

## Responding to consumers' needs: a qualitative assessment. The Organic Farming Innovations Network Europe (OH-FINE) project

EU workshop

29 - 30 April 2026 | The Building Hotel, Rome

### Speakers' list

**Ángel Adell**, EURADIA-BETANIA – Spain



Founder and Managing Director of EURADIA INTERNATIONAL. With specialist training in European law, he is a lecturer and member of the Academic Board of the Master's Degree in Globalisation and Innovation at Carlos III University of Madrid, and an expert consultant on European projects (specialising in regional development, innovation and technology centres). In the field of R&D&I, he has designed and led projects under the 5th, 6th and 7th Framework Programmes and Horizon 2020, as well as in innovation (CIP), the environment (LIFE) and SME R&D (Eurostars).

EURADIA-BETANIA is a specialized organization with expertise in the exploitation and market uptake of research results. With a solid track record in translating scientific knowledge into practical applications, EURADIA-BETANIA bridges the gap between research innovation and real-world impact. The company has the infrastructure, technical expertise, and industry connections necessary to advance innovative methodologies and ensure their scalability and sustainability. EURADIA-BETANIA also excels at designing user-centric digital tools and facilitating effective knowledge transfer, making it a valuable partner in projects that require the integration of cutting-edge technologies and stakeholder collaboration. In the OH-FINE project, EURADIA-BETANIA plays a central role by leading the design and development of the ICT platform and associated tools, ensuring that they meet user needs and comply with ethical and legal standards. The company also oversees tasks related to the design of the Decision Support System (DSS) and the Platform Data Store, facilitating the seamless integration of project data from all work packages. In addition, EURADIA-BETANIA will promote knowledge transfer by developing training modules, guidelines, and dissemination strategies to ensure that project results reach a wide audience. As a key partner in exploitation activities, EURADIA-BETANIA will also develop strategies for scaling up and sustaining project results beyond the project's lifetime.

**Raquel Arroyo Palomares**, Institute of Natural Resources and Agrobiology of Salamanca (IRNASA-CSIC) – Spain



Raquel Arroyo Palomares holds a degree in Agricultural engineering from the Polytechnic University of Madrid (UPM) along with an Advanced Studies Diploma in Food Science, Technology, and Engineering. Since 2013, she has been leading the Muñovela Experimental Farm, a farm belonging to the IRNASA-CSIC (Institute of Natural Resources and Agrobiology of Salamanca-Spanish National Research Council). Raquel participates in several European and national innovation and rural development projects and in the transfer of knowledge and technology to the agricultural sector, in order to get a more profitable and sustainable activity. She is the coordinator of the European OH-FINE project.

The Institute of Natural Resources and Agrobiology of Salamanca (IRNASA) is a center of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), the largest public research organization in Spain. IRNASA-CSIC carries out multidisciplinary research in different fields related to agricultural crops and their products, environmental conservation, and animal health. IRNASA-CSIC also promotes the exchange of knowledge with different stakeholders for more profitable and sustainable agriculture, in which its experimental farm 'Muñovela' plays a key role. CSIC is responsible for the overall coordination, administration, and management of the of the OH-FINE project, ensuring its efficient operation. In addition, CSIC participates in the Organic Farming Learning Community (OFC) and the Organic Farming Regional Knowledge Hub in Spain, develops field trials (1 livestock trial and 3 field trials), organizes the first forum in Spain, cross-visits and field demonstrations, and collaborates with other EIP-Agri Operational Group projects and European projects.

**Lieve De Cock**, Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food – Belgium



Lieve De Cock is a researcher at the Social Sciences Unit of the Flemish Institute for Agricultural, Fisheries and Food Research (ILVO) in Belgium. For many years, she has supported the organic sector by facilitating research, fostering collaboration, and encouraging knowledge exchange and joint learning. She is involved in several European and national research projects focusing on the socio-economic aspects of agroecology and organic farming. Building on this experience, Lieve helps facilitate the Living Lab Agroecology and Organic Farming in Flanders (LLAEBIO), a network open to all individuals and organizations who wish to support the development of agroecology and organic

farming in Flanders. Within the OH-FINE project, she is Work Package Leader for the Organic Farming Learning Community, where she oversees its design, coordination, and implementation.

The Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food (EV ILVO) is an independent research institute of the Flanders Government that focuses on generating knowledge for more sustainability in agriculture, fisheries, and agri-food sectors. Based in Flanders, EV ILVO operates throughout Belgium, Europe, and the rest of the world, with four main units: Plant, Animal, Technology & Food, and Social Sciences. It also features six living labs for co-creative research, connecting researchers, end-users, stakeholders, citizens, and regions.

#### **Bianca Ferraiolo**, Active Citizenship Network – Belgium



Bianca Ferraiolo is the Head of the Cittadinanzattiva – Active Citizenship Network's Representative Office to the EU, a position she has held since its opening in March 2015, working as Senior Manager for European Affairs.

She is involved in many European-level activities, with a particular focus on health and patient advocacy issues and represents Cittadinanzattiva – Active Citizenship Network in several multi-stakeholder initiatives. She also liaises with all relevant stakeholders, including umbrella and national patient associations, private companies, and European institutions. She was responsible for establishing and manages the secretariats of the Members of the European Parliament Interest Groups “European Patients’ Rights & Cross-Border Healthcare” (2015) and “SDGs for Well-Being and Consumers’ Protection” (2021). She is also actively involved in European project management and the organisation of important European initiatives, such as the “European Patients’ Rights Day”.

She is a certified pharmacist, holds a master's degree in chemistry and a postgraduate diploma in marketing and communications.

#### **Mariano Votta**, Active Citizenship Network - Italy



Mariano Votta is graduated in Political Science at University of Rome. He has a Master in European Public Relations and a Master in Corporate Social Responsibility. In July 2013 he was nominated Responsible of EU Affairs at Cittadinanzattiva and Director of Active Citizenship Network, the European interface of the Italian civic organization Cittadinanzattiva, responsible for the international relations with public and private stakeholders such as the European Commission, EU Parliament, EESC, companies.

He is a freelance journalist and programme manager too, with more than 10 years working in the field of citizens' rights, civic information, evaluation of quality standards in services provided by Public Administration and public companies. Between 2011 and 2012 he worked as consultant for the United Nations Development Programme in Colombia, to assert a new governance in the managing of Public Services and Health. In that Country, Cittadinanzattiva opened several Citizen Advisory Centre on Public Services and Health. In 2015 he took the initiative to encourage and promote the MEPs Interest Group focused on patients' rights called "European Patients' Rights and Cross-border Healthcare" inside the EU Parliament.

### Participants' list

#### Roberto Barceló Vivancos, CONSUMUR – Spain



Roberto Barceló Vivancos has dedicated several decades to consumer advocacy and civic engagement, playing a key role in shaping consumer protection in Spain, particularly in the Murcia region. He began his career as Secretary-General of Crecer and a founding member of the national association (1983–1989). He later held several senior positions, including Vice-President of FAMDIF (1989) and Managing Director (2002–2005), as well as President of the Unión de Consumidores de España (UCE) in the Murcia Region (1995–2003) and of the Murcia Consumer Institute Foundation. He has also contributed at institutional level as a member of the Economic and Social Council (CES) and as a Board member of FACUA Spain (2005–2016). In parallel, he has led key civil society initiatives, including founding and presiding over the Volunteering Platform of the Region of Murcia (currently President) and Antropología Global. Since 2003, he has been the founder and President of CONSUMUR, the Online Association of Consumers and Users.

CONSUMUR is a non-profit organisation dedicated to defending the rights and interests of citizens as consumers. Its activities include legal defence, information and awareness-raising, training, and the promotion of active social participation. The organisation focuses on protecting consumer rights, with particular attention to vulnerable groups, while safeguarding health, safety, and quality of life. It represents citizens in institutional processes and promotes their active role in public life.

CONSUMUR provides guidance, legal advice, and technical assistance, and promotes mediation and arbitration as effective tools for dispute resolution. It also contributes to improving the regulatory framework through collaboration with public authorities at local, national, European, and international level. Through dialogue with stakeholders, cooperation with social organisations, and initiatives in communication, awareness-raising, and volunteering, CONSUMUR works to strengthen consumer rights and support social welfare.

