



SYMSITES

ECOSITES implementation for industrial-urban symbiosis through social and technological solutions

Deliverable D5.8

Report on held stakeholder forum events

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviation	Meaning
AITEX	Asociación de Investigación de la Industria Textil
AnMBR	Anaerobic Membrane Bioreactor
BEOF	Bornholms Energi & Forsyning
BOFA	Bornholms regionskommune
BOKU	Universität für Bodenkultur Wien
EU	European Union
FACSA	Sociedad de Fomento Agrícola Castellonense, S.A.
FOVASA	Fomento Valencia Medioambiente S.L
ICLEI	ICLEI European Secretariat GmbH
IFA Tulln	Department of Agrobiotechnology in Tulln
ITG	Fundación instituto tecnológico de galicia
I-US	Industrial-Urban Symbiosis
KLAR! network	Klimawandel-Anpassungsmodellregionen (climate change adaptation model regions)
MWA	Municipality of West Achaea
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NTUA	National Technical University of Athens
Q&A	Questions and Answers
SME	Small and Medium-sized enterprises
SYMSITES	Industrial Urban symbiosis and its social, economic and environmental impact on different European regions
WWTP	Wastewater treatment plant





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Executive Summary

The SYMSITES Project at its core integrates technological innovation with community-driven strategies to valorise underutilized resources, including municipal waste, industrial by-products, and wastewater. The initiative deploys advanced treatment technologies across four pilot EcoSites in Austria, Denmark, Greece, and Spain. These pilots serve as real-world laboratories to test and optimize circular economy solutions mechanisms to facilitate the community building in each EcoSite.

Accompanying the pilots, the EcoSite managers organised a total of 14 local stakeholder forums from 2023 to 2025. The forum events are opportunities for community building and to reach a diverse group of stakeholders. The Austrian EcoSite implemented three events with an expert audience around the topics of water & wastewater including numerous targeted sub-topics. The Danish EcoSite also focused their two meetings around the water topic, including the involvement of cross-national funding agencies in one of the events. In Greece, a total of six events took place focusing on both the civil society engagement including education as well as the more technical expert discussions on Industrial-Urban Symbiosis or sustainability. The Spanish EcoSite organised three events around themes such as waste & wastewater treatment and education. This document (Deliverable 5.8) reports on the events in a structured and detailed approach and as a subsequent follow-up to Deliverable 5.7, the 'Establishment of stakeholder forums' which was submitted in November 2022 outlining key methodologies and plans that were applied in the stakeholder forums. The findings of this report underline the importance of coupling technological progress with stakeholder involvement and community building by presenting a variety of cases that have proven successful.

1. Introduction

The SYMSITES Project (2022–2026) is a four-year project funded by the European Union under the Horizon Europe Programme, dedicated to transforming how European regions manage and reuse their waste and wastewater. Rooted in the principles of Industrial with Urban Symbiosis (I-US), SYMSITES aims to foster local and regional collaborations between citizens, municipalities, and enterprises, enabling a more sustainable and circular use of resources. At the heart of the project lies the valorisation of underutilized materials and energy, including industrial by-products, end-of-life urban waste, and wastewater, by converting them into valuable inputs for other industrial processes. In its four pilot sites, the 'EcoSites', SYMSITES tested and validated developed solutions. The EcoSites (Alcoi, Spain; Bornholm, Denmark; Tullnerfeld, Austria; West Achaia, Greece) all represent a unique and distinct socio-economic and environmental setting across diverse regional contexts: 1) Austria, focusing on industrial wastewater and flotation-sludge integration; 2) Denmark, optimizing co-treatment systems under highly automated conditions; 3) Greece, integrating decentralized organic waste and wastewater streams in semi-urban settings; 4) Spain, managing complex residual streams such as the organic fraction of municipal solid waste and urban and industrial wastewater in advanced membrane-based treatment.

One process that accompanied the EcoSite implementation was the stakeholder community building. The key mechanism for that in each EcoSite is the organization of annual stakeholder forums: informative and engaging events giving the opportunity for stakeholders *"to get involved in the project design and implementation as well as for the project itself to generate useful practitioner and citizen knowledge and insights to facilitate exploitation of the results"* (D5.7 Establishment of





stakeholder forums, 2022)¹. Each EcoSite organised a forum once a year between 2023-2025 under the leadership of the respective EcoSite managers (FACSA for the Spanish EcoSite, BOFA and BEOF for the Danish EcoSite, BOKU for the Austrian EcoSite, and MWA NTUA for the Greek EcoSite) with support from ICLEI and the SYMSITES consortium. The forum provided a continuous and concrete opportunity for stakeholders to get involved in the project design and implementation as well as for the project itself to generate useful practitioner and citizen knowledge and insights to facilitate exploitation of the results.

Each stakeholder forum followed a standardised methodology that got adapted to each country and for the unique events taking place. This methodology is described in detail in Deliverable 5.7, Establishment of stakeholder forums. The methodology of this document (D5.8) follows a simple structure, providing a chapter each for the respective EcoSites. Within these chapters, EcoSite managers provided updates following each meeting. While most EcoSites aimed to organise one event per year, in the Greek case, multiple meetings per year took place and in the case of the Danish EcoSite the 2023 forum was cancelled due to low participation number, both of which is reflected in the respective chapters. Each EcoSite chapter follows a simple and standardised structure describing the yearly forums first 'at a glance' with bullet points followed by a description of the event and main activities, objectives, feedback received from participants and reflections provided by the EcoSite managers. Chapter 2 describes the Austrian stakeholder forum, followed by the Danish forum in Chapter 3, the Greek forum in Chapter 4 and the Spanish EcoSite reporting on the stakeholder forum in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 summarises and concludes the stakeholder forum report.

2. Austrian EcoSite

2023 Stakeholder Forum 1

At a glance:

- Irrigation with wastewater: an option for the future?
- 21.06.2023 online
- KLAR! network: Climate Change Adaptation Model Regions; KLAR-Managers, mayors, federal environmental agency
- ~100 people participated in the stakeholder forum

Description of the event and main activities

KLAR! Meeting: This program is supported by the Austrian Climate and Energy fund and 89 Austrian regions take part. The aim of the program is to give regions and municipalities the opportunity to prepare for climate change, to minimize the negative consequences of climate change by means of adaptation measures and to take advantage of the opportunities that arise. Through the KLAR! service platform and the KLAR! events, the Climate and Energy Fund ensures that the KLAR! regions use the available knowledge and information from science for their work.

