

Eco Champions for Household and Public Spaces Sustainable Waste Management

Active projects

ECO CHAMPIONS

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The increasing environmental and climate pressures confirm that this is one of the main challenges of our times. The central aim of the Eco-Champions Project is to actively engage citizens and communities in discussions and activities directly linked to EU sustainable waste management policies, allowing them to participate in the EU policymaking process and thus contribute to the democratic and civic life of the Union and create a sense of community pride and unity showcasing the positive contributions locally and regionally. Through a wide range of workshops, training, and activities implemented in 4 European countries, Belgium, Spain, Italy, and Greece, with the addition of Kosovo from the Western Balkans region, Eco-Champions aspires to provide an opportunity to raise awareness and change – medium term and long term- societal behaviors. To develop a more holistic approach, an intergenerational collaboration between young people and aging populations will be promoted and encouraged by creating a sense of community and responsibility across borders and generations, to induce a greener and more sustainable future for Europe and for all, with a vision aligned with the EU's Green Deal agenda and priorities. The project aims to 1. Identify needs and requirements for sustainable waste management in EU countries, 2. Use a robust experimental methodology and facilitators in each country to organize challenges, taking into account preferences, ideas, and needs of citizens of different ages and genders and of public authorities, 3. Develop engaging eco-challenges events in 5 different cities, implement a voting process for all, and reward the most engaging “eco-citizens”. 4. Communicate and disseminate achievements and results to all public stakeholders at regional, national, and European levels. Civic engagement will pass through a democratic process respecting EU values and aspiring that the impact will surpass more than 2000 direct participants and 7000 indirect.

Partnership :

P1. Connect Brussels P2. Cohesion Network 2gether P3. The Balkan Forum P4. Bond Beter Leefmilieu Vlaanderen P5. Asociacion La Bien Paga P6. Crhack Lab Foligno P7. European Grants International Academy – EGINA (Associated Partner) P8. INSTITUTO PARA EL FOMENTO DEL DESARROLLO Y LA FORMACION – INFODEF (Associated Partner)

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Project: 101147501- Citizens and EU Values

D2.2

Transnational Report on Gaps and Needs Analysis on Waste Management in Belgium, Italy, Kosovo, Greece and Spain

February 2025



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the European Union

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1. Introduction

Objective

As part of the needs analysis activity within the Eco-Champion project, the corresponding partnership organizations have conducted five national surveys. Every national analysis aimed to scan and understand citizens' needs, assess current waste management practices, and identify key requirements and challenges in sustainable waste management in Belgium, Kosovo, Italy, Greece, and Spain. The information provided will serve project partners in gathering renewed insights from relevant stakeholders and utilizing the information to shape future planned activities in the Eco-Champion project and other initiatives.

Survey Design

The Eco Champions consortium's research teams created a common questionnaire to maximize the insights gained from survey research. The questionnaire was translated into the national languages, and Google Forms was decided to be the most appropriate online tool in terms of uniformity of the process and accessibility. 20 -30 participants per organization answer the survey, and the main findings will be presented in the following lines. The transnational survey doesn't wish to serve as a comparative study, even if it could be read as such, but mainly to guide the national teams in identifying the local needs and preparing customized activities according to the specific findings.

Next Steps

Findings will guide the development of activities planned for Eco festivals, which may include targeted awareness campaigns, encourage public debate and roundtable discussions, and localized waste management strategies and policies for improvement.

2. Needs analysis Report Belgium

Survey Design and Data Collection Process

The responsible organization for conducting the survey in Belgium is Connect Brussels in the city of Brussels. The survey was distributed within our local network via an online Google Form, ensuring easy access and participation. It was conducted in French to enhance comprehension and engagement among respondents. While the questionnaire required participants to provide certain details, its structured format encouraged candid responses. A total of 20 individuals took part in the survey, offering valuable insights into waste management practices and challenges within their communities.

Key Findings

Participant Profile and Demographic Overview

Age Distribution:

55% aged 18-29

30% aged 30-64

10% aged 0-17

5% aged 65+

Gender Breakdown:

70% identified as male

30% identified as female

Geographical Location:

85% reside in urban and 10% regional areas

5% live in villages

Primary Role in the Community:

85% are residents

15% are business owners or waste management professionals

Waste Generation and Management Practices

95% of respondents separate recyclables (plastic, glass, paper) from general waste.

90% actively reduce food waste.

55% avoid single-use packaging.

50% repair broken items instead of discarding them.

55% use reusable sanitary products.

Estimated Amount of Waste Generated Weekly

60% produce less than 5kg of waste per week.

30% generate 5-10 kg.

10% produce more than 20 kg.

Most Common Types of Household Waste

Organic waste was the most frequently reported type, mentioned by **90%** of participants. This was followed by **plastic waste (80%)**, which remains a significant environmental concern. Paper and cardboard waste were identified by 40% of respondents, while glass waste (10%) and metal waste (5%).

Infrastructure and Technological Assessment

90% stated that there are enough waste management facilities (bins, recycling centers) in their area.

75% reported that waste collection occurs twice per week, while 25% indicated daily collection.

40% said recycling is the most common waste disposal method, while 40% Incineration. 0% of participants reported landfills are a disposal method.

Environmental and Financial Impact

100% of respondents believe that waste management practices significantly impact the environment.

Monthly household spending on waste services:

45% pay less than €10.

10% pay between €10-20.

10% pay between €20-50.

15% pay more than €50.

The rest, 20%, reported it as nonapplicable.

Recycling Challenges:

60% found recycling very easy.

25% found it easy.

15% was neutral.

Specific Needs and Concerns

Challenges in Achieving a Zero-Waste Lifestyle

55% cited lack of time to engage in sustainable waste habits.

45% reported excessive supermarket packaging as a major issue.

30% found reusable products too expensive.

Barriers to Recycling and Composting

10.5% were unsure how to recycle properly.

Feedback from Participants

"Ils doivent venir chercher plus souvent." ("They should come to collect more frequently.")

"Une application de suivi/rapport devrait être conçue pour garantir l'engagement des citoyens dans la collecte des déchets." ("A tracking/reporting app should be designed to ensure citizen engagement in waste collection.")

Challenges Faced by Disabled or Elderly Persons in Waste Management

10% of respondents stated that disabled or elderly individuals face challenges in waste management.

Challenges mentioned by respondents:

Inadequate waste collection services for individuals with limited mobility.

Heavy equipment (like furniture) is very difficult to be transported to recycling parks.

Cultural and Gender-Related Influences on Waste Management Practices

15% of participants believe that cultural or gender-related factors influence waste management behaviors in their area.

Examples cited by respondents:

Cultural differences in household waste sorting practices.

Traditional gender roles, where women are more likely to handle waste disposal and recycling.

Regulatory and Policy Assessment

Awareness of Waste Management Programs and Regulations

20% of respondents were aware of local or national waste management programs, while **80%** were not familiar with any specific initiatives.

10% of respondents were aware of local waste management regulations, while **90%** were not informed about policies in their municipality.

Effectiveness of Waste Policies (among those aware):

15% found them very effective.

30% found them somewhat effective.

20% considered them ineffective.

35% were unsure.

Participation in Waste Management and Environmental Awareness

40% of respondents have participated in community clean-up activities or waste management initiatives.

100% of respondents stated that they know the environmental impact of improper waste disposal.

Recommendations and Policy Suggestions

55% suggested increasing waste collection frequency

50% proposed distributing free compost bins

40% wanted stronger awareness campaigns

55% supported launching an app for waste tracking and citizen engagement

40% encouraged school-based waste education programs

30% favored financial incentives for recycling

Conclusions

The Eco Champions WP2 survey provides valuable insights into waste management behaviors, challenges, and potential solutions within the local community. While engagement in waste reduction and recycling is high, key issues such as waste collection frequency, policy awareness, and accessibility for vulnerable groups remain. Despite 90% of respondents affirming the presence of adequate waste management facilities, the need for improved service delivery and targeted interventions is evident.

