

LIFE BIOBEST

GUIDING THE MAINSTREAMING OF BEST BIO-WASTE RECYCLING
PRACTICES IN EUROPE

D3.4: Country Factsheets on the analysis of communication and engagement practices

WP3: Set of Guidelines

T3.4: Analysis of communication and engagement practices

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Public Report



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N°4: Factsheet on Exemplary Communication and Engagement Strategies for bio-waste collection | Spain: Promotional Interventions for Community Composting in Pallars Sobirà

Nestled in northeastern Catalonia, the Pallars Sobirà region is characterised by its mountainous landscape and low population density, presenting unique challenges in waste management, exacerbated by seasonal fluctuations driven by tourism. Beginning in 2006, public authorities initiated a few community composting points, gradually expanding the programme alongside a D-t-D collection system for kitchen waste launched in 2015.

To encourage participation in composting initiatives, punctual and regular awareness-raising strategies have been implemented. Additionally, campaigns promoting community composting have been organised, featuring educational events and the distribution of locally produced compost. These dedicated communication and information activities position Pallars Sobirà as an exemplary case for municipalities seeking to effectively promote community composting among their citizens.

PALLARS SOBIRÀ		
Population	Density (inhab./km²)	Type
7,427 (2023)	5.6	Rural and isolated
Background elements		
<p>The Pallars Sobirà region, situated in the province of Lleida, Spain, spans 1,378 km² and is characterised by its mountainous terrain, making access challenging. Formed by 15 municipalities and 135 villages scattered along the Noguera Pallaresa river, the population of the region is concentrated in the valley bottoms, notably in Sort, the capital of the region (with 2,244 residents), Rialp (with 667 residents), and Esterrri d'Àneu (with 874 residents).</p> <p>It's noteworthy that the region's low population density, the lowest among all Catalonia's counties, significantly influences its labour market dynamics. It is a tourist region so waste generation is affected by second homes and the seasonal population that increases both in the winter months (mountain and ski activities) and in the summer months, too.</p>		

Bio-waste collection model

In Pallars Sobirà, bio-waste management involves both community composting and D-t-D collection systems. Communication activities to promote these two types of system account for 2-4% of the waste department budget of the county council.

Community composting began with a pilot test in 2006 and has gradually expanded its implementation, with today seeing more than 60 composters in use and only a couple of villages remaining to implement it. Community composting is implemented in the small mountain villages. The bio-waste gathered from various community composting areas is managed directly on-site, with the resulting compost distributed to residents.



Image 1. Community Composters next to a bring point.

Source: Pallars Sobirà [website](#)

- **D-t-D collection of kitchen waste** started in 2015 in the urban areas of the valley area (25 villages) and bio-waste is collected three times a week. It's important to note that collection frequencies of the different waste fractions for commercial activities, including bio-waste, depend on the period of high or low tourist intensity. This variability depends mainly on tourist pressure from skiing and summer sports. The bio-waste collected through the D-t-D system is processed at Sort's composting facility (small-scale facility of 750 tonnes/yr). This facility is equipped with aerated composting technology in silos.

Best Practices description

To promote community composting among its residents, Pallar Sobirà has implemented a range of awareness-raising and information strategies tailored to different segments of the population that have been disseminated through various channels.

1. **Punctual activities supporting the implementation of community composting points**

Each time a new community composting point is set up in a village of the region, specific awareness-raising activities have been implemented to inform residents and encourage their participation, including:

- **Teaser leaflets** distributed across the area prior to the installation of community composting to inform the residents;
- **Information letters** sent out, detailing the dates scheduled for the environmental educators to visit each area;
- **Neighbourhood meetings** were organised during the gradual implementation process to address queries and bolster understanding of the most optimal composting techniques;
- Online and face-to-face **training sessions on community composting** were organised for the residents.



Image 2. Community Composter with informative poster.

Source: Pallars Sobirà [website](#)



Image 3. Technical staff managing the composter.

Source: Pallars Sobirà [website](#)

2. Regular activities:

Specific activities were organised on an ongoing basis to support the deployment and continued proper use of the community composters. These include:

- **Specialised technical staff** (currently one full-time dedicated person) manage the various community composting sites, to maintain the health of the compost and warn of potential problems;
- A **manual about community composting** was created and disseminated locally;
- **Kitchen caddies and compostable bags** are distributed to all citizens covered by D-t-D bio-waste collection or with access to community composters, to encourage the sorting of bio-waste at home using clean, easy-to-use equipment. They are distributed at the beginning of the setting-up of a new

community composting site but can also be requested directly at the city council for free.

- A **telephone hotline** was set up for citizens who need assistance from the city council.

3. Awareness-raising campaigns:

- In 2021, a campaign to promote community composting was organised to raise the profile of this practice among citizens:
 - A team of environmental educators visited all the households in the towns with community composting points and explained how to make good use of composters;
 - The campaign culminated on February 19, 2022, with a celebration at the Sort composting plant, featuring a training session on community composting and family-friendly activities.
 - An [explanatory video](#) demonstrating the process of community composting was produced and disseminated across multiple platforms, including websites, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc.



Image 4. Schoolchildren visiting the composting facility.