The lecture and discussion began with an introduction of the project "SYMSITES" and its objectives. The importance of addressing the challenges of water scarcity, climate change, and sustainable

¹ https://symsites.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/D5.7_SYMSITES_FINAL.pdf





agriculture was emphasized. The project aimed to explore the potential of wastewater irrigation as a solution that integrates environmental and agricultural considerations.

The speaker representing the engineering company Spitzer emphasized the need for a holistic approach that takes into account the interconnectedness of various factors. This includes implementing water treatment technologies in industries to minimize pollutant discharge and adopting water-efficient practices. By linking industry, climate change, and wastewater irrigation, a comprehensive and sustainable approach to water resource management can be achieved.

Other participants emphasized the socio-economic benefits of wastewater irrigation, particularly in countries where water scarcity is a serious issue. It was noted that careful public awareness and comprehensive training of farmers are necessary to overcome potential biases against this practice.

The Spitzer speaker emphasized that modern technologies enable effective wastewater treatment, making it suitable for agricultural use and posing no health risks. The benefits were highlighted, such as conserving freshwater resources, reducing landfill burden, and creating additional agricultural land.

Objectives

- Present the SYMSITES project to a broad audience from regions all over Austria and explain the I-US concept in context of the Austrian EcoSite.
- Have a discussion and feedback from stakeholders involved with municipalities trying to develop and implement concepts in their region for climate change adaptation.

Feedback

The subsequent discussions delved into the technical aspects of wastewater treatment, highlighting advancements in treatment methods and quality monitoring. Additionally, the economic viability of wastewater irrigation was discussed, considering factors such as infrastructure development, cost effectiveness, and potential income generation for farmers.

Reflection

In conclusion, the lecture and panel discussion provided an overview of the project, emphasizing the importance of considering the nexus between climate change, industry, and wastewater irrigation. The discussion underlined the need for integrated approaches that address water scarcity, climate change impacts, and sustainable agricultural practices. By harnessing the potential of wastewater as a resource and implementing proper treatment measures, Austria can work towards a more sustainable and resilient future.





Figure 1 2023 Stakeholder Forum 1 Austria

2024 Stakeholder Forum 2

At a glance:

- Opportunities and challenges in water reuse in food businesses
- 18.11.2024, Berger Schinken Sieghartskirchen
- ecoplus Lebensmittel Cluster Niederösterreich (Lower Austria Food Cluster): participants from the food and beverage industry, education and research, public representatives
- ~30 Participants

Description of the event and main activities

The stakeholder forum was organized in cooperation with EcoPlus the Food Cluster of Lower Austria which is an initiative of the provincial government to foster innovative and sustainable food production. The event was held at the facilities of Berger Schinken in Sieghartskirchen. In the beginning the Symsites Project was presented by the Austrian EcoSite manager (BOKU). Other presentations by different speakers from academia, industry and public sector gave a broad overview about water scarcity, water quality and regulation, water recycling and finally the example from practice at the meat industry company Berger Schinken. After the presentations, there was time for a discussion, that especially focused on the regulatory part which in Austria is very strict. Many of the attending industry representatives highlighted that the legislative requirements hinder new developments and water reuse. On the other side, everyone agreed that monitoring is of the utmost importance to guarantee high water qualities. A good option would be to take a more critical look at water and its qualities and the use of streams depending on their nature. During the lunch break there was time to network and the participants had time to connect and exchange ideas or best practice examples from their industry. Following the event, there was a tour of the pilot plant, where



the implementation of the presented and discussed wastewater treatment and recycling could be demonstrated.

Objectives

- Bring the food producing companies together.
- Present possible problems and solutions.
- Discuss possible projects and implementations.
- Raise awareness for the issues in the food and beverage industry.

Feedback

The event resonated well among the industry representatives with many of them reaching out to the organizers afterwards. The need for solutions is there, but the implementation is deemed difficult because of the many onerous legal requirements regarding water and hygiene.

In a questionnaire filled by the participants, the main barriers identified were high investment costs, regulatory requirements and internal barriers. The respondents also highlighted what they believe to be most needed to overcome these barriers, such as the establishment of more pilot plants and providing funding, implementing research projects, more opportunities for consultation and pressure on politicians to address the legislative barriers.

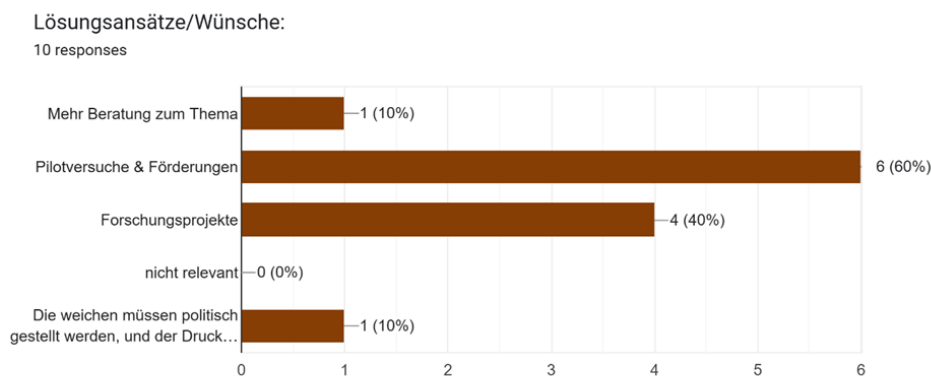


Figure 2 Example of questionnaire response to "Lösungsansätze/Wünsche" (Solutions/Wishes)

Reflection

In conclusion, the lecture and panel discussion provided an overview of the project and brought together a diverse mix of stakeholders involved in the food industry. The problems the different producers are facing are similar, but their waste streams differ. Nevertheless, there are also a lot of parallels especially considering the wastewater streams and the recovery of water for use. One of the major limiting factors are the cumbersome and difficult authorisation procedures, and that there is only limited data on large scale implementations. The industries can't risk large investments in not fully developed solutions, but the demand for water is increasing while at the same time the resource is becoming more and more limited. The tension between high hygiene standards and resource recovery from waste and wastewater is hindering further developments. The extensive legal requirements for water reuse follow public expectations for strict safety measures. To push in this direction more intense cooperation is required between the different actors. If industry is only pushed to adopt changes that are currently hard to implement, the intended outcomes will not be reached.





