tabulated. The presentation was well received and the audience was quite interested in the project and the approach that was used. The results of the questionnaires were tabulated in combination with those from the Sasova event in Banska Bystrica. There were a total of 115 survey filled out and a report was prepared summarizing the results.

The CEE Citizens Network conducted a second dissemination event on the 14 April at the Community Center in the Sasova neighborhood in Banska Bystrica. The neighborhood conducted a second annual event to prepare a community garden behind the community center. Residents of the neighborhood were invited to come and assist with the preparation of the land and make further plans for what would be planted. Fortunately the weather was reasonably good and approximately 40 participants attended including the staff of the center. A presentation was made about the COHEIRS project, the methodology used, the participation at the local Slovenian event and the request that participants rate the recommendations by choosing their top two choices in each of the six categories. The recommendations were distributed to all the participants. Approximately 35 questionnaires were completed that day and were later tabulated. The presentation was well received and the audience was quite interested in the project and the approach that was used.

- **Hungary**

Civil Kollégium Alapítvány (Civil College Foundation), Dissemination initiatives

The Civil College Foundation organised nine workshops in order to spread the outcomes of the project as widely as possible and collect comments on consensus around the final recommendations to be submitted to the European institutions.

The first event took place on 14 March 2014 in Szágy, in Baranya county. Residents of the small village in Baranya came together to hold a community forum. Besides evaluation and planning activities, the forum's focus was on protecting health and sustainable lifestyles, with an emphasis on deep poverty. One of the main results is a community garden, where local children are very active. Many non-formal training activities had been implemented in the last year on bio farming, household sustainability and environment. The local authority recently launched an agricultural programme through which local residents planting herbs and mushrooms. The event was the framework to disseminate COHEIRS results among participants and collect their comments and support. They were assessed as very relevant and interesting for the locals.

The second event took place at the training centre Kunszentmiklós-Kunbábony on 16 March. Participants arrived to the Young Developers Workshop from the different regions of Hungary. Their task is to provide/ disseminate information in their locality, to facilitate community processes, organize trainings, community

actions and to prepare community leaders. They are interested in international development and cooperation, most of them are still continuing higher-educational studies. The most important goal was to think about creating a young developers network. The meeting had a strong focus on the sustainability and sustainability of local community activities, participants were very interested to hear about COHEIRS activities and recommendations. As main outcome of the event, participants took the decision to launch and extend their more formal network and organize training activities on relevant national and international experiences like COHEIRS.

The third event took place on 20 March in Gönc, in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county. Community development processes have been formulated in the most disadvantaged area in Hungary for ten years now. As an important result, community actions and programs have been organized in the cooperation with the three sectors (civil, governmental, business). They initiated a series of workshops called *North-Abaúj in our Heart* with the goal to support and implement community planning. The forum's main topic was *good governance*, lectures and discussions were organized to highlight good examples. Participants received information on the new EU planning period, and the CLLD issue, as well as the COHEIRS programme as a good example for inter-sectorial cooperation. Following the forum participants attended a workshop on community planning for two more days. As main outcome of the event, participants agreed that they will launch community planning processes in some of the settlements. In Hidasnémeti, people aged 30-40 will take the initiative. In Gönc, the local authority will set up the Community Advisory Committee. In Telkibánya, the civil organizations will prepare a package of suggestions for the cooperation with the local authority.

The fourth event took place at the training centre *Kunszentmiklós-Kunbábony* on 21 March. The Cooperative has been active since 2011. Members are residents of the small-region. Its most important goal is to develop and support local sustainability. They organized a large community garden and residents have been learning and gardening in an environmentally friendly way. Another important aspect of this work is to provide opportunities for local disadvantaged people to earn some income from the local products. The meeting focused on the Cooperative's spring activities, developments (such as the set-up of a local food processing building) and activities that are involving the wider locality. COHEIRS, as an example which is targeting to support the balance of natural, environmental, economic and social processes was very welcomed in this group.

