INTERREG EUROPE

CORE

No. 2

Composting in Rural Environments

Interreg Europe

Co-funded by the European Union

CORE

INTRO

Thematic Seminar in Mechelen (BE)

CORE - COMPOSTING IN RURAL ENVIRONMENTS

CORE is a project co-funded by **Interreg Europe**. It focuses on the promotion and mainstreaming of composting and anaerobic digestion, in rural areas across Europe. The presentation of good practices for the prevention and recycling of bio-waste from eight European countries will facilitate the improvement of policy instruments for the treatment of source-separated and separately collected bio-waste, as well as their sustainable utilisation. The project is expected to **serve as a catalyst for rural territories to improve biowaste management and curtail the practice of landfilling or incinerating biowaste to a considerable extent.**

2,054,762 €
budget

01 Mar
2023-31 May
2027

9 partners

PROJECT UPDATE

Midpoint Update on the 'Composting in Rural Environments' Project

As the 'Composting in Rural Environments' project reaches its halfway point, exciting developments have been made that demonstrate its continued success and evolution. Recently, the project hosted two major international events—its 4th and 5th thematic seminars—highlighting innovations in composting and biowaste management, as well as fostering international collaboration.

4th Thematic Seminar: Potsdam, Germany (10-12 September 2024)

Held in Potsdam (Brandenburg), Germany, the 4th Thematic Seminar was organized by the Brandenburg State Office of Environment (Landesamt für Umwelt). This event focused on sharing valuable insights into the sustainable use of compost and digestate products. Participants—totaling 45 attendees—were able to explore nine good practices presented by project partners and stakeholders, showcasing the transformative potential of composting in rural settings:

- Analysis and study of the proper use of compost in an occupational center and in pilot plant
- Research on the use of compost in the recultivation of post-mining landscapes
- Good and different use of compost and digestate-based products starts with a good plan
- Successful marketing of compost and digestate products
- An organic soil improver – an alternative to fertilizers
- Aurora Climate Garden - It started all with composting
- Use of compost in soil mixtures – Application in construction projects in South Tyrol
- Biogas and biofertilizers
- Composting of Organic Waste

Adding to the seminar's richness, four experts presented results and experiences related to the sustainable production and use of compost and digestate in organic farming, specifically within Germany's unique context:

- German compost quality standards – an overview (Michael Balhar, Regionale Gütegemeinschaft Kompost - Ost)

PROJECT UPDATE

- NÖK Hessen – A regional network for organic farming and compost (Dr. Felix Richter, Witzenhausen -Institut)
- Compost as a fertilizer in organic crop rotations - practice example NutriNet Brandenburg (Charlotte Kling, HNE Eberswalde)
- KlimaBioHum (Julian Matlach, DBFZ Deutsches Biomasseforschungszentrum)

The second day of the seminar offered a practical, hands-on experience. Project partners visited two innovative sites: the Störk GmbH growing media production plant, which manufactures over 300 distinct growing media blends, and the newly established combined anaerobic digestion and composting plant by RETERRA GmbH in Trappenfelde. These visits demonstrated the scale and technological advancements in composting and biowaste management systems.
The third day of the event focused on internal issues, with a reflection on the project's achievements so far. Key discussions included lessons learned from the previous thematic seminars, as well as policy improvements being considered by each project partner moving forward.

5th Thematic Seminar: Smart Composting, Hungary (20-22 May 2025)

The 5th Thematic Seminar, scheduled for May 2025, shifts focus to **Smart Composting**—an innovative approach for improving biowaste management. Key topics at this seminar included:

- Smart Composting for Efficient Biowaste Management,
- Smart Biowaste Collection Using IoT Sensors,
- Compocity: Smart Composting Meets Sustainable Workplace Culture featuring the interactive CompoBot demonstration,
- "Müllbert" Chatbot: An AI tool for municipal waste companies,
- Pocketbook for the Closed Loop Garden, Neighbourhood Composting Plants.

PROJECT UPDATE

In addition to the compelling presentations, the seminar featured a keynote by Prof. Dr. Laszlo Aleksza from ProfiKomp, who provided valuable insights into the current bio-waste treatment policies in Hungary. The second featured site visits to the University of Pannonia, where composting research—including energy-producing compost boxes and breathable drum composters—is underway.
A visit to a green kindergarten and a community composting site, both established within the CORE project, provided attendees with a glimpse into real-world applications. The trip concluded with a tour of a composting site in the Balaton Region.