Plastic waste continues to be a significant environmental concern (80%), highlighting the urgency for stricter reduction policies and sustainable alternatives. Additionally, while 95% of respondents separate recyclables, only 40% compost, signalling an opportunity to enhance organic waste management. The community strongly supports digital tools (55%), such as a waste-tracking app, to improve citizen engagement and accountability.

Most notably, 100% of participants recognize the environmental impact of waste disposal, reinforcing the importance of education and policy-driven initiatives. With strong support for school-based waste education programs and awareness campaigns, there is a clear opportunity to foster long-term behavioral change. Addressing these challenges through a combination of policy improvements, digital innovation, and community-driven initiatives will be key to achieving a more sustainable waste management system.

3. Needs analysis Report Kosovo

Survey Design and Data Collection Process

The responsible organization for conducting the survey in Kosovo is The Balkan Forum in the city of Pristina. An online Google form survey [translated into the Albanian language] with multiple-choice and open-ended questions is designed and shared via emails and also via social media channels. The survey was distributed through organizational contact lists, social media platforms, and direct outreach to key stakeholder groups across the municipalities of Prishtina, Peja, Mitrovica, and Ferizaj in Kosovo. Analysis of responses by age group indicates that Instagram was particularly effective in engaging young people aged 18-29, who made up 61.8% of total participants, compared to 35.3% from the 30-64 age group. Additionally, the survey saw strong participation from women, who represented 67.6% of the 34 respondents. These insights highlight the effectiveness of digital outreach in engaging younger demographics and the active involvement of women in discussions on waste management.

Limitations:

The survey received limited responses from rural areas, with only 17.6% (6 out of 34 respondents) residing in villages. This suggests a potential gap in rural participation and highlights the need for more targeted outreach in these communities. Additionally, as with

any self-reported data, there may be some degree of response bias. Notably, 24 out of 34 respondents voluntarily provided their email addresses, indicating a willingness to stay engaged and potentially participate in future discussions or initiatives on waste management.

Key Findings

Participant Profile and Demographic Overview

The survey gathered responses from a total of 34 participants, providing valuable insights into waste management perspectives. A significant portion of respondents (**61.8%**) were young adults aged 18-29, while **35.3%** fell within the 30-64 age group. Women represented the majority of respondents, making up **67.7%** (23 out of 34). In terms of location, **76.5%** of participants reside in urban areas, while 17.6% come from villages, ensuring a diverse geographic representation. The survey successfully reached a broad range of stakeholders, including citizens, young people, households, individuals with disabilities, and environmental organizations, reflecting an inclusive approach to gathering opinions on sustainable waste management.

Waste Generation and Management Practices

The survey highlights a significant gap in waste segregation infrastructure, with **76.5%** of respondents disposing of all waste in a single bin, while only 23.5% actively separate plastic, glass, and paper. However, respondents demonstrate strong awareness of food waste, as **64.7%** stated they avoid throwing away food. Similarly, sustainability in clothing use is evident, with 73.5% wearing clothes as long as possible or donating them to those in need.

Household waste generation varies, with 34% producing 5-10 kg weekly and 26.5% generating less than 5 kg. Combined, **60.5%** of respondents fall within this range, though 20.6% were unsure, and 17.6% reported generating 10-20 kg of waste per week. The most commonly found waste materials in households are plastic (85.3%) and paper (70.6%), emphasizing the need for improved recycling efforts and waste reduction strategies.

Infrastructure and technological assessment

The survey results indicate a strong concern about waste management infrastructure, with **70.6%** of respondents stating that there are not enough waste management facilities in their area. Waste collection frequency varies, as 41.2% reported that waste is collected once a week, while 29.4% stated it is collected daily. However, 52.9% of respondents were unsure or unaware of the specific waste management methods applied in their municipality. Notably, the majority (82.4%) believe that waste management is the responsibility of the municipality, highlighting the need for clearer communication and improved public services in this sector.

Environmental and Financial Impact

Almost **80%** of respondents believe the current waste management practices have significant impact on environment. **61.8 %** of households spend less than EUR 10 per month on waste management services.

Specific Needs and Concerns

The survey highlights significant challenges in recycling accessibility, with only **2.9%** of respondents stating that recycling is very easy. In contrast, the majority find it difficult, with **41.2%** describing it as very difficult, 23.5% as difficult, and another 23.5% as somewhat difficult. The main barriers to recycling and composting include a lack of system and infrastructure (41.2%), followed by 14.7% who believe it requires too much effort, and 17.6% who are unsure why they do not recycle.

Opinions were somewhat divided regarding challenges faced by People with Disabilities (PwDs) in waste management. While 58.8% believe there are no particular obstacles, 41.2% think otherwise, with some respondents noting that PwDs often lack proper access to waste management facilities. Cultural and gender-related influences on waste management were not seen as significant by most respondents, as 67.6% stated that these factors do not impact waste practices. However, comments suggest a strong need for awareness campaigns to promote waste reduction, recycling, and environmental protection.

Regulatory and Policy Assessment

The survey reveals a significant gap in public awareness regarding waste management programs, with **79.4%** of respondents stating that they are unaware of any local or national initiatives. Additionally, confidence in waste management policies is low, as only 8.8% believe they are effective, while 20.6% find them ineffective, and 52.9% remain uncertain.

However, there are encouraging signs of community engagement and environmental awareness. A notable 76.6% of respondents have participated in community clean-up initiatives, demonstrating a willingness to take action. Furthermore, 82.4% recognize the negative environmental impact of improper waste disposal, indicating a strong foundation for future awareness campaigns and policy improvements.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The survey findings highlight a broad consensus on the lack of proper and modern waste management infrastructure, including insufficient recycling facilities and collection systems. Additionally, respondents emphasize the need for stronger policy enforcement and incentive based initiatives to encourage responsible waste disposal. Finally, public education emerges as a key factor in fostering long-term engagement, as many participants remain unaware of existing waste management programs and best practices. Strengthening awareness efforts, improving infrastructure, and implementing policy-driven incentives will be essential steps toward a more effective and sustainable waste management system.

Actionable recommendations

1. Enhance Recycling Infrastructure
 - a. Establish a comprehensive recycling system by increasing the number of recycling bins and collection points in urban and rural areas (88.2% support).
 - b. Ensure that bins are properly labeled and strategically placed to maximize accessibility and usage.
2. Introduce Incentives and Regulations for Responsible Waste Disposal
 - a. Implement financial or material incentives to encourage citizens to recycle (70.6% support).
 - b. Introduce penalties for improper waste disposal to promote compliance and accountability.
3. Strengthen Partnerships for Waste Management
 - a. Foster collaboration between schools and municipalities to improve waste collection infrastructure and promote reduce, reuse, and recycle practices (67% support).
 - b. Develop a structured engagement model where municipalities, businesses, and citizens work together to enhance waste management.
4. Develop a Governmental Master Plan on Waste Management
 - a. Establish a comprehensive, long-term waste management strategy with clear policies, regulations, and enforcement mechanisms.
5. Increase Waste Collection Frequency and Efficiency
 - a. Prevent environmental hazards by increasing the frequency of waste collection, especially in areas where waste accumulation leads to public health risks.
6. Improve Waste Management Services and Training
 - a. Provide capacity-building programs for waste management service providers to enhance efficiency and sustainability.
 - b. Introduce green technologies to modernize waste management infrastructure and reduce environmental impact.
7. Enhance Public Engagement and Education
 - a. Launch large-scale awareness campaigns targeting schools and communities to promote responsible waste disposal.
 - b. Integrate recycling education into school curricula and organize community clean-up initiatives.
8. Encourage Business and Retail Sector Involvement
 - a. Supermarkets should install vending machines for recycling plastic and glass, providing incentives for customers to return used packaging.
 - b. Establish collaborative recycling programs between businesses, waste management services, and citizens to streamline collection and processing.

