

ECOLISE

2024 | Activity Report



10 Years Catalysing Communities for Future.



What we stand for.

We are the European Network for Community-Led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability. We recognise the power and impact of community-led solutions worldwide in tackling the profound ecological, social, economic, and political challenges to a dignified life on Earth.

We engage in, support, and facilitate accelerated learning and collaboration among Community-Led Initiatives, their networks, and partners to catalyse systemic transformation within and across society and to achieve a just and regenerative future for all within planetary boundaries.

By community-led initiatives (CLIs) we mean self-organised initiatives of people working together on an ongoing basis towards a set of environmental and/or social goals, usually within defined localities or communities of place. Community-led Initiatives include transition movements, permaculture projects, ecovillages, energy communities, community-supported agriculture, and local sharing economies, among others.

These initiatives encompass inner growth, inclusive approaches to collaboration, governance of the commons, and ecosystem stewardship. We aim to leverage the growing interest in these life-affirming approaches by bringing the demands of community-led initiatives to the EU level.

10 years of ECOLISE

A decade ago, on Europe Day, a small group of visionaries gathered in Brussels with a bold idea: to make local community-led initiatives a cornerstone of Europe's journey towards a socially just and sustainable future. That gathering marked the birth of ECOLISE, the European network for community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability. As we present our 2024 Activity Report, we reflect on ten years of progress while acknowledging the critical role that communities play in achieving lasting climate action.

Back in 2014, just ahead of the Paris Agreement, optimism was high that global temperature rise could be limited to 1.5°C. Fast forward to today, and that optimism is fading. By 2023, the global average temperature had risen to 1.45°C above pre-industrial levels, the highest in recorded history. Communities worldwide are bearing the brunt of intensifying climate impacts, from extreme weather events to long-term ecological disruptions.

The transformation envisioned a decade ago remains elusive. This year, we have witnessed how national governments continue to fall short of their climate commitments, making the scale and urgency of required action—both to mitigate and adapt—far greater than anticipated. At the same time, dissatisfaction with official responses is mounting. Protests against environmental policies, resistance to renewable energy projects, and widespread discontent highlight a deeper issue: many feel excluded from decision-making processes.

In recent months, Europe has seen some of its largest climate-related demonstrations, with voices both supporting and opposing stronger climate policies. This growing divide underscores the need for thoughtful responses from policy makers.

ECOLISE's ongoing high level strategy review invites us to critically evaluate the progress we have made, identify barriers, and refine our focus to meet the challenges of the next decade. This process builds on our commitment to empower communities while creating the conditions for systemic change. Now more than ever, it is crucial to create more inclusive democratic spaces. Rather than framing climate solutions as a battle between winners and losers, we need dialogues that inspire shared ownership of the path forward. Local communities must lead the way, not just in reducing emissions but in reimagining what a fair and sustainable society can look like.

For ten years, ECOLISE has championed this community-led approach across Europe. Thousands of communities within our network are already showing how to thrive within planetary boundaries by rethinking food systems, energy use, transportation, and more. Scaling these efforts requires a strategic framework that builds stronger alliances, amplifies voices from the ground, and aligns local actions with broader policy objectives.

In 2025, ECOLISE will take a major step forward with the launch of the Regenerative Communities Fund. This initiative aims to nurture an ecosystem of communities and organizations working together to model just and equitable transitions in diverse contexts. The network will also expand its Community Climate Coach program, empowering more individuals to guide collective action and dialogue at the local level.

At the same time, ECOLISE is driving critical policy conversations. The Time for Collective Action Manifesto, developed through a participatory process involving over 900 contributors from 135 organizations, calls for transformative local development policies. These policies would place

communities at the heart of an ambitious European Green Deal with the support of Communities for Local Green Deals project.

Our strategic review process challenges us to think bigger. By 2030, ECOLISE envisions 25% of the EU population actively engaged in community-led initiatives. Achieving this ambitious goal will require strong support from policymakers and institutions. As we reflect on ten years of ECOLISE, we reaffirm our commitment to be a driving force for community empowerment. Let us move forward with renewed determination, working hand in hand with our network to shape the transformative future our planet so urgently needs.

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Highlights

2014

In May, ECOLISE was registered as an association in Belgium, with 25 founding members.

2017

Launch of the European Day of Sustainable Communities, alongside the publication: *A community-led Transition in Europe*.¹

2015

In February, ECOLISE had its first General Assembly in Freiburg, Germany.



2013

The willingness of activists and organisations to work together was alive since 2010 and was reinforced while making the publication of *Europe in Transition: Local Communities Leading the Way towards Transition*.¹

A steering group was formed which worked on a strategy and statutes for a new European network.

2016

Success in acquiring the first core funding of EUR 45,000.00 allowing three paid team members to be recruited.

Established a partnership with the European Economic and Social Committee for the launch of the European Day of Sustainable Communities.

Increased membership to 35 organisations.

2018

Policy event in Brussels with the European Economic and Social Committee on municipalities - *Civil society and Municipalities: Building Sustainability through Collaboration*.

Setting up of ECOLISE wiki and a knowledge database.

Increased team to 5 members and membership to 43 organisations.



2019

Launch of the first ECOLISE Status Report: *Reshaping the Future*, a comprehensive review of the status of community-led initiatives in Europe, and the barriers impeding their progress.

ECOLISE was awarded the prestigious Lush Spring Prize for Influence.

Co-creation of the programme Communities for Future: aiming to mobilise community-led initiatives to work towards catalysing climate-inspired transformation in Europe.

2020

Launch of the European Green Deal which laid out a pathway to net-zero emissions by 2050.

Launch of the Communities for Future programme, through an online event, to which attended MEPs, EU Commissioners, partners and members.

Launch of the project Community Climate Coaches, aiming to build a practitioner network and movement.

Increased team to 14 members.



2022

Launch of the participatory process *10 theses towards transformative community-led local development*.¹

Development of good practices and methods to build an internal culture of trust, transparency, care and efficiency.



2023

Launch of the *Time for Collective Action Manifesto*¹ the outcome of a two-year participatory process involving over 900 people and 140 organisations.

Publishing a People Care Manual with 6 internal policies and an introduction to People Care in ECOLISE.

Development of internal policies on Inclusive communication and building of an Inclusive Image Bank.



2024

Development of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion values and practices within the team.

Annual budget increase to EUR 1,6 million, around which EUR 460,000 was mobilised to resource CLI's work.

The Funding Fairer Futures project starts, and with it, the first steps of the Regenerative Communities Fund.

Launch of the project Communities for Climate, which empowers and supports 50 local community-led projects in 11 European countries.

First online event on women's leadership, organised by ECOLISE: *Women's leadership in regenerative intentional communities*.

Increased team to 20 members.

¹ Publication available for download at <https://ecolise.eu/publications>

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01 **Our Impact**

10 years: What we have built.

People

- Grown a professional team with experience in transnational collaboration, project management, European events, and campaigns.
- Developed expertise in communications, project management, administration, financial management, network weaving, and policy/advocacy.
- Hired 36 people in total as steady team members and 49 member representatives in Council member roles.
- Created a space to work together in a way that embodies our values, empowers contributors, and cares for their welfare while supporting individual and organisational resilience.



Manifesto

Developed a manifesto about collective action with 10 theses about the importance of CLIs, in a participatory process that gathered over 900 participants from 140 organisations and 70 campaign partners.



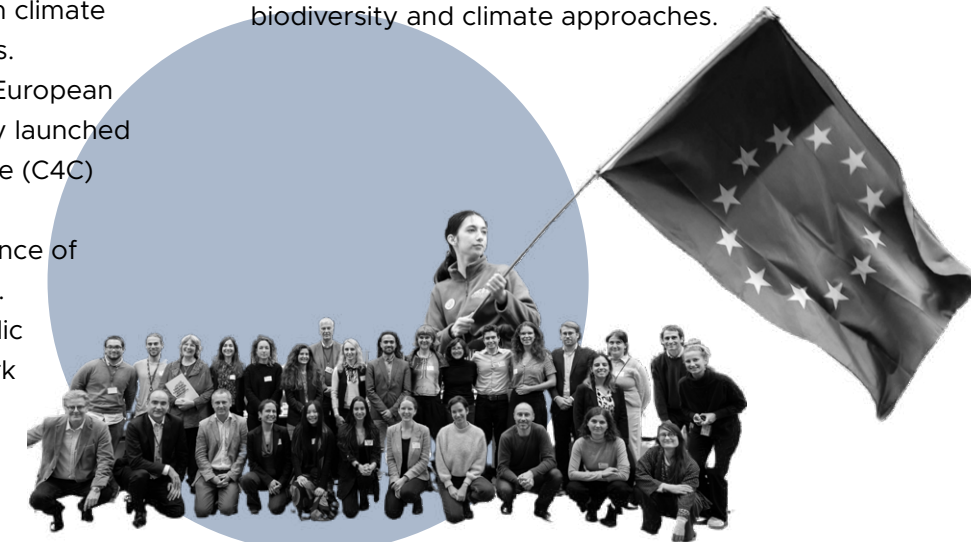
Budget

- Grew our annual budget from EUR 45,000 in 2016 to EUR 1.6 million in 2024.
- Started the Regenerative Communities Fund for sub-granting.



