



ACT4FOOD

Youth in Action for Food Waste Reduction

PULSE PAPER

Project Bulletin & Participant Reflections



LOCATION

Vienna, Austria



DATES

11 - 18 April 2026



PARTICIPANTS FROM

Austria • Türkiye • Bulgaria
Latvia • Hungary

HOSTED BY

ViaEuropa
Exchange and Culture

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

- Euroregioni (Bulgaria)
- Latvijas -Turcijas sadraudzības biedrība "Arkadas" (Latvia)
- Changemakers MATE (Hungary)
- YILDIRIM MESLEKI VE TEKNİK ANADOLU LİSESİ (Türkiye)



Erasmus+

Enriching lives, opening minds.

Co-funded by
the European Union



PREPARED BY: PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

1. Introduction

The *Act4Food – Youth in Action for Food Waste Reduction* project has brought together young people from Austria, Türkiye, Bulgaria, Latvia, and Hungary between **11–18 April 2026** in Austria. Throughout this exchange, participants have explored one of today’s most pressing challenges: food waste and its impact on our environment, economy, and daily lives.

During the project, we have not only discussed the causes and consequences of food waste but also experienced practical ways to reduce it. Through workshops, group activities, field observations, and creative tasks, participants have had the opportunity to reflect on their own habits and develop more sustainable approaches. The project has created a space where ideas, cultures, and experiences have been shared openly, allowing participants to learn from each other and build a common understanding of responsible consumption.

This *Pulse Paper* has been created as a collective outcome of our journey. It reflects the voices, thoughts, and creativity of the participants, bringing together different perspectives on food waste, sustainability, and youth action. Each section has been prepared by different teams, focusing on experiences, reflections, practical solutions, and future ideas.

Beyond documenting what has been done, this bulletin aims to inspire others. It shows that small changes in daily life can create meaningful impact when combined with awareness and collective action. As young people, we have the potential not only to change our own behaviors but also to influence our communities.

This publication stands as a reminder that sustainability starts with simple choices—and that every action, no matter how small, contributes to a larger change.

2. Impact Stories

Our experience in Vienna was both inspiring and meaningful, combining personal impressions with valuable learning moments throughout the project. At the beginning, we felt a bit nervous because we had to meet many new people from different countries. It was our first time participating in an international project like this, so everything felt new and unfamiliar. We were not sure how we would communicate or whether we would feel comfortable in such a diverse environment.

However, from the very first day, things started to change. We had the chance to explore Vienna, and the city immediately impressed us with its beautiful architecture, calm atmosphere, and well-organized environment. At the same time, as we got to know the other participants, we realized that everyone was very friendly, open-minded, and welcoming. We met people from different cultures, which allowed us to experience cultural diversity closely. In the beginning, it was not easy to connect, but as the days passed, we built a strong team spirit and meaningful friendships.

One of the most enjoyable parts of the project was the drama activities. Even though some of us had limited English skills, we were still able to understand and enjoy the activities, which helped us feel more confident. The cultural evenings were also very special, as we shared traditions, food, and stories from our countries. These moments made the experience more personal and unforgettable.

Compared to the other capital cities of Europe, Vienna felt more structured, especially when it comes to environmental awareness. Recycling systems are clearly organized, and people follow them carefully. This made us realize how important it is to have both good systems and public awareness in order to create sustainable habits.

During the project, we learned a lot about food waste and sustainable living. One important realization was that the mistakes we make in our daily lives without noticing can actually have a very big impact. We often waste food, use too much plastic, or ignore recycling without thinking about the consequences. Through workshops and discussions, we understood how serious the global problem of food waste is, but also how small actions—like planning meals, using leftovers, and reducing unnecessary consumption—can make a difference.

One of our favorite activities was painting on fabric tote bags. It was creative and fun, but also meaningful, as it promoted the use of reusable bags instead of plastic ones. This simple idea showed us how small changes can contribute to a more sustainable lifestyle.

Overall, this experience helped us grow both personally and socially. We improved our communication skills, became more open-minded, and learned how to work better as a team. We spent many moments laughing, sharing ideas, and supporting each other, which created a warm and friendly atmosphere. We are truly grateful for this experience, and we will carry these lessons with us in our daily lives.



3. Personal Reflections

Throughout the project, participants experienced a wide range of thoughts, emotions, and personal developments. Each individual approached the experience differently, yet all reflections reveal meaningful learning moments and growing awareness.

