

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Project Partners,  
Dear Colleagues,

It is a great honour for me to welcome you to Szombathely and to the closing conference of the Localience project.

As a firefighter, I like clear situations, clear risks and clear responsibilities. Unfortunately, climate change does not always follow these rules. What we see today is more heat, more sudden rain, and more extreme events. In disaster management, we usually say: hope for the best, prepare for the worst. With climate change, the “worst” is becoming more creative every year.

Szombathely is more than 2,000 years old. The city has survived fires, floods and many historical challenges. Today, the challenge is adaptation. As a regional centre in Western Hungary, we are directly exposed to climate-related risks. For us, disaster risk reduction is not theory. It is daily work.

This is why the Localience project is important. It did not stay on paper. It focused on prevention, preparedness and cooperation. It helped institutions work together better, involved local communities, and strengthened resilience where it matters most – at the local level.

In Vas County, the project delivered real, practical results. People are more aware of risks. Organisations cooperate more effectively. Decision-makers think more in terms of prevention. From a firefighter’s point of view, this is good news. The best emergency is the one that never happens.

One of the strongest elements of Localience was transnational cooperation. Risks do not stop at borders, and neither should our professional knowledge. Working with our Central European partners showed us that while we may use different words, we face the same fires, the same floods, and the same challenges.

Today is not just about closing a project. It is about taking the results forward. The tools and experiences of Localience are ready to be used, adapted and further developed. We are already planning to build on them in future projects, including BETTHER.

I would like to thank all project partners, experts, the Joint Secretariat and the Managing Authority for their professional work and support. Cooperation like this makes our job easier – and our communities safer.

I wish you strong discussions, clear conclusions and good cooperation.  
And finally, I hope today will be calm and uneventful – which, in disaster management, is always the best outcome.

Thank you for your attention.

Brig. General BALÁZS BOGNÁR Dr., PhD  
university associate professor  
Vas County Disaster Management Directorate director  
Disaster Management Scientific Council president