Figure 3 2024 Stakeholder Forum 2 Austria

2025 Stakeholder Forum 3

At a glance:

- ONE WATER 2025
- 15.05.2025 IFA Tulln
- Experts from science and research, research institutions, business leaders, specialists and administration in the field of water management, stakeholders from local government
- ~150 participants
- One Water 2025; <https://www.ecoplus.at/newsroom/save-the-date-one-water-2025>

Description of the event and main activities

The stakeholder forum ONE WATER 2025 was organized by IFA-Tulln (BOKU) in cooperation with Ecoplus and brought together experts and stakeholders from science, industry, and the public sector to discuss the future of integrated and sustainable water management. The event focused on the concept of “One Water,” which approaches water as a single interconnected resource, linking supply, wastewater, stormwater, and resource recovery. Presentations from academia, policy, and business highlighted the key challenges of climate change, water scarcity, and regulatory frameworks, as well as opportunities through digitalization, innovative treatment technologies, and circular economy approaches. Special attention was given to best practice case studies that demonstrated how water reuse, monitoring, and energy recovery can provide both environmental and economic benefits. Also, the SYMSITES project was presented by Berger Schinken.

Following the presentations, a panel discussion and workshop moderated by BOKU offered a platform for in-depth exchange on regulatory issues, financing models, and practical applications. In particular, many industry representatives expressed that current regulatory requirements in Austria



remain strict and can present barriers to implementing new water reuse strategies. At the same time, there was strong consensus that high-quality monitoring is essential to ensure water safety and reliability. Participants also agreed that a differentiated view on water streams and their qualities could create more room for practical solutions and innovations.

During breaks, there were opportunities for networking, where participants actively exchanged ideas, experiences, and best practices from their respective sectors. The forum concluded with a forward-looking discussion on future trends and the role of integrated water systems in contributing to sustainability, resilience, and resource efficiency.

Objectives

The main objective of the ONE WATER 2025 event was to frame water as a critical resource under increasing pressure and to explore the challenges arising from both surplus and shortage. The event aimed to highlight current research and technological developments from leading Austrian institutions such as the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, the Austrian Institute of Technology, and Tulln University of Applied Sciences. In addition, it addressed key issues including water reuse, contamination and hazards, as well as drought stress and water scarcity. Through lectures, expert discussions and stakeholder exchange, participants should gain valuable insights into the current situation and potential solutions. Another important goal was to provide information on funding opportunities and regulatory frameworks to support the development and financing of innovative projects in the water sector. Finally, ONE WATER 2025 served as a networking and matchmaking platform, bringing together experts, practitioners, administrative stakeholders and researchers to share best practices and foster collaboration across different sectors.

Feedback

The feedback to the ONE WATER 2025 event was very positive. Participants valued the broad overview of water scarcity, quality, reuse, and regulation, as well as the diverse perspectives from academia, industry, and the public sector. After the stakeholder forum and workshop, an online survey was conducted on wastewater reuse and non-technical barriers. Most participants think the reuse of treated wastewater should actively be enforced to protect ground water resources, but also that the reuse should only be allowed in compliance with all safety measures. The majority of the participants were in favour of the irrigation of grapevines and fruit crops with wastewater, but most preferred it for the irrigation of sugar beets. Almost all responses (besides two negative ones) showed that everyone considers the reuse of wastewater to be safe. The measure which was wished for by the majority was informing the public about the opportunities and risks of wastewater reuse. Besides 3 responses everyone would support the regulation of wastewater reuse as an EU-wide regulation with national flexibility.

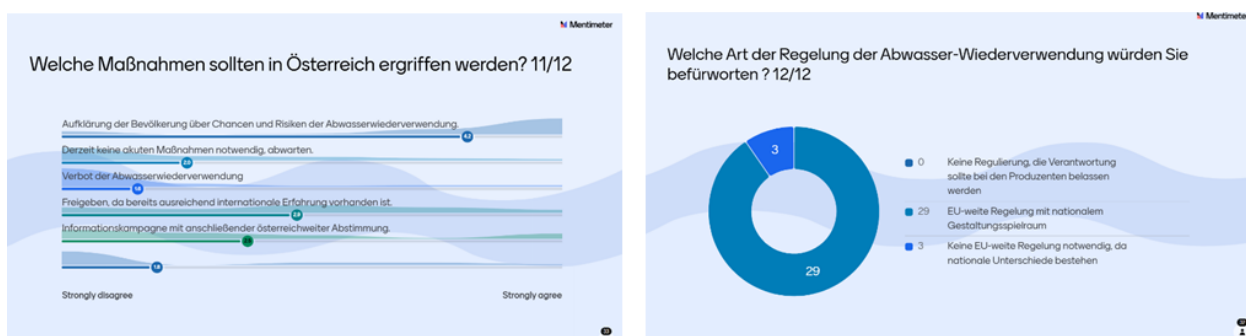


Figure 4 Example of the feedback from the online survey

Reflection

Concluding, the ONE WATER 2025 event clearly demonstrated the value of bringing together diverse stakeholders to address the pressing challenges of water management. The exchange between industry, academia, and policymakers highlighted both the opportunities for innovation in water reuse and the barriers. What stood out most was the shared recognition that closer cooperation across sectors will be key to achieving sustainable and future-oriented water solutions.

A non-technical barrier workshop was also successfully held as part of the stakeholder forum, allowing the participants to contribute more in-depth in the discussion on how to address the barriers previously identified, provide feedback and raise their own questions.



Figure 5 2025 Stakeholder Forum 3 Austria

3. Danish EcoSite

2023 Stakeholder Forum

While the 2023 Stakeholder Forum in Denmark was planned to take place, it was decided to cancel the event due to low registration numbers. Thus, no further reporting is possible.

2024 Stakeholder Forum 1

At a glance:

- SYMSITES project
- 19 September 2024, 09:00 – 12:00; Svaneke WWTP
- Local public wastewater authorities





Description of the event and main activities

This Forum has been organized to introduce the employees at the Bornholm Municipality to the SYMSITES project, particularly the employees from the wastewater department and the environmental permit department. The activities consisted of an introduction to the SYMSITES project, a tour of the WWTP plant including a visit to the pilot unit, and a discussion about the future prospects and opportunities, also considering the regulation on wastewater reuse.

Objectives

This forum aimed to engage and receive feedback from local public wastewater authorities.