One participant shared their journey of personal growth and cultural exchange:

Ege - Through the Erasmus+ project, I had the opportunity to gain a wealth of experience. I left Turkey and began studying here to further my personal development. Since I started, I've improved my English by talking with my teammates and other international friends and participating in activities. Additionally, I've learned a great deal about the "zero waste" concept, which is the focus of our project. Through the cultural evenings organized by my friends from other countries, I've also been able to learn about different cultures and perspectives. I've gained new insights into the personalities of the people in Austria and their architectural styles. Although I was a bit anxious at the start of this entire experience, each day has been happier and more enjoyable than the last. I hope it continues that way.

Another participant reflected more on their emotional journey and the development of personal skills:

Sara - During the project, I felt many different emotions. At the beginning, I was a little nervous and not sure what to do. Later, I started to feel more comfortable and confident. I liked working with my team and sharing ideas. I learned how to work better with others and how to listen carefully. This project helped me feel more confident and improve my skills. I think this project was interesting and different from our usual work. I also learned how to plan my work better. This project helped me believe more in myself. I learned how to explain my ideas more clearly.

A different perspective highlighted a more critical and reflective viewpoint, especially regarding environmental awareness and expectations:

Jacob - At the beginning of the project, I was not fully convinced that food waste and recycling are the most critical issues in solving environmental problems. I still believe that larger challenges exist outside the European Union, where action may be more necessary. However, I was surprised to learn that Latvia is relatively active and aware in this area, with many initiatives compared to other countries. It also became clear that the situation is worse in some places than I expected. Personally, I am not very engaged in recycling, but this project helped me better understand different perspectives and the importance of individual awareness. Also Vienna is one of the most beautiful cities I have been to with rich architecture and clean streets.

Finally, one participant focused on how the project influenced their everyday habits and self-awareness, particularly regarding food consumption:

Juhana - the beginning of the project, I was actually really excited because I was curious to see the ways we waste food without even noticing it. When I came here and we started eating in the hostel, I kind of started paying more attention to myself. I realized that sometimes I take more food than I really need, even when I'm not that hungry. I'm not gonna lie, that made me feel a bit ashamed, but also I'm glad I noticed it.

After that, I started trying to listen more to my body and understand if I'm actually hungry or just taking food out of habit. I'm not perfect at it, but I'm trying to be more aware and more honest with myself. I think that's what really changed for me.

I also noticed that other people are trying too, which made it feel like we're all learning together. This experience made me more conscious, and I want to keep that even after the project.

4. Food Waste Tips & Practical Solutions

Food waste is a big problem today. People throw away a lot of food every day. At the same time, many people do not have enough food. This is why food waste is an important problem.

In Vienna, there are good examples of how to reduce food waste.

- One example is *Wiener Tafel*: This group collects food from shops and restaurants and gives it to people who need it.
- *Too Good To Go*: With this app, people can buy extra food from restaurants for a lower price.



Smart Planning & Shopping: Shop with a list and Planning meals for the week and sticking strictly to a grocery list prevents impulse buys that often end up in the trash.

- *Decode date labels*, understand the difference between "Use-by" (a safety date) and "Best-by" (a quality indicator). Many foods are still perfectly safe to eat after the "Best-by" date.
- *Embrace "ugly" produce*, Buying imperfect fruits and vegetables prevents perfectly good food from being discarded at the farm or grocery store level.

- *Strategic Storage, Use the FIFO method:* "First In, First Out." Move older items to the front of your fridge and pantry so they are consumed before the newer items placed in the back.
- *Maximize the freezer:* If you can't finish leftovers, fresh herbs, or bread in time, freeze them. You can even freeze fruit that is getting too soft for smoothies.
- *Creative Cooking & Reuse, Save scraps for broth:* Keep a container in the freezer for vegetable peels, carrot tops, and onion skins. Once it's full, boil them down to make a free, zero-waste vegetable stock.
- *Responsible Disposal, Start composting:* For the food scraps that truly can't be eaten (like eggshells, coffee grounds, and fruit pits), setting up a small indoor or balcony compost bin keeps organic matter out of landfills.