Influence

- Gained high-level recognition among EU partners, networks, and institutions.
- Convinced high-level partners, such as CAN-Europe and ELARD, to recognise the role of CLIs in climate and sustainability strategies.
- Shifted the thinking at the European Commission, which recently launched the Communities for Climate (C4C) pilot initiative.
- Established a growing alliance of supporters, including MEPs.
- Convinced private and public funders to support our work in favour of CLIs.
- Encouraged CAN-E, through our advocacy efforts, to integrate grassroots initiatives into their strategy, as well as a more systemic and holistic approach, incorporating both biodiversity and climate approaches.



The Network

Built a network of 53 key organisations in the field of community-led eco-social transformation in Europe.



2024: What we have achieved.

Advocacy

- Contributed to Climate Action Network Europe (CAN-E) positioning on "The economy of tomorrow", which includes two pillars: reorienting the global economy to deliver a just transformation within planetary boundaries, and empowering society through bottom-up action.
- European Commission/ DG Regio invited ECOLISE to present our *Time for Collective Action Manifesto*. DG Regio mentioned that the process which led to the Manifesto serves as a good practice in multi-level governance, connecting grassroots initiatives to EU-level policies.
- CAN-E incorporated our inputs on sufficiency and a changed economy into a Manifesto. This demonstrates that the awareness of the need to support CLIs and a changed economy is growing within major meta-NGO networks such as CAN-E, European Environmental Bureau (EEB), and others.
- Impact on Liège Declaration

on Adaptation to Climate Change: ECOLISE centred the Declaration on the message that adaptation needs to be community-led and community-based.

Fundraising

- In the summer of 2024, the fundraising circle dedicated considerable effort to applying for a LIFE NGO and Horizon proposal. Unfortunately, we did not get the grant despite the positive feedback, given that EU calls are becoming increasingly competitive.
- 2024 marked the first year we received core funding from the Open Society

Foundation. This funding will run until 2026. 2024 was also the final year of a 3-year core funding agreement from Porticus.

- We continued to receive funding for ongoing EU projects and tenders. The new projects that came in 2024 were Funding Fairer Future (DEAR programme), COM4LGD (CERV programme) and Communities 4 Climate (contract for the European Commission).
- Around EUR 460,000.00 was mobilised to resource CLI's work and we hosted a project building session with the network members.



Activities

- 131h of in-house training for team members, 18 team members who received training.
- 2 campaigns with 70 partners involved in the campaign creation and manifesto creation.
- 283 signatories of the

Time for Collective Action Manifesto.

- 100+ pictures focusing on inclusivity and CLIs representation sent by CLIs for the EDSC campaign.

The Network

- 53 network members in 24 European countries, 27 partner organisations, and 70 campaign partners amongst which 27 members.
- 11 online member's hour events plus one 3-day in-person General Assembly.
- 35 members involved in collaborative projects (paid work) and 15 members worked with ECOLISE on joint project applications.
- 50 active local community-led climate projects across 11 countries in Communities for Climate project, plus a community of practice with 33 facilitators and 35 experts to support with community development and technical advice.
- 41 organisations and 80 people joined the ECOLISE network map and shared 558 existing connections.
- 33 Community Climate Coaches trained.
- Resources mobilised to

members to participate in the policy process and advocacy campaign EUR 3,460.00.

Outreach Statistics

- ECOLISE's social media presence has grown significantly, highlighting the power of digital engagement in mobilising communities and advocating for community-led initiatives.
- The more than doubling of our follower base suggests a heightened awareness and interest in ECOLISE's work:
- Facebook and LinkedIn remain our strongest platforms, while X provides visibility but limited deep engagement.
- The staggering 1406.7% increase in our total impressions signals that our content is reaching far more people than before, likely due to an improved content strategy, partnerships, and increased organic sharing.
- Facebook's 679.42% rise in impressions confirms its role in broad outreach, while LinkedIn's growth highlights professional and policy engagement.
- 2024 was a transformative

year for ECOLISE's digital presence. To sustain momentum, we'll focus on innovative content, deeper engagement, and strategic advocacy for 2025.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

- 1 internal training on Ableism and Mental Health.
- A budget of EUR 10,000.00 was invested in the topic overall, training, raising awareness.
- A total of EUR 2,500.00 was granted to member representatives from more vulnerable backgrounds for participating in ECOLISE activities.
- 2 internal policies on diversity and inclusion (one new, one reviewed).





02 **Activities**

Campaigns

Time for Collective Action Manifesto

2024 was a standout year for policy and advocacy, with the European Parliament elections (June 6-9) providing a key opportunity to communicate the vision of the ECOLISE network and its partners. ECOLISE seized this opportunity to launch an advocacy campaign at the EU level, with a focus on the European Green Deal, and to advocate for better framework conditions for community-led initiatives on climate and the environment.

The campaign, co-led with ECOLISE's communications team, centred on the [Time for Collective Action Manifesto](#) –which was published online in the form of a dedicated website, alongside over 10 translations into EU languages. The Manifesto garnered 70 campaign partners and 283 signatories– far more than we thought possible. Among the signatories were high-level elected officials, scientists, NGOs, many community-led initiatives and networks, as well as movements. Most importantly, the campaign and Manifesto were supported by 26 ECOLISE members and signed by 45 members. The invitation remains open for other ECOLISE members and partners to sign, with a goal of 500 signatories. Having ECOLISE members back the Manifesto gives ECOLISE significant leverage when conducting advocacy work at EU level.

The campaign's goal was to raise awareness among community-led initiatives about the European elections as a make-or-break moment for the European Green Deal. At the same time, the campaign aimed to communicate the Manifesto's main message to policymakers and stakeholders: that it takes strong community-led initiatives to make the Green Deal a reality on the ground. Additionally, a strong and ambitious Green Deal is necessary to provide the right

framework conditions for communities to thrive. To create momentum around the campaign, ECOLISE aimed for a “mushrooming effect” by working in cooperation with our 70 campaign partners. The campaign was also grounded in close cooperation with meta-networks such as Climate Action Network Europe (CAN-E, where ECOLISE is a member) and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), who provided tools (such as reports like “What has the EU done for you and the planet”, a scoreboard of past votes of Members of the European Parliament) and networking opportunities.

Honouring the diversity of our network, we empowered campaign partners to tell their own stories of collective action, based on the key messages of the Manifesto:

Support community-led initiatives as laboratories for transformative social innovation.

Support the right to have a choice to live sustainably.

Harnessing the power of community for a strong localised Green Deal.

To facilitate this, ECOLISE organised a storytelling workshop together with Project Story UK (Freya Barnes and Andrew Brightwell), which ran from



April to May 2024 and involved 20 campaign partners. An in-person training at ECOLISE's General Assembly in Arterra Bizimodu Ecovillage, in Spain, allowed for hands-on storytelling and personal exchanges, guided by expert trainers. The result was nine inspiring stories of collective action, which you can read on Communities for Future website.

To increase outreach, ECOLISE organised five of its own events and participated in over 30 EU-level events as active speakers, reaching altogether over 1,200 people, including 40 policymakers from both EU and national levels. This outreach was possible through collaborations with organisations such as Climate Chance, the Liège Festival (Belgium), the Fito Network, the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), and the European Commission (DG CLIMA with its Climate Pact initiative, where ECOLISE is a partner), as well as DG Regio with its Rural Pact, where ECOLISE is a member of the coordination group, with Council Member Mieke Elzenga.

The Manifesto opens up a wide landscape view on values, principles, and worldviews of ECOLISE's network of community-led initiatives in relation to EU-level policies.