By implementing these recommendations, municipalities and stakeholders can improve waste management efficiency, increase citizen participation, and promote a culture of sustainability.

4. Needs Analysis Report Italy

Survey Design and Data Collection Process

The organization responsible for conducting the survey in Italy is CRHACK LAB in the city of Foligno. The ECO-CHAMPIONS project aims to assess the local community's current waste management practices, challenges, and needs. This report summarizes the findings based on survey responses collected from residents. The primary objectives include understanding waste disposal habits, identifying common obstacles to effective recycling, and recommending solutions for improvement.

Key findings

Participant Profile and Demographic Overview

The survey involved people of various age groups, predominantly between 30 and 64 years old, with a slight majority of female participants. Most respondents reside in urban areas and identify as residents rather than entrepreneurs or business managers. The primary role of respondents in their community is that of residents, indicating that household waste management is a critical concern.

Waste Generation and Management Practices

The majority of respondents reported separating recyclable materials such as plastic, paper, and organic waste. However, some still lack awareness or access to proper recycling facilities. In terms of waste reduction, common strategies include avoiding food waste and minimizing the use of single-use packaging.

Main Challenges and Obstacles in Waste Management

Several key barriers were identified:

- Lack of availability of waste sorting and recycling facilities.
- Insufficient knowledge about composting and recycling procedures.
- Difficulty in repairing and repurposing items due to time constraints or lack of skills.
- Limited accessibility for elderly or disabled individuals in waste disposal.

Among the main difficulties reported, many participants highlighted the limited availability of packaging-free products in local supermarkets. Others expressed difficulties in repairing damaged objects due to a lack of time or specific skills. A percentage of respondents believe that information on recycling and composting is insufficient or difficult to access. Some residents, particularly the elderly or people with disabilities, find waste management complicated, emphasizing the need for accessible and inclusive solutions.

Recommendations for Improvement

Respondents suggested various measures to enhance waste management:

- Establishing incentive programs for recycling.

- Implementing stricter regulations and penalties for improper waste disposal.
- Conducting educational campaigns to raise awareness on sustainable waste management.
- Improving waste collection infrastructure to accommodate all community members.

Suggestions and Possible Solutions

Participants proposed several initiatives to improve waste management, including:

- Economic incentives for those who adopt sustainable practices such as composting or material reuse.
- Increased educational campaigns and workshops to raise public awareness of proper waste disposal practices.
- Implementation of stricter regulations and penalties for those who do not comply with waste management rules.

Interest in Sustainability Training

A considerable portion of respondents expressed interest in further exploring sustainable practices in waste management. This suggests an opportunity to develop targeted training and awareness programs to increase knowledge and encourage the adoption of responsible behaviors.

Conclusions

The needs analysis highlighted a good level of awareness regarding waste management but also the need for greater informational, logistical, and economic support. The recommendations suggest the importance of encouraging sustainability through targeted policies, environmental education, and active community involvement. The ECO CHAMPIONS project can play a key role in promoting more sustainable and inclusive Practices within the territory.

5. Needs Analysis Report Greece

Survey Design and Data Collection Process

The organization responsible for surveying in Greece is Co2gether in the city of Patras. The survey was delivered to our local network through an online form (e.g., Google form) in Greek to facilitate distribution and participation. The fact that the questionnaire was anonymous encouraged people to complete it and allowed them to feel more confident and open to answering. A total number of 31 participants answered the questionnaire, and 58% of them left their email addresses visible, meaning that they wish to receive updates for the project development

Key findings

Participant Profile and Demographic Overview

The majority (**67%**) fall within the **30-64** age group, indicating a predominantly middle-aged population. Only 9.7% are young adults (18-29), suggesting a lower presence of younger generations. Seniors (65+) make up 16%, and the 0-17 age group, is the smallest (6.3%), signaling potential concerns in these age groups. Women significantly outnumber men (**74%** vs. 26%). Most respondents (**64.5%**) reside in cities, while 35.5% live in rural areas. This suggests urbanization trends and potential disparities in services between urban and rural populations. Most individuals (**87.1%**) are residents, Business owners constitute 9.7%, and Public servants make up 3.2%.

Waste Generation and Management Practices

- Sorting recyclable materials (**67.7%**) is the most common behavior, suggesting that the public is quite aware of recycling.
- This is followed by avoiding food waste (**58%**), indicating a fairly strong environmental awareness, especially given the high environmental impact of food waste.
- Repairing items (**3.2%**) and avoiding single-use packaging (**6.4%**) appears to be less widespread, which may indicate either limited awareness of these practices or practical barriers to their implementation (e.g., lack of infrastructure for repairs or lack of alternative packaging).
- Long-term use of clothes and shoes or their free disposal (**29%**) suggests that, while recycling and avoiding food waste are high priorities, clothing management may not be as widespread or organized as other eco-friendly habits.

Estimated amount of general waste weekly

- **The majority produce minimal waste 51.6%** generate less than 5kg of waste per week, indicating a relatively low waste output. Moderate Waste Generators
- **22.6%** produce between 5-10kg weekly, which is a moderate level of waste. This group may represent larger households, higher consumption levels, or areas with less emphasis on waste reduction practices.
- **Lack of Awareness. 16.1%** do not know how much waste they generate, which highlights a potential gap in waste awareness. This could indicate the need for education on waste tracking and management to encourage better sustainability practices.

Types of household waste are most common in your neighbourhood

- **Plastic is the dominant waste type (64.5%)**

This is a significant concern as plastic is non-biodegradable and contributes to environmental pollution. High plastic waste suggests a need for better recycling, plastic reduction policies, and awareness campaigns.

- **Paper/Cardboard waste is also high (58%)**

This indicates a strong reliance on paper-based materials, which can be managed through recycling programs. Encouraging digital alternatives and reusable packaging could help reduce this category.

- **Organic waste is 41.9%**

This presents an opportunity for composting programs to reduce landfill waste. High organic waste also suggests a need for better food waste management practices.

- **Glass (32%) and Metal (19.4%) waste are relatively lower**

These materials are recyclable and should be collected separately to maximize reuse. Improving glass and metal recycling facilities could help reduce their environmental impact.

19.4% of respondents don't know their waste composition. This indicates a knowledge gap and highlights the need for educational initiatives on waste sorting and reduction

Infrastructure and Technological Assessment

Adequate Waste Management Facilities (77.4%). A strong majority believe there are enough waste bins and recycling centers, which suggests that infrastructure is not a major issue. However, **22.6%** might feel there are gaps, which could indicate certain areas need more accessibility to waste disposal options.

Waste Collection Frequency Varies. 35.5% reported twice-weekly collection, which is a standard frequency in many urban areas. **22.5%** have daily collection, likely in high-density areas or city centers. **15.5%** receive weekly collection, which may not be sufficient in some cases. **25%** don't know how often waste is collected, indicating a lack of awareness about local waste management schedules.

Recycling is the Most Used Waste Disposal Method (35.5%). Recycling appears to be common but not dominant, meaning there is room for improvement in promoting it further. **35.5%** are unsure or unaware of the primary disposal method, showing a significant knowledge gap. **22.6%** reported landfill use, suggesting that a portion of waste is not being properly diverted from landfills, which may have environmental consequences.

Municipality's Responsibility (90.3%). Nearly everyone agrees that waste management is handled by the local government. This suggests that improvements or changes in waste management policies should be led by municipal authorities, potentially in collaboration with private waste management companies.