The fifth event took place within the framework of the strategic meeting of the Upper-Kiskunsag Community Workers Association on 26 March. The association has been active in the Upper Kiskunsag region since 1998. At their strategic meetings, they annually evaluate last year's activities and make plans for the next year. They have been supporting self-organized groups in 10 local settlements and provide information and mentoring. The main topics of discussion were: drug prevention programme, non-formal education processes, preparation for the launch of a local market, community organizing. They highlighted that strong community cores have been established in the settlements in the last years and more focused cooperation with local authorities seems to be more and more possible. This cooperation may reflect on health and environmental issues, in which COHEIRS may serve as a good example. The project was therefore widely showcased, in particular the recommendations to be submitted to the EU authorities. Besides the opportunity to debate on its outcomes, participants also supported the recommendations as a tool to bring citizens' voice to decision makers.

The sixth event took place within the framework of the national training for community leaders at the training centre *Kunszentmiklós-Kunbábony* on 28-30 March. The 24 hour training was related to the CCF's *Local Power - Local sources* programme, as a part of a long term development to initiate community organizing and sustainable development practices across the country. Local community leaders came together from thirteen localities all over Hungary to learn about leadership skills and methods to increase local/organizational sustainability. A separate day of the programme was focusing on local resource mapping, alternative solutions for harmonizing resources (reciprocity models, energy-efficiency, community programmes, alternative fundraising etc.). International examples, such as COHEIRS were presented in a detailed way, which gave concrete examples for the organizational development plans.

The seventh dissemination event took place in the context of the Assembly of the Together for Bábonny Association in Kunbábonny (Bács-Kiskun county) on 4 April 2014. The Together for Bábonny Association organizes community life linking the local farming centres. It implements community and environmental developments: building and maintaining playgrounds, liquidation of illegal landfills, building and maintaining bus stops, etc. Therefore, the members are all interested in all initiatives related to protection of environment and rural development. Another important thread is working with elderly people, so health is also an important issue for local residents. COHEIRS gave some good ideas for the Assembly in relation with planning of the Earth Day environmental programs and actions. As outcome of the meeting, a plan was drafted for the Association's environmental activities and actions, including the Earth day.

The eight dissemination initiative took place in Óriszentpéter, in Vas county on 10 April, within the framework of the partners' meeting of the "With Families in the Órség" project. The partners met in Óriszentpéter to discuss the experiences of the programme which provided social and health services for local families, especially for woman. Community self-employment workshop series had been implemented, new initiatives have been set up, such as apiary centre, food sovereignty group, enterprises on local products, natural cosmetics and heritage house. All of these are based on local values. The presentation of the project COHEIRS was very helpful to extend thinking on health protection (food, chemicals, mental hygiene) and on which aspect should be included in the local programmes.

The last dissemination initiative was organised at the ELTE University of Budapest on 14 April. The students of the Community and Civil Studies BA course organized a workshop on international programmes related to community and regional development, sustainable development and environmental programmes. Kitti Kurucz the trainee of the CCF introduced the COHEIRS project in details for the participants, by putting the emphasis on the cooperation between local authorities and NGOs. After the presentation of the recommendations to the EU, a small debate was formulated in the group. Most of the recommendations received positive feedback but some missing pieces were highlighted, such as local community economic development, cooperatives, community energy-efficiency and community production. As one of the main outcomes of the event, the students decided to organize similar workshops on relevant international programmes in every half year.

Recommendations

To local authorities

After the analysis of the environmental violations affecting their own territory, citizens with different social, professional and demographic backgrounds gathered together in citizens' panels to debate and draft a set of recommendations to be submitted to their local, regional and national authorities. More than 200 people were involved in each local process respectively in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Macedonia, Malta, Romania and Slovenia.

Drawing from their local experiences, civic observers gathered in Mesagne, in the Apulia Region, on 13-15 March 2014. The event brought together more than 60 international participants and 50 locals to debate on environmental and health issues. It was an occasion to share common issues and to exchange good practices on how local authorities and civil society organisations can work together to tackle such violations.