Aiming for a “mushrooming approach”, ECOLISE worked with four trusted Youth ambassadors: Amelie Krug (former ECOLISE policy officer, Germany), Inés Elvira and Sara de Sousa Machado (former ECOLISE interns, Spain and Portugal, respectively), and Sophia Orachunwong (France, also an intern). This enabled us to target youth movements and stakeholders in different countries. With the support of the ECOLISE policy team, the

youth ambassadors reached out to around 20 candidates for the European Parliament, engaged with 20 youth movements, participated in events like the European Greens' Rally, and organised the “Ceremony of Reconnection”, based on the Work that Reconnects, together with the Earth Society, a Brussels-based organisation formed by bluebook trainees of the European Commission.

A media partnership with Euractiv resulted in two journalistic articles about the campaign, which reached around 1 million impressions and around 6,300 readers.

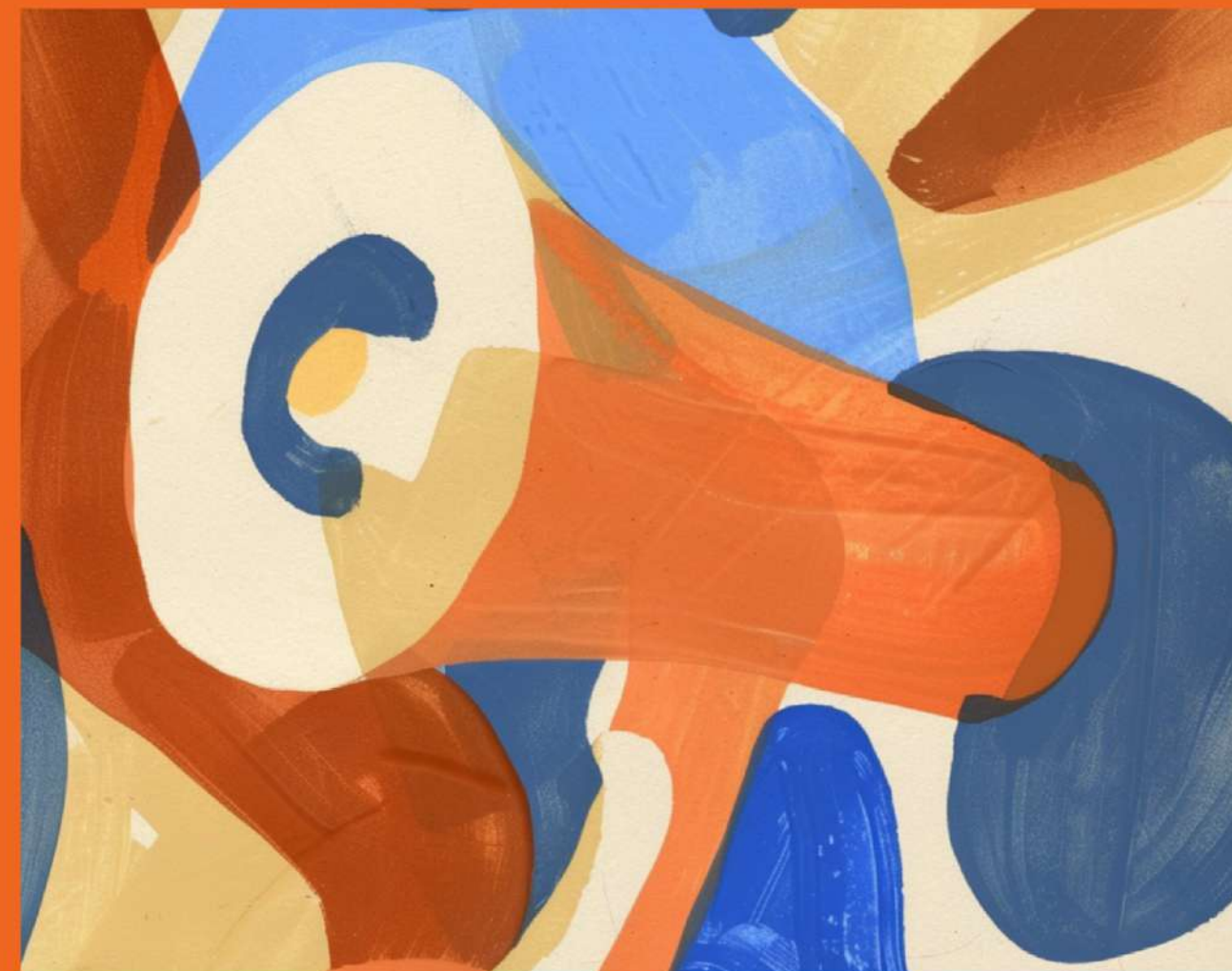
The highlight of the campaign was a social media storm around the time of the European elections in June, coordinated by ECOLISE's cooperation partner, Olatz de Solaeche (Spain). A storytelling toolkit and a video, produced in cooperation with Felicidad Collective, helped partners to share their own messages and stories on social media or simply talk to their friends, families and networks.

The campaign brought to a full circle, building on a process that started two years earlier, in 2022. At that time, ECOLISE coordinated an extensive consultation with around 900 people from 140 organisations, supported by 37 process partners. This co-creative process resulted in a live Google document, the 10 Theses towards Transformative, Community-led Local Development Policies. The Time for Collective Action Manifesto was the first policy positioning to emerge from this fertile soil of collective wisdom, supported by over 70 campaign partners, and accompanied by an editorial board of ECOLISE members.

The Manifesto opens up a wide landscape view on values, principles, and worldviews of ECOLISE's network of community-led initiatives in relation to EU-level policies such as the European Green Deal. ECOLISE's goal is to apply the Manifesto's key insights to different policy fields at EU level, starting in autumn 2024 with a policy positioning on food systems, which is partially supported by EU funding from the Communities for Local Green Deals project.

EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

6-9 OF JUNE



GIVE VOICE TO OUR FUTURE

WE ALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE UNDER PLANETARY BOUNDRIES
SIGN OUR MANIFESTO AND GET INVOLVED : WWW.TIMEFORCOLLECTIVEACTION.EU

ECOLISE
EUROPEAN NETWORK
FOR COMMUNITY-LED
INITIATIVES ON CLIMATE CHANGE
AND SUSTAINABILITY

 COMMUNITIES
FOR FUTURE



8th edition of the European Day of Sustainable Communities

On September 21st, communities across Europe came digitally together to celebrate the eighth edition of the European Day of Sustainable Communities (EDSC). We asked our online community to share photos of their community-led actions driving sustainability across Europe, and we received over 100 amazing pictures. A selection of these was showcased on our @communitiesforfuture Instagram account in a special album designed with an inspiring illustration by Pedro Perles (on the left), highlighting the diversity of these initiatives.

Afterwards, we created a video capturing the spirit of diversity and inclusion in community-led initiatives, available as a reel on our Instagram page. The campaign showcased the power of local action in addressing climate challenges, with a spotlight on community-led initiatives. Additionally, these contributions are now part of our growing Inclusive Image Bank – a powerful tool funded by Actiris to showcase the strength of diverse and inclusive communities working together to build a sustainable future, reflecting the collective efforts of grassroots movements across Europe.

The campaign showcased the power of local action in addressing climate challenges, with a spotlight on community-led initiatives.

Projects

CURIOSOIL: Awakening Soil Curiosity To Catalyse Soil Literacy

Soil illiteracy is a significant barrier to sustainable land management and soil conservation, as many people still lack a deep understanding of the critical role soil plays in food security, climate stability, and biodiversity. CURIOSOIL addresses this challenge by fostering a deeper connection between individuals and soil through immersive, hands-on educational experiences. The project aims to empower teachers, students, citizens, and policymakers with the knowledge and tools needed to protect and restore soil health, driving systemic change from the ground up.

CURIOSOIL works through collaborations across Europe to develop innovative educational resources, establish curriculum standards, and deliver teacher training programs to promote soil literacy. By engaging younger generations, educators, and decision-makers, the project enables Community-Led Initiatives (CLIs) to champion sustainable soil practices and influence policies.

By engaging younger generations, educators, and decision-makers, the project enables community-led initiatives to champion sustainable soil practices and influence policies.

The project's outcomes include immersive tools and the creation of a Community of Practice to ensure that soil education is practical, impactful, and widely adopted. Four ECOLISE members were selected to be CURIOSOIL CoP leaders: Teija Timilsina, Jalotus (Finland), Leonor Afonso, GEN Europe (Switzerland), Manja Vrenko, Sunny Hill (Slovenia), and María de los Milagros Bullón (Mili), Arterra Bizimodu (Spain).