5. Good Practices & Local Examples

In Latvia, there is no popular system like Too Good To Go, but supermarkets often offer very high discounts on food close to expiration, sometimes up to 90%. This helps reduce food waste and makes food



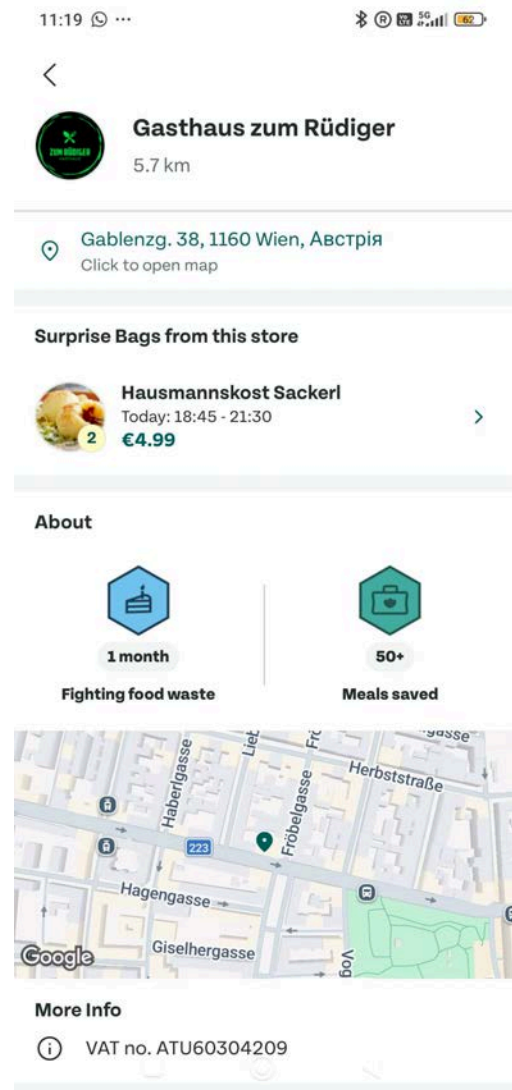
cheaper for customers. In Austria, we observed that discounts are, often only up to 20%, which could be improved. However, Austria has Too Good To Go, which is useful because it saves unsold food, although one disadvantage is that customers do not know exactly what they will receive before ordering. We tried it, and it was quite good, budget meal.



In Hungary, the primary solution for food waste is Munch, a local app that functions exactly like Too Good To Go by allowing restaurants to sell surplus meals at a discount. For bulk quantities, there is a law that major retailers must donate food approaching its expiry date to the state-run Food Rescue Centre (ÉMK). When food is no longer fit for human consumption, businesses are legally required to hand it over to licensed contractors. This waste is then processed into biogas or compost, ensuring it avoids landfills.

In Bulgaria, Foodobox lets you buy discounted surplus meals from local eateries via a mobile app. Foodshare.bg provides a community platform for individuals and businesses to share excess food with neighbors. The Bulgarian Food Bank manages large-scale logistics to rescue professional food waste for nationwide charitable distribution. Together, these three services bridge the gap between commercial surplus and those seeking affordable or free meals. Their combined efforts significantly reduce environmental impact while supporting food security throughout Bulgaria.

In Türkiye, Bursa, the Fazla İyi app is the go-to platform for rescuing individual meals from restaurants and patisseries at significant discounts. For businesses with large-scale surplus, the system relies on the Sıfır Atık (Zero Waste) framework, which encourages restaurants to donate bulk edible food to local NGOs like TİDER. In many districts of Bursa, the municipality collects organic waste separately to produce compost and energy, while specific leftovers are often repurposed as animal feed for local shelters.



6. Activities & Workshop Highlights

The Erasmus+ project on “Reduction in Food Waste” was honestly one of the most memorable and meaningful experiences for all of us. Bringing together participants from Hungary, Austria, Latvia, Turkey, and Bulgaria, the project was not just about learning - it was about connecting, sharing, and growing together.



From the very first day, we started with icebreakers and energizers, which helped break the discomfort zone and made everyone feel comfortable. Gradually, strangers turned into friends. One of the most special activities was the Secret Friend game, where each of us had someone to secretly make him/her happy throughout the project. Small notes, kind gestures, and surprises created such a positive and friendly atmosphere that made everyone feel included.



