



THE JUSTNATURE CONSORTIUM MET IN VIENNA AND SZOMBATHELY DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF APRIL 2025 FOR THE SEVENTH PROJECT MEETING AND FIFTH COLLABORATIVE CIPEL WORKSHOP.



JUSTNature partners in Szombathely after the 7th Joint Project Meeting, on April 3rd 2025. Photo: Katalin Lutor.

The JUSTNature Consortium met in early April 2025 to celebrate the 5th Collaborative CiPeL Workshop in Vienna, Austria, and to hold the 7th Joint Project Meeting in Szombathely, Hungary. In the course of three days, representatives of all JUSTNature City Practice Labs (CiPeLs) and partner organisations carried out a collaborative review of the latest project-related progress, including implementation and exploitation tasks. As the project navigates its final year, the meeting was also the opportunity for the Consortium to discuss the impact of our actions and the best ways to secure long-term effects.

DAY 1

5TH COLLABORATIVE CIPEL WORKSHOP

The event kicked off on April 1st in Vienna, Austria, with the project's **fifth Collaborative CiPeL Workshop**, held at the **Austrian Institute of Technology (AIT)**. The Consortium was welcomed by Gudrun Haindlmaier, Tanja Tötzer, Martin Jung and Elena Stefanich, who introduced us to the institute's **City Intelligence Lab (CIL)**, an incubator of AIT exploring urban development through the use of digital tools. The CIL team gave us a presentation on their most outstanding initiatives, primarily focused on the co-creation of innovative, intelligent urban solutions. From simulations to interactive visualisation

software and artificial intelligence (AI) tools, the Consortium gained insights into a range of **digital technologies** that place climate adaptation at the centre of urban projects –ranging from air quality to thermal comfort standards and greening. The presentation was followed by a round of questions and open discussion, where the JUSTNature partners explored the potential uses of these tools in their specific contexts. Key points of the exchange evolved around the role of digital tools in the **maintenance** of Nature-based Solutions (NbS), as well as costs and benefits of these technologies for cities.



The second session of the CCW5, a **Digital Twins Session**, was led by Dr. Koldo Urrutia Azcona, from IES, and focused on the use of the digital twins tool developed by them in the context of the JUSTNature project. City representatives were given time to explore the tool’s range of features using models that represent their cities and pilot sites. This allowed them to simulate diverse climatic conditions in different seasons, and to test their interventions under varying **thermal comfort conditions**. The workshop laid the groundwork for the future Local Stakeholder Workshops, where CiPeL representatives will be using the digital twins tool with their communities.

The afternoon gave way to two sessions organised by ABUD, both following the main topic of the **CCW5: Digital Solutions in the CiPeLs**. During the first one, our colleague Viktor Bukovszki introduced the co-governance platform, and project partners had the opportunity to test the JUSTNature app in their phones, giving their input on how user-friendly and intuitive it is. The user experience (UX) testing allowed for collective feedback on the app’s main features, reinforcing thus its co-creation and contributing to its future effectiveness. The second workshop, also led by ABUD representatives, focused on the **ethics of artificial general intelligence**, particularly in relation to its use for nature-related projects. The interactive session invited participants to reflect on the topic of **justice in digitalisation**, as well as on the (potential) usefulness of AI in the conservation of natural ecosystems and the fight against climate change. Through thought-provoking questions, the debate delved into the issue of decision-making –specifically, where the power should lie– while also addressing the ethical boundaries surrounding the use of AI.

The day concluded with a final open-discussion session moderated by Prospex Institute with contributions from the Technical University of Crete, IES and ABUD, dedicated to answering questions from city representatives, sharing reflections arising from the day’s activities, and exchanging on JUSTNature’s digital solutions for green urban development.



DAY 2

7TH PROJECT MEETING

April 2nd marked the beginning of the **7th Joint Project Meeting** in Szombathely, Hungary. We were officially greeted by the **Mayor, Dr. András Nemény**, who expressed how happy he was to welcome the JUSTNature Consortium back in Szombathely. Two years after our last visit (on the occasion of the 3rd Project Meeting), the Mayor was particularly proud to see how his earlier welcome speech –celebrating the plans for the city’s pilot sites– had now become a reality.

The morning then gave way to a comprehensive review of the project’s advancement and activities from the past semester, with presentations from each of the work package teams. The first one was held by the project coordinators from EURAC Research, who outlined JUSTNature’s overall progress, including on-going and completed tasks, as well as key achieved and upcoming milestones. Financial matters and reporting were discussed, and the last steps in bringing the **Gender Equity Strategy** to full implementation were presented, marking the final phase of the project. The **Ethics Committee** then took the floor, focusing on ethical considerations and **research integrity** in both theoretical and practical contexts. The case of regional events involving local communities and vulnerable groups was subject to discussion, since conflict can often arise in co-governance and co-creation processes. The session transitioned into a **group activity**, during which participants gathered in small groups to examine specific scenarios, exchanging perspectives on potential ethical conflicts and strategies to address them. The discussion topics were:

- Co-evaluation: managing risks and benefits when involving vulnerable groups.
- Strategies for gender-sensitive communication and events.
- Data governance within the context of digital products (e.g. digital twins).
- Handling conflict during local events.