Climate Resilient And Inclusive Cities

Indonesia is experiencing the highest rate of urbanization in Asia, surpassing both India and China. Many urban communities also remain vulnerable to poverty. Currently, only 48% of households have access to safe water, and sewerage coverage is available in just 11 of the country's 98 cities. The Climate Resilient and Inclusive Cities (CRIC) project aims to substantially contribute to sustainable integrated urban development, good governance, and climate adaptation and mitigation.

Since 2020, 10 climate action plans have been developed with the pilot cities, and five tools have been designed to address issues like water and sanitation, air pollution, early warning systems, effective waste management and sustainable finances to support the transition. This project is the only ECOLISE initiative currently being implemented outside of Europe, providing an opportunity to work closely with communities severely impacted by climate change and to empower and make visible city managers by highlighting local solutions that can be scaled. ECOLISE's role includes bringing awareness to nature-based solutions derived from community experience and innovation, as well as developing a training program on Bioregional governance through a systemic lens.

The CRIC project is a 5-year initiative (2020-2024), funded by the EuropeAid initiative, and is led by the United Cities of Local Government for Asia and Pacific countries in partnership with ECOLISE, Pilot4Dev, Université Gustav Eiffel, the Association of Cities for Recycling, and the All India Institute of Local Self-Government.

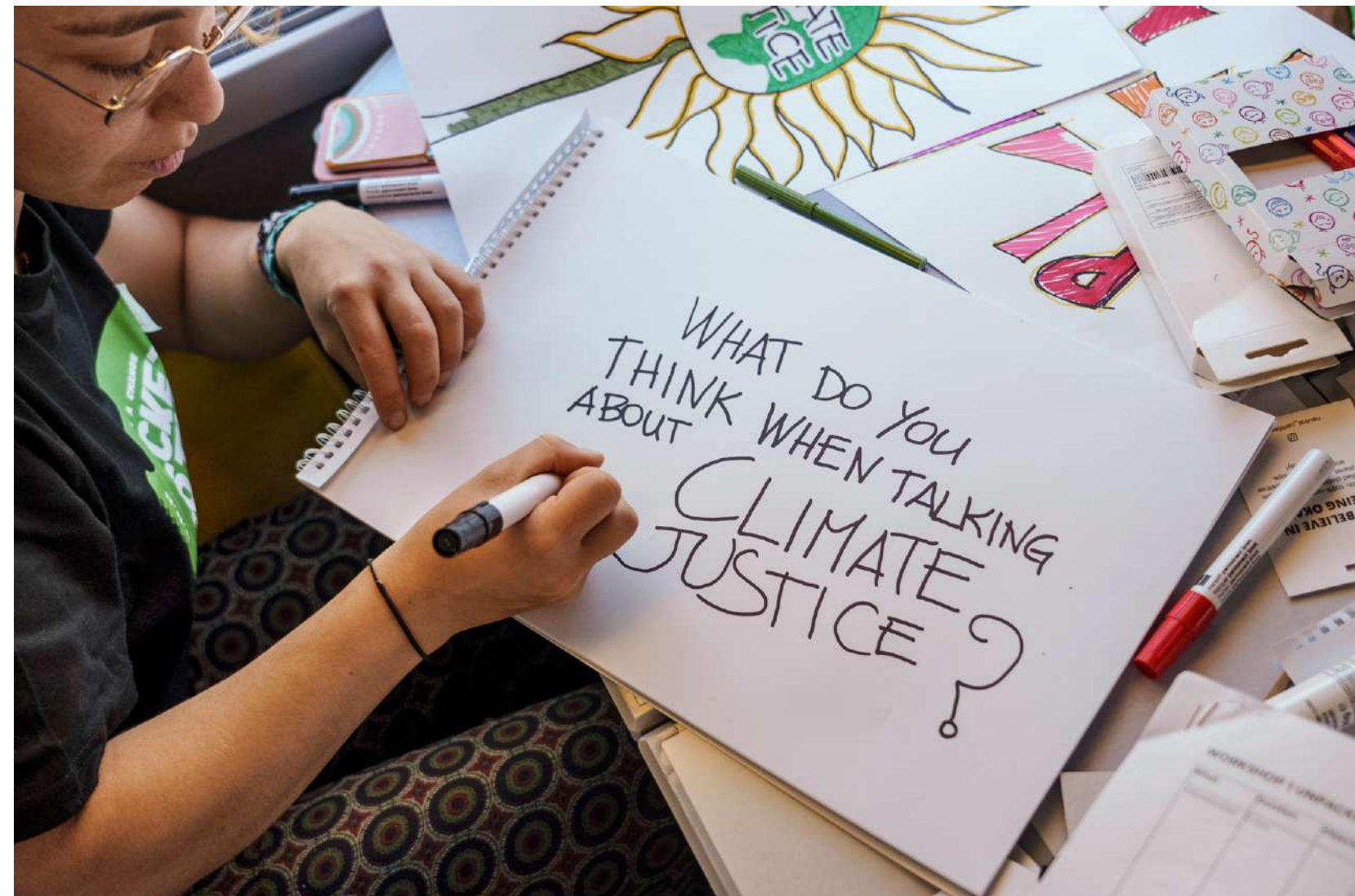
Communities For Climate

In response to the polycrisis and environmental issues, we are all called to come together as resilience communities, strengthen collaboration, localized actions, and take concrete steps for a just eco-social transition. The Communities for Climate project empowers and supports 50 local community-led initiatives across 11 European countries: Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France,

Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain, and Sweden to implement their projects.

Selected from a public call for proposals, the 50 communities are now being accompanied in the realisation of innovative ideas for collective action and community engagement in four thematic areas: biodiversity and nature-based solutions, sustainable water management, circular economy, and renewable energy.

The C4C projects receive tailored support and capacity building by both community facilitators and thematic experts to develop and implement their project, do study visits to demonstrators, learn from each other and become replicable models for others willing to engage in community action, regenerative development and local resilience.



The Communities For Climate pilot action, launched by the European Commission DG REGIO, is being implemented over 1.5 years by four partners: AEIDL (lead), ECOLISE, REScoop, and DRIFT, along with around 20 ECOLISE member organisations.

Communities For Local Green Deals

The Communities for Local Green Deals (COM4LGD) project recognises the intersection of the climate and environmental crisis with the social and political polarisation that EU citizens face. The innovative solution we propose for a just, sustainable, democratic, and inclusive future for the EU is a focus on local community development, climate and sustainability action, community organising, advocacy, and cooperation between citizens and local governments across all 27 member states.

COM4LGD is a consortium of five partners: ICLEI Europe, RIPESS, ECON, ELARD, and ECOLISE, led by GEN-Europe. ECOLISE leads several Work Packages (WPs) within the project, contributing to its ongoing work around participatory advocacy. With partial support from the EU project (CERV call), ECOLISE is organising a policy positioning process on food systems, working to articulate

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the grassroots perspective on EU-level policies on food. A kick-off workshop took place on 5 December, with around 120 people registered. Altogether, eight online events are planned for this participatory advocacy process, which reaches out to ECOLISE members and partners. A capacity-building advocacy training on environmental and climate issues is planned for April 2025, coinciding with the ECOLISE General Assembly.

Female-Led Innovation In Agriculture And Rural Areas

During the second year of the FLIARA project, key activities focused on completing field research, identifying 20 FLIARA Innovation Ambassadors, and launching the FLIARA Community of Practice (CoP). Field research, conducted across all 10 participating countries, included 200 interviews with innovative women in agriculture, resulting in national, regional,

and EU-level reports on the current state of agriculture and rural areas. This research informed the selection of the 20 FLIARA Ambassadors, who now form the foundation of both the CoP and the Visibility Campaign.

The CoP was officially launched during FLIARA's first online event in May, bringing together Ambassadors and the project consortium. Two in-person CoP networking events followed in 2024—one in Galway, Ireland, in July and another in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in September. Additionally, progress was made on policy benchmarking, with an initial report prepared to inform policy briefs and recommendations, which will be finalised at the project's conclusion.

In December, FLIARA Coordinator Maura Farrell highlighted the project's relevance during the European Parliament's Gender Equality Week in Brussels. This event emphasised the need

for inclusive agricultural policies, underscoring FLIARA's alignment with advancing gender equality and diversity in farming and rural development.

Funding Fairer Futures / Regenerative Communities Fund

The [Regenerative Communities Fund](#) (RCF), launched in 2024 by ECOLISE, is the first fund specifically focused on supporting regenerative communities in Europe. It is a long-term strategic initiative that aims to catalyse transformative community-led initiatives (CLIs) that drive an eco-social just transition through direct funding and capacity building.