As the project began, we were introduced to the goals and structure, which helped us understand why food waste is such an important issue. Through interactive sessions, discussions, and presentations, we learned how food waste

affects the environment, from climate change to wasting valuable resources. The sessions with volunteers, especially those connected to sustainability and

organizations like Greenpeace, really helped us understand the topic clearly and made it feel important and urgent.

What made the learning even better was how interactive everything was. We didn't just sit and listen - we played quizzes, Kahoot games, and group challenges, which made it fun and easy to understand. At the same time, our daily reflection sessions gave us a chance to share thoughts, learn from each other, and grow as a team.

One of the most interesting parts was learning about Austria's sustainability practices and comparing them with our own countries. Activities like the SWOT analysis helped us think deeper about the challenges and possible solutions in different contexts. It made us realize that even though we come from different places, the problem of food waste is something we all share. We also got very creative during the project. From designing posters to participating in a trash bin design contest, we turned ideas into something practical.



Some of the best moments happened outside the classroom. We went out for street interviews, talking to local people about their habits and awareness. It was interesting to see different perspectives. The project also helped us develop digital and creative skills. We made videos as part of a friendly competition, created online posters, and even used QR codes to share our work. It was a great mix of creativity and technology.

Of course, one of the highlights was the cultural nights. Each country shared its food, music, and traditions, and those evenings were full of energy, laughter, and connection. Another personal favorite was the tote bag painting activity, where we designed our own eco-friendly bags. By the end, everyone signed each other's bags, turning them into special memories we'll keep for a long time.



Throughout the whole project, we didn't just talk about sustainability - we actually practiced it. From reducing food waste to saving water and energy, we supported each other in building better habits every day.

Looking back, this project was much more than just activities - it was about learning, friendship, and real change. It inspired us to be more responsible and aware, and to take small but meaningful steps towards a better and more sustainable future.

7. European Engagement & Dissemination



A central pillar of the “*Youth in Action for Food Waste Reduction*” project was strengthening participants’ connection to Europe— not only as a geographical space, but as a shared system of values, cooperation, and active citizenship. Beyond raising awareness on sustainability

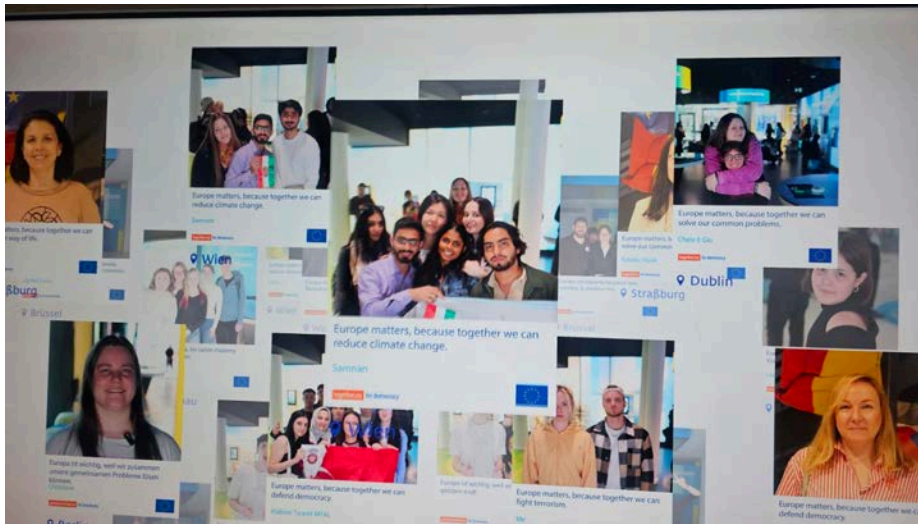
and food waste, the project created opportunities for young people to understand, experience, and engage with European structures in meaningful ways. Two key components played a crucial role in achieving this: the visit to **Europa Experience** and the European Parliament role play simulation.

Exploring Europe in Practice: Europa Experience Visit

The visit to **Europa Experience** served as a gateway for participants to better understand the European Union in an accessible and engaging format. Rather than approaching the EU through complex theoretical explanations, the experience translated institutional knowledge into interactive learning.