Feedback

The event was well received, and participants provided valuable feedback on several key topics:

- **Upscaling:** Concerns about the balance between the quantity of wastewater and food waste on Bornholm. Is there sufficient food waste to sustain a biogas reactor?
- **Shredding:** Consider permitting the use of household sink-based food waste shredders as part of a scaled-up solution for organic waste management, while acknowledging that such devices are currently prohibited under existing regulations.
- **Storage and Distribution:** Discussions highlighted the seasonal variations in water needs, the distances to farmers, storage challenges, and the existing wastewater treatment infrastructure.
- **Symbiosis with Biodynamic Farms:** Potential for collaboration with small biodynamic vegetable farms that require water during the growing season, suggesting that these farms could be the starting point.
- **Groundwater Protection:** The importance of addressing water reuse and groundwater protection issues was questioned incl. the safety of using reclaimed wastewater.

Reflection

The SYMSITES Stakeholder forum at Svaneke WWTP provided a valuable opportunity to connect the project's ambitions with the practical realities faced by local wastewater authorities. The concern about the volume of food waste relative to wastewater flows suggests a need for tailored approaches. The seasonal nature of water demand and the logistical challenges of distribution emphasize the importance of flexible and adaptive infrastructure planning. Collaboration with local farmers, especially biodynamic farms, could offer a promising starting point for pilot reuse schemes.





Figure 6 2024 Stakeholder Forum 1 Denmark

2025 Stakeholder Forum 2

At a glance:

- Visit to the Danish Ecosite as part of the Interreg South Baltic Annual Event
- 24 September 2025
- 19 delegates from the Interreg South Baltic Programme from a number of organisations including research & academia, the funding agency, public utility companies and research projects.

Description of the event and main activities

The forum featured a guided tour of the Danish Ecosite's water treatment plant, offering insights into both conventional wastewater treatment and the innovative SYMSITES anaerobic membrane bioreactor (AnMBR) system. Participants explored the technical setup as well as technical and non-technical challenges, with a focus on sustainable resource recovery and circular economy principles.

Objectives

The primary goal was to communicate the scope and impact of the SYMSITES project, while highlighting key challenges that could influence future funding opportunities within the INTERREG programme. These included:

- **Regulatory barriers:** Slow adoption of EU wastewater reuse regulations in some countries (e.g., Denmark), while other member states have opted out entirely.
- **Logistical hurdles:** Distribution of reclaimed water for irrigation remains complex and requires huge investments.
- **Food waste processing:** Difficulties in pre-treating food waste to a fine mass, leading to clogging issues in the drum filter and reduced system efficiency.
- **Investment uncertainty:** A critical risk concerns the question of who should invest in such systems, the farmers or utilities like BEOF. This uncertainty affects long-term planning, stakeholder commitment, and the viability of scaling the technology.



Feedback

The forum sparked active dialogue, with participants raising several critical points beyond the planned agenda:

- **Waste stream compatibility:** Concerns were raised about mixing food waste with municipal wastewater. This practice may disqualify the resulting material from use in biological farming and pastures, and some national regulations explicitly prohibit such mixing.
- **Nutrient availability and stabilization:** One participant noted that the plant availability of ammonium in the permeate is limited. A suggestion was made to add sulfuric acid, which reacts with ammonia to form ammonium sulphate—a highly soluble and plant-accessible fertilizer. This approach could also reduce ammonia volatilization and improve nutrient retention during storage.
- **Scalability:** There was interest in the SYMSITES project's plans for upscaling the system, including technical feasibility and economic viability. However, this was a difficult topic to address, as it remains uncertain whether upscaling is feasible from an economic point of view.
- **Ammonium loss during storage:** Concerns were raised about the evaporation of ammonium from permeate stored in open tanks. It was emphasized that tanks must be fully sealed to prevent nutrient loss. Using open basins, such as Frennegård's surface water collection area, could result in ammonium evaporation.
- **Membrane performance:** Participants expressed interest in the flat sheet membrane technology and the use of biogas scouring, particularly regarding membrane fouling, lifespan, and how these factors influence the overall business case. Another relevant question but hard to answer at this point.

Reflection

The stakeholder forum at the Danish Ecosite successfully bridged technical insight with strategic dialogue. Stakeholders engaged with the SYMSITES project, raising critical questions about upscaling, regulation and nutrient recovery.

The event showed strong interest but also highlighted the need for clearer rules and practical solutions before wider adoption is possible.



Figure 7 2025 Stakeholder Forum 2 Denmark





4. Greek EcoSite

2023 Stakeholder Forum 1²

At a glance:

- **Title of the Event:** Ano Alissos Primary School Stakeholder Forum
- **Date; Location:** 15 May 2023, Ano Alissos Primary School, Greece
- **Target audience:** Ano Alissos Primary School administration and teaching staff, parents and local community members, local education authorities, representatives from the EcoSite project team, environmental educators and NGOs, municipality representatives.

Description of the event and main activities

The stakeholder forum at Ano Alissos Primary School was a key engagement event within the broader Ecosite initiative. The forum facilitated collaboration and feedback between educators, parents, community stakeholders, and local authorities around sustainable education and environmental awareness in primary schools.

Main activities included:

- Opening remarks and welcome by the school director
- Presentation of the Ecosite project and its relevance to the school community
- Group discussions on sustainability practices and environmental education
- Interactive workshops with students demonstrating eco-friendly initiatives
- Feedback session and open floor for stakeholder questions and suggestions
- Networking session with refreshments

Objectives

- To introduce the EcoSite project to key school stakeholders
- To foster community involvement in sustainable practices
- To gather feedback for the integration of environmental activities in the curriculum
- To strengthen the school's stakeholder network for future collaboration

Achievement:

- The forum successfully increased awareness, generated practical suggestions, and secured stakeholder buy-in for upcoming projects. Several parents expressed interest in volunteering, and municipal representatives committed to supporting infrastructure improvements.

² The Greek EcoSite presents a unique case as there were a total of six stakeholder forums organised over the three year period. These are numbered accordingly throughout the chapter and are based on the additional effort exhibited by the Greek EcoSite managers.



Feedback

The event was well-received by participants. Stakeholders appreciated the open and inclusive structure of the forum. Notable feedback included:

- Praise for student involvement in environmental presentations
- Requests for regular follow-up events and progress updates
- Suggestions for integrating local environmental challenges into the curriculum
- Calls for more hands-on environmental education opportunities

Reflection

The original mission focused on “creating eco-conscious learning environments through inclusive stakeholder engagement.” This remains largely relevant.