Neighbourhood and community composting

Example of a compost box

Next Steps

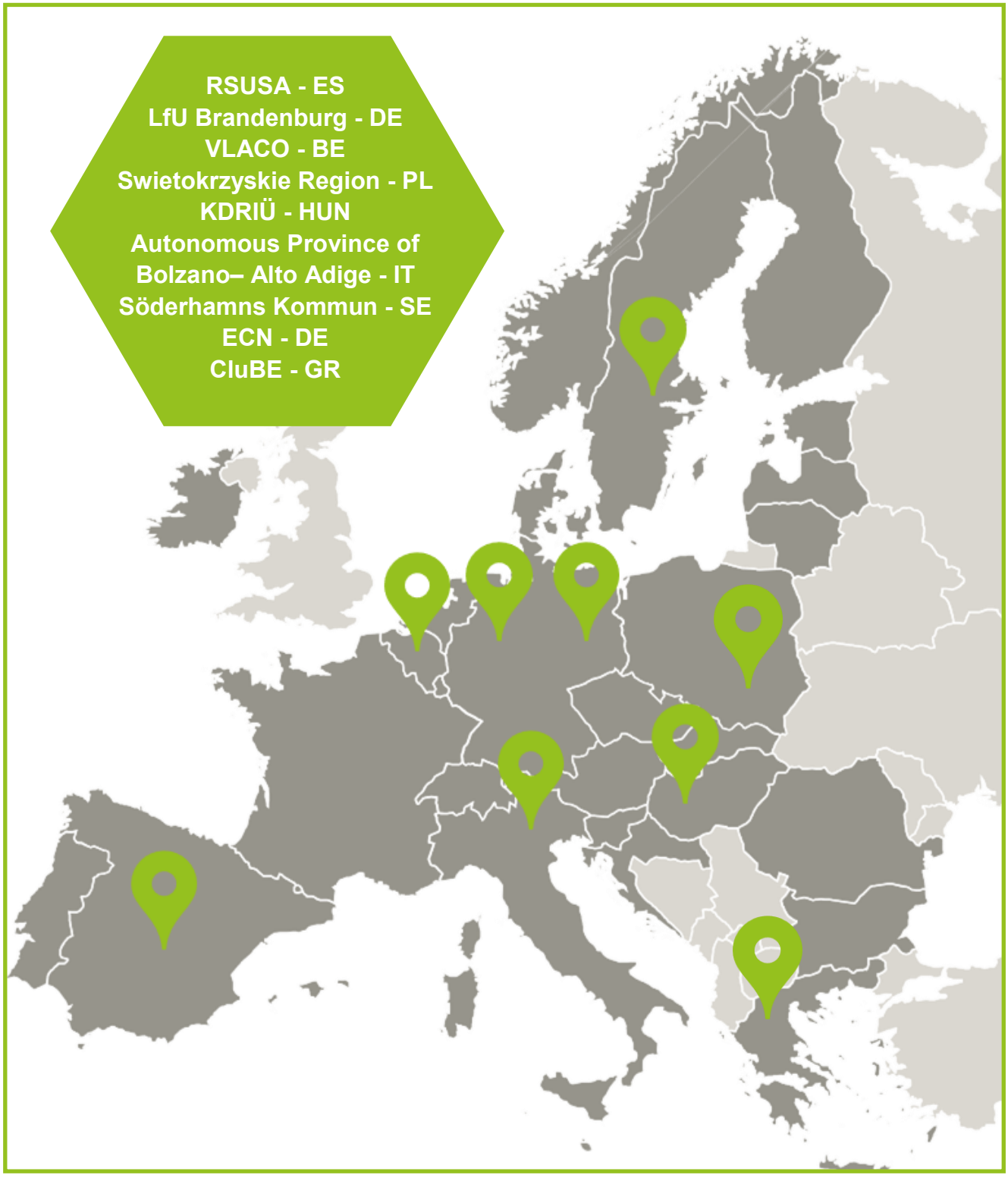
As the **Composting in Rural Environments** project moves forward, these thematic seminars are playing a pivotal role in sharing knowledge, fostering cross-border collaboration, and introducing cutting-edge solutions to waste management. The project is on track to make a significant impact on sustainable practices in rural settings, and as it enters its next phase, the continued exchange of expertise will be key to achieving long-lasting, transformative change. Two pilot actions were successfully submitted and will transfer experiences from project partners in other regions:

The Municipality of Söderhamn will implement and test small scale composting sites for garden and neighbourhood waste.

The Autonomous Province of Bolzano decided to build a new composting plant for locally composting its digestate from anaerobic digestion into valuable, marketable compost products in the region of South-Tyrol.

There are still more international meetings to come before the project crosses the finishing line. The next one will take place in Söderhamn, Sweden, in September. We are already looking forward to a new exchange with our partners.

PROJECT PARTNERS



PROJECT PARTNERS

LEAD PARTNER I SPAIN

RSUSA - Waste Management Castilla La Mancha

Introduction to the project

The RSU Consortium of Ciudad Real, created in the late 1980s at the initiative of the Provincial Council, was established to support municipalities with environmentally sound waste management solutions.

RSUSA Update

RSU Ciudad Real's main objective within the CORE project is to promote and normalize community composting in rural, low-density areas with high natural value. The focus is specifically on municipalities located within or near natural parks, such as the Cabañeros National Park, where current composting initiatives are already underway.

In the short term, the aim is to boost the implementation of community composting across the province of Ciudad Real through active stakeholder engagement and intensive communication. In the medium term, the goal is to significantly reduce the amount of organic waste generated in rural areas, where its management is economically and environmentally costly.

