

The Environmental Hackathon I took place on 24 February 2026 in Soto del Real (Community of Madrid, Spain), organized by Association Building Bridges (ABB) as Lead Beneficiary for Work Package 11, with the active involvement of the municipality of Soto del Real. All six partner representatives of the YMCA consortium arrived the previous evening, enabling a full day of shared activities. Note: gender disaggregated figures (19F / 18M) include both local participants and the 6 partner representatives (2F / 3M), including the local ABB coordinator.

MORNING: Environmental Field Visit: The day began with a guided tour of the existing environmental and civic initiatives in Soto del Real, led by local stakeholders at each location. Sites visited included: La Cabezuela Environmental Youth Area; the Eco-Escuela (Eco-School); the Municipal Botanical Garden; the local recycling point; the Social Bike Project; and the Butterfly Garden (recently inaugurated). Each stop was led by the responsible stakeholder: José María Gómez Salazar (House of Youth of Soto del Real), Ignacio García Castañares (Environmental and Sports Office of the municipality, representing the mayor's office), Jorge Hernández (Botanical Garden), and Lawrence Sudlow (Municipal Community Orchard/Allotment). This visit enabled partners and participants to gain direct, contextualized knowledge of the local environmental ecosystem before the afternoon workshop.

AFTERNOON: Hackathon I (Centro Cultural, Soto del Real): The official hackathon session was held in the auditorium of the Centro Cultural de Soto del Real, in the presence of 18 local young people (aged 15–25), 8 local stakeholders, 5 Soto del Real municipality representatives, and the 6 partner representatives (including the hosting partner from ABB). The session was facilitated by ABB together with Ignacio García Castañares and José María Gómez Salazar.

The first part of the session consisted of structured presentations by representatives of each local environmental initiative, including those visited in the morning and others to be seen the following day, with the aim of mapping the full landscape of what the community already offers. This exercise immediately generated a pivotal moment: participants unanimously expressed surprise at the breadth of existing initiatives in their own community, while also noting that these were largely unknown to them. The organizations, led by stakeholders, responded by acknowledging the challenges they face in communicating effectively with and engaging young people.

This organic exchange led to an unplanned but highly productive facilitated exercise: a collaborative 'bucketing' activity in which both youth participants and stakeholders together categorized the issues they had identified into three areas: Interest, Communication, and Inclusivity. The third category, Inclusivity, emerged in response to observations by some young participants that certain activities presented barriers related to physical and mental health conditions, reflecting the importance of making community initiatives genuinely accessible to all.

In the second part of the session, participants split into mixed working groups (youth and stakeholders together) to develop concrete proposals. Each group produced a poster outlining the problems identified, potential solutions, and new activities or adjustments they would recommend improving communication, accessibility, and organic interest among young people.

EVENING: The day was closed with a community dinner. This informal gathering served to consolidate the connections made during the day and build momentum for the second event.

The event directly addressed YMCA project objectives OBJ 1 (active youth participation in local democratic life) and OBJ 2 (intergenerational dialogue and exchange of best practices), contributing to the broader CERV goal of engaging citizens in environmental and democratic processes at the local level.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).