We are currently piloting the RCF. The European Union contributed €1.53 million to the fund, alongside 10% co-financing from ECOLISE, establishing an initial RCF Fund of €1.7 million through the Funding Fairer Futures project. We are actively fundraising to match and scale this to €4.36 million over the next three years, with ambitions to grow further in the long term. Funding Fairer Futures (FFF) is a European

The Regenerative Communities Fund, launched in 2024 by ECOLISE, is the first fund specifically focused on supporting regenerative communities in Europe.

project part of the DEAR programme, focused on increasing awareness, engagement, and capacity among civil society organisations, citizens, and decision-makers to empower them and take action on inclusive transformative climate justice. The main focus is on subgranting, capacity building for CSOs, campaigning, and networking. The main actions led by ECOLISE include:

Designing and launching the first phase of the Regenerative Communities Fund, which will financially support more than 100 organisations and communities in five countries.

Train 40 Community Climate Coaches.
Implement Policy Dialogues and related policy events in Brussels.

FFF started in May 2024 and will conclude in May 2028. It's composed of six partners: Climate Action Network Europe (CAN-E) (Lead partner), Climate Action Network International (CAN-I), ECOLISE, Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF), Generation Climate Europe (GCE), and Christian Blind Mission (CBM).

Spark

Over four years, the ClimAct consortium delivered multiple streams of work towards awareness raising, training and mobilisation. In addition to working at a national level, the consortium led three major joint campaigns leading up to COP26, COP27, and COP28, centered on climate justice themes such as "Loss and Damage Financing" and "Make Rich Polluters Pay." The Spark project funded the successful advocacy campaigns led by ECOLISE, which resulted in the creation of the Time for Collective Manifesto. Spark, also supported the organisation of five annual celebrations of the European Day of Sustainable Communities, where thousands of people from 10 different countries participated in in-person events. These events involved petitions, activist tours, collaborations with online influencers, school outreach programs, festival engagements, youth workshops, and activist labs.

Across 4 years, the project raised the awareness among 72,385,147 people, trained 80,918 individuals – including teachers, youth and amplifiers – and mobilised 3,356,634 people across Europe on climate justice issues.

Transformative Adult Learning For Green Transition

We are facing the pressing need to transition towards a more sustainable, nature-aligned, and socially just society. The Transformative Adult Learning for Green Transition (TALE) project prototypes co-creative partnerships between adult education organisations in six EU countries and green grassroots initiatives forming "innovation groups" to foster transformative learning and sustainable practices.

The goal has been to co-create transformative and participatory action-learning experiences, experiment with different methods, raise awareness, develop green skills, and learn from each other. By fostering such cross-sector cooperation, the project aims to scale out the approach of innovation groups and transformative learning methods, contributing to capacity building and a green transition in local communities and urban neighbourhoods.

The six innovation groups have organised participatory learning experiences, workshops, and reflective dialogues about sustainable topics, including urban forests, seed diversity, gardening, food preservation, craftivism, and circular economy. ECOLISE has facilitated network connections to CLIs, supported and coached the innovation groups with practical and methodological

The project aims to scale out the approach of innovation groups and transformative learning methods, contributing to capacity building and a green transition in local communities and urban neighbourhoods.

knowledge. Moreover, we have showcased examples of sustainable community-led initiatives, and conducted a workshop using transformative learning and participatory facilitation methods.

Tale is an Erasmus+ funded project led by Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation, in collaboration with ECOLISE, EAEA, ICAE, Educators Center Association, Deutscher Volkshochschul Verband, VHS Wien, Hellenic Open University, SVEB and AONTAS.

We Are Voices Of Ecology

WAVE is a European-funded ERASMUS+ project run by five partner organisations based in Romania, Turkey, Lithuania, Portugal and Belgium. WAVE's mission is to take action against climate change, encourage environmental sustainability, and amplify the voice of the youth by providing them space and tools to become active citizens. WAVE will develop

the active participation competences of 180 young people, empowering them to understand, adapt, and promote a more sustainable way of living.

In August, a group of 40 climate activists met for the International Onboarding Training at Biovilla, outside Lisbon, for an intense week of learning that provided participants with a wide range of tools and methodologies (Fishbowl, Climate Fresk, The work that reconnects) that can be used for ecology education and action. ECOLISE coordinates the Belgian group, where a team of 6 ambassador mentors have been developing an action plan for 2025 to begin to make podcasts with a group of 30 local climate youth ambassadors.

The WAVE values and priorities include: Focus on radical transformative action; Regeneration (go beyond sustainability); Empower and mobilize the youth; System change not climate collapse. For more information about the project, check out [their Linktree](#).



Events

The [Stories to Catalyze Collective Action](#) training took place from May 7-11, 2024, at the Arterra Bizimodu ecovillage in north of Spain, bringing together around 45 in-person participants and another 25 online. This event, part of the ECOLISE General Assembly, combined learning, reflection, and celebration to mark our 10-year anniversary. Moreover, it provided a platform for storytelling, strategizing future developments, and strengthening collaborations for the future.

ECOLISE hosted 11 online member's hour sessions about membership expansion, network map, engagement opportunities, Advocacy, Permaculture in Europe networking, fundraising or campaigning. The ECOLISE team joined over 36 external events, as active speaker, co-organiser or for networking and cross-pollination and invited different members as speakers.

A key highlight was the Liège Summit on

These stories highlight that citizens can be, and already are, agents of change for strong sustainability, while also illustrating the barriers that hinder living well within planetary boundaries.

Adaptation (Belgium) in February 2024, which gathered over 800 participants and was hosted by the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council. Key messages of the Time for Collective Action Manifesto were integrated into the Liège Declaration on Adaptation, and the ECOLISE policy team co-organised three public events together

with partners such as the IPCC platform Wallonia, Climate Chance, and the Wallonian region, Belgium, as representative of the Belgian Council Presidency of the European Union.

Another key event was the invitation by the European Commission's Directorate General REGIO to present the Manifesto and engage in discussions with around 50 participants in Brussels in June 2024. This included European Commission staff and partners of the Common Provisions Regulation, a structure where ECOLISE is a member.



Trainings

Advocacy Storytelling Training for the ECOLISE Network

With Freya Barnes and Andrew Brightwell.

A few months before the European Parliament elections, we partnered with Andrew Brightwell and Freya Barnes from Project Story to deliver an immersive training on storytelling. The goal was to empower a dedicated group of campaign partners and ECOLISE team members to bring forward stories of collective action, aiming to inspire EU

policymakers and citizens alike to recognise citizen-led initiatives as laboratories for transformative social innovation. These stories highlight that citizens can be, and already are, agents of change for strong sustainability, while also illustrating the barriers that hinder living well within planetary boundaries. The training was part of the Time for Collective Action campaign.

Training on Disability and Mental Health

With Genny Carraro, for the ECOLISE team and Council. A series of two workshops were delivered to the ECOLISE team and Council, aimed at raising awareness of both visible and invisible disabilities, as well as mental health vulnerabilities. The sessions provided a space to explore concrete but often unnoticeable special needs within the ECOLISE team and Council, helping us foster a more inclusive and supportive environment.

Sociocracy Introduction

With Mauge Cañada, for the ECOLISE team, Council and members. As part of ECOLISE's governance approach, Sociocracy/S3 are integrated into its decision-making processes. This introductory session was designed for team members for team members with no prior training on Sociocracy, helping them develop a better understanding of its principles and applications.

Branding Post-graduation

By IADE - Faculty of Design, Technology and Communication, as individual capacity building for Sara Silva, ECOLISE Communication Designer. The need for ECOLISE to have a clear identity, core message, target groups, and aligned strategy in communications and as an organisation had been identified in the previous years, and became clearer throughout 2023, leading the organisation to the co-financing of this post-graduation.



04 People & Culture

The Network

The purpose of ECOLISE is to be an impact network dedicated to scaling up regenerative, transformative, local community-led initiatives across Europe. Our role is to develop and advocate for the structures, collaborations, policies, and resources that enable Community-Led Initiatives (CLIs) to thrive, fostering social innovation and participation for an eco-social just transition. We facilitate connections, collaboration, exchange, learning, and capacity building among network members, partners and allies –co-creating and cultivating a thriving impact network. The key work areas of the enable domain are:

Membership and network development to nurture trusting relationships, attract and onboard new members, use the network map and facilitate network weaving.

Coordination and collaboration with members in project design and implementation, fostering meaningful and wide-spread engagement and value exchanges.

Communication with regular member’s mailings, and network convenings, facilitation of or participation in online and in-person events, and showcasing of CLI actions. Capacity building and support through training, resources, toolkits, methodology, and sub-granting, as well as online CfF sessions and Communities of Practice.