RSU seeks to position rural municipalities in natural areas as flagship leaders of this transition, turning their environmental richness into a driver for sustainable waste management. The compost generated through these initiatives will be reused in public parks, gardens, and by residents involved in the composting process.

Alignment with CORE Project Goals

These objectives are fully aligned with the overarching goals of the CORE project, which include:

- Mainstreaming composting practices in rural and low-density territories.
- Developing and sharing best practices for bio-waste management.
- Supporting the transition toward a circular bioeconomy.
- Preventing landfilling and open burning of biowaste through the production of high-quality compost
- Promoting the use of compost in agriculture, parks, and gardens to improve soil health and local sutainability.

By anchoring its strategy in environmental stewardship and community engagement, RSU contributes directly to CORE's mission of accelerating composting and circular solutions across European rural regions. Throughout the three years of the CORE project, RSU Ciudad Real has made significant progress in promoting and mainstreaming community composting in rural and semi-urban areas of the region.

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RSUSA - Waste Management Castilla La Mancha

Project Achievements and Results – RSU Ciudad Real

Implementation of 130 composters across 20 municipalities, not only in rural environments but also in schools, urban gardens, associations, and occupational centers. These initiatives have empowered users to self-manage the organic waste generated within their facilities, provided them with proper training to monitor the composting process, and actively involved the local authorities hosting these entities. By doing so, RSU has brought composting closer to citizens, demonstrated its environmental and operational benefits, and showcased its potential as a key strategy for meeting EU and national legal requirements for biowaste management.

Promotion of the master composter role and training programs. The official recognition of “Master Composter” as a new professional category in Spain represents a major milestone for scaling up composting nationwide. Thanks to the experience shared by European partner VLACO — who has long implemented training in this field — RSU has been able to learn from their methodologies. This complements the existing training already developed by RSUSA's stakeholder Composta en Red.

Development of a regional Composting Manual as a policy improvement, currently in progress. This guide will provide technical, practical, and accessible content for individuals and organizations aiming to implement domestic and community composting systems. It fills a major gap, as no such manual previously existed in Castilla-La Mancha. The guide is directly inspired by knowledge exchanges within the CORE project, particularly by the experiences of the partners from Flanders and Bolzano.

These achievements not only reflect the tangible outcomes of RSU's involvement in CORE but also contribute to the project's overall mission: to accelerate the adoption of sustainable biowaste management in rural and low-density territories through shared knowledge, capacity building, and practical, replicable solutions.

Master Composter Event

PROJECT PARTNERS

GERMANY

LfU - State Office of Environment Brandenburg

Landesamt für Umwelt

Update on LfU

Since the beginning of Interreg CORE, the biowaste collected in Brandenburg by door-to-door collection increased from 78,014 Mg (30 kg/capita and year) in 2022 to 83,450 Mg (32 kg/capita and year) in 2024. The amount of bio-waste collected by door-to-door collection will further raise in 2025 since another local waste authority introduced the door-to-door collection in its county. Several thousand of new garbage bins for separate biowaste collection where distributed and will further develop biowaste management in Brandenburg. However, the rural areas are still a challenging terrain for bio-waste collection, with long distances and simultaneously low quantities to collect, since home composting is quite common. This needs new thinking, some local waste authorities using a “call-to-collect” system for bio-waste in rural areas or offering a 24h fully automated recycling center, where also green waste can be brought.
The participation in the Interreg CORE project helps for the required development in bio-waste management and collection strategies. The project offers a variety of different approaches on bio-waste collection in the attending countries.

Thematic Seminar in Brandenburg

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GERMANY

LfU - State Office of Environment Brandenburg

During the Interreg CORE project a network of local stakeholders, in particular local waste authorities and plant operators, who are highly interested to maintain regular meetings for exchange of experience and discussion of means to improve bio-waste management, was created. Good practices, presented in the thematic seminars or in the study visits, are communicated to the stakeholders. While not every example of a good practice fits in the established collection system in Brandenburg, it helps with thinking outside the box and recognizing potential for development. In meetings with the stakeholder, the local waste authority of the county Prignitz, the intention to participate the State Garden Show in Wittenberg 2027 (Brandenburg), an event several 100,000 people visit, was evinced. First ideas how to present bio-waste management and home composting to the public was discussed. Several good practices learnt from the Interreg CORE partners, such as the master composter from Vlaco, Belgium, or the Aurora Climate Garden from CTRIA, Hungary, may form the art of presentation of biowaste management at the event.
In addition, the LfU department for public relations focuses on further opportunities to present the work of the authority on public events, especially events that focus on environmental topics. Lessons learnt on good public relations work in CORE can be applied here. Here, we develop public relation in addition to our work on the policy improvement. All these measures can help to sustainably improve the biowaste collection along with other topics in separate waste collection as well as reuse and recycling.

