

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

(To be filled in and uploaded as deliverable in the Portal Grant Management System, at the due date foreseen in the system.

 Please provide one sheet per event (one event = one workpackage = one lump sum).)

PROJECT	
Project name and acronym:	Bright and Green Christmas in European Towns – Building a Sustainable Future
Participant:	WATERFORD CITY & COUNTY COUNCIL
PIC number:	910626010

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	1
Event name:	Bright and Green Christmas in European towns - Building a Sustainable Future
Type:	- Opening remarks by the Mayor of Waterford. - Expert talk on the importance of sustainability during festive celebrations, highlighting global best practices. - Open debate with representatives from partner municipalities. - Open discussion. - Brainstorming sessions. - Presentations. - Local visits to Waterford's Christmas installations and initiatives.
In situ/online:	In situ - Presential
Location:	Ireland, Waterford
Date(s):	26.11.2025 – 27.11.2025
Website(s) (if any):	https://waterfordcouncil.ie/waterford-shines-for-bright-green-christmas-conference/
Participants	
Female:	81
Male:	91
Non-binary:	0
From Ireland	45
From Spain:	27
From Portugal:	22

From Italy :	16		
From Slovenia	4		
From Croatia	12		
Serbia	3		
Romania	12		
Ukraine	11		
Poland	15		
Netherlands	1		
Czech Republic	2		
Finland	2		
Total number of participants:	172	From total number of countries:	13

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

The event held in Waterford represented the first major activity within Work Package 1 (WP1) of the project implemented under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV). The meeting aimed to bring together European citizens, local authorities, civil society organisations, and experts to discuss how Christmas celebrations across Europe can become more sustainable while preserving cultural traditions and strengthening European cooperation.

The event gathered 170 participants, including 50 local participants and 120 international participants, representing municipalities, NGOs, experts, and members of civil society. International participants travelled from several European countries, fostering intercultural dialogue and the exchange of good practices.

Participants came from the following countries:

- Ireland
- Spain
- Italy
- Romania
- Poland
- Portugal
- Czech Republic
- Ukraine
- Croatia
- Slovenia
- Netherlands
- Finland
- Serbia

All participants were over 18 years old. The event ensured balanced participation from partner organisations and municipalities across Europe, with 120 international participants attending the meeting.

Special attention was given to gender equality and gender mainstreaming, encouraging the active participation of women in discussions, workshops and decision-making processes. Several sessions also highlighted the role of women in promoting sustainability and green innovation in local communities.

The main objectives of the event were:

- To promote European cooperation and dialogue between municipalities and civil society organisations.
- To exchange best practices for sustainable Christmas celebrations.
- To raise awareness about the environmental impact of festive events.
- To explore how local traditions can be preserved while incorporating innovative and environmentally friendly solutions.
- To contribute to broader European sustainability strategies such as the European Green Deal.
- To develop a Guide for Sustainable Christmas Celebrations that can be used by European municipalities.

Description of Activities

Day 1 – Opening and Knowledge Exchange

The event began with an official welcome and introduction session, including opening remarks by the Mayor of Waterford, Mr. Seamus Ryan, and a presentation of the project's objectives. Dynamized by Mr. Finn Brophy (Executive Technician), this introductory session highlighted the importance of building a more sustainable and environmentally responsible approach to festive celebrations across Europe.

After this, members of Winterval Organising Committee dynamized a keynote conference entitled "Sustainable Celebrations – Paving the Path to a Greener Christmas" providing an expert overview of sustainability challenges linked to festive events and presented international examples of environmentally responsible Christmas initiatives.

This was followed by a panel discussion with representatives from partner municipalities, focusing on the European Christmas experience and exploring the challenges and opportunities faced by cities when organising large festive events. Participants shared their experiences regarding waste management, energy use, local economic impact and citizen engagement.

During Workshop 1, participants collaborated to begin drafting a Guide for Sustainable Christmas Celebrations. Working in small groups, they identified key areas such as sustainable decorations, waste reduction, responsible consumption and eco-friendly event management.

In the afternoon, a round table discussion highlighted successful green initiatives implemented by local entrepreneurs and environmental NGOs during Christmas celebrations. Series of presentations and workshops on festival sustainability with keynote speakers Gawain Morrison, Rob Van Wegan, Tim Benson, and JB Dubois. These examples demonstrated how small changes in event organisation can significantly reduce environmental impact.

A dedicated session titled "Women Leading the Green Transition" explored the role of women in promoting sustainability and environmental awareness in local communities and festive events.

The first day concluded with Workshop 2, where participants brainstormed ideas for a digital platform that could allow municipalities across Europe to exchange ideas, tools and best practices related to sustainable Christmas events.

Day 2 – Innovation, Policy Alignment and Practical Experience

The second day began with a recap of the previous discussions and an introduction to the objectives of the day.

An expert presentation on energy-efficient Christmas lighting, dynamized by Mr. Gawain Morrison (Playthinkbrink!), showcased innovative technologies and solutions that reduce energy consumption while maintaining festive atmospheres in urban environments.

Participants then took part in an interactive discussion exploring how local Christmas events can contribute to the goals of the European Green Deal, encouraging municipalities to integrate sustainability into their cultural programming.

During Workshop 3, participants finalised the Guide for Sustainable Christmas Celebrations, consolidating ideas developed during the previous workshops. The guide aims to serve as a practical resource for municipalities and community organisations wishing to organise environmentally responsible festive events.

In the afternoon, participants attended a practical visit to Waterford's sustainable Christmas initiatives, allowing them to observe real examples of energy-efficient decorations, sustainable installations and environmentally friendly festive practices implemented in the city.

The event concluded with an open debate and final round table, led by the association Christmas Cities Network, responsible of the award European Capital of Christmas, during which participants reflected on the balance between preserving traditional Christmas heritage and introducing innovative sustainable solutions. Special participation took the Mayor of Torrejón de Ardoz (Spain), Mr. Alejandro Navarro and the Mayor of Medina de Rioseco (Spain), Mr. David Esteban. The final session summarised the outcomes of the event and presented the draft guide developed during the workshops, while also identifying opportunities for future collaboration among partner municipalities.

The event was closed out by Deputy Mayor of the Metropolitan District, Cllr. Lola O'Sullivan.

Results and Impact

The event successfully facilitated dialogue, cooperation and knowledge exchange among European participants. The main outcomes included:

- The development of a draft Declaration for Sustainable Christmas Celebrations for municipalities.
- Increased awareness among participants regarding the environmental impact of festive events.
- Strengthened cooperation between municipalities, NGOs and civil society organisations across Europe.
- The promotion of gender equality through dedicated sessions and inclusive participation.
- The identification of innovative solutions and best practices that can be replicated in different European cities.

Overall, the event contributed to strengthening European citizenship, intercultural dialogue and environmental awareness, in line with the priorities of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV).

Learning Results

The event generated significant learning outcomes for participants by increasing their awareness and understanding of how sustainability can be effectively integrated into traditional cultural celebrations such as Christmas. Through workshops, expert presentations, and collaborative discussions, participants gained practical knowledge on topics such as energy-efficient lighting, waste reduction, sustainable event planning, and community engagement. The exchange of experiences between municipalities and organisations from different European countries enabled participants to identify innovative solutions and transferable practices that can be implemented in their own communities. Furthermore, the event strengthened participants' understanding of how local initiatives can contribute to broader European sustainability objectives, including those promoted by the European Green Deal. Participants also developed skills in collaborative problem-solving, intercultural dialogue, and participatory decision-making, reinforcing their capacity to organise more sustainable and inclusive festive events in the future.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01/09/202	Initial version (new MFF).