Network strategy and governance from the General Assembly, to co-creation, co-ownerships, shared purpose, strategic alignment and acting on network synergies.

Key network activities, highlights and results to celebrate from the year 2024 are:

Member collaboration

We have been working together with 35 member organisations in six collaborative funded projects

(C4C, COM4LGD, CURIOSOIL, ClimACT, CRIC and WAVE) and developed joint project applications with 15 members. Hosting project building sessions is a new good practice and the creativity, competence and innovation in our network greatly contributes to project results.

Community empowerment

Through the C4C initiative ECOLISE and its members are providing capacity building, facilitation, technical expertise and support to 50 local community projects in the areas of biodiversity, water, energy and circular economy as well as enabling practical learning through study visits to around 50 CLI demonstrators.

Membership development

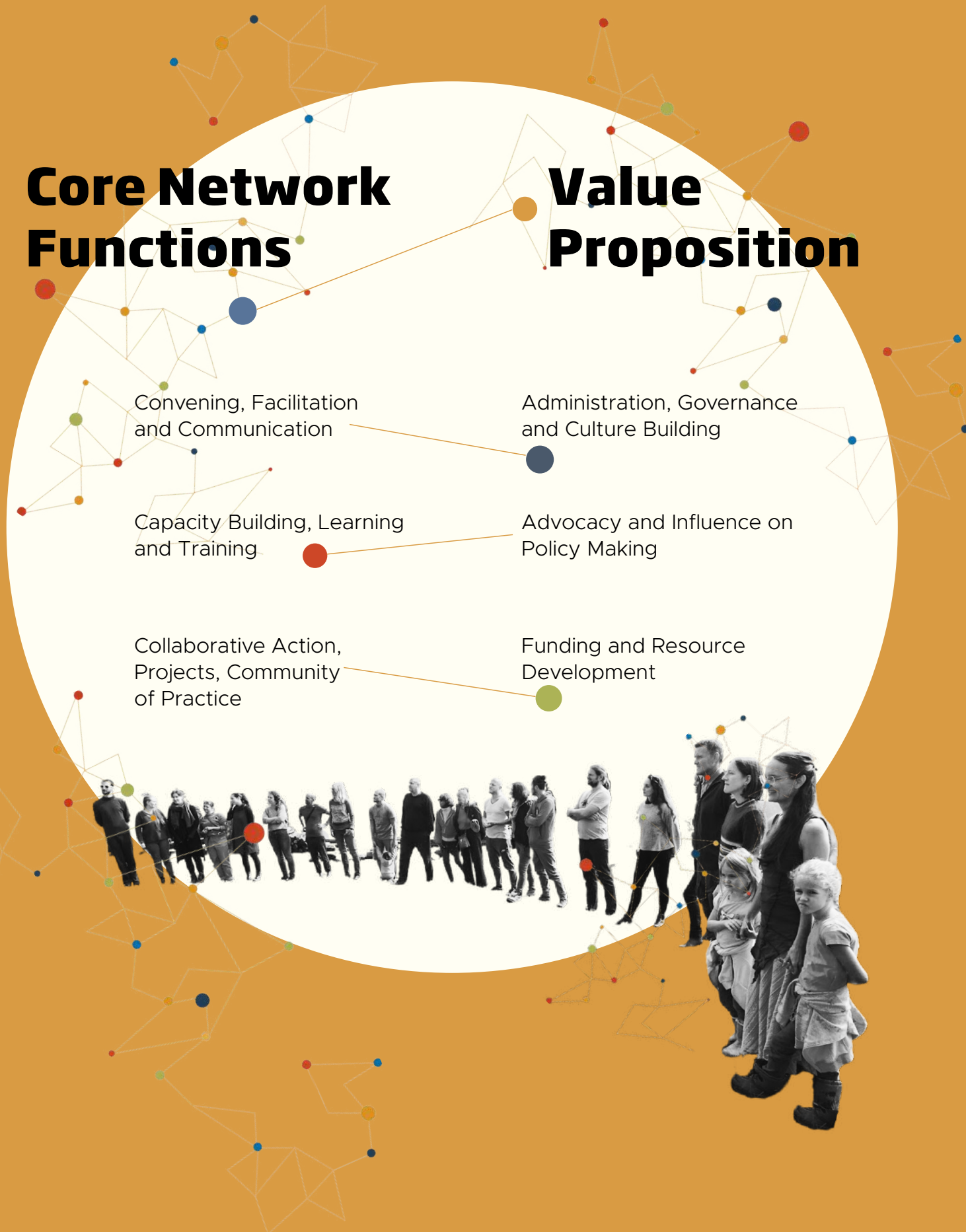
In 2024 we welcomed 4 new organisations in the national member category to the ECOLISE network: Permaculture Institute Finland, Transition Hub Belgium, GEN Germany and Evolving Cycles (Permaculture in Greece), growing to a total of 53 and wishing farewell to Croatian Permaculture exiting membership.

Network governance

For the first time after 5 years and to celebrate the 10-year anniversary, ECOLISE hosted a 4-day in-person General Assembly combined with the advocacy storytelling hosted at the ecovillage Arterra Bizimodu in Spain. We had 16 members participate on-land and another 36 people joining online for the approval of all formal documents and an engaging, connective gathering.

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Core Network Functions Value Proposition



Network map

We further developed the interactive ECOLISE network map to visualise member data in 4 different map views, adding a beautiful visual look and functionality to find and learn about other members, make connections, exchange, find collaborators and self-organise. In 2024 41 organisations and 80 people joined the map, added their profile information and showcased 558 connections.

Capacity building

We hosted one in-person advocacy storytelling training with xx members present to strengthen storytelling and campaigning skills, we trained 33 community facilitators as part of C4C in the Community Climate Coaching methodology as well as offering online CfF sessions to gain skills in campaigning, women leadership, storytelling or bioregional governance and running 3 (project related) Communities of Practices with a total of 220 regular participants.

Strategy review

ECOLISE started a strategy review process with members co-designed and facilitated by Resilience Earth with regenerative methods, in 2 online sessions 16 members joined and 12 contributed via a survey to provide feedback and input for updating ECOLISE’s purpose, principles, story of change as well as strategic goals and priority action areas.

Participatory advocacy

We have been able to continue the momentum from the 10 thesis process, time for collective action manifesto and policy event in Brussels to engage 22 members as campaign partners in raising awareness, building alliances, and running a “go vote” campaign for the EU elections in June. Members also crafted [9 stories of collective action](#) to showcase the inspiration and impact of CLIs and translating the core messages of the TCA manifesto into their local context.

Network evaluation

In the annual network health and evaluation survey 34 people from 31 member organisations provided feedback (that is 58%, an increase from 52% ad

30% in previous years). We are organically growing and optimizing across the 7 areas of network health to 3.56 total average points (3.51 and 3.20 before). By far the strongest area is purpose, followed by governance, impact and resourcing, and weakest area is communication and coordination with the greatest potential.

Future plans and vision for the network development:

More project building and funded collaborative projects with and between members building our joint fundraising and implementation capacities for real-life results.

Continued network weaving, shared leadership and distributive network structure, supporting the emergence of national network hubs and links to local CLIs.

Advance, apply and innovate CLI-based methods and regenerative approaches e.g. Community Climate Coaching, Local Transformation Toolkit, or Ecovillage Transition.

Design and facilitate co-creation and collaboration processes across scales and themes from community action, to advocacy, projects to communication or funding.

Learn, listen to feedback, adapt and evolve as a network, continuously, humbly and creatively, to stay relevant and valuable, enable network weaving and joint work.



Team

2024 has been a year of growth and transformation for the ECOLISE team. This year, our team continued to collaborate across different areas, supporting key initiatives and strengthening connections with our network. With a shared vision for sustainable and community-led change, each team member plays a vital role in advancing our mission.

At the beginning of the year there were 12 people in the ECOLISE team: Abdul Otman (CURIOSOIL Project Manager), Anastasia Oprea (FLIARA Project Manager), Duncan Crowley (Community Engagement Officer), Eamon O'Hara (Co-Director), Juan Del Río (Fundraising Lead and Project Manager), Laura Kaestele (Network Weaver), María Sánchez (Communications Lead), Nina Klein (Policy Lead), Pauliina Helle (CoDirector), Sara Silva (Project Manager and Communications Designer), Tim Strasser (Monitoring and Evaluation) and Zsófia Vidak (Administrative Officer).