Environmental and Financial Impact

- **Environmental Impact Perception. 64.5%** believe waste management significantly affects the environment, indicating strong awareness of waste-related environmental issues. **25.8%** are unsure, suggesting a gap in education about the environmental consequences of waste disposal practices. This highlights an opportunity to improve public knowledge on how waste contributes to pollution, landfill overflow, and climate change.
- **Financial Awareness of Waste Management Costs.** 58% are unsure about their household waste management costs, which suggests that waste-related expenses are either included in taxes, bundled with other services, or not clearly communicated. 22.6% spend less than €10 per month, which is a relatively low cost. 19.4% spend between €10-20 per month, indicating that some residents may be paying for private waste services or additional disposal fees.

Specific Needs and Concerns

The Greek survey reveals several challenges and attitudes toward waste minimization, recycling, and accessibility in waste management.

1. Lack of Awareness & Initiative in Waste Reduction.

48.4% haven't considered minimizing household waste, suggesting a lack of awareness or motivation. This indicates a need for educational campaigns on simple, actionable steps for waste reduction, such as meal planning, composting, and reusing materials.

2. Barriers to a Zero-Waste Lifestyle

25.8% consider supermarkets responsible for not selling bulk products, showing that local/national businesses contribute to waste production.

16.1% lack skills to repair items, leading to unnecessary disposal of clothes, electronics, and shoes.

22.6% struggle with time constraints when managing food waste or buying in bulk.

3. Recycling Participation & Barriers

19.3% consider recycling very easy, but **16%** avoid it due to effort, **25.8%** don't know how, and **38.7%** don't care much.

4. Accessibility Issues in Waste Management

64.5% are unaware of challenges faced by disabled or elderly persons, while **35.5%** recognize that these groups struggle with waste disposal. This suggests that accessibility concerns (e.g., difficult-to-reach bins, lack of home collection) may not be widely recognized.

Challenges mentioned by the participants

- Difficult access for the elderly or people with reduced mobility due to the height of the recycling bins.
- The bins are very difficult to open, you have to be very strong
- Because the collection system is not adequate. Making recycling management difficult

87% think cultural or gender-related issues influence waste management practices in their area.

Regulatory and Policy Assessment

The data highlights significant gaps in awareness regarding local and national waste management programs and policies, despite relatively high participation in community efforts.

- **Low Awareness of Waste Management Programs (80.6%).** Only **19.4%** are aware of existing local or national waste programs, suggesting that current initiatives are either insufficiently publicized or not widely accessible. However, participants mentioned knowledge of Clothing recycling, Individual initiatives, Recycling of plastics, electronics, composting, and Oil recycling.
- **Lack of Awareness of Local Regulations (97%).** Nearly all respondents (97%) are unaware of local regulations on waste management, showing a major gap in policy communication. Of those who responded, **66.7%** were unsure if local waste reduction regulations are sufficient, indicating confusion or lack of transparency in policy enforcement.
- **Encouraging Community Involvement & Action.** **67.7%** have participated in community clean-ups or waste initiatives, showing strong local engagement. **83.9%** recognize the environmental impact of improper waste disposal, indicating a generally informed population on environmental consequences.

Suggestions and Recommendations

The survey suggests the community is willing to seek better waste management solutions, particularly through **education, incentives, and improved recycling infrastructure**.

- 61%** by organizing educational campaigns or workshops on waste management
- 61%** by setting up incentives for recycling or waste reduction (e.g., discounts, rewards)
- 58%** by collaborating with schools to teach children about reducing waste, reusing products, and recycling
- 29%** by helping local businesses and citizens go waste-free, for instance, by setting up systems to reuse packaging and reduce food waste and introducing stricter regulations and fines for improper waste disposal.
- 58%** by offering free or low-cost composting bins or facilities
- 51%** by offering more recycling bins to improve recycling disposal
- 25%** support community-led waste management initiatives (e.g., clean-up drives, eco-challenges), and improve frequency and reliability of waste collection services.
- 84 %** would be interested in learning more about sustainable waste practices

Conclusions

Recycling & Waste Reduction Efforts – Many residents separate recyclables, minimize food waste, and extend the use of clothes and shoes. However, **plastic and paper remain the dominant waste types**, requiring stronger reduction strategies.

Infrastructure vs. Accessibility – While waste management facilities are generally considered sufficient, **accessibility remains challenging for vulnerable groups**. Addressing these gaps is crucial for inclusive waste management.

Lack of Awareness & Engagement—Most **residents are unaware** of local and national waste management programs and regulations. Limited policy awareness suggests a **need for stronger educational efforts and public engagement**.

Cultural & Demographic Influences – **Gender differences and other demographic factors shape recycling behaviors**, indicating that tailored approaches may be more effective in promoting sustainable habits.

6. Needs Analysis Report Spain

Survey Design and Data Collection Process:

The organization responsible for surveying in Spain is LA BIEN PAGÁ in the city of Valladolid. The survey was delivered to our local network through an online form (e.g., a Google form) in

Spanish to facilitate distribution and participation. The fact that the questionnaire was anonymous encouraged people to complete it and allowed them to feel more confident and open to answering. A total of 20 participants answered the questionnaire.

Key findings

Demographic and general information

- Age: **90% age 30-64**
- Sex: **85% women**
- Geographical location: **75% city**
- Primary role in the community: **85% resident**

Waste Generation and Management Practices

85% separate recyclables (like plastic, glass, paper) from general waste

75% avoid throwing away food

65% repair things that are broken (when possible)

60% avoid single-use packaging

60% wear clothes and shoes as long as possible or give them away when don't wear them

Estimated amount of general waste weekly

- **40% less than 5kg**
- 25% 5-10 kg

Types of household waste is most common in your neighbourhood

- **65% plastic waste**
- 50% Paper/Cardboard

Infrastructure and Technological Assessment

70% stated that there are enough waste management facilities (e.g. bins, recycling centres) where they live.

50% stated that waste is collected daily (30% weekly)

50% stated that recycling is the waste disposal method most used in their area (40% doesn't know/not sure)

80% stated that the Municipality is responsible about Waste Management

Environmental and Financial Impact

50% believe current waste management practices in their area have a significant environmental impact (35% doesn't know)

45% of their household spend less than 10€ monthly on waste management services (30% N.A. and 25% 10€-20€)

Specific Needs and Concerns

50% declared that the difficulty to recycle is level 3 (corresponding to “neutral” I Likert scale) while for the 20% of the participants is very easy (level 1)

65% declared that the main reason why it is difficult to live without household waste is because the **supermarkets around them don't sell products in bulk** and **40% don't have the skills to repair** things like clothes, shoes, electronics, etc.

65% recycle and 10% doesn't due to too much effort.

Feedback from one participant: there are no recycling bins nearby, they are generic.

50% is not aware if there any particular challenges faced by disabled or elderly persons in waste management in their area while **30% of them declare that these vulnerable groups face challenges**.

Challenges mentioned by the participants:

- Difficult access for the elderly or people with reduced mobility due to the height of the recycling bins.
- The bins are very difficult to open, you have to be very strong
- Because the collection system is not adequate. Making recycling management difficult
- Pedal bins
- Purchasing options, barriers to access to all bins

35% think that cultural or gender-related issues influence waste management practices in their area.

Main reasons according to the participants:

- The more culture, the more recycling there should be.
- My Roma neighbours don't recycle. They don't even put the rubbish bags in the bin, as if to recycle.
- Lack of training and awareness
- The older population is not as familiar with or aware of recycling and they often confuse bins.
- There are people who are not careful or have not considered recycling because they think it is nonsense.
- Women in general are more aware because of the care education we have.

Regulatory and Policy Assessment

10% is aware of local or national programs for waste management

Feedback from participants:

- The slogan we all recycle
- Green homes, go natural.