**Carmelo Benenti**, European Consumers Union (ECU) – Belgium



In April 2025, Carmelo Benenti was elected President of ECU – the European Consumers Union, renewing the association’s leadership and guiding a comprehensive restructuring of its European board with a new team. He is a lawyer specialized in consumer protection. In his role, he coordinates ECU’s advocacy activities, oversees organizational development, and promotes joint initiatives among the European associations that make up the network. His work focuses on ensuring that citizens’ voices are heard, that their rights are effectively protected, and that institutions – both local and European – recognize ECU as a competent, authoritative, and solution-oriented counterpart. ECU – the European Consumers Union is a European network established to connect the local needs of citizens with the major global challenges shaping today’s markets. It provides listening and case-handling services for consumer issues, delivering quick and practical solutions, legal advice, mediation with Public Administrations and businesses, as well as extensive information and awareness-raising activities on consumer rights. Its mission is to defend citizens’ purchasing power and to continuously monitor the market to ensure transparency, fairness, and the quality of services. This also includes protecting people’s health, safety, and fundamental rights. ECU operates across a wide range of areas, including food, health, environment, commerce, production, savings, essential public services, and the oversight of the effectiveness and impartiality of Public Administration. ECU aims to serve as a European point of reference that combines listening, expertise, and long-term vision, with the objective of strengthening consumer rights and improving people’s daily lives.

**Vytenis Butkevičius**, National Consumer Confederation (NVK) – Lithuania



Vytenis Butkevičius is an Environmental and Ecology Policy Expert and Advisor to the National Consumer Confederation (NVK), a leading umbrella NGO representing consumer interests in Lithuania. In his role, he focuses on environmental policy, sustainability, and the protection of consumer rights within regulated sectors, including energy, water, waste management, and public services. His work is closely aligned with European Union priorities, particularly in relation to transparency, sustainability, and the implementation of Green Deal principles. In addition to his advisory role, Vytenis Butkevičius is the President of the Lithuanian Markets and Tradeplaces Association, where he represents the interests of traditional marketplaces and small traders,

promoting fair competition, regional economic development, and the sustainability of local commerce ecosystems. He is also a member of the Lithuanian Small and Medium Business Council under the Ministry of Economy and Innovation of Lithuania, where he contributes to national-level policy discussions related to entrepreneurship and business environment improvement. His work also includes engagement in sustainable food systems and the role of consumers in shaping demand for environmentally responsible agricultural production.

The National Consumer Confederation (NVK), established in 2003, is a national umbrella non-governmental organization bringing together consumer associations and civil society organizations dedicated to the protection and representation of consumer rights in Lithuania. NVK operates at both national and international levels, advocating for consumer interests in policy-making processes, regulatory frameworks, and market practices. The organization is actively involved in consumer education, dispute resolution, and public policy development, particularly in regulated sectors such as energy, water, waste management, telecommunications, and public services. It has a strong track record in implementing national and EU-funded projects, contributing to governance improvement, transparency, and the strengthening of civil society engagement.

**Anastasia Chatzipavlou**, Union of Working Consumers of Greece (EEKE) – Greece



Anastasia Chatzipavlou is the Director of the Union of Working Consumers of Greece and a Board Member of the European Consumers Union (ECU). She holds a MSc in International and European Policies on Education and Training as well as a certification as an Adult Educator. She's authored a wide range of educational materials on consumer protection and the social economy. Her work spans national research and advocacy bringing Greek consumer voices to the front stage by representing them in national and EU forums.

The Union of Working Consumers of Greece (EEKE) is an initiative of the country's trade unionists and aims to contribute to the improvement of the standard of living and quality of life of consumers. The members of the EEKE work from the realisation that the standard of living and quality of life of consumers do not depend solely on their income. It also depends on the prices of goods and services in relation to their quality, safety and hygiene, their purchase and supply through transparent transactions and without the existence of abusive practices on the part of suppliers.