We had the pleasure of introducing eight new people to the team during the year. Early in the year, we welcomed: Carmen Contreras (Content and Social Media Manager) to take charge of ECOLISE's social media presence and content revision; Laurence Modrego (Senior Policy Officer),

to boost the policy advocacy work towards the EU elections; Henrique Cachetas (Events and Tech support Officer) and Matteo Zampatti (Events and Admin Officer) to support the new Curiosoil EU-project, and to strengthen administrative and technical support due to an organisational growth curve.

Before the summer, three new team members joined: Lucia di Paola (Fundraising officer and now Fundraising Lead), to bring additional capacity for securing continued funding; Janelle Conn (Network and Membership Officer) to work in key initiatives engaging the broad membership; and Luís Costa (Operations Manager), to strengthen our management systems and practices. Towards the end of the year, we welcomed: Katerina-Shelagh Boucoyannis (COM4LGD Project Officer and Advocacy Support) who has been contributing to ECOLISE advocacy work on an on-off basis for almost two years already, since her internship in 2023.

Some other key contributors were Gisella Reina (Fundraising advisor), who supported our fundraising developments; Erika Zárate and Òscar Gussinyer from Resilience Earth who supported us with our strategy review process; Alejandro Lopez

who did our website maintenance; Jane Feeney (communications expert), who contributed to the new ECOLISE website content; Freya Barnes and Andrew Brightwell (Project Story UK) who led our storytelling workshops; Olatz de Solaeche (communications expert), who supported our EU-election campaigning and led an Instagram campaign for the European Day of Sustainable Communities; as well as four Youth Ambassadors who campaigned in Brussels for the EU-elections on ECOLISE's behalf: Amelie Krug, Inés Elvira Pérez, Sara Sousa and Sophia Orachungwong-Pochet.

In 2024, ECOLISE hosted one intern: Sophia Orachunwong-Pochet (Erasmus+ placement) - Policy Intern supporting the Time for Collective Action Manifesto campaign. In 2024, we also said goodbye to three dedicated colleagues who have played an instrumental role in ECOLISE's work. Tim Strasser and Duncan Crowley brought energy, expertise, and a deep commitment to community-led action, and their contributions as Monitoring and Evaluation Officer and Project Manager, respectively.

We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to Nina Klein for her outstanding leadership as Advocacy Lead. Her work has been instrumental in shaping ECOLISE's policy efforts, particularly through the development of the 10 Theses Towards Transformative Community-Led Local Development and the Time for Collective Action Manifesto, which will continue to guide our work.

where nominations were collected on the spot, alongside words of praise and acknowledgement for the people proposed for the roles. This led to a high number of candidates, from which only five could be selected for the open seats. All accepted their posts: Ana Margarida Esteves, from Center for International Studies of ISCTE; Magali Paulus, from CELL Luxembourg; Jason Nardi, from RIPESS Europe. And two exiting Council members reelected for a second 2-year term, as well as being elected as Co-presidents for one year:



Mieke Elzenga, Co-president, from GEN Europe and Liberta Care Foundation; Claudian Dobos, Co-president, from Romania in Transition. Two previously selected Council members continued in their role until the end of their mandate in 2025: Leonor Afonso, from GEN Europe and Merushe Zeneli, from PVN Albania.

The Council met once each month to discuss and review organisational operations. In addition, Council members played advisory roles in circles and working groups closely linked to their oversight responsibilities, including Strategy Circle, Financial Monitoring, Evolve, People Care, Fundraising, and Future of Co-director Role Working Group. The Council also helped support employment selections for new team members. Council engagement on our collaborative platform, Slack, was steady, with regular contributions.

Council

In the General Assembly in May 2024, ECOLISE conducted its formal voting session for the Council election in a hybrid setting. The election process was adapted from a sociocratic selection



Finances & Administration

We made the following improvements in the area of finances and administration:

Capacity building

We recruited 2 new team members supporting admin and event management, deliberating substantial capacities of the Admin Officer. We recruited a new Operations Lead who has been providing continuous support in improving financial and admin processes and tools. We secured funding for 2025 for a new role to oversee and coordinate financial processes (Financial Lead), after doing an in-depth analysis of the admin tasks and responsibilities. We internalised important and useful accounting knowledge and skills to manage the accounting program with the help of our external accountant.

Process development

We improved the process of reviewing and approving invoices (new Invoice tracker). We introduced new tools and practices: BitWarden, shared drives, Wise and PayPal accounts and cards, Docusign, new expense claim template, timesheet plans, budget monitoring. We harmonised accounting and admin processes (documentation of invoices, financial planning, time recording, VAT issues, reporting). We started to collaborate with the Project Circle in creating a Project Manager Manual. We started to develop an Admin Manual with user friendly articles for admins and other team members. We started to experiment with participatory budgeting by running a structured and facilitated Work and Budget planning process in the autumn. In 2025 we evaluate the process and develop it further for the next planning (autumn 2025).

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

2024 marked the final year of ECOLISE's 26-month Diversity Plan process, which implemented 11 actions to foster diversity and inclusion within ECOLISE. This work was facilitated and co-financed by the Diversity Department of Actiris, the Brussels Regional Office for Employment. Notable actions throughout the year included:

Training on ableism and mental health, raising awareness of the inclusion of special needs across the ECOLISE team, Council and beyond.

Enhancing our Recruitment Policy to better reflect inclusion and diversity principles.

Continuing the development of an inclusive image bank, using photographs sourced from within the network to ensure a more accurate representation of the network, portraying real, relatable people. Clear guidelines were established to consistently prioritise diversity and inclusion when using pictures and images in our communication.

Drafting an inclusive events procedure.

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Governance

The Organisational Transformation Circle was renamed the 'Evolve' Circle to better reflect ECOLISE's stage of continuous improvement. The term 'transformation' was no longer appropriate, as it suggests moving from one problematic or harmful state to another more desirable or healthy state. We are now in a situation where continuous incremental improvement through organisational learning and evolution is more appropriate than a fundamental transformation.

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One of the key areas of development in the past several years has been the leadership structures in ECOLISE. It's been a long process for the organisation to develop to a stage where Eamon O'Hara, as a founder and long-standing Executive Director and later Codirector, has been able to transition away from a day-to-day management and leadership role. At the end of 2024 this shift was completed and Eamon moved into an external advisory role, while Pauliina Helle remained alone in the (Co)director position. This shift was made smooth by introducing a new Operations Lead role and hiring Luís Costa for this position. The day-to-day management responsibilities are now shared between the Operations Lead, Financial Lead and People Support Lead (HR), while the Director role focuses more on overall stewarding of the organisation. This shared management

system allows for competence based selection for these roles, a more expertise-based decision-making system and more adaptability to growing and shrinking tendencies in the organisation. In the former structures the Director roles have held responsibility and leadership over all these aspects.

Other key activities of the Evolvers circle in 2024 included:

Initiating a process to update and simplify the sociocratic circle structure, clarify the domains (purpose and key responsibilities) of all circles and roles in the organisation, and visualise these in an accessible and easy to update way using the Maptio tool. Improving the structure and efficiency of team meetings by clarifying responsibilities for agenda curation and facilitation, being intentional about who needs to attend, starting more on time, reminding of our relational agreements, and doing check-outs in breakouts with intentional questions for connection.

Establishing a group of 'Process Coaches' from team members who are most knowledgeable to support proposal forming, consent-based decision-making, and retrospectives for adaptive work planning and process improvement.

Stronger integration of strategic evaluation processes in the (tri)annual work planning cycles through clearer focus on defining measurable targets per annual objective, and retrospectives that include capturing and reflecting on monitoring data.

Evaluating the results of ECOLISE's key initiatives—the Time for Collective Action advocacy campaign and the European Day of Sustainable Communities— and harvesting learnings and recommendations for the operational and high-level strategy, as well as internal governance.

With a vision of further developing a strong participatory culture within ECOLISE, the processes that led to both the work and budget plans for 2025 were designed in order to make sure that every voice in the team matters. After hearing from everyone in the team what they believed should be the working priorities for 2025, a proposal was drafted that included five key objectives for the upcoming year:

- 1) Members, partners, and team shape and communicate a political narrative and strong policy positioning while identifying and acting upon key leverage points and barriers in EU policies
- 2) Enhanced fundraising capacity to establish flexible and unrestricted funds that effectively fund core work and emerging needs; ensure financial stability for long-term contracts and competitive fee rates for contributors; and support member participation in the network and its activities and in project-building activities.
- 3) Cultivate an impact network that enables meaningful engagement and collaboration of members in network governance, strategy, and implementation.
- 4) Develop a strong evidence base of the contributions of Community-Led Initiatives to climate and environmental action and societal transformation is collected and communicated.
- 5) Improve clarity of the responsibilities of circles and roles and of decision-making processes, and strengthen cross-domain collaboration.