10% is aware of any local regulations or policies on waste management

Feedback from participants:

- What needs to be discriminated between one type of waste and another: video, paper, plastic, etc.
- Municipal law

11% of those who answered yes (9 participants), finds local regulation very effective in reducing waste, while 33% somewhat effective.

35% has participated in community clean-up or waste management initiatives.

60% is aware of the environmental impacts of improper waste disposal.

Suggestions and Recommendations

How can local authorities or organizations help you manage waste better?

60% by collaborating with schools to teach children about reducing waste, reusing products and recycling

55% by setting up incentives for recycling or waste reduction (e.g., discounts, rewards)

45% by helping local businesses and citizens to go waste free, for instance by setting up systems to reuse packaging and reduce food waste

40% by

- offering **free or low-cost composting bins** or facilities
- organizing **educational campaigns** or workshops on waste management
- introducing **stricter regulations and fines** for improper waste disposal
- supporting **community-led waste management** initiatives (e.g., clean-up drives, eco-challenges).

What changes would you recommend improving waste management practices in your area?
(open question)

- Better management of the municipality
- Workshops for more effective recycling. Accessible containers
- Not privatising companies dedicated to this end
- Citizens need to know the effects of incorrectly separating waste
- Proximity of collection points for electrical appliances and other devices
- Raising public awareness
- More frequent collection system
- Use of recycled containers in supermarkets

Are there any additional comments or insights you'd like to share? (open question)

- Using creativity to give things other uses
- Not for the moment
- More containers
- Thanks for the initiative

65% would be interested in learning more about sustainable waste practices

Conclusions

The waste management analysis reveals a **responsible community with strong recycling habits, yet challenges persist in accessibility, awareness, and infrastructure.**

While **most residents separate recyclables, avoid food waste, and repair** items, plastic and paper remain dominant waste types. Infrastructure is generally sufficient, but **accessibility issues exist** for vulnerable groups.

Limited policy awareness and engagement highlight the **need for stronger educational efforts and incentives**. Cultural and demographic factors influence recycling behaviors, with gender differences noted.

Key recommendations include school collaborations, incentive programs, and stricter regulations to enhance waste reduction. Overall, improved public awareness, infrastructure adjustments, and municipal engagement are crucial for more effective waste management.

7. Concluding Remarks

Potential Actions & Recommendations:

- ✓ Increase Education & Awareness – Many are unaware of waste reduction strategies and the challenges faced by certain groups.
- ✓ Improve Recycling Accessibility & Convenience – More bins, better instructions, and incentives could boost participation.
- ✓ Advocate for Systemic Changes – Supermarkets, businesses, and local authorities must support waste reduction efforts. This suggests that broader outreach and engagement strategies are needed while some targeted initiatives exist.
- ✓ Enhance Municipal Involvement & Policy Communication- Municipalities should increase public communication on waste policies (e.g., through online platforms, social media, or local events).
- ✓ Address gaps in knowledge about waste reduction strategies- Implement awareness campaigns explaining waste management regulations in simple, actionable terms.
- ✓ Promote engagement- Workshops & seminars can be organized to inform residents on their responsibilities, propose inclusive activities and acquire practical skills.

Potential Solutions:

- Advocate for bulk-buying sections in local stores.
- Promote repair workshops and DIY repair guides.
- Create time-efficient waste reduction strategies (e.g., simple meal planning tips).
- Build on existing community engagement by formalizing waste reduction programs.
- Encourage volunteer-led awareness campaigns to bridge the knowledge gap about local waste policies.
- Strengthen partnerships between municipalities, businesses, and community groups to create more visible and structured initiatives.
- Digital innovation for informing and boosting waste management responsible practices.

Project: 101147501- Citizens and EU Values



Training Manual



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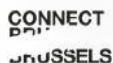
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Introduction

BECOMING ECO CHAMPIONS

Engaging Every Voice in Climate Participation

The Training Manual “**Becoming Eco Champions: Engaging Every Voice in Climate Participation**” is developed within the ECO-CHAMPIONS FOR HOUSEHOLD AND PUBLIC SPACES SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT CERV project to train facilitators tasked with organizing and supporting **local citizen engagement** activities related to **climate action**. The manual aims to build facilitators’ capacities to engage citizens—especially those who are least able to participate—in meaningful and inclusive deliberation.

The ECO-CHAMPIONS project aims at empowering communities to take action on sustainable waste management—from food to clothing and household goods. By actively engaging citizens of all ages, local authorities, and community actors, the project promotes practical solutions at both the household and regional levels. Through participatory workshops, awareness campaigns, and cross-border collaboration among **six partner organizations** from Belgium, Kosovo, Italy, Spain, and Greece, ECO-CHAMPIONS aims to foster a culture of responsible consumption and waste reduction.

The project will directly involve over 2,000 participants and reach more than 7,000 indirectly across Europe.



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Manual Objectives

This manual supports **facilitators** in:

- Understanding the barriers to **citizen participation** when it comes to **Waste Management**
- Applying the principles of **experimentalist democracy theory**
- Using **socially inclusive** and gender-balanced approaches
- Designing and delivering **effective and equitable engagement processes** for all the members of society, regardless their age, sex, geographical residence, etc.



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Who we are

CONSORTIUM PARTNERS

Connect Brussels (Connect Your City – Brussels ASBL) is a youth nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering young people (13 – 30 years old) through creativity, civic engagement, and social inclusion. Based in Jette, Brussels, we provide a safe and dynamic space where young people can develop skills, strengthen their mental well-being, and actively participate in their communities.

Co2gether is a social organization based in Patras, covering the Region of Western Greece. It supports and networks local authorities, non-profit organizations, private companies, research and educational institutions. It provides care to vulnerable groups (e.g. older people, families with economical difficulties, patients who have and do not have health insurance, children coming from Roma communities and people who are incarcerated) living in rural or remote areas.

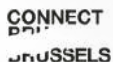
The Balkan Forum on Regional Cooperation is a cross-sectoral platform for advancing sustainable and participatory development. It promotes a resource efficient, greener, and more competitive Balkan region that is based on collaboration and diversity. The Balkan Forum aims to create a new vision for the Western Balkans based on economic integration, prosperity, and sustainable peace.



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Who we are

CONSORTIUM PARTNERS

Bond Beter Leefmilieu is the largest network of sustainable organisations in Flanders, uniting citizens, policymakers, and companies. Core goals include climate neutrality, circular resource use, ecosystem resilience, and less environmental nuisance. They empower member organisations, mobilize citizens, and guide government policy for a just transition.

La Bien Pagá Espacio Escénico (LBP) is an association aimed at supporting the socio-educational integration and cultural inclusion of people with fewer opportunities and vulnerable groups through culture and arts. The association support disadvantaged groups including: children and school students with learning disabilities, low-skilled and low qualified young and adults, migrant families and refugees, ethnic minorities and offenders.

CRHACK LAB FOLIGNO 4D opens portals of possibility through digital and cultural innovation. Founded in 2019, it's a volunteer-led organization promoting positive use of technology. It fosters digital culture, cultural welfare, and energy awareness, especially for younger generations. Their projects empower people with the skills needed for the future. They inspire "addiction to positive thinking" and the dream of connected consciousness.



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Experimentalist Democracy Theory

Experimentalist democracy is a **governance approach & methodology** based on:

- Continuous feedback and learning,
- Inclusive participation
- Peer-to-peer accountability
- Iterative problem-solving

Instead of top-down policymaking, experimentalist democracy creates deliberative spaces where citizens, especially marginalized groups, are empowered to co-define problems and co-develop solutions.

It is a methodology participation and a **Bottom-up approach**, where citizens and public officials meet and speak together about public problems.