**Svilen Iliev**, Association for legal aid to consumers (ALAC) – Bulgaria



The Association for legal aid to consumers (ALAC) is a Bulgarian consumer protection organization based in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Our main goal is to inform the consumers of their rights and to provide pro bono legal aid. We have focused our efforts on the protection of the consumers against monopolies and oligopolies on the Bulgarian market. We have led the way in creating legal practice in Bulgaria in the field of collective consumer claims against providers of communal services.

As a member of ALAC his main role is to develop the international network of the organisation and to enhance the cooperation with other similar organizations through the participation of ALAC in different projects.

**Janis Kessa**, TALENTED BORDERS – Latvia



TALENTED BORDERS is an independent non-profit organisation, founded in Latvia in 2021, working as a platform for civically active citizens in order to represent and defend common interests of civil society, ensuring equal opportunities for everyone to participate in the development of democratic processes. In view of the above, TALENTED BORDERS dedicates its activities to broadening the cultural understanding of democracy among the population, paying special attention to democratic and cultural processes in the sparsely populated areas of Latvia, as well as to participating in the solution of urgent socio-economic issues of the Latvian society.

Janis Kessa is the expert in the socio-economic development of local communities and protection of consumer and patient rights.

**Stasys Kuskevičius**, Lithuanian National Consumer Federation – Lithuania



Stasys Kuskevičius holds a degree in Physics from Vilnius University, where he graduated from the Faculty of Physics. Since 2012, he has been actively involved in the Lithuanian National Consumer Federation. He initially joined as a project expert and has since contributed extensively to the development and implementation of projects focused on sustainable consumption. In addition, he supports a range of other organisational initiatives. He is responsible for the administration and maintenance of the organisation's website, ensuring its effective functioning and ongoing development. Having grown up in a rural environment, he has a strong practical understanding of agriculture and farming practices.

The Lithuanian National Consumer Federation (LNCF) is one of the most active non-governmental organisations in Lithuania. The LNCF's objectives are to protect consumer rights and economic, ecological and social interests, to educate consumers and to promote the integration of consumer policy into all economic sectors in Lithuania and the EU. To achieve these objectives, the LNCF brings in experts from different fields, communicates with consumers, the government, the media and other interest groups, provides consultations, participates in radio and television broadcasts and internet discussions, publishes and distributes booklets, leaflets and magazines, familiarises people with related information, organises different events and makes remarks and proposals when preparing legal acts. The LNCF cooperates with the media to inform society. Since its establishment in 2000, the team has worked hard to promote social interests within the government sector. To this end, they have established strong relationships with many other organisations in various sectors in Lithuania and the European Union. Internationally, LNCF is a member of Consumers International and ANEC, the European standardisation association. At a national level, we have established active collaborations with trade unions, youth organisations, environmental organisations, rural communities and other NGOs and related government institutions.

**Anita Laima Lancmane**, IMPACT2040 – Latvia



NGO IMPACT 2040 good governance and consumer rights civic organisation, founded in Latvia in 2005 and operates in the Baltic States. NGO is dedicated to defend common interests of public health, social rights and consumer rights throughout the EU. IMPACT 2040 focuses on following objectives: recognition the primary role of citizens in the care of the common good; supporting citizen's participation in the policy making at the local, national, regional and EU level; involving them in the defence of their fundamental rights as citizens, patients and consumers. Anita Laima Lancmane is the expert in legal, health and socio-economic issues.

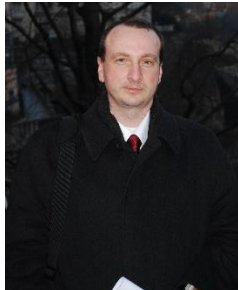
**Andrada Nitu**, InfoCons – Romania



Andrada Nitu is a Public Relations and Communications Specialist with experience in managing both internal and external communications, ensuring consistent and effective messaging across stakeholders, partners, and diverse audiences. She represents InfoCons in national and international working groups, meetings, and events, contributing to dialogue and collaboration initiatives. Her work also includes supporting communication and dissemination activities for various projects, enhancing stakeholder engagement, visibility strategies, and reporting outcomes.

Additionally, she contributes to strengthening the organisation's online presence by tailoring content to different platforms and target audiences.