However, based on the forum insights, the mission statement could be expanded to emphasize:

- Ongoing co-creation of sustainable initiatives with direct input from local communities and youth. This updated focus reflects a more dynamic and participatory approach to stakeholder engagement.



Figure 8 2023 Stakeholder Forum 1 Greece 1





2023 Stakeholder Forum 2

At a glance:

- **Title of the Event:** Ano Alissos Primary School Stakeholder Forum
- **Date; Location:** 15 May 2023, Ano Alissos Primary School, Greece
- **Target audience:** Ano Alissos Primary School administration and teaching staff, Ano Alissos Primary School (host), Local education authorities, community representatives and parents, Municipality of West Achaia, environmental NGOs, EcoSite project coordinators, teaching staff and pupils

Description of the event and main activities

The stakeholder forum at Ano Alissos Primary School was designed as a community-oriented event promoting the integration of environmental education within the local curriculum through the Ecosite framework. The day's activities included:

- Welcome and Opening Remarks by school administrators and municipal officials.
- Presentation of the Ecosite Project, its aims, and outcomes from the past academic year.
- Interactive Student Demonstrations, including environmental games, mini science exhibitions, and a recycling workshop.
- Roundtable Discussion with parents, teachers, and NGO representatives on sustainable school practices.
- Breakout Group Sessions to collect ideas for next year's Eco-Actions and community involvement.
- Feedback and Q&A Session to close the forum.

Objectives

- Strengthen collaboration between local stakeholders in supporting environmental initiatives.
- Increase awareness and visibility of Ecosite activities.
- Encourage co-creation of action plans for environmental education.

All key objectives were achieved:

- The forum fostered deeper dialogue between school staff and the wider community.
- Several stakeholders volunteered support for upcoming sustainability projects.
- The event significantly raised student and parent engagement with Ecosite themes

Feedback

The event was very well received. Specific feedback included:

- Teachers praised the practical involvement of students in showcasing green practices.
- Parents appreciated the opportunity to contribute ideas and better understand the Ecosite framework.
- Municipal leaders highlighted the importance of replicating such forums in other schools across the region.

Overall, participants described the forum as “inspiring,” “well-structured,” and “impactful for community ties.”



Reflection

To cultivate ecological awareness in schools by fostering partnerships with the local community and enabling practical, student-led environmental actions. The 2023 forum emphasized a stronger role for intergenerational learning and municipal cooperation leading to the following goal being formulated: To deepen ecological literacy through inclusive, multigenerational collaboration and embed environmental responsibility across all school-community touchpoints.



Figure 9 2023 Stakeholder Forum 2 Greece

2024 Stakeholder Forum 3

At a glance:

- **Title of the Event:** Overcome Non-Technological Barriers to Implement Industrial-Urban Symbiosis
- **Date; Location:** 11th September 2024
- **Target audience:** Municipal Hall, Olenia, Western Achaia, Greece, Municipality of West Achaia, Region of Western Greece, Local industries (e.g., EEP Kernel Oil Refinery, agri-food cooperatives, SMEs), National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), Environmental NGOs and civic groups, Community representatives and local residents, Waste management firms (e.g., SIRMET S.A.), Educational and research institutions, Municipalities, Industries, Ecosite Contact Point & project Manager for MWA

Description of the event and main activities

This stakeholder forum was convened to address the non-technological barriers hindering the development of Industrial-Urban Symbiosis (I-US) in the Greek Ecosite. The forum included:

- Introductory session on the I-US concept and local context





- Presentations on identified barriers (e.g., governance, finance, regulation, skills gaps, social acceptance)
- Interactive group work focused on localized strategies across Movri, Lariso, Olenia, and Dimi
- Panel discussions with policymakers, researchers, and local businesses
- Pilot demonstration planning and local resource inventory mapping
- Awareness and educational sessions targeting residents, including youth

Objectives

The key objectives of the Stakeholder Forum were:

- Raise awareness of I-US and engage local communities
- Identify and prioritize non-technological barriers
- Co-create a local Action Plan with key stakeholders
- Define pilot initiatives and regulatory recommendations
- Establish collaborative networks for I-US

Were they reached?

Yes. The forum successfully built consensus around major barriers also established new stakeholder alliances and gathered significant input for policy reform and local demonstration projects.

Feedback

The event was positively received. Participants appreciated the inclusive, cross-sectoral dialogue. Many expressed a renewed interest in collaboration and endorsed the proposed I-US coordination body.

Specific Feedback Highlights:

- Industry: called for financial de-risking and simplified permits
- Citizens: requested ongoing community involvement and transparency
- Local officials: asked for concrete support mechanisms and capacity-building
- Academia: emphasized the importance of monitoring and data-sharing platforms

Reflection

Initial Mission Statement:

To engage local stakeholders in identifying and overcoming non-technological barriers to enable resource efficiency and symbiotic practices at the regional level.

Updated Goals (if any):

The forum reaffirmed the mission but proposed an expanded focus on:

- Establishing a formal I-US coordination structure
- Integrating I-US into local economic development plans
- Scaling citizen education programs, particularly in schools
- Developing digital platforms for information and resource flows
- Monitoring and evaluating I-US impact over time





Figure 10 2024 Stakeholder Forum 3 Greece

2024 Stakeholder Forum 4

At a glance:

- **Title of the Event:** Stakeholder Forum – Municipal Unit of DYMI
- **Date; Location:** 1st December 2024
- **Target audience:** Municipal Hall, DYMI, Western Achaia, Greece, Municipality of West Achaia, Local businesses and agricultural cooperatives, environmental NGOs, regional development agency, local community representatives, EcoSite project team

Description of the event and main activities

The Stakeholder Forum held on 1st December 2024 in the Municipal Unit of DYMI brought together a diverse range of participants to engage in a dialogue on sustainable development and circular economy initiatives under the EcoSite framework. The event opened with welcoming remarks from municipal officials and a presentation of EcoSite's progress and upcoming priorities.