CORE Partner visit of the Composting/AD plant of RETERRA in Trappenfelde

Final product—quality compost of the Composting/AD plant n Trappenfelde

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BELGIUM

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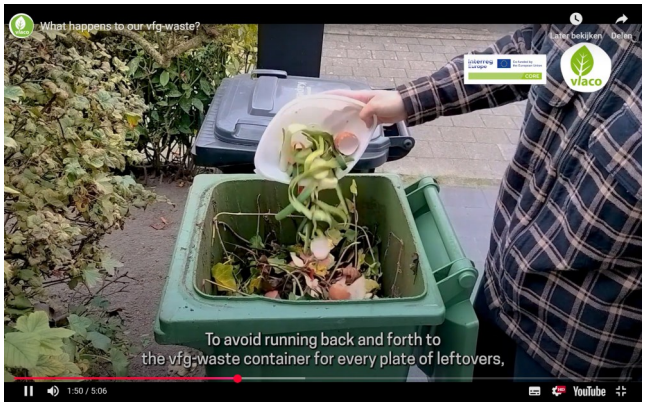
Getting more out of the organic cycle

Vlaco Shares CORE Insights and Good Practices Across Flanders

Vlaco has actively shared feedback from thematic CORE seminars and good practices from its partners—such as RSUSA and LfU Brandenburg — with its stakeholders, including private and intermunicipal waste companies, volunteers, and the public waste agency OVAM.
One highlight is the incorporation of RSUSA's best practices into Vlaco's new 2025 publication *Zakboek voor de Kringlooptuin*, focused on closed-loop gardening. Other practices under consideration include the 'Biotonne Aktion'-inspired social media challenge from LfU Brandenburg, aimed at improving the quality of household biowaste. Vlaco is currently exploring possible sensitisation measures (e.g., posters, container symbols, and social media campaigns) to support OVAM's expanded 2025 vfg-waste collection efforts. These ideas have already been presented to members for feedback during two key events: the VFG-waste Inspiration Day (13/5/2024) and a workshop on impurities in bio-waste (29/4/2025).
Vlaco has also engaged with RSUSA and Composta en Red to gather insights on Spain's national training programme for Master Composters. These discussions are helping shape Vlaco's own training initiatives and could lead to a future project on EU-wide harmonisation of Master Composter certification.

Educational Videos: Raising Awareness Through Visual Tools



With support from the CORE budget, Vlaco has produced a series of tutorial videos as part of its 'individual local actions'—targeted efforts aimed at raising awareness among local policymakers, organisations, and specific audiences involved in the management of vegetable, fruit, and garden (VFG) waste.
The videos focus on key themes within organic waste management and are available in both Dutch and English (with subtitles), ensuring broad accessibility. They are hosted on Vlaco's own website, the official EU CORE platform, and YouTube. The three topics covered include:

- Home composting (Dutch | English)
- Selective collection and professional processing of VGF waste (Dutch | English)
- Closed loop garden management advisors (Dutch | English) (Dutch | English)

These videos serve multiple purposes. The first two tutorials are especially designed to inform and educate a wide audience—households (with or without gardens), schools, small businesses, and

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community groups—about the basic principles of VFG waste, proper composting practices, and the importance of keeping organic waste streams clean. They also highlight the environmental benefits of composting, including energy recovery and nutrient cycling, and promote home composting as a practical step toward closing the biological loop.

The third video introduces the relatively new concept of **closed-loop garden management advisors** in Flanders. This emerging role focuses on supporting individuals and communities in managing gardens more sustainably and with circular principles in mind. By promoting this role, Vlaco aims to encourage more targeted, expert-led support for composting and closed-loop gardening initiatives.

These tutorials are not only publicly available but are also actively integrated into Vlaco's training efforts. Trainers use the videos during sessions on home composting, biological cycles, and related topics. These training sessions can be booked through Vlaco's online lesson request tool and are tailored for individuals, community trainers, or local policy actors. The visual format and multilingual accessibility of the tutorials make them an effective and user-friendly tool for communicating complex sustainability topics to diverse audiences.

More broadly, these resources are also intended for use by other CORE partners and their networks—such as municipalities and intermunicipalities—as part of broader communication strategies targeting both small-scale home composters and professionals in the organic waste sector.

Event for the pocketbook for closed-loop gardening

From Practice to Policy: Integrating CORE Insights

Finally, Vlaco has also ensured that lessons learned through CORE are feeding into policy development. In early 2025, relevant findings were submitted to OVAM for inclusion in the progress report of the *Action Plan on Food Loss and Biomass Residual Streams (2021–2025)*. These were evaluated and accepted, and later published in April 2025.

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POLAND

Marshal Office of Swietokrzyskie Voivodeship

ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKIE
VOIVODESHIP

"The CORE project and its impact on the environmental policy of the Świętokrzyskie region"

The regional environmental policy, defining investment needs in waste management, is established by the Waste Management Plan for the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship (WPGO). This document assumes the implementation of tasks that should contribute to the optimization of waste management and the achievement of a number of ambitious environmental goals.