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Experimentalist Democracy Theory

This methodology leads the ECO-CHAMPIONS project in all its activities, because it aims **to engage all the citizens in the waste management practices**, especially the ones who are usually left behind: older people, people with economic difficulties, people with disability, young people, people that live in remote and rural areas.

Involving diverse citizens strengthens legitimacy, relevance, and creativity in local responses to climate challenges. It fosters:

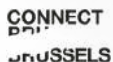
- Local ownership of climate initiatives
- Resilience through trust and collective responsibility
- Innovation through inclusive dialogue
- Inclusion in designing or claiming waste management practices accessible for all



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Ecosystem community Based Management

Beyond the Experimentalist democracy, ECO-CHAMPIONS is also built on the **Ecosystem community Based Management (ECBM)**.

The Ecosystem Community-Based Management (ECBM) is an approach that involves **local communities in decision-making processes**.

This methodology takes into consideration the needs and rights of local communities to make **sustainable practices** and improve ecological environment with green practice such as circular economy.



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Identifying Excluded Populations

Vulnerable groups are defined as populations who have **limited access** to resources due to various factors like age, disability, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

These may include:

- Low-income households
- Migrants and ethnic minorities
- Women and gender-diverse individuals
- Older people
- Youth without institutional representation
- People with disabilities
- Rural populations
- Those with limited digital or language skills
- People with low education



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Waste Management Barriers

Communities who are least able to participate in civic life often also face **unique challenges** when it comes to sustainable waste management. These barriers are not only logistical, but also social, informational, and psychological—and are closely tied to systemic exclusion. The barriers they face can be:

- **Structural** (lack of access to facilities, poor waste collection services)
- **Cultural** (norms and stigmas around waste-related activities)
- **Informational** (lack of awareness and understanding of waste management)
- **Psychological** (feelings of disempowerment, distrust, and fear of judgment)



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Structural Barriers

- Lack of access to proper waste facilities (e.g., no recycling bins in low-income areas or rural villages, bins that are too high or difficult to open it, etc.)
- Infrequent or unreliable waste collection services in marginalized neighbourhoods
- Poor housing conditions that limit space for sorting or storing recyclables
- Limited access to healthy food, making food planning and waste reduction difficult

Cultural Barriers

- Cultural norms that see it as a government-only responsibility
- Stigma around certain waste-related tasks, especially for women or youth
- Distrust in institutions promoting sustainability, rooted in previous negative experiences
- Low or no education on environmental issues



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Informational Barriers

- Lack of awareness about how to manage food waste, reuse materials, or sort recyclables correctly
- Language gaps or inaccessible communication formats (e.g., written-only guides for low-literacy groups)
- Inconsistent messaging from authorities or services across regions

Psychological Barriers

- Feelings of disempowerment—believing individual actions “won’t make a difference”
- Shame or fear of judgment around “doing it wrong” or being seen as poor
- Frustration from past failed initiatives or poorly designed systems



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Overcoming Barriers as a facilitator

While some structural barriers, like lack of infrastructure or unreliable waste collection, are beyond the immediate control of facilitators, there are still many actionable strategies that facilitators can employ to empower individuals and communities to overcome challenges.

- **Giving simple Information:** Design easy-to-understand materials, using visuals, symbols, and simple language.
- **Advocacy & Cooperation:** Collaboration with Municipalities, Institutions and Social Services. Co-host events. Peaceful protests. Involving the Traditional Media.
- **Give simple solution to the Community:** In remote and isolated areas, facilitators can give practical solutions and educate people, for instance how to recycle, how to do compost, or the importance of donating & reusing.
- **Inclusive communication:** Speak in a simple and inclusive way, use both male & female pronouns or even better the * . Use the language of the community and visuals that they can relate to.



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Effective Communication Strategies

How to speak to vulnerable groups:

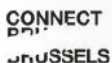
- Use **clear, simple language** — Avoid words like “biodegradable,” “infrastructure,” or “circular economy.” , or if you use them, explain them in a simple way: biodegradable means that it will not pollute, infrastructure like buildings and roads, circular economy means an economy where we share, reuse and pollute as least as possible.
- **Ask for confirmation** by saying: “Does this make sense?” or “Should I explain it another way?”
- **Be informed about their cultures**, In some cultures, public praise can embarrass people, so you can offer recognitions in private.
- **Use respectful language**: don’t say elderly or disabled, say older person or person with disability.



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Effective Communication Strategies

How to speak to vulnerable groups:

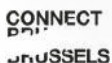
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Co2gether Case Study

Co2gether has implemented in all its actions the **experimentalist democracy theory**, as it strictly cooperates with different entities, such as municipalities, NGOs, academias, universities, associations, religious institutions such as Orthodox Metropolises and so on.

Through signed **Memoranda of Understanding** with seven municipalities and various social services, the organization reaches remote and vulnerable areas across Western Greece each month.

These include mountainous villages, isolated households, Roma community camps, prisons, and regions affected by floods and fires.

Partner entities refer individuals in need, enabling Co2gether to deliver targeted support and inclusive outreach.

This case study is a great example for **facilitators** to build a sustainable synergy and strategy to reach vulnerable groups.



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Recommended Resources

- Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making – Kaner
- Gender & Inclusion Toolbox – CGIAR
- OECD Report: Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions



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***“True progress happens
when everyone is included
in building a cleaner,
fairer future.”***



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WP10 Voting Activity and Petition Campaign

Short report

Giorgia Marchionni
29/06/2026



Project Title	ECO-CHAMPIONS – Eco-Champions for Household and Public Spaces Sustainable Waste Management
Project Acronym	ECO-CHAMPIONS
Funding Programme	Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)
Programme Topic	CERV-2023-CITIZENS-CIV
Project Number	101147501
Project Duration	2 September 2024 – 1 September 2026
Work Package	WP10 – Voting Activity and Petition Campaign
Report Title	WP10 Voting Activity and Petition Campaign – Short Report
Dissemination Level	Public
Lead Organisation for the Report	CRHACK LAB Foligno 4D
Author	Giorgia Marchionni
Report Date	29 June 2026
Project Website	ECO-CHAMPIONS Open E-Space
Participating Countries	Belgium, Greece, Italy, Kosovo and Spain
Project Coordinator	Connect Brussels

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1. Overview of Eco-Champions

The **ECO-CHAMPIONS – Eco-Champions for Household and Public Spaces Sustainable Waste Management** project is funded under the European Union's **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)**. The project responds to the growing environmental and climate-related pressures affecting European communities and recognises sustainable waste management as one of the most important shared challenges of our time.

The central objective of ECO-CHAMPIONS is to actively engage citizens and communities in discussions, learning activities and participatory processes related to European sustainable waste management policies. By creating opportunities for citizens to express their needs, exchange ideas and contribute to the development of practical recommendations, the project supports their participation in democratic and civic life at local, national and European levels.

The project is implemented in **Belgium, Spain, Italy and Greece**, with the participation of **Kosovo** from the Western Balkans. Through workshops, training activities, eco-challenges, public events, voting processes and awareness-raising campaigns, ECO-CHAMPIONS aims to promote medium- and long-term changes in public attitudes and behaviours concerning waste prevention, sorting, recycling, reuse and responsible consumption.

A strong emphasis is placed on **intergenerational cooperation**, bringing together young people and older citizens and encouraging shared responsibility across communities, countries and generations. This approach contributes to building community pride, strengthening social cohesion and supporting a greener and more sustainable future aligned with the objectives of the **European Green Deal**.

The main objectives of the project are to:

1. Identify citizens' needs and local requirements concerning sustainable household and public-space waste management.
2. Apply a participatory and experimental methodology through national facilitators and local eco-challenges, taking into account the views of citizens of different ages and genders, as well as public authorities and relevant stakeholders.
3. Organise engaging eco-challenge events in five cities, implement a democratic voting process and recognise the most active and committed "eco-citizens".
4. Communicate and disseminate the project's achievements and results to public stakeholders at regional, national and European levels.