Main activities included:

- Presentation of Greek EcoSite achievements in 2024 and local impact
- Panel discussion on local challenges in waste management and resource efficiency
- Breakout sessions on stakeholder engagement and collaborative project design
- Networking lunch fostering intersectoral dialogue
- Interactive mapping of local circular economy actors and opportunities





Objectives

- Strengthen local stakeholder networks
- Promote understanding of circular economy benefits at the municipal level
- Collect input for 2025 EcoSite planning

Achievement:

The event successfully enhanced local stakeholder connections, provided valuable feedback for future EcoSite actions, and broadened awareness of circular economy strategies among community members.

Feedback

The event was positively received. Participants praised the inclusiveness of discussions, clarity of presentations, and relevance of topics to local needs. Specific feedback included:

- Desire for more frequent stakeholder gatherings
- Requests for technical workshops on composting and waste valorisation
- Interest in pilot project collaborations with local schools and businesses

Reflection

Initial mission statement:

To foster participatory stakeholder engagement that accelerates sustainable practices and circular economy integration within the DYMI municipal unit.

Updated Goals (2024 Review):

The mission remains relevant but now emphasizes action-oriented collaboration. Based on insights from this forum, the updated focus will be:

To drive collaborative, actionable initiatives that integrate circular economy principles into municipal planning and empower local stakeholders through continuous dialogue and capacity building.





Figure 11 2024 Stakeholder Forum 4 Greece

2024 Stakeholder Forum 5

At a glance:

- **Title of the Event:** Stakeholder Forum of the Municipal Unit of Olenia – Ecosite Initiative
- **Date; Location:** 7th December 2024, Municipal Hall, Olenia, Western Achaia, Greece
- **Target audience:** Municipal Unit of Olenia (local government representatives), EcoSite project team, regional environmental agencies, local SMEs and agricultural cooperatives, citizens' groups and youth representatives, academic and research institutions, EcoSite contact point & project manager for MWA

Description of the event and main activities

The Stakeholder Forum held in Olenia on 7 December 2024 was a core event in the ongoing Ecosite initiative's annual engagement strategy. Designed as a collaborative space for exchanging insights and aligning local efforts toward sustainable development, the forum included:

- Opening remarks from municipal leaders and the EcoSite coordination team
- Presentation of 2024 progress on local sustainability initiatives
- Interactive workshop on circular economy practices for rural communities
- Breakout sessions on environmental innovation, youth involvement, and agri-business adaptation
- Networking for cross-sector dialogue and partnership development
- Q&A session with regional authorities and researchers



Objectives

The key objectives of the stakeholder forum were:

- To review the 2024 implementation progress of the EcoSite pilot actions.
- To facilitate open dialogue between diverse local stakeholders on environmental challenges and innovation.
- To co-design updated community targets aligned with the 2025 EcoSite goals.

These objectives were successfully achieved, with measurable engagement from all sectors represented and actionable recommendations produced for integration into the 2025 plan.

Feedback

Participants reported high satisfaction with the forum's structure and outcomes. Key feedback included:

- Appreciation for the interactive format, particularly the breakout sessions.
- Recognition of improved communication between citizens and policy actors.
- Calls for more frequent forums and localized working groups.
- Requests for greater inclusion of youth voices in future strategic planning.

Evaluation forms collected on-site and via follow-up emails confirmed a strong approval rating for the forum's organization and relevance.

Reflection

In light of the forum's discussions and evolving priorities, the mission statement from the 2023 stakeholder mapping was re-examined.

Original Mission Statement:

To mobilize and integrate local actors across Olenia for climate resilience, circular economy implementation, and inclusive community participation.

Updated Goals (2024–2025):

- Deepen circular economy applications in agriculture and small industry.
- Strengthen youth-led sustainability innovation at the municipal level.
- Expand digital tools for public engagement in environmental monitoring.
- Formalize an inter-municipal collaboration framework on green policy sharing.





Figure 12 2024 Stakeholder Forum 5 Greece

2025 Stakeholder Forum 6

At a glance:

- **Title of the Event:** Technical Visit and Demonstration of the SYMSITES Pilot Plant for Industrial-Urban Symbiosis for Community representatives and local residents.
- **Date; Location:** 17th June 2025, Biological Treatment Plant, Municipality of West Achaia, Greece
- **Target audience:** Municipality of West Achaia, community representatives and local residents, ecosite contact point & project manager for MWA

Description of the event and main activities

This technical visit served as a hands-on demonstration of the SYMSITES project's pilot plant, hosted at the biological wastewater treatment facility of the Municipality of West Achaia. The visit was structured into the following key activities:

- Welcome briefing by municipal officials and the project team on the SYMSITES objectives and progress
- Technical presentation on the design and operation of the anaerobic membrane bioreactor (AnMBR) pilot system
- Guided tour of the biological treatment plant, focusing on co-treatment processes of industrial effluents, municipal wastewater, and household bio-waste
- On-site demonstration of biogas (biomethane and biohydrogen) production and reclaimed water output
- Q&A and feedback session with attending stakeholders
- Informal networking session among technical, governmental, and community representatives



Objectives

- Demonstrate the operational readiness of the SYMSITES pilot system
- Showcase co-treatment and resource recovery processes to stakeholders
- Promote stakeholder understanding of symbiotic resource flows in real-world settings
- Build trust and visibility around the pilot as a scalable model for I-US

All technical components were successfully presented and explained. Stakeholders expressed strong interest in the potential of the SYMSITES system to be replicated in other contexts. The visit strengthened the project's credibility and fostered deeper institutional support.

Feedback

Participants responded enthusiastically to the practical demonstration, citing the clarity and transparency of the technical explanations. The guided tour helped demystify the complex processes involved in waste valorization and encouraged broader discussion on local implementation pathways.

Specific Feedback Highlights:

- Multiple stakeholders appreciated the clarity of the pilot's function and outputs
- Local authorities emphasized the need for citizen-oriented educational initiatives following the technical visit

Reflection

Initial Mission Statement:

To build stakeholder awareness, engagement, and collaboration around non-technological solutions for implementing symbiotic resource use within the Municipality of West Achaia.