Given that the Świętokrzyskie region is agricultural in nature, and bio-waste constitutes the largest share of the municipal waste stream, its management plays an important role, among other things, in meeting EU requirements, such as achieving levels of preparation for reuse and recycling of municipal waste. It should be emphasized that waste prevention and bio-waste recycling are crucial elements of the circular economy (CE). Therefore, developing infrastructure for bio-waste management is crucial.

Taking into account the experience of the CORE project partners with composting in rural areas, the "Waste Management Plan for the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship for 2023-2028 (WPGO)," adopted by the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship Assembly on October 26, 2023, includes provisions regarding the need to develop infrastructure for bio-waste management to maximize the use of raw materials and energy from this waste.

How did the "CORE - Composting in Rural Environments" project impact the WPGO?

The previously applicable document, the "Waste Management Plan for the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship for 2016-2022," did not include the construction of facilities for processing green waste and bio-waste, such as biogas and biomethane plants. The changes introduced were inspired by good practices learned during the CORE project during experience exchanges and study visits, particularly in Spain (TS1 in Ciudad Real, April 2022) and Italy (TS2 in Bolzano, September 2023). Implementing the new content into the WPGO was possible because the aforementioned document was being updated at the time of joining the CORE project. Furthermore, individuals appointed to the CORE project were part of the team developing this update.

Good practices learned during the "CORE - Composting in Rural Environments" project that contributed to the implementation of changes at the WPGO:

- Anaerobic Digestion - Bioenergy Center - Schwarze Elster, Brandenburg Region, Germany;
- Anaerobic Digestion - Lana Anaerobic Digestion Plant, Bolzano Province, Italy;
- Anaerobic Digestion - Municipality of Söderhamn, Sweden;
- Anaerobic Digestion - Flanders Region, Belgium.

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POLAND

Marshal Office of Swietokrzyskie Voivodeship

Waste Management Plant LLC in Janczyce

The CORE project – through practical knowledge exchange, seminars, and study visits – became a catalyst for change in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. The experiences presented by partners from Germany, Italy, Sweden, and Belgium demonstrated interesting ways of processing household bio-waste, especially that which is not suitable for composting. These experiences confirmed our belief that biogas or biomethane plants are a good direction for bio-waste management. As a result, the "Waste Management Plan for the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship for 2023 –2028" introduces appropriate changes, including updates to the Financial Schedule of Planned Tasks and to the Investment Plan (annexed to the WPGO). These revisions highlight the need to construct biodegradable waste fermentation facilities (biogas/biomethane plants) and to implement innovative bio-waste processing technologies.

The CORE project, which provides the opportunity for direct exchange of experiences and good practices in the field of bio-waste management, is a unique opportunity for our region to learn and subsequently implement these innovative solutions in our region.

Stakeholder Meeting

PROJECT PARTNERS

HUNGARY

CTRIA - Central Transdanbiuan Regional Innovation

Compost with Us! – CTRIA's Inspiring Approach to Sustainability Communication

Sustainable living is not merely a future aspiration, but a series of decisions we make every day. CTRIA Nonprofit Ltd. placed this philosophy at the heart of the CORE project, dedicating intentional and creative focus to dissemination and communication. Their goal was clear: to reach and engage diverse social groups with the messages of composting, the natural cycle, and sustainability. The organization's communication toolbox is impressively diverse. A modern and user-friendly landing page was created (komposztaljvelunk.hu), where anyone interested can explore the world of composting. The site offers practical guides, videos, interactive content, and downloadable brochures — and even allows visitors to submit questions, encouraging two-way communication.

"Long Table Picnic" and Biodiversity Festival in Veszprém

The video library includes tutorials on indoor composting, practical techniques for garden composting in single-family homes, guides to community composting systems, and short films highlighting the environmental benefits of composting. It also offers inspirational examples for compost use — in gardening, soil improvement, and even balcony solutions. For the youngest audience, an engaging animated story introduces the concept of composting in a playful, age-appropriate way.

Awareness-raising event on community composting

CTRIA's digital presence is further strengthened by online campaigns, social media posts, and thematic video series that aim to raise awareness of the positive environmental impact of composting. Printed brochures were also produced to reach those less active in the digital space. One of the most powerful pillars of dissemination was the organization of high-impact public events. The variety of target groups was reflected in three distinct event types, each tailored to specific age groups and interests.

PROJECT PARTNERS

HUNGARY

CTRIA - Central Transdanbiuan Regional Innovation

In September 2024, the “The Space Belongs to All of Us” – 1st Veszprém Compost Festival was held to introduce the newly installed community composter to local residents. Participants — including the University of Pannonia, the Municipality of Veszprém, and CTRIA — not only explained how the unit works, but also engaged in open and trusting conversations with local residents. The presence of a master composter added special value to the event by answering questions and addressing concerns in person.

In May 2025, a youth-focused sustainability event was held in the Acticity Garden, welcoming over 300 primary school students. Through eight themed stations, children explored the natural cycle, composting, water and soil preservation, and urban beekeeping. Using games, puzzles, and guided conversations, the children not only played, but actively learned — and each received a colorful brochure to take home.