Through these activities, ECO-CHAMPIONS seeks to reach more than **2,000 direct participants** and **7,000 indirect participants**, while promoting civic participation, respect for European values and the active involvement of citizens in shaping more inclusive and sustainable waste management systems.

Partnership

The ECO-CHAMPIONS consortium consists of the following organisations:

- **P1 – Connect Brussels**, Belgium
- **P2 – Cohesion Network 2gether**, Greece
- **P3 – The Balkan Forum**, Kosovo
- **P4 – Bond Beter Leefmilieu Vlaanderen**, Belgium
- **P5 – Asociación La Bien Paga**, Spain
- **P6 – CRHACK LAB Foligno 4D**, Italy
- **P7 – European Grants International Academy – EGINA**, Associated Partner
- **P8 – Instituto para el Fomento del Desarrollo y la Formación – INFODEF**, Associated Partner

2. Purpose of this report

This short report presents the implementation and principal results of **Work Package 10 – Voting Activity and Petition Campaign**. It covers the online voting process, the digital tools and multilingual resources used to support citizen participation, the public petition campaign, the selected waste management recommendations and the online event held on **29 May 2026**.

The report also highlights the main outcomes of the activity and demonstrates how ECO-CHAMPIONS connected environmental awareness with democratic participation by enabling citizens from the five participating countries to contribute directly to the prioritisation of practical waste management solutions.

3. Overview of the Activity

The ECO-CHAMPIONS Voting Activity and Petition Campaign was implemented as part of Work Package 10 of the project “ECO-CHAMPIONS – Eco-Champions for Household and Public Spaces Sustainable Waste Management”. The activity was designed as an online dissemination and participation action aimed at involving citizens from Belgium, Kosovo, Italy, Greece and Spain in the identification and prioritisation of practical recommendations for more sustainable waste management in households and public spaces. The initiative combined three main components: an online voting campaign, a public petition campaign and an online dissemination event held on 29 May 2026. Together, these activities created a common participatory process through which citizens, stakeholders, local actors and project partners could contribute to the development of recommendations for better waste management systems at local and European level. The online voting period ran from 3 March to 3 June 2026. During this period, citizens were invited to access the Citizens Voting section of the ECO-CHAMPIONS Open E-Space, select their country of residence and complete the relevant multilingual Google Form. The vote allowed participants to select and prioritise recommendations on waste prevention, recycling, waste sorting, organic waste, public cleanliness, reuse, accessibility of services and citizen engagement. The petition campaign ran in parallel with the voting period. It invited citizens and stakeholders to support stronger, clearer and more participatory waste management systems. The campaign was promoted through the project e-space, partner websites, social media posts, newsletters and stakeholder networks. Its aim was to transform environmental awareness into visible civic support for concrete policy-oriented recommendations. The online event of 29 May 2026 acted as a key milestone of the campaign. It provided a shared European space for presenting project results, promoting the voting and petition process, discussing national findings and encouraging participants to contribute to the finalisation of waste management solutions. The event also strengthened the visibility of the project and helped connect local waste management challenges with broader European debates on sustainability, circular economy and citizen participation. Overall, the Voting Activity and Petition Campaign demonstrated the potential of digital tools to support inclusive participation and environmental decision-making. Through multilingual online forms, an accessible e-space, social media dissemination, a public petition and a dedicated online event, the project created a practical mechanism for listening to citizens and integrating their preferences into the development of future waste management recommendations. The activity reached participants from all five partner countries. The reported participation included 167 women and 133 men, with citizens and stakeholders from Belgium, Kosovo, Italy, Greece and Spain. In addition, the recording of the online event was made available on YouTube, extending access to those who could not attend the live session. Overall, more than 300 people were reached through the live event and subsequent views of the recording.

4. Online Voting, Digital Tools and Accessibility

The citizens’ online voting activity was one of the main participatory actions of the ECO-CHAMPIONS project. Its purpose was to involve residents directly in the improvement of household and municipal

waste management by giving them the opportunity to express their preferences on practical recommendations. The campaign connected environmental awareness with civic participation, allowing citizens to contribute to proposals that could support more effective waste management policies. The voting focused on community-oriented solutions for waste management in households and public spaces. Citizens were asked to identify the recommendations they considered most relevant for their local context. These recommendations addressed several key issues, including recycling systems, illegal waste dumping, organic waste collection, composting, reuse, environmental education, accessibility of services and local decision-making processes. The ECO-CHAMPIONS Open E-Space served as the central access point for the campaign. The Citizens Voting section explained the purpose of the campaign, the importance of voting and the steps citizens had to follow to participate. From this section, users could select their country of residence and access the corresponding voting form in the relevant language. Google Forms was used as the operational tool for the online voting process. This choice made participation simple and accessible, as citizens could complete the forms from a computer, tablet or mobile phone. Separate language versions were provided in French, Dutch, Greek, Albanian, Spanish and Italian, reducing language barriers and supporting inclusive participation across the consortium. The voting forms were not only informative questionnaires. They enabled citizens to select and prioritise concrete waste management recommendations, while also providing useful feedback to the project partners. This allowed the consortium to collect comparable input from different national contexts and to identify both shared priorities and country-specific needs. The e-space also included additional educational resources linked to sustainable waste management. These included materials such as a waste sorting guide, a recycling locator and resources on sustainable food and waste management. These tools supported the educational dimension of the campaign by helping citizens better understand waste sorting, recycling and responsible consumption before or after completing the vote. Communication and dissemination played a central role in the success of the campaign. Project partners promoted the voting link through their institutional channels, websites, newsletters, social media platforms and stakeholder networks. Social media was particularly important for reaching wider audiences and reminding citizens about the voting deadline. Facebook and Instagram were used to promote the activity, share campaign messages and connect the vote with broader discussions on recycling, waste prevention and sustainable cities. The campaign communication was adapted to the different languages and contexts of the partner countries. Messages invited citizens to take part in the vote, support the petition and contribute to improving waste management in their communities. The visual identity of the campaign emphasised the idea that waste management is not only a technical or administrative issue, but also a matter of community responsibility and citizen voice. By combining an accessible digital platform, multilingual forms, educational resources and coordinated communication, the online voting campaign created an inclusive and replicable participation model. It allowed citizens from different countries to contribute to a shared European process while still addressing local waste management challenges.

5. Petition Campaign and Voting Results

The petition campaign complemented the online voting by encouraging citizens and stakeholders to publicly support the recommendations developed within the ECO-CHAMPIONS project. It was designed to raise awareness about the need for stronger, clearer and more participatory waste