Updated Goals (Post-Visit):

The mission remains relevant but is now expanded to emphasize:

- On-site demonstration as a tool for increasing engagement
- Institutionalizing pilot learnings into local and regional policy
- Accelerating replication opportunities in similar municipalities
- Supporting capacity-building for municipal technical staff and engineers



Figure 13 2025 Stakeholder Forum 6 Greece





5. Spanish EcoSite

2023 Stakeholder Forum 1

At a glance:

- Stakeholder Forum in Spanish Ecosite
- 29.09.2023, Valencia
- Citizens, including children

Description of the event and main activities

FACSA and FOVASA organised the 2023 stakeholder forum as part of European Mediterranean Researchers' Night, held on the 29th of September, where the city of Valencia joined others in the Mediterranean arc to celebrate scientific research. The aim of the forum was to disseminate information about the SYMSITES pilot in the Valencian Community, addressing young citizens. The forum consisted of interactive materials to introduce children and their families to SYMSITES, including a child friendly video explanation of SYMSITES, public-friendly brochures and merchandising. Children were invited to carry out an experiment to see if they could separate waste properly and ultimately teach them how to do it. Other games were played to learn about wastewater. Dozens of children attending the research night with their schools and grandparents came to interact with the forum activities in morning and afternoon slots. A video was made of the activities and disseminated through the SYMSITES channels to further raise awareness regarding the project.

Objectives

The aim of the forum was to raise awareness among the more than 400 attendees about the importance of making good use of water and the correct separation and treatment of waste, while at the same time demonstrating SYMSITES Technology.

Feedback

- Attendees enjoyed the fact that activities were interactive
- They realized and were surprised about specific mistakes that they make in their daily life (e.g., waste separation)
- Merchandising was highly appreciated
- Weather conditions must be considered (the forum was held under the sun)
- The number of attendees for the activity should be specified beforehand to avoid too big groups.
- Due to this high unexpected attendance, it was not possible to fulfil individual surveys.





Figure 14 2023 Stakeholder Forum 1 Spain

2024 Stakeholder Forum 2

At a glance:

- Circular Economy and Environmental Education in Spanish Schools with SYMSITES
- 17-18 April 2024, Muro de Alcoy
- Citizens

Description of the event and main activities

The initiative involved the implementation of containers for the collection of organic waste in the school, which will be processed at the SYMSITES project's pilot plant in Alcoy's WWTP. Additionally, the collaboration aimed to foster a sustainable culture within the school community by conducting recycling-related activities, including an educational video and a group game to encourage practical learning about waste management.

Objectives

The objective of this forum was to reinforce the environmental commitment of FOVASA, supported by FACSA, and in collaboration with Seruni3n and the city council of Muro de Alcoy, through the extension of their environmental efforts to the public schools of Bracal and Montcabrer in Muro de Alcoy. This partnership between the company and schools serves as an example of Industrial-Urban Symbiosis, demonstrating how communities and industries can unite to effectively tackle environmental challenges.

Feedback

- **High engagement:** The children showed great enthusiasm and curiosity throughout the workshop. They actively participated in the sorting games and enjoyed the activities.



- **High educational impact:** The simple explanations and visual materials helped the students easily understand recycling concepts and the importance of taking care of the environment.
- **Teamwork:** Group activities encouraged collaboration among the students.

Overall, the workshop was very well received by both students and teachers.

Reflection

Influencing behaviour regarding waste sorting: The activity aimed to educate children about the importance of waste sorting and make them aware of common mistakes. This forum helped the kids to understand how their actions impact the environment and the society. The project sought to teach responsible waste management practices. Through interactive sessions and hands-on activities, children learned the significance of reducing, reusing, and recycling, fostering a sense of environmental stewardship and encouraging them to become proactive in maintaining a cleaner, healthier community.

Replicability of project solutions with different actors: The fact that the activity was carried out in different schools of the municipality highlighted the possibility of establishing different working channels to adapt the particularities of each institution to the project needs.



Figure 15 2024 Stakeholder Forum Spain 2

2025 Stakeholder Forum 3

At a glance:

- [Fira de Cocentaina](#)
- 31st October-2nd November; Cocentaina, Alicante (Spain)
- Local community members (citizens), local authorities, representatives from the EcoSite project team from FACSÀ (organizer), FOVASA, AITEX, ITG, Germaine de Capuccini, Jover, and Greene, Environmental educators and NGOs, and other companies. According to the organizers of the Fira, during the 3 days of the event, more than 500,000 people visited the fair.

Description of the event and main activities





The Fira de Tots Sants of Cocentaina, commonly known as the Cocentaina Fair, is one of the oldest and most renowned fairs in Spain, with origins dating back to 1346. It is held annually in the town of Cocentaina, in the province of Alicante, close to Alcoy, where the Spanish Ecosite is located. Throughout the years it has grown into a major cultural, commercial, and festive event that attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors. The fair combines tradition and modernity, offering a diverse range of exhibitions, from agricultural and livestock displays to crafts, gastronomy, technology, and cultural performances. Therefore, and thanks to this remarkable reach of visitors and topics, the fair was selected as the ideal setting for carrying out the stakeholder forum.

The SYMSITES project and the Spanish Ecosite were presented at the fair, where a stand was acquired. All the organizations involved contributed to the event, with the SYMSITES project as the central focus.

During this three-day stakeholder forum, several activities were carried out to promote awareness and engagement, including:

- SYMSITES goals and progress.
- Activities and demonstrations on wastewater treatment.
- Recycling awareness sessions and hands-on workshops.
- Highlight the importance of Industrial-Urban Symbiosis.
- Information focused on the textile and cosmetic industries, both key sectors within the SYMSITES project.
- The virtual I-US game developed within the project was showcased and made accessible to the public.

AITEX, as the coordinating entity of the SYMSITES project, attended the Stakeholder forum and disseminated the project's goals and progress, highlighting its role in the coordination and communication among the different European partners and with the stakeholders.

FACSA coordinated and organized the stakeholder forum and the rest of the partners in the stand. Also, **FACSA** organized a water workshop aimed at helping both children and adults understand how water is treated before it returns to the environment. During the session, participants learned which types of waste should never be disposed of through the toilet (non-biodegradable compounds), highlighting the importance of responsible behaviour in protecting our water systems. Through an engaging hands-on experiment, attendees discovered how a wastewater treatment plant operates, exploring the screening and grit removal processes, as well as the biological treatment stage. These demonstrations allowed participants to clearly see how the quality of treated water improves step by step, fostering a deeper appreciation for the technology and care involved in safeguarding this vital resource.

This workshop was linked to the complementary session organized by **FOVASA**, which focused on training participants in proper waste separation across the different containers — glass, plastic, paper and cardboard, and general waste. Special emphasis was placed on organic waste, explaining its key role within SYMSITES, where it is utilized as a valuable resource. By connecting both workshops, participants gained a comprehensive understanding of how responsible waste management and water treatment work together to promote sustainability and environmental protection.