In June 2025, the “Long Table Picnic" and Biodiversity Festival in Veszprém offered another opportunity to reach local families. This event stood out for its interactivity: visitors discovered different composting methods, tried out smart composting devices, and were able to see, touch, and smell mature compost — creating a sensory learning experience. Project materials and online resources were also presented, bringing the knowledge even closer to the public.

During the CORE project, something more than information was shared — communities were built. Through shared learning, questions and answers, and hands-on experiences, people came together who might never have interacted otherwise. Composting was not just presented as an eco-friendly practice — but as a bridge that connects people. An idea exchanged in a park, a child’s smile at a school station, a parent’s surprise at the smell of healthy compost — these are the small but lasting steps toward a more sustainable future. In addition to large public events, CTRIA also organized smaller workshops aimed at more in-depth knowledge transfer and direct community building.

CTRIA Nonprofit Ltd.’s efforts serve as a benchmark for how environmental messages can be conveyed through engaging, multi-platform, experience-based communication. KDRIÜ’s approach went beyond traditional “awareness-raising.” It wasn’t a one-off campaign — it was the launch of a new mindset. The goal was not just to teach people what composting is, but to help them feel that sustainability begins with each of us. The digital content, the events, and the workshops all served one purpose: to make environmental protection not a burden, but a natural choice.

Veszprém dissemination and student events on sustainability with a focus on composting

PROJECT PARTNERS

AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF BOLZANO (South Tyrol) - ITALY

Environmental and Climate Protection Agency - Waste Management Office (WMO)

Autonome Provinz Bozen
Provincia autonoma di Bolzano
Provinzia autonoma de Bulsan
SÜDTIROL · ALTO ADIGE

Since the start of the Interreg Europe CORE project, South Tyrol has advanced two complementary tracks: mobilizing public awareness on organic-waste recycling and reforming local policy to enable decentralized green-waste composting.
Over the past year, these efforts produced targeted outreach campaigns, new multimedia tools, and a tangible policy shift via two pilot green-waste collection sites— shifting from punitive enforcement to proactive circular-economy solutions that curb illegal dumping.

Communication Activities

Our outreach drew directly from interregional learning. In September 2023, Flanders shared its "Prevention of Biowaste Is Non-Stop Communication" at the Bolzano seminar; in May 2024, Hungary presented its hands-on "Compost Day" model during the CORE seminar in Flanders. Inspired by these, we launched:

- **Open-Door Events** at the Lana anaerobic digestion plant and Schabs composting facility, where residents toured operations, engaged in live Q&A with plant managers, and saw biogas production and digestate reuse.
- **Compost Day in Silandro**, applying the hands-on engagement model.
- **#iWASTEless** campaign on food waste: 400 high-school students attended interactive workshops, viewed the documentary Just Eat It, and had follow-ups with the Consumer Protection Center. Teachers report tangible changes in household behavior.
- **Multimedia Resources**: short interviews with plant managers on organic-waste treatment process on the Environmental Agency's portal; a brochure on community composting and anaerobic digestion distributed to all 116 municipalities and online; and infographic videos (Italian/German) on proper organic separation, shown in 22 cinemas, shared on social media, and featured in regional online press.

Food Waste Quantification Methodology

Building on earlier thematic analysis, the project developed a consistent methodology to quantify food waste in the province of Bolzano. Two Provincial Food Waste Working Group meetings set key parameters and data needs, and a task force—including the Chamber of Commerce, ASTAT, trade associations, and provincial departments—was activated to guide data collection and pilot testing. An electronic calculation tool to apply the method is being developed by the University of Vienna, funded through provincial allocations from the Waste Management Plan (WMP), enabling scalable, evidence-based monitoring of food waste trends.

PROJECT PARTNERS

AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF BOLZANO (South Tyrol) - ITALY

Environmental and Climate Protection Agency - Waste Management Office (WMO)

Policy Instrument Improvement: Decentralized Green-Waste Collection Pilots

Parallel to communication, CORE enabled a concrete policy evolution with establishing two pilot green-waste collection facilities—in Taufers (≈900 inhabitants) and Mazia (≈450)— targeting illegal dumping in natural areas. These low-cost, adaptable models show how minimal infrastructure can convert neglected spaces into composting hubs.

Inspired by the study visit to Compostwerf Sint-Niklaas in Flanders, the pilots use simple designs: concrete block bays to structure flows, prefabricated shelters avoiding excavation, and reuse of existing public lots. Both were realized in under 18 months, supported by alignment with the WMP's valorisation goals, proactive local leadership eager to test proven solutions, and flexible adaptation to local terrain and waste streams.

Taufers: Remediation began in spring 2023, clearing abandoned garden and wood waste, terracing the slope, and creating a secure receiving/shredding yard. By October 2024, the facility was operational, offering residents a structured drop-off. Awareness was raised via town-square events and local associations, emphasizing benefits for soil health, reduced transport emissions, and forest protection.

