



AGROECOLOGY EUROPE FORUM 2023: BUILDING MOMENTUM AND UNITY FOR THE AGROECOLOGICAL MOVEMENT IN EUROPE

The 2023 Agroecology Europe Forum, Converging movements for resilient food systems, took place in Gyöngyös, Hungary, on 16-18 November 2023. The Forum was a resounding success.

Almost 300 people from 36 countries came together to celebrate agroecology initiatives, strengthen synergies among social movements, and tackle the challenges ahead to transform food and farming systems. All three days were fully packed with 4 keynote speeches, 13 workshops, 9 sessions, 4 work meetings, 25 poster presentations, and 4 field visits to witness agroecology in action. As a side event, we displayed photo exhibitions on the walls to illustrate agroecology and rural livelihoods in Hungary.



Group photo. Photo credit: Brigitta Vidák

When creating the agenda, we aimed to make the Forum absolutely participatory: not a conference, where we listen to experts on a stage, but a forum, a platform for sharing and co-creation. As Andrea Ferrante, coordinator of Schola Campesina, said, “Forget the transfer of knowledge, we co-create.” For that, AEEU organised the programme in several different formats: sessions, workshops, poster sessions, cultural musical side events, and time for networking and connecting.

Sessions presented results from research, projects, or organisations to create interactive dialogue among speakers and participants, comparing and contrasting experiences and broadening the research agenda. They represented the diversity of not only issues within agroecology, ranging from policy through digitalisation and education to farm practices, but also stakeholders in the fooding systems and value chains, including peasants, farmers, Roma and youth activists, shepherds, and civil society, always asking: how does it affect women and youth?

Workshops created spaces of knowledge where all knowledge is recognized and where we shape knowledge together. Here, everybody in the room took part in activities, created action plans, played out scenarios, and identified problem statements and collaboration strategies. Workshops were self-reflective and creative safe spaces that pushed our imagination on feminism, One Health, soil science, supply chains, food self-provisioning, and living labs.



Workshop. Photo credit: Brigitta Vidák

In this interactive, participatory environment we agreed that farmers should be involved in project design, policy-making, peer-to-peer networks, and funding schemes; institutions should prioritise funding for small-scale farmers; in the complexity of European sustainable agriculture policy, agroecology must represent farmers' needs, rights and incentives (lest give rise to populist initiatives speaking for farmers); and that while definitions are important, we shouldn't let definitional debates hinder us from putting the principles into practice. We have an important job to do and we are running out of time.

On the last day, we ventured out to the Hungarian countryside to visit two organic market gardens, a community farm, a buffalo reserve and a natural winery, and the national gene bank. These visits gave us a first-hand understanding of the reality of agroecological entrepreneurs, their everyday dilemmas, challenges, and astounding successes as regenerative pioneers of Central Eastern Europe.

The Forum ended with several work meetings, allowing participants to further strengthen connections and exchange ideas about collaboration—a beautiful ending—or start—to the time spent together to advocate for and practice food sovereignty and agroecology.



Sharing lunch made with local, agroecological ingredients. Photo credit: Brigitta Vidák


Altogether, AEEU supported over 75 participants to attend the Forum, including 7 young farmers, 9 members of the AEEU Youth Network, and 13 international volunteers whose outstanding work was instrumental to the success of the event.

This Forum stood out by its social ambiance leaning into community, joy, and connection. We have all made valuable professional links and even more valuable friendships. On both evenings, local folk and world musicians guaranteed that the long days end on a high note. Looking around a room full of people dancing together and smiling ear to ear reminded us of the true meaning of agroecology: **connection, kindness, harmony.**



Hungarian folk dance hall. Photo credit: Boglárka Bozsogi

On behalf of Agroecology Europe, thank you for the paramount efforts of the local organising committee in Hungary, our superb volunteers, our funders, and our organising team for making all of this possible. We are grateful to all participants for being truly present, enriching the discussions with your expertise and unique experiences, and creating an unmatched warmhearted atmosphere.



The agroecological movement across Europe takes diverse forms, influenced by distinct political, environmental, and socio-economic contexts in different regions. Nevertheless, #AEEUForum2023 has shed light on a shared unity within the movement, where robust advocacy is taking shape, and collaborations within the agroecological community and with other social movements are gaining increasing momentum and importance. In the words of President Lili Balogh: “In times of political, environmental, social, and economic crises, agroecology emerges as the most resilient system, paving the way for a peaceful future for Europe and beyond, grounded in human rights, justice and dignity for all.” AEEU takes pride in facilitating the growth of this movement, allowing it to rightfully claim its position in the political landscape of the 21st century.

See you at the 2025 Forum in Malmö, Sweden!

About Agroecology Europe

Agroecology Europe is a non-profit European association intending to place agroecology high on the European agenda of sustainable development of farming and food systems. It wants to foster interactions between actors in sciences, practices, and social movements, by facilitating knowledge-sharing and action. It aims to create an inclusive European community of professionals, practitioners, and societal stakeholders in agroecology.

THE FORUM WAS SUPPORTED BY



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