After collectively reviewing the main takeaways from each of the group discussions, the University of Malta and the Institute for Urban Excellence (former ISOCARP Institute) shared insights on the project's latest communication and dissemination activities. With the project navigating its final year, special emphasis was put on **exploitation strategies**, and ensuring the project's impact remains relevant and influential beyond its formal conclusion. In that sense, a partnership with the initiative *What's that Green?* for the production of a series of podcast episodes featuring JUSTNature CiPeL representatives was announced.

It was then the turn for the Inlecom colleagues to provide updates on the **Entrepreneurial Activation Process** and business plans in the CiPeLs. Key points of their presentation included strategies to engage with the private sector (including SMEs), tailoring business plans to the local context of each city, actions to ensure the project's results and innovations are properly exploited, and increasing the tangible impact of JUSTNature. Afterwards, the Technical University of Munich team and the ABUD team shared updates on the latest co-governance tasks and deliverables, including the soon to be released third Learning Log session, as well as the development of the final draft for **NbS co-governance protocols**. Their presentation also covered the new development of a handbook and training toolkit on co-governance capabilities and interventions, which counts with input from all work packages.



In the afternoon, our colleagues from IES, University of Crete and ABUD reviewed the project's latest digital-related developments. From the digital twins tool to the co-governance platform and data management strategies, their presentation gave way to an exchange of ideas on how to make the best use of the technologies already in-place at the CiPeLs. **Data collection and storage** were at the centre of the discussion: recognised as powerful assets now available to the cities, clear strategies to maintain and continue leveraging them after the project formally concludes are essential. Later on, E2ARC provided an overview of the **NbS implementation** status in the CiPeLs, highlighting the work done and the outstanding transformations that have taken place in the last year. Procurement issues and other delays were examined, and the maintenance of NbS was also part of the discussion. Lastly, the coming steps for the **cross-learning activities**, as well as a new approach to multi-lateral exchange workshops were presented.

The day wrapped up with two **site visits**: first, the Consortium went to Dési Huber István Primary School, where we were welcomed by the school's headmaster and two teachers. They guided us through the transformed schoolyard, one of the CiPeLs pilot sites which was intervened with NbS and turned into a more sustainable, nature-oriented space. The group then headed to the recently inaugurated Százhold park, an eco-friendly green space located along the Gyöngyös river, now featuring walkways, seating

areas, fitness stations, natural play equipment, a small stage for events, and even a Miyawaki forest. We were thrilled to see the transformation of both sites, which had been visited by the Consortium two years ago, when construction works had not yet begun, and concrete was dominating the scene.



DAY 3

The morning of the third day centred on the City Practice Labs. First, Prospex Institute gave a presentation on **CiPeL co-facilitation and operationalisation**, highlighting some of the most important milestones taking place in each of the JUSTNature cities. An overview of the latest and upcoming Local Stakeholder Workshops was given, together with their main objectives. The session also brought up the question of how to best ensure that the experiences and lessons learnt by city partners be shared outside of the project, reaching a wide range of stakeholders and initiatives. After that, city representatives shared the latest developments in their CiPeLs, addressing both key achievements and encountered challenges in Leuven (Belgium), Munich (Germany), Szombathely (Hungary), Chania (Greece), Gzira (Malta), Bolzano and Merano (Italy) respectively. The presentations covered NbS implementation, citizen engagement activities, data collection, and progress on entrepreneurial activation activities, as well as the main plans for the months ahead.

It was then the time for our partners from EURAC Research, University of Crete and ABUD to share insights related to the **monitoring and evaluation** of the NbS interventions. They referred to the analysis of data collected from the pilot site sensors, its evaluation and the future steps towards designing and developing policies informed by them, providing thus a clear impact pathway extending beyond the end of the JUSTNature project. Later on, EURAC Research presented possible strategies to further exploit the work conducted with socio-ecological profiles and identification of **NbS potential** in cities, as well as the JUSTPlanT toolkit. We are convinced to have developed informative, innovative tools and services within the JUSTNature project, and look forward to having our experiences and research be of use to a larger community!

And so the 7th Project Meeting concluded, after a brief open General Assembly session, where the Consortium discussed the organisation of the project's upcoming events: the next Joint Project Meeting and our Final Conference. We look forward to them!



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