Fig. 1: Taufers

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AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF BOLZANO (South Tyrol) - ITALY

Environmental and Climate Protection Agency - Waste Management Office (WMO)

Mazia: In summer 2024, after approvals, concrete compartments were installed on a refurbished public lot, a lightweight shelter erected, and outreach launched to civic groups and senior centers. Early use is steady; projected collection averages ~100 kg per resident annually. Material is forwarded to the nearby supra-municipal composting plant in Malles, which is expected to receive formal approval later this year.

Fig. 2: The plant in Mazia, Spring 2025

Next Steps and Broader Impact

These pilots lead a province-wide network of green-waste composting sites. As CORE enters its fourth semester, planned actions include: finalizing and publishing technical guidelines for replication, monitoring operations inform cost-benefit and lifecycle emission analyses, and advocating for a dedicated chapter on green-waste valorisation in the WMP revision (early 2026), embedding the model into binding policy.

By combining participatory communication with decentralized infrastructure innovation, CORE is creating a replicable pathway for organic-waste management in mountainous regions. South Tyrol's growing composting network not only diverts waste from sensitive landscapes but fosters a circular-economy mindset with potential for wider European adoption.

PROJECT PARTNERS

SWEDEN

Municipality of Söderhamn

The Municipality of Söderhamn is launching a pilot project, approved by Interreg within the CORE project, to test small-scale composting sites for garden waste in residential areas. The initiative aims to enhance local waste management, promote more sustainable behavior among residents, and update the municipal waste management policy, known as the Cycle Plan. The project is supported by the Belgian project partner Vlaco (P3), which provides experience and expertise in neighborhood composting.

Background and Objectives

In Söderhamn, many residents do not manage their garden waste properly. Some avoid composting or recycling altogether, choosing instead to burn the waste or dump it in nature. Additionally, the existing Cycle Plan lacks specific guidance on garden waste.

This pilot project has several goals:

- To test small, neighborhood-based composting sites as a more accessible option for residents.
- To experiment with various composting methods, including hot composting and other alternatives.
- To produce soil that can be reused locally in gardens and community cultivation.
- To evaluate results and improve municipal policy by including garden waste in the revised Cycle Plan.

Pilot Locations

Two locations have been selected for testing, Stenbacken and Trönö.

Northern Central Söderhamn (Stenbacken)

Close to an urban garden, this site will collect and compost garden waste from both the urban garden and local residents. The resulting compost will ideally return to the local gardens.

Figure 1. shows an urban garden at Stenbacken, which will be supplemented with a compost site.

Figure 1. Urban garden at Stenbacken

Trönö

A smaller village 18 km from the city center. A simpler composting setup will be created here for local use, reducing the need for long-distance waste transport. A seminar was held in Trönö, with local association to inform about the pilot and inspire potential volunteers.

PROJECT PARTNERS

SWEDEN

Municipality of Söderhamn

Timeline and Key Activities

Semester 6 (Spring–Autumn 2025):

- Online meetings with P3 Vlaco to plan the composting sites and develop operational guidelines.
- Construction of two composting facilities using different types of composting bins.
- Initial composting using hot compost methods will begin.
- Winter will serve as a planning period to review routines and prepare for broader implementation in spring.
- In September 2025, Söderhamn will host an interregional seminar. Project partners will visit the pilot sites and provide feedback, even if construction is not yet complete.

Project visibility will be ensured through signage, and updates will be published on the CORE website and social media.

Semester 7 (Spring–Summer 2026):

- Collection and composting of garden waste from residents will fully begin.
- Soil production will be tested and evaluated for local cultivation.
- Ongoing communication with P3 Vlaco will help solve any challenges.
- A full evaluation of composting systems, methods, and results will take place.
- The Cycle Plan will be updated to include garden waste handling, supported by findings from the pilot.
- Project results will be shared via a monitoring webinar and possibly a broader presentation during a final event.

Figure 2. The pilot site in Trönö, where there is an existing unorganized compost at present.

Figure 3. Seminar with local village association i Trönö.

Cross-border collaboration

The project was inspired by study visits to small-scale composting initiatives in Flanders in May 2024. Söderhamn brought these ideas home and worked with P3 Vlaco to adapt them locally. Vlaco provides practical tools, guidance, and support throughout the process.

Policy improvement

If successful, this pilot will lead to lasting improvements in Söderhamn's waste policy. Garden waste, currently unaddressed in the Cycle Plan, will be integrated through clear guidelines and suggested annual actions. This could mark the beginning of a broader, more sustainable garden waste strategy for the municipality.

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Policy Influence

Within the framework of the CORE project, CluBE aimed to integrate composting into the Western Macedonia Regional Waste Management Plan (RWMP- ΠΕΣΔΑ) and ensured that this is specifically reflected in the revised plan. DIADYMA S.A. (Waste Management Company of Western Macedonia, Greece) is responsible for the design, implementation, and monitoring of the RWMP in the region of Western Macedonia. Following the influence of the CORE project, the revised RWMP now formally integrates composting.