The choice for fewer objectives was very intentional, with the aim of creating more focus and clarity around where to allocate resources. The previous five objectives also reflect a hierarchy of priorities, which can support the team in making important decisions throughout the next year. With a stronger understanding of the main directions that ECOLISE wants to explore in 2025, it became easier to allocate the budget around the different circles of the organisation. In a process

that involved all the circle leads, and in a scenario constrained by considerable budget reductions compared to 2024, it was possible to achieve before the end of the year a feasible budget for 2025 consented by the entire team.

With many aspects still to be improved for next year, it is a tremendous celebration to go through such conversations that are very challenging for trying to hold many different views together and find a common space that feels safe enough for everyone to jump into.

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04 **Challenges & Learnings**

Challenges & Learnings

The advocacy campaign coordinated by ECOLISE's policy team, in cooperation with the communications team, showed ECOLISE's messages have strong outreach potential among EU policymakers and stakeholders. Mobilising community-led initiatives for political engagement is crucial for transformative change, yet it tends to overwhelm already overburdened people and organisations. "Ambassador" roles – such as the youth ambassadors who participated in the campaign – could help harness the potential and passion of ECOLISE network supporters willing to engage politically and do advocacy work, based on agreed policy positionings such as the Time for Collective Action Manifesto.

Despite the campaign's promising advocacy potential, it was not possible to implement the "harvesting" phase of the campaign, which was planned for the time after the hot phase of the campaign (that is for autumn and winter 2024). This phase was intended to involve policymakers, build relationships, and spark discussions around the Time for Collective Action Manifesto – effectively bringing the campaign's outcomes to the 'Brussels bubble' of policymaking. However, due to ECOLISE's heavy reliance on EU projects funding and a lack of core funding, financial support for this crucial work was unavailable, leading to a situation where core work of the organisation is underfunded. ECOLISE is not alone in this fragile situation, most of Brussels-based NGOs on climate and environment are EU project funded, competing with each other for scarce resources.

With the outcome of the European elections for the European parliament, and the new political majority for conservative and extreme right groups, this fragile situation is set to become worse and funding opportunities for advocacy will become

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even scarcer. This is why the key demand of the Manifesto is to provide core funding for the work of community-led initiatives and organisations engaged in care work for the planet and the people. Ensuring a stable and thriving civil society is important at all levels, including EU policymaking, where lobbying by industrial heavy weights creates an uneven playing field of influence.

The 2024 European Day of Sustainable Communities (EDSC) campaign demonstrated that a simpler and more targeted approach – focusing on building an image bank for digital storytelling, rather than promoting events of CLIs around Europe– significantly reduced resource expenditure. Additionally, outsourcing video and image production generated a much higher return on investment than in previous years. Another key takeaway is that ECOLISE’s outreach is more effective when actively engaging in existing conversations, contacting specific people directly with invitations and requests (for photos, stories, etc), more than inviting others to join our events, sending non-targeted invitations to contribute to our campaigns, or expect that people beyond our bubble will engage with information on our social media channels. This might imply joining threads happening on social media and conversations at events of other organisations with higher visibility. However such active outreach also requires increased capacity for a campaigns coordinator role in ECOLISE.

The EDSC campaign also helped to create an updated database of member communications teams, which we can leverage for future campaigns and more collaborative outreach efforts, as well as a contact database of potential members and partners that can be useful for our future advocacy work. In general, the Inspire team is working on a more focused social media strategy for concentrating our outreach efforts on key channels: LinkedIn for reaching policy actors and partner organisations, and Instagram for reaching the wider public.

A key challenge from working to connect and engage our members is nurturing strong, trusting and collaborative relationships with a growing

network of 50+ members. This process is time-intensive and ideally needs to be organic and distributed across the team. While ECOLISE still largely operates as an organisation, shifting towards a stronger network-oriented approach –such as the participatory policy positioning process– could help to broaden our engagement and influence. This shift may require internal mindset changes, capacity building and increased funding capacity for participatory processes.

Some additional learning from our member engagement work include:

Need to create more focus and coherence and direct actions to generating value and impact.

Link and support members more to empower local CLIs through funding, collaboration, innovation.

Facilitate more value exchanges within the network (knowledge, skills, care, experiences).

Break out of bubbles, making new relationships to deliver new outcomes.

Organise national-level activities such as connecting with MEPs, linking CLI actors, and building capacities to ensure ECOLISE’s work remains engaging, locally relevant, and adequately communicated.

Share support and inspiration with good practices for local CLIs and collaboration with local governments plus access to funding.

The experiences from 2024 highlighted the need for:

A more systematic and testable theory of change for ECOLISE’s high-level strategy and specific campaigns and projects.

Specifically, it’s important to articulate in more explicit and precise terms the change assumptions about how planned activities are supposed to lead to desired outcomes for specific target groups. This is foundational for making monitoring and evaluation serve a more strategic function of learning about and improving the impact of our work, based on better evidence and systematic analysis of how change happens.

A unifying focus on flagship projects that involve strong cross-domain collaboration and receive realistic structural resources for the core work to deliver these. This remains challenging as long as ECOLISE relies predominantly on project funding and lacks a strong framework of direction, priorities and processes for the core work of ECOLISE.

Increased core capacity, on top of project work - an ongoing barrier for deepening our impact - is vital for continuous campaigning throughout the year, following up on EU parliamentarians that are now elected, contacting new partners and building deeper relationship with external partners, using participatory processes for preparing and implementing campaigns, and having deeper conversations around our theory of change and reflecting on how to adjust our goals and strategies.

Becoming more of a ‘network organisation’ that uses a mushrooming approach for our policy work by engaging effectively with partners and members in creating wider ripples of impact.





05 **The Future**

The Future

ECOLISE's core vision is what makes it unique, guiding our mission and values while ensuring cohesion among all collaborators. This needs to be preserved. We need to ensure that it is well communicated and that our ongoing activities are aligned with our collective vision. To achieve this, we need an efficient process to continuously identify and address any misalignment and respond to related questions or concerns. The source role plays a key part in this, and engaging other team and Council members can further enrich this work and support long-term continuity.

A long-term goal - What could we aim for?

To bring more clarity to the ECOLISE vision, it can help to translate this into a tangible, long-term goal, with a clear, realistic pathway. Building on discussions in 2022/2023, one possible main goal could be: Every local community (place-based) in the EU (including candidate and applicant countries) has access to the resources and support needed to develop and implement a community-led initiative for an inclusive eco-social transition, and is encouraged and supported to use this opportunity through public policy initiatives at all levels.

Charting a credible pathway - How could we get there?

As ECOLISE plans for the next five years (towards 2030), we need to take account of our existing resource base, network, funding currently secured, and realistic fundraising prospects, as this largely defines our scope of action. We should also learn from and build on the experience and knowledge accumulated over 10 years. Taking this into account, the unique role ECOLISE can play in the coming years, in order to achieve universal or mainstream support for citizen engagement in CLIs, is to develop and strengthen work with

members and partners to pilot and demonstrate CLI action in diverse communities. This can be achieved through direct interventions (e.g. capacity building, seed funding), and indirectly by improving access to existing policy support. Through these activities we can gain important insights to inform improvements in mainstream policy support, while also building awareness about CLI action. This work could focus on the following priorities:

Piloting, demonstration and seed funding that progressively builds a network of model CLIs in diverse areas across Europe, helping to inspire broader action by communities, while also establishing a Europe-wide network of partners (national hubs, demonstrators, experts/coaches, LAGs, local authorities, thematic experts, and more) that can help catalyse and support these CLIs.

Capacity building for partners at all levels in order to develop the skills and competences needed to successfully support expanding the movement of CLIs.

Inspiring broader change in communities: working with partners at country level to share the stories of CLIs in diverse areas and to develop the positive and hopeful narrative of a community-led eco-social transformation.

Harvesting knowledge and learning: harvest the learning and experience of pilot/demonstration actions and other CLI related research to support policy/advocacy work, and to support awareness raising and capacity building.

Advocacy for improved mainstream policy support, drawing on the lessons and experiences of CLIs in diverse areas to highlight the potential contribution to broader policy goals, identify the challenges, needs and policy interventions required, and advocating for policy change as well as improvements in policy implementation.

By advancing these priorities, ECOLISE can play a crucial role in enabling and strengthening community-led action across Europe, ensuring that CLIs receive the support they need to thrive and drive transformative change.

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