**Alen Novit, Slovenian Food Bank (SIBAHE) – Slovenia**



Alen Novit, Director of SIBAHE (Slovenian Food Bank), holds a degree in Public Administration from the University of Ljubljana and has extensive experience in EU-level projects and activities.

He previously served as Executive Director of EAPN Slovenia for four years, representing his country in EAPN Europe working groups. He is also the founder of SIBAHE and actively contributes to EU-level initiatives through the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) and other platforms, including COP and ESF+ working groups. Alongside his management responsibilities, he is involved in broader NGO activities and leads projects focused on health and patient rights, including awareness-raising initiatives on patients' rights and the EU Directive on Cross-Border Healthcare.

SIBAHE, the Slovenian Food Bank is a non-profit humanitarian organisation active since 2012, focused on supporting people in need through the redistribution of food surpluses across the supply chain. Its work combines social support with environmental impact, contributing to the reduction of food waste while assisting vulnerable individuals and families. Operating at local, national, and international levels, SIBAHE is also engaged in awareness-raising, advocacy, and volunteering initiatives related to hunger, social inclusion, health, and active citizenship. The organisation works with over 60 partner organisations, collectively supporting more than 10,000 people, while also providing direct assistance to hundreds of families and individuals.

SIBAHE is an active member of the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) and collaborates with several international networks, including ACN, Volonteuropa, and COP, contributing to broader EU-level efforts on food aid, social policy, and active citizenship.

**Alina Pekalska, Buy Responsibly Foundation – Poland**



Alina Pekalska is a Projects Coordinator and Food Sustainability Specialist with a focus on building short supply chains, advancing agroecological practices, and fostering collaboration with public sector partners. Outside of work, she is an avid gardener dedicated to no-dig cultivation methods.

The Buy Responsibly Foundation is a nationwide organisation focused on sustainable development, responsible consumption and production, and the promotion of human rights and environmental standards in business. Active since 2002—initially as part of the Polish Green Network and, since 2014, as an independent foundation—it works to raise awareness among citizens and strengthen their ability to make socially and environmentally responsible choices, while increasing consumer

influence on companies. The foundation conducts research on production conditions and supply chains, highlighting their impact on people, animals, and the environment, and promoting ethical and ecological alternatives. It implements educational and awareness-raising initiatives, collaborates with NGOs, educators, businesses, and public institutions, and addresses issues across sectors such as clothing, toys, wood and paper, as well as electronics and food. Its activities target a broad range of stakeholders, including consumers, businesses, media, public authorities, educators, students, and trade unions. Through the use of modern communication tools and public campaigns, the foundation promotes civic engagement, develops practical tools such as consumer guides and rankings, and supports responsible consumption practices across Poland.

### **Rui Torres, Associação de Consumidores de Portugal (ACOP)- Portugal**



ACOP is a non-profit institution dedicated to the protection, information, and defence of consumer rights. The association acts as a balancing force in the market, ensuring that the consumer's voice is heard by both corporations and public authorities. Its activities include providing specialized legal support, offering consultations to help consumers navigate disputes related to product warranties, public utilities (water, electricity, gas), telecommunications, and banking services. It also promotes conflict mediation, encouraging resolution between consumers and providers or referring cases to Consumer Conflict Arbitration Centers in order to achieve fast, effective, and low-cost outcomes. ACOP is actively engaged in consumer education, organising workshops on consumer rights and duties in schools, municipalities, and civil society organisations. In parallel, it carries out institutional advocacy, working closely with legislative bodies and regulatory authorities—such as ANACOM, ERSE, and ERSAR—to contribute to public policy development and address unfair commercial practices.

In his role within the organisation, Rui Torres represents ACOP across various social and regulatory bodies where the association holds a seat. This includes serving as a representative at ECU, on the Advisory Board of ERSAR (the Water and Waste Services Regulation Authority), and participating in arbitration centres such as CACRC, CNIACC, and TRIAVE. He also maintains direct engagement with regulatory authorities in Portugal, as well as with the Directorate-General for the Consumer (DGC), and occasionally delivers presentations in educational settings.