

LakiTerra (357) Short Final Report

HuMUS – WP4 Pilot Project

Title: Participatory Soil Literacy and Soil Health Stewardship in Lakitelek Municipality (Hungary)

Consortium: Lakitelek Municipality, Iskolakertekért Alapítvány, Discovery Center non-profit Ltd.

Publishable Summary – 500 words

This pilot project, implemented in Lakitelek (Hungary), set out to raise soil literacy and strengthen participatory soil governance at the municipal level. Through a combination of educational materials, capacity-building events, and intergenerational partnerships, the project demonstrated how local actors can be empowered to care for soil health.

Key outputs included two digital guidebooks on simple soil assessment methods – one for home gardeners and educators, and one for farmers wishing to better understand their soils – a series of six short educational films on common soil problems and solutions, and several one-day participatory trainings combining theory with hands-on demonstrations in school and home gardens, a regenerative farm, and even a botanical garden. The events concluded with the signing of a Territorial Management Agreement (TMA), confirming stakeholder commitment to soil stewardship.

We translated the Soil Steward course to Hungarian and at least 5 local stakeholders finished the course and members of the LakiTerra team. All found it useful in organizing their existing knowledge as well as acquiring new knowledge that all stakeholders found useful in spreading soil literacy.

The TMA was more than symbolic: it set out concrete actions participants committed to for soil health. It outlined shared principles, such as responsible use of soil resources, promotion of soil-friendly practices – for example, local gardeners agreed to organize regular garden visits to observe and discuss soil health – and passing on soil literacy to younger generations. It also served as a governance tool, linking individual commitments to a common municipal vision. As an initial step, the municipality began developing communal composting so residents who remove leaf litter need not send it to waste collection. Drafting and signing the TMA fostered dialogue among stakeholders who rarely interact, encouraging them to see soil as a shared responsibility. Importantly, the TMA was conceived not as a one-off pledge but as a living agreement that can evolve, inspire future collaborations, and serve as a model for replication in other regions. By anchoring commitments in a written framework, it translated awareness into action and helps ensure that outcomes will outlast the project's limited funding period.

Farmer–school garden partnerships were also created, with a local farmer giving interactive classes that linked formal education with practical soil knowledge. A final dissemination event in

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Budapest shared the results nationally, ensuring visibility beyond the pilot region. Attendees included university professors of soil science and agroecology, young researchers committed to teaching their peers about soil health, municipal leaders, gardening therapists, and school garden coordinators from across Hungary. The event was highly successful thanks to the active participation of all present, who will be valuable allies in spreading the project's message in the future.

Overall, the project engaged multiple stakeholder groups — municipal leaders, teachers, schoolchildren, gardeners, farmers, advisors, and NGOs — in a collaborative process. The simple, low-cost methods tested proved highly replicable in other regions, while the TMA provides a transferable governance tool to formalize commitments. The pilot thus contributes to the Soil Mission goal of enhancing soil literacy and participatory governance across Europe.