Specifically:

"The collected materials will be directed to the pre-sorted biowaste treatment line, from which high-quality compost will be produced after aerobic treatment. Additionally, household composting will be promoted providing the appropriate equipment. Large producers will have the option to use mechanical composters. Kitchen waste (food waste) and green waste (especially from gardens and parks) will be collected separately using various methods, including:

- Special bins (brown bins) for households.
- Food service enterprises, according to the provisions of Law 4685/2020, are obliged to collect waste separately regardless of capacity, such as restaurants, catering services, camps, hotels. Similarly, grocery stores, fruit and vegetable shops, and local markets are included.
- A separate collection network for green waste.

Edible fats and oils, which also fall under the category of biowaste, will be collected separately and directed towards biofuel production for energy recovery or other applications".

Events

As part of the Environmental Day, which was celebrated on 5-6 June 2025, students took part in an engaging, team-based educational game focused on the **Bioeconomy**, specifically highlighting themes like **recycling and composting**. This was an excellent opportunity to promote CORE and discuss composting. A lot of citizen and families took part in these events and children played relevant interactive games. Divided into three teams, participants spun a "Wheel of Fortune"

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to receive challenges or quiz questions. The game included three card categories — *Did You Know?*, *True or False*, and *Multiple Choice* — designed to spark curiosity, promote teamwork, and reinforce key sustainability concepts through play. Many of the questions focused on composting practices, encouraging students to think critically about waste management. Teams earned points for correct answers, but a wrong spin could wipe out their progress, adding an exciting twist. The aim was to gather points and return to the starting point first, balancing competition with collaboration. The activity proved to be both educational and entertaining, with enthusiastic participation from students aged 4 to 15.

In addition, and **in collaboration with DIADYMA**, a **"Snakes and Ladders"** activity was organized, bringing another layer of excitement to the event. Students rolled a dice to move across a board made of blocks. Each block posed a question related to recycling, composting or circular economy. A correct answer allowed the player to roll again, while incorrect answers paused their progress. The first student to reach the final block was the winner. This game added movement, strategy, and knowledge-testing in a lively, enjoyable format.

The Environmental Day events held in **Ptolemaida and Kozani** were a resounding success, involving over **700 students** in meaningful, hands-on learning experiences. The interactive games effectively combined fun with education, fostering critical thinking, teamwork, and environmental awareness. Students eagerly embraced the challenges, while teachers commended the initiative for its strong educational impact and engaging approach. Hosting the events in open public spaces like Emergency Park and Kouri Forest added to the inclusivity and energy of the day, making it a memorable experience for all involved.

THEMATIC SEMINARS

Central to the CORE-project is exchanging knowledge and experiences ('Good Practices') between partners on prevention of food waste, home composting, neighbourhood composting, industrial biowaste management including anaerobic digestion and composting. To this effect, every semester a Thematic Seminar with several study visits is organised. These thematic seminars provide partners with invaluable opportunities to learn from each other, enhancing their understanding and implementation of best practices. The seminars can include workshops and visits to composting and anaerobic digestion sites, allowing participants to gain hands-on experience and insights into various biowaste management techniques.

Vermicomposting

The good practice is focuses in centers that self-manage vegetal waste and cold manure. Also is an interesting tool to do environmental education in schools.

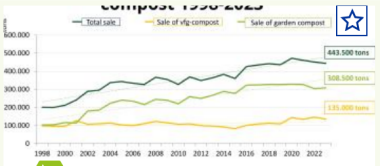
11 Jul 2024 | By project CORE

Expert approved

Wasteless Programme in Hungary

The Wasteless Programme is a national programme for the prevention of food waste in Hungary, organised by the National Food Chain Safety Office.

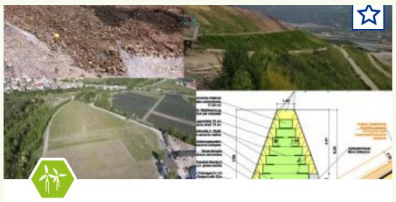
13 Feb 2024 | By project CORE



Structural planning required (1990-2024) for succesful management of organic treatment of biowaste

Flanders planned since the 90's its biowaste management policies and cooperation structures to obtain good and well used composts and digestates

11 Oct 2024 | By project CORE



Use of compost in soil mixtures - Application in construction projects in South Tyrol

Briefly illustration of uses of compost as a structural material and soil conditioner in different construction projects in South-Tyrol.

30 Oct 2024 | By project CORE

„Composting in home composters"

Composting "at source" i.e. individual composting by the province's residents in home composters, represents a significant share of bio-waste treatment.

17 Jul 2024 | By project CORE

Expert approved

Check out our Good Practices on our website or here:

Follow our journey on CORE website and social media!

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CluBE
Cluster of Bioeconomy & Environment of Western Macedonia

Söderhamns kommun

LfU
Landesamt für Umwelt

ECN
Compost and Digestate for a Circular Bioeconomy

vlaco
Getting more out of the organic cycle