- A complementary campaign included the **distribution of locally produced compost**, branded as "Compost Pallars Sobirà," along with awareness-raising activities.
 - The council's municipal waste collection service distributed a total of **80 tonnes of "Compost Pallars Sobirà"** from the Sort composting plant to all 15 municipalities within the county.

- Additionally, **compost was provided to local campsites** and both **virtual and in-person guidance** on its proper utilisation were offered.
- **Roll-ups and vinyl tents featuring the "Compost Pallars Sobirà" logo** were created and showcased at various regional markets, municipal events, and county council gatherings.
- **Activities showcasing the bio-waste cycle** following a fork-to-farm approach were conducted, which received subsidies under the Circular Economy Projects Grant from the Catalan Waste Agency in 2017.
- **Guided tours of the Sort composting plant** were organised, with educational materials being created to help illustrate how compost was being distributed locally, and labelled compost sachets were prepared for distribution during plant visits.



Image 5. Poster about compost distributed within each village

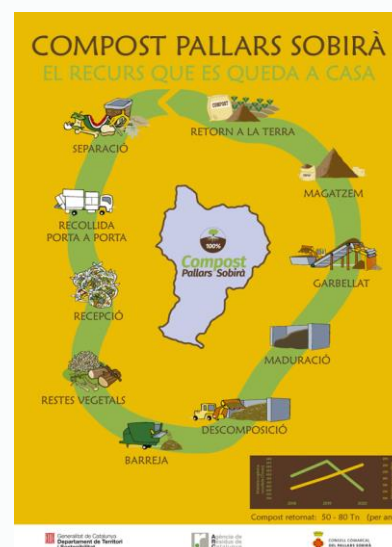


Image 6. The cycle of bio-waste in the county



Image 7. Compost bags for distribution, labelled "Compost Pallars Sobirà" with information on gardening applications.

Key results

<p>Change in participation</p>	<p>Data analysis revealed an increase in participation and improvement in engagement levels. Following this trend, the need for installing new community composters in several towns became apparent after a few months.</p>
<p>MSW separate collection rate</p>	<p>60%</p>
<p>MSW generation per capita (2022)</p>	<p>658 kg/inhab./yr</p>
<p>Residual waste generation per capita (2022)</p>	<p>262 kg/inhab./yr</p>
<p>Bio-waste collection per capita (2022)</p>	<p>88 kg/inhab./yr bio-waste separately collected 26 kg/inhab./yr bio-waste treated in community composting</p>

<p>Tonnes of compost produced</p>	<p>The community composters process between 170 and 185 tonnes of organic matter per year, producing around 10 tonnes of compost.</p> <p>There was a 4.5% increase in the amount of organic material composted since the programme began.</p>
<p>Impurities in bio-waste (% of weight)</p>	<p>2%</p>

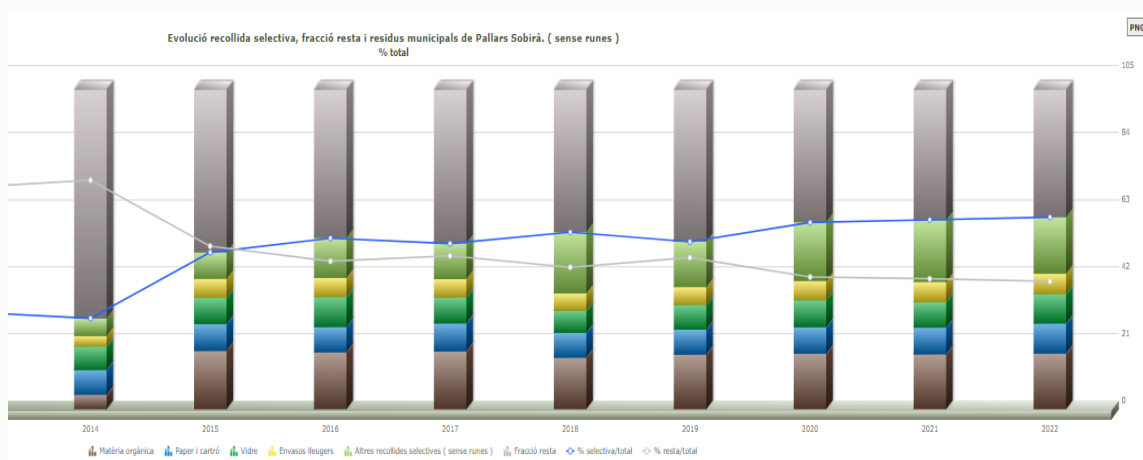


Image 8. Evolution of waste collection in Pallars Sobirà from 2014 to 2022 - showing the bio-waste collected locally after the D-t-D scheme implemented in mid-2015 and the subsequent reduction in residual waste.

Lessons learned

- **Users need to see the results of their action to adhere to the system.**
- D-t-D surveys and **direct engagement** with users are essential for raising awareness and providing clear explanations about the composting process.
- Including **master composters** to follow the composting process and resolve issues as they arise.
- Distributing the compost produced **allows users to see the tangible results of their participation**, reinforcing their understanding and trust in the system and, ultimately, their involvement.



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