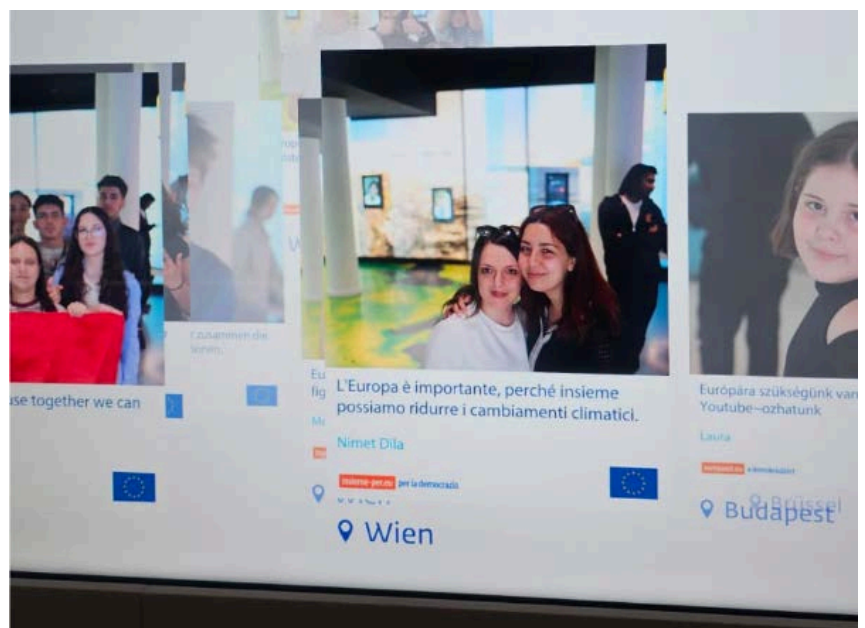
Participants were introduced to the structure and functioning of the European Union through a combination of visual installations, digital tools, and an introductory film. This allowed them to explore how decisions are made, how institutions interact, and how policies are developed and implemented across member states.



One of the most impactful aspects of this visit was the realization that the European Union is not a distant or abstract entity. Instead, it plays a direct role in shaping

everyday life—especially in areas closely linked to the project’s theme, such as environmental protection, sustainability, and food systems. Participants were able to connect EU-level strategies and regulations with real-life challenges like food waste, resource management, and climate change.

The interactive nature of the exhibition also encouraged participants to actively engage with the content. By navigating through different sections, exploring case studies, and reflecting on real-world examples, they developed a clearer and more practical understanding of European cooperation.



This helped bridge the gap between knowledge and relevance, making the EU feel more tangible and relatable. Moreover, the visit contributed to fostering a sense of



belonging. For many participants, especially those experiencing such an environment for the first time, it reinforced the idea that they are part of a larger European community. It highlighted shared values such as solidarity, cooperation, and responsibility — values

that are essential when addressing global challenges like food waste.

Learning Democracy by Doing: EU Parliament Role Play

While the Europa Experience visit provided a strong conceptual foundation, the European Parliament role play transformed this knowledge into lived experience. In this simulation, participants stepped into the roles of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs),



representing different political groups and ideologies. This shift from observer to decision-maker was critical in deepening their understanding of democratic processes.

The role play focused on two key directives: the *Climate-Friendly Food Directive* and the *Online Participation Directive*. These topics were carefully chosen to reflect both the project's core theme and broader societal challenges. The Climate-Friendly Food Directive encouraged participants to engage with issues such as sustainable consumption, food waste reduction, and environmental responsibility. At the same time, the Online Participation Directive opened discussions around digital democracy, inclusion, and the evolving role of citizens in decision-making processes.

The simulation environment was dynamic and realistic. Participants engaged in debates, negotiated with other groups, and formed alliances to support their positions. They were required to defend their ideas, respond to opposing arguments, and adapt their strategies in order to reach agreements.



One of the most valuable outcomes of this process was the realization of how complex policymaking truly is. Reaching consensus proved challenging, as different perspectives, priorities, and interests had to be balanced. This experience highlighted the importance of compromise, dialogue, and mutual respect—key elements of any functioning democratic system.

In addition, the role play allowed participants to see how policies are not created in isolation. Instead, they are the result of continuous interaction, negotiation, and cooperation among various actors. This understanding is

particularly important in the context of sustainability and food waste, where effective solutions require both political will and collective action.

Beyond the content itself, the activity significantly contributed to the development of essential competences. Participants strengthened their communication skills, improved their ability to think critically, and gained confidence in expressing their opinions. They also learned how to listen actively and consider different viewpoints—an essential skill in both democratic participation and intercultural dialogue.

