

## PRESS RELEASE

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# FRIDGE - project: Final Conference in Budapest, Hungary

**25.-26.5.2023**



All good things must come to an end and now it is time for the FRIDGE project, which has supported small and medium sized food producers by providing better policies to exploit their potential in development and growth.

Our journey comes formally to an end in July 2023, but before that we wanted to celebrate the project and its achievements with organising the Final Conference in Budapest, Hungary. We started with *site visits* to still learn about some new good practises and then summarised the results with short *presentations* of the implementation of the Action Plans in each partner region and *two panel discussions* in the themes of the project focusing on the practical examples and

experiences of the panellists on the topics. We had in total about 40 participants, some of them participating on-line.

## Site visits on the 25th of May

The First visit for the morning was to **the Association of Conscious Consumers**, which has since its foundation in 2002 explored, tested, and evaluated different products based on their environmental impact and sustainability. It is a consumer's advocacy NGO supporting consumers in defending and expressing their interests towards producers to support more sustainable consumption methods. They not only test products and publish the results for consumers to educate themselves, but also support so-called "Eco-Circles" which are local consumer groups supporting greener lifestyles. They organize educational events, and support community-supported agriculture schemes as well.



**Humusz Association** supports decreasing waste and re-using among consumers and Municipalities as well. They are an advocacy group for decreasing for example packaging waste, composting more, and overall, creating a more sustainable and environmentally conscious future. We visited their centre, the so-called "Humusz Ház" (humus house) where they host educational activities and exhibitions.



In the afternoon we met *Eszter Molnár*, founder and CEO of **Nekedterem.hu**, which is a successful initiative started right before the pandemic. Their aim is to provide fresh food from small producers but benefitting from the comfort of an online marketplace, and supporting small producers in the meantime whose sales options are rather limited in geographical scope and capacity to do direct sales in their region. Food deliveries are done in the whole country, allowing users to pick products from all producers registered.



**Alliance of Responsible Food Producers** was presented by its president *Attila Vörös*. The Alliance unites around 500 food producers, as well as other organizations and is the largest Hungarian food industry association. Our particular focus was on the recommendations created by the Alliance and how it has affected the industry. These are a set of self-regulating guidelines ranging from decreasing sugar or salt content to better customer information.



Our last visit was to **White Rabbit**, which is a relatively new brewery having operated in their current facilities since 2017, but already present in ten countries in Europe, including Hungary. We visited their brewery and tasted their products as well as enjoyed dinner provided by the *Petrol Beer & BBQ*, which is another innovative company partnering up with the Rabbits.



## The Final Conference in the Plazt, Budapest on the 26th of May

We were welcomed by *Balázs Kiss*, TCDA Nonprofit Ltd., the Lead partner of the project. He also gave a short introduction to the FRiDGE -project.

*Ségolène Jean*, Financial Officer of the Joint Secretariat of the Interreg Europe program told the audience about the state of the play of the programme for 2021-2027 and the future opportunities it provides.



Action Plans were presented by Hungarian, German and Finnish partners.

The First panel was on the topic “**Supporting local producers, increasing visibility and market reach**”.



It was moderated by *Hanna Meriläinen*, who previously worked at the Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia, Finnish partner in the FRiDGE project, and now works at SeAMK, Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences on the YDIRE project, which is one of the actions of the Action Plan in the region.

Participants were:

- *dr. Katalin Kujáni*, the president of Kislépték Association (National Association of Interest Representations for Small-scale producers and service providers) supports small-scale producers and spearheading the development of SSC in Hungary.
- *Csilla Fejes*, who is known for her work with MyFarm Harta, where she and her team led a fact-based renewal of the marketing activities of the initiative. Not only they are small-scale producers, but also consider the environment; see [MyFarm Harta](#).
- *Sarah Levecque* is a coordinator of European project at the Economic Council of East-Flanders and supports the Tasteful East-Flanders food network of around 270 local producers in East-Flanders. She contributes to a communication campaign supporting local food products in East-Flanders, focusing on the stories and people behind the food we eat.

- *Terhi Välisalo* works as an expert in the Rural Women's Advisory Organization, Finland. They are responsible of the [Food Province brand](#), local food brand in South Ostrobothnia. She works on the development of the food label.

Next we heard the presentations about the Action Plan implementation by our Romanian, Greek and Belgian partners.

The conference ended with the Second Panel: **“Supporting investments and innovation in the food sector”**.



It was moderated by *Kostas Karamarkos*, who is a seasoned expert in European funding, urban & regional development policies. He works as a freelancer and is involved in numerous interregional projects and has also contributed to strategic planning of various funding programmes and success of regional policies in Greece.

The participants were:

- *Zsófia Kertész*, a development engineer at Campden BRI, a service provider for food industry companies. She is involved in trainings activities and microbiological troubleshooting for clients as well as contributing to Horizon research project and focuses on the dissemination and exploitation of the results of such projects.



- *Anna Loraine Hartmann* is a project manager in the field of innovation at the Bavarian Food Cluster. As such, she is responsible for innovation projects, such as "food collegen", a program supporting Bavarian startup companies, specifically farmers in product development, and also contributes to the Way to Future Food (W2FF) initiative.
- *Nathalie Bernaert* works as a project manager at the Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research (ILVO), Belgium. She works in the Food Pilot, a test center of ILVO and Flanders' FOOD, where she guides food companies in their food innovation.
- *Silvia Gaiani* is a senior researcher at Ruralia Institute, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Helsinki, Finland. She among other activities is working on the YDIRE project with the aim of supporting the resilience of local food entrepreneurs (especially with focus on digitalisation and cooperation).



## Contact

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