management systems, while also mobilising support for practical improvements at local and European level. The petition invited the public to support better recycling systems, greater awareness of correct waste sorting, stronger participation in local decision-making and more effective waste management practices. It therefore acted as a bridge between information, mobilisation and direct participation. Citizens were first informed about the importance of sustainable waste management, then invited to support the petition and finally directed to the online voting forms to select the recommendations they considered most relevant. The petition was disseminated through the project e-space, partner websites, social media posts, newsletters and stakeholder networks. Partners reached out to online communities, environmental organisations, local actors and citizens interested in sustainability, circular economy and responsible waste management. This digital dissemination strategy made it possible to reach audiences across the five partner countries and beyond. The online vote identified five main recommendations for each partner country or area. These results show both specific national priorities and common trends across the consortium. In Belgium, the most relevant recommendations focused on public cleanliness, coordination and service improvement. Citizens prioritised reducing illegal waste dumping, improving coordination between municipalities, increasing mobile collection points for bulky and special waste, improving multilingual communication on waste sorting and expanding food waste collection citywide. In Italy, the selected recommendations focused strongly on local governance, accessibility and community engagement. Citizens prioritised the publication of clear “rules of a shared pact” for waste management and public cleanliness, the accessibility of waste-management services and infrastructure for all residents, the creation of “recycling ambassadors” to promote good practices within communities, the co-design of local waste-management rules with residents and stakeholders, and tailored support for families on waste sorting and reduction. In Spain, the most voted recommendations showed a strong focus on separate collection and education. Citizens prioritised extending separate collection streams for problematic fractions such as textiles, cooking oil and batteries, integrating waste education into schools and adult learning programmes, implementing or piloting curbside organics collection in high-density neighbourhoods, scaling up continuous awareness campaigns on correct separation and contamination avoidance, and promoting reuse through municipal reuse centres. In Greece, the priorities were linked to education, incentives, organic waste and smart systems. The most supported recommendations were the introduction of permanent environmental education in schools, implementation of a pay-as-you-throw system where those who recycle more pay lower fees, mandatory organic waste collection in all municipalities, tax incentives for home composting and smart waste collection systems with fill-level sensors. In Kosovo, citizens prioritised basic waste management infrastructure and education. The main recommendations were the implementation of waste separation at source at national level, installation of recycling stations in neighbourhoods, expansion of waste collection services to all rural areas, integration of environmental education into schools and reduction of organic waste through composting. In Flanders, the most voted recommendations focused on incentives, enforcement and reuse. Citizens prioritised the installation of deposit-return machines for plastic bottles and cans with digital rewards, stricter controls and fines for illegal waste dumping, a pay-as-you-throw system, collaboration with supermarkets to reduce non-recyclable packaging and the promotion of reuse through municipal reuse centres. Several common recommendations emerged across countries. Environmental education appeared as a major priority in Spain, Greece and Kosovo, and was also connected to awareness-raising actions in other countries. Organic waste collection and composting were important in Belgium,

Spain, Greece and Kosovo. Waste separation and separate collection appeared broadly across Kosovo, Spain, Belgium, Italy and Flanders. The pay-as-you-throw system was common to Greece and Flanders, while reuse through municipal centres was shared by Spain and Flanders. The reduction of illegal waste dumping appeared in both Belgium and Flanders. These results show that citizens across different countries are asking for waste management systems that are clearer, more accessible, more educational and more participatory. At the same time, the results confirm that local contexts require specific solutions, from deposit-return machines and smart sensors to rural collection services, multilingual communication and community-based ambassadors.



6. Online Event of 29 May 2026

The ECO-CHAMPIONS online event held on 29 May 2026 represented a key moment in the Voting Activity and Petition Campaign. It was organised as an online dissemination event and aimed to present the project results, promote the citizens' voting campaign, disseminate the petition and create a shared space for discussion among citizens, stakeholders, local actors and project partners. The event was promoted through dedicated communication materials inviting participants to "Shape the future of waste" by contributing with their voice and vote. This message clearly connected the event with the wider voting and petition campaign, presenting the meeting not only as a dissemination activity but also as an opportunity for civic participation. The agenda combined project presentation, national results, expert input and participatory discussion. The meeting opened with a welcome and technical introduction led by CRHACK LAB. This included participant registration, practical information for joining the session and presentation of the agenda. Connect Brussels then presented the ECO-CHAMPIONS project, focusing on its context, objectives, partnership, main activities and expected impact. A central part of the event was dedicated to the presentation of national results by all partners. Each partner introduced its organisation and shared the main outcomes developed in its national context. These presentations allowed participants from the different countries to compare experiences, identify common challenges and discuss possible solutions for household and public spaces waste management. During the event, participants were invited to support the petition and take part in the online voting process. The proposed solutions were therefore not presented as fixed results, but as recommendations to be validated, prioritised and finalised through citizens' preferences and stakeholder feedback. This approach helped the consortium move from national findings to a common set of recommendations informed by public participation. The event also included a keynote session delivered by BBL. The keynote addressed citizen engagement, sustainable waste management and circular economy practices. It connected the project results to broader environmental challenges and highlighted how communities can drive local policy change. This contribution reinforced the importance of active citizenship, shared responsibility and circular economy principles in the transition towards more sustainable waste systems. In the final part of the meeting, CRHACK LAB summarised the main points discussed, presented the next steps and invited participants to complete the evaluation questionnaires through a QR code and link shared in the chat. This final moment helped collect feedback from participants and ensured that the event also contributed to the monitoring and assessment of the activity. The online format allowed the participation of people from all partner countries and made the event more accessible to citizens and stakeholders who could not attend an in-person meeting. The recording was later made available on YouTube, allowing people who were unable to participate live to access the presentations afterwards. Considering both live attendance and subsequent views of the recording, the event reached more than 300 people overall. The event achieved several important outcomes. It presented the ECO-CHAMPIONS project and its objectives to a transnational audience, allowed partners to share and compare national results, informed participants about the petition, encouraged citizens to vote online and strengthened the link between project results, citizen engagement and circular economy practices. Most importantly, it created a participatory space where citizens' voices and votes contributed to the finalisation and prioritisation of waste management solutions.

7. Main Outcomes and Conclusions

The ECO-CHAMPIONS Voting Activity and Petition Campaign successfully connected dissemination, consultation and civic participation. It created a structured process through which citizens could learn about the project, express their preferences, support a petition and contribute to the finalisation of recommendations for future waste management policies. The use of digital tools was central to the activity. The project e-space provided a common online access point, while multilingual Google Forms made participation simple and inclusive across the five partner countries. Social media, newsletters, partner websites and stakeholder networks helped promote the campaign and reach a wider audience. The online event further strengthened the process by bringing together citizens, stakeholders and partners in a shared European discussion. The voting results highlighted both common priorities and local specificities. Across the participating countries, citizens repeatedly prioritised environmental education, separate waste collection, organic waste management, composting, access to collection services, reuse and citizen participation. These themes suggest that sustainable waste management requires not only technical solutions, but also clear information, accessible services, community involvement and long-term behavioural change. At the same time, the results showed that different territories face different needs. Some recommendations were closely linked to local infrastructure and policy contexts, such as expanding waste collection services to rural areas in Kosovo, improving multilingual communication in Belgium, creating recycling ambassadors in Italy, extending separate streams for problematic waste fractions in Spain, introducing smart collection systems in Greece and installing deposit-return machines in Flanders. The petition campaign added an important mobilisation dimension to the activity. By inviting citizens and stakeholders to support stronger and more participatory waste management systems, it helped transform awareness into public commitment. It also supported the connection between the online vote and the recommendations to be presented during the final stages of the project. The online event of 29 May 2026 represented the main public moment of the campaign. It increased the visibility of the project, promoted the voting and petition process, encouraged transnational exchange and created a space for discussion around the proposed solutions. The involvement of partners from all countries and the keynote contribution on citizen engagement and circular economy helped place the campaign within a broader European sustainability framework. Overall, the activity demonstrated that citizens are willing to engage with waste management issues when they are offered clear, accessible and multilingual tools for participation. The campaign showed that digital participation can support democratic environmental decision-making, especially when it is combined with educational resources, targeted communication and opportunities for dialogue. The ECO-CHAMPIONS Voting Activity and Petition Campaign therefore contributed to the project by collecting citizens' preferences, strengthening public awareness and supporting the development of practical recommendations for sustainable waste management. It confirmed the importance of shared responsibility between citizens, municipalities, stakeholders and European actors in building cleaner, more inclusive and more sustainable communities. The results of the campaign provide a useful basis for future policy-oriented work. They indicate that effective waste management should combine infrastructure, education, incentives, enforcement, accessibility and citizen participation. By listening to citizens and involving them directly in the prioritisation of recommendations, ECO-CHAMPIONS helped ensure that the final project outputs reflect real community needs and practical solutions for improving waste management across Europe

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Recording of the online event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-WCavWETtA>.