From Awareness to Active European Citizenship

Together, the Europa Experience visit and the role play created a comprehensive learning journey. While one provided the knowledge and context, the other offered practical application and personal involvement.

This combination reinforced a key message of the project: that young people are not passive observers, but active stakeholders in European society. Understanding how the EU works is only the first step—engaging with it, questioning it, and contributing to it is what truly defines active citizenship.



Furthermore, these experiences helped participants connect the topic of food waste to a broader European and global framework. They recognized that individual actions, while important, are most effective when supported by policies and collective

efforts at higher levels. This dual perspective—local responsibility and systemic change—was a central takeaway of the project.

Extending Impact Through Dissemination



In addition to experiential learning, dissemination played a key role in amplifying the project's impact. Participants actively shared their experiences through articles, social media content, and visual storytelling. By doing so, they contributed to raising awareness not only about food waste but also about the opportunities provided by Erasmus+ and the importance

of youth participation. Efforts to publish content on institutional and public platforms further strengthened the visibility of the project. These dissemination activities ensured that the knowledge gained and experiences lived during the exchange reached a wider audience, extending the project's impact beyond its immediate participants.

A Strengthened Sense of Belonging

Ultimately, these activities contributed to a stronger sense of European identity among participants. By engaging directly with European institutions and simulating democratic processes, they developed a deeper understanding of what it means to be part of a shared European space. The project successfully transformed abstract concepts into lived experiences, empowering participants to



see themselves as active contributors to a more sustainable and democratic future.

8. Taking Awareness to the Public: Flashmob for Change

As part of the project's dissemination and visibility efforts, participants organized a dynamic flashmob in the square near **St. Stephen's Cathedral**, one of the most iconic and lively public spaces in the city. This central location provided the perfect setting to reach a diverse audience of locals and visitors, turning everyday urban life into an opportunity for awareness and engagement.

The flashmob was designed not only as a performance, but as an interactive awareness-raising activity. Participants came together with carefully prepared banners and visual materials featuring messages about sustainability and food waste reduction. In addition, they incorporated elements of traditional dances from their respective countries, creating a vibrant and multicultural atmosphere that naturally attracted attention and curiosity.



As the performance unfolded, passersby gathered to watch, take photos, and engage with the group. What began as a visual and artistic expression quickly evolved into meaningful interaction. Participants actively approached locals, introduced the Erasmus+ programme, and shared the aims of their project. They explained the importance of reducing food waste, highlighted the environmental

impact of everyday consumption habits, and discussed how young people across Europe are working together to promote more sustainable lifestyles.



These conversations played a crucial role in transforming the flashmob from a simple performance into a genuine exchange. Locals were not only observers but became part of the experience—asking questions, sharing their own perspectives, and reflecting on the topic. This direct communication helped make the project’s message more relatable and impactful.



At the same time, the activity strengthened participants’ confidence and communication skills. Speaking with strangers in an international context, explaining complex topics in an accessible way, and representing their project publicly required both courage and teamwork. It reinforced their role as active ambassadors of the project and of the broader values of European

cooperation and youth participation.

The use of traditional dances and cultural elements also added a deeper layer to the activity. It showcased the diversity within the group while emphasizing unity and shared purpose. By combining culture with advocacy, the flashmob became a powerful example of how intercultural exchange can be used as a tool for social awareness.

Overall, this public action successfully extended the impact of the project beyond its participants. It demonstrated how creative dissemination methods can engage wider audiences, spark curiosity, and encourage dialogue in everyday public spaces. More importantly, it highlighted that even small, collective actions can contribute to raising awareness and inspiring change within the community.



9. Future Actions & Opportunities

After completing our project, we understand that sustainability requires long-term commitment and practical actions. In the future, we plan not only to stay aware of environmental issues but also to implement clear, concrete solutions in our daily lives and communities.

At the local level, one of our main goals is to reduce food waste through specific strategies. For example, we will create weekly meal plans before shopping and make detailed grocery lists to avoid buying unnecessary products. We can also introduce a “use first” system at home, where older food is placed at the front of the fridge to prevent it



from being forgotten. Another idea is to organize “leftover days” once a week, where meals are prepared only from remaining food. Additionally, we will encourage our



families to compost organic waste where possible, or at least separate it from other trash.