- [i. Italy](#)
- [ii. Croatia](#)
- [iii. Macedonia](#)
- [iv. Romania](#)
- [v. Bulgaria](#)
- [vi. Malta](#)
- [vii. Slovenia](#)
- [viii. Albania](#)

To European authorities

A. Enhancing citizen participation in the environment and health field

1. Increase investments in formal and non-formal education focused on active citizenship and participatory politics;
2. Encourage and promote creative ways to promote active citizenship in public spaces;
3. Encourage and require increased use of public consultations;
4. More actively engage citizens in local public issues and increase role and resources for civil society to facilitate this work;
5. Engage more youth in the decision making process;
6. The European Union should focus more on the local level and de-emphasise requirements on EU level;
7. Continue to provide access to information and provide good practice.

B. Urban sustainable development, green spaces and public health

1. Promote a European wide contest/competition for the most ecological town (up to 60.000 inhabitants): The winning town will invest the prize into:
 - creating green spaces, reconvertng vacant spaces into urban gardens and parks, facilitating the citizens with vacant spaces to stimulate urban gardens
 - photography and video contest for citizens about a specific green subject (private gardens, urban gardens, rooftop gardens, hanging gardens, greening and cleaning the city)
2. Stimulate/promote the use of public space for urban gardens (supporting the citizens in this undertaking by providing them with public land and seeds/plants)
3. Introduce classes/educational material for classes in kindergardens, schools, universities (basic knowledge) about:
 - sustainability
 - sustainable urban development
 - growing plants, planting gardens (sensitization towards sustainable urban living, health, quality of life related to nature, food and food production);
4. Stimulate the introduction and use of more ecological cars (subventions for car sharing systems) plus the improvement of public transport (in order to make living in city centers more sustainable, more healthy and more attractive) by supporting the municipalities and citizens' associations directly.

C. Air pollution and public health

1. The implementation of EU standards should foresee:
 - the setting of a register identifying the regions that do not comply with the terms of the EU directives
 - a more regulated monitoring process that clearly defines the responsible body in charge and that extends the measurements to all relevant chemical agents;
2. The monitoring process should be organised directly by the European Commission;
3. A new EU body (for instance, EU Monitors of the Environment) should be set to identify environmental violations affecting public health;
4. Raise citizens' awareness on the link between air pollution and public health through formal and non-formal education;
5. Increase investments and further support EU projects promoting improvements in public transport services and tackling the excessive use of private cars;
6. Further promote the use of innovative technologies such as filters and water-based colours;
7. Identify mechanisms to issue fines for environmental violations on individual and not state basis

D. Water pollution and public health

1. Promote more harmonisation of water policies;
2. Promote educational activities and aware raising campaigns on the protection of water sources;

3. Promote civic education for water saving;
4. Promote more transparency on potable water services in terms of water quality analysis, costs and final prices at the market;
5. Promote and support projects on water protection such as an “Award on the most clean water city” might be;
6. Further promote the exchange of best practices on how to tackle the lack of potable water in disadvantaged areas;
7. Water must be a public good and not a commercial item;

E. Agriculture and public health

1. Further include the organic producers in the EU decision making process;
2. Provide more information on the use and abuse of farming products and techniques;
3. Introduce classes/educational material for classes in kindergardens, schools, universities (basic knowledge) on agriculture and health;
4. Acknowledge the added value of local agricultural products for health;
5. Quality regulations should be re-defined in order to include more quality features rather than apparent ones.

F. Waste management and public health – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

1. Promote stricter EU regulations on waste management. Identify the most efficient and effective model of waste management and promote its application in all member states;
2. Promote regulations on the treatment of sludges (domestic waste);
3. Set a EU register of forbidden waste categories ;
4. Promote more transfer of power to national and regional agencies for the monitoring of waste management that can also issue a withdrawal of permit;
5. Promote and support awareness raising campaigns as well as education, information and trainings for citizens on waste management and public health;
6. Promote in-field visits, job shadowing and exchange of good practices (“door to door”);
7. Engage military and other available human resources in waste management processes;
8. Make all pollution data available to public;
9. Environmental studies should be adopted by committees composed of at least 51% of citizens