The technological centre **ITG** carried out the presentation of the virtual SYMSITES "I-US Game". This game has been developed with the aim of raising player awareness of the benefits of the symbiosis between industrial and urban activities and the valorisation of waste derived from these



activities. A member of the ITG team presented to attendees the game mechanics and the main concepts necessary for playing the game (I-US, EcoSite, etc.). To this end, a device displayed the game map, illustrating the possible relationships between industrial and urban activities that players can establish. The relationships were based on real interactions taking place within the SYMSITES project. Among these activities, the following entities were represented: JOVER, GERMAINE DE CAPUCCINI, FACSA, FOVASA, and GREENE, all of which are part of the stand and the consortium, and the Municipalities of ALCOY, MURO DE ALCOY, and COCENTAINA, where the residual streams are collected. Additionally, another device offered attendees the opportunity to play a session of the I-US Game. ITG staff guided players through the game to ensure a clear understanding of its mechanics and an enjoyable user experience. Finally, a brief explanation of the I-US activities achieved during the game was provided, along with a giveaway from the textile company JOVER based on the results obtained, and the option to participate in a survey to share feedback and impressions about their experience with the I-US Game.

In addition, **JOVER and GERMAINE presented their participation in the project**, showcasing how these industries are transitioning towards circularity through innovation, waste reduction, and the reuse of resources. They emphasized how adopting circular practices not only minimizes environmental impact but also enhances efficiency and competitiveness. The speech given to the attendees highlighted the importance of I-US illustrating how cooperation between diverse sectors can drive sustainable growth.

Objectives

The main objectives of participating in the fair were:

- Increase public awareness about sustainable water management and wastewater treatment practices.
- Promote recycling and circular economy principles among participants and local stakeholders. It is very important to reach the general community collaboration if we want to meet EU regulations in the coming years.
- Highlight the relevance of I-US as a key approach to improving resource efficiency and reducing environmental impact.
- Showcase the involvement of the textile and cosmetic industries within the SYMSITES project, emphasizing innovation and sustainability in these sectors.
- Encourage public engagement through interactive activities, including the presentation of the educational game developed within the project.
- Foster collaboration and knowledge exchange among organizations, companies, and institutions involved in the project.

Feedback

From our experience at the stand, we observed a very positive response from the public, with strong interest from both children and adults in learning more about water treatment, waste separation, and circular economy practices. The interactive nature of the workshops made it easier for people to understand complex processes such as wastewater treatment and the importance of proper waste sorting, especially organic waste used in SYMSITES.

Many visitors expressed curiosity about how local industries, such as textiles and cosmetics, are integrating circularity into their operations, which opened conversations about I-US and the role of innovation in creating more sustainable communities.



Reflection

Overall, the participation of the SYMSITES project at this 3rd Stakeholder forum was led by FACSA, manager of the Alcoy WWTP and leader of the Spanish ecosite, which organized the event and contributed to it with its expertise in water management and circular economy. AITEX, as project coordinator, supported the communication activities and presented the overall objectives and progress of SYMSITES. FOVASA engaged the public through a recycling workshop, while Germaine de Capuccini and Francisco Jover S.A. promoted sustainable innovation in the cosmetics and textile sectors. The technological center ITG complemented these actions by showcasing the development of its interactive digital tool, The Virtual I-US Game developed in SYMSITES. Together, these entities demonstrated the collaborative spirit of the consortium and its commitment to promoting I-US across Europe. Organizing the stakeholder forum during the fair served as an excellent platform to raise environmental awareness.



Figure 16 2025 Stakeholder Forum 3 Spain

6. Conclusions

While the **objectives, formats, durations, participation** and more of the stakeholder forums described across chapters 2-5 varies, there are some key observations to be drawn across all. In **quantity** alone, the stakeholder forums have proven successful:

- **14 events** hosted across the four EcoSites
- **Over 700 (non-unique) participants reached**





The events proved a valuable platform for **large-scale outreach** and **impactful discussions**. The stakeholder forums managed to include a wide variety of stakeholders including

- **Public representatives** (including sub-national agencies, local politics, local and regional administration, and waste & wastewater managers),
- **Researchers**
- **Environmental educators**
- **NGOs**
- **Industries**
- **Local businesses & associations**
- **Cross-national funding agencies**
- **Citizens** (including parents, students, children and teachers)

This multi-stakeholder approach allowed for a **variety of topics** to be covered. While some EcoSites facilitated the events and discussions around relatively consistent themes such as **sustainable water & wastewater** with deep dives on **financing**, **regulation** or **technical treatment**, others jumped quite a lot across the sessions, including different topical focus points ranging from **waste management** to bringing **sustainability topics to schools and education**. The implementation took place in close alignment with the **designed function of the forum** as a format to **promote co-creation**, **validation** and, crucially, support **EcoSite implementation**. This was for example achieved by linking the instalment of new bins to the future users, all links in the entire chain required for I-US implementation in these specific fields of action. The forums also supported **dissemination** and **exploitation**. The same can be said about the formats applied. In this, some EcoSites had a nature of **joint discussions** while others were more **co-creative**, depending on the actual needs. Additionally, all EcoSites managed to **introduce the SYMSITES project** to a wide audience and thus use the project as **a hook to start conversations**. Overall, the **feedback received** for the sessions was **consistently positive** and constructive to **improve future collaboration**. In many instances, participants showed a clear **need to have more meeting opportunities** in the future or even to create constant exchange formats. The often open and **inclusive design** of the events, the **co-creative nature**, and the **involvement of the youth** was mentioned as positive feedback in the more **citizen-centred events**. The more **technical and industry focused events** on the other hand reported the need for more exchange that allows **further topical deep dives**, and the positive perception of the events could for example be examined through inquiries following the stakeholder forums. The reflections provided by the EcoSite Managers are another testament to the successful implementation of the stakeholder forums across the board.

All in all, this shows that the implementation of the stakeholder forums was successful and still can be seen as a **starting point** and **source of experience and inspiration** for any future collaboration platforms that get continued or set up in each EcoSite location after the SYMSITES project lifetime. It also shows the importance of **accompanying technical development** with community **building to progress** on I-US efforts in each location. Similar importance goes to the **focus of civil society and the youth**, as they play a vital role in the systems piloted in the EcoSites as well and the stakeholder's forum methodology managed to cover all these critical points in the project over several years.