Recycling is another area where we want to take practical steps. In our homes, we will set up clearly labeled bins for paper, plastic, and glass

to make sorting easier.

In places where recycling systems are not well developed, such as in the Kyrgyz Republic, we can start small initiatives like collecting plastic bottles and taking them to the nearest recycling points. We can also collaborate with local schools or communities to organize simple recycling campaigns or clean-up days. These actions can serve as examples and motivate others to participate.

We also plan to actively participate in ecological organizations. One of our team members will volunteer at the sustainable development ecological organization at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Hungary. Through this, we can take part in tree-planting activities, awareness campaigns, and workshops. A concrete idea is to organize small educational events where students can learn about sustainability in an interactive way, such as quizzes or games.



As part of Erasmus+ opportunities, we want to expand our impact internationally. A key idea is to create a social media project on platforms like Instagram or TikTok. This project will focus on short, engaging videos that explain environmental problems and offer simple solutions.

For example, we can create a weekly series such as “Eco Tips in 30 Seconds,” where each video presents one easy action people can take, like reducing

plastic use or saving water. Another idea is to start challenges, such as a “Zero Waste Week,” encouraging followers to participate and share their progress.

In our daily lives, we will also adopt more sustainable habits. This includes using reusable bags, bottles, and containers instead of single-use plastics, reducing energy consumption by turning off unused devices, and choosing public transport, cycling, or walking whenever possible. We will also support local and seasonal food products to reduce the environmental impact of transportation.



Finally, we believe that education and communication are essential. We will talk to people around us, share knowledge, and lead by example.

By combining small, practical actions with larger initiatives like Erasmus+ projects, we can create real and lasting change. Even simple steps, when done consistently, can contribute to a more sustainable future.

10. Conclusion

As *ViaEuropa Exchange and Culture*, we are proud to have hosted the *Act4Food – Youth in Action for Food Waste Reduction* project and to have brought together young people from different countries to address one of the most urgent challenges of our time.

Throughout this exchange, participants have not only increased their awareness of food waste and sustainability but have also actively engaged in creating solutions, sharing ideas, and learning from one another. The project has shown that when young people are given the right space, tools, and support, they can take meaningful steps toward positive change.

Beyond the activities, what made this project truly valuable was the sense of connection, responsibility, and cooperation developed among participants. From daily sustainable practices to creative outputs and community engagement, the experience has gone beyond learning and has become a shared commitment to more conscious living.

We believe that the impact of this project will continue after the mobility. Participants have gained the confidence and motivation to implement what they have learned in their own communities, acting as ambassadors of sustainability and responsible consumption.

As *ViaEuropa*, we remain committed to supporting initiatives that empower young people, strengthen intercultural dialogue, and contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive future. This project has been another important step in that direction.

11. Acknowledgement

As *ViaEuropa Exchange and Culture*, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to all partner organisations for their valuable contribution to the successful implementation of this project:

- **Euroregioni (Bulgaria)**
- **Latvijas -Turcijas sadraudzības biedrība "Arkadas" (Latvia)**
- **Changemakers MATE (Hungary)**
- **YILDIRIM MESLEKI VE TEKNİK ANADOLU LİSESİ (Türkiye)**

Your cooperation, commitment, and active involvement have played a key role in creating a meaningful and impactful learning experience for all participants. Your contributions throughout the preparation, implementation, and follow-up phases have significantly strengthened the quality and results of the project.



We would also like to sincerely thank all **participants** for their energy, openness, creativity, and active engagement. Your willingness to learn, share, and step out of your comfort zones has made this project truly alive and meaningful. The connections you built, the ideas you developed, and the actions you took have been at the heart of this experience.


A special thanks goes to the **group leaders and facilitators**, whose guidance, support, and dedication ensured a safe, inclusive, and productive learning environment. Your role in supporting participants, managing the process, and maintaining the quality of activities has been essential to the success of the project.

Together, this collaboration has created not only a successful project but also a strong network of motivated young people and organisations. We hope this partnership and these connections will continue in future initiatives.

Thank you all for being an essential part of this journey.

12. Contact Information

ViaEuropa Exchange and Culture

 *Vienna, Austria*

 **Email:** viaeuropaexchange@gmail.com

 **Instagram:** [@viaeuropaculture](https://www.instagram.com/viaeuropaculture)