

D.T2.2.1

Webinar

**Enhancing stakeholders' participation to
regional bioeconomy ecosystems**

CLUSTERO
05/2022

Project Information

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1. Introduction

The third webinar entitled “Enhancing stakeholders’ participation to regional bioeconomy ecosystems” was part of the Activity A.T2.2 “Enabling regional specificities and excellencies to take part in participative governance”.

This webinar aimed to identify ways of developing circular bioeconomy ecosystems and enhance the participation of various types of actors acting at regional level. It was organized through the zoom platform on March 29th, 2022.

A total number of 64 representatives of project partners and stakeholders participated in the online webinar.

Prior to the webinar, a web-based questionnaire has been made available, containing the same questions as addressed in the webinar. The questionnaire was filled in by 34 representatives of project partners and stakeholders.

The webinar contained a moderated discussion on how to strengthen regional circular bioeconomy ecosystems, alongside following topics:

- The concept of bioeconomy
- Prior involvement in bioeconomy projects
- SWOT of circular bioeconomy at regional level
- Ways to foster circular bioeconomisation at regional level.

2. Concept and development

The webinar was focused on mobilisation of stakeholders, exchange and best practice examples and way of enforcing bioeconomy processes at regional level.

The webinar enabled quick feedback on the Integration Plan by the project partners as well as stakeholders.

The following topics were approached:

2.1 Examples of stakeholders’ involvement in the bioeconomy ecosystem

2.2 Strengthening regional circular bioeconomy ecosystems

2.3 Conclusions

2.1 Examples of stakeholders’ involvement in the bioeconomy ecosystem

2.1.1 Food for the Earth

The best practice “Food for the Earth” was presented by Mrs. Irena Sabeva from “Our Neighborhood Association for Sustainable Practices”, Bulgaria.

“Our Neighborhood Association for Sustainable Practices” is a non-profit organization. The aim of the association is to increase the awareness and knowledge of individuals and the community about ecological topics and issues such as climate change mitigation, biodiversity and the use of sustainable and natural resources. The association provides activities and tools to inspire, enhance and develop the individual and the community to be conscious about and actively

engage in, projects addressing these topics, with the goal to strike a balance between personal wellbeing and taking care of our environment.

“Food for the Earth” was born in 2013 in Knyajevo, Sofia, Bulgaria, as an initiative for community composting in the neighbourhood. The concept “Food for the Earth – good for all” 2013 was awarded in European Commission’s contest: “World you like Challenge” as a national winner and received a certificate for a top-ranked climate solution.

Consequently, in 2020, the initiative grows as a Romanian-Bulgarian group for the Earth Composting Communities for Climate. This group aims to raise awareness, inform and form communities in urban and rural areas about composting, compost and its benefits of them.

In December 2020 “Food for the Earth – Composting Communities for Climate” was awarded in the contest of Climate Community Lab, launched by EIT Climate-KIC and partners in October 2020 to spark climate impact partnerships in the region.

The project “Food for the Earth – Composting Communities for Climate” is a cross-border collaboration between the “Urban Cultor” startup in Bucharest, Romania, and “Our Neighborhood Association for Sustainable Practices” in Bulgaria. The short-term pilot project’s idea was to make a demo composting area in Bucharest for a cross-border multiplication and scale of the already started initiative in Sofia.

Currently, there are two shared compost locations installed and operating in urban areas: one in Bulgaria, Sofia by “Our Neighborhood Association for Sustainable Practices” and the second in Bucharest by “Urban Cultor” company. These community-based operations can move from concept to operation in a relatively short time, and usually are welcome in the neighborhood where they are implemented. By involving the right stakeholders and motivating the communities, the practice can be adopted in any country within the Danube region and can function as a Danube network for neighborhood composting.

The participants asked about the age of the stakeholders. “Are they young or old?” - answer: “Families, young and old are involved being an initiative of community”. Another question was about the involvement of municipalities-local small municipalities are involved. - answer: “In the project “Food for the Earth – Composting Communities for Climate, municipality from Bucharest was directly involved”.

Participants also asked “how you managed to mobilize stakeholders?” – answer: “we raise awareness, educate students, people in workshops, campaigns; we mobilize people through facebook, twitter etc”.

2.1.2 Landscape Recovery Programme

The best practice “Landscape Recovery Programme” was presented by Mr. Michal Kravčík, Council member of Košice Self-governing Region and founding member and chairman of People and Water NGO, Slovakia.

On the 22nd of October 2018, the Council of Košice Self-Governing region approved Landscape Recovery Program. The action plan was accepted in 2019, whereby the meeting was held with mayors, agriculturists, forest agriculturists, representatives of state administration, activists, and volunteers in individual regions under the named establishment of Water Councils.

The plans of the Water Councils of Košice Region within the Landscape Recovery Program 2021-2030 of individual regions open topics for comprehensive solutions for the WEF (water, energy, food) approach, like climate change itself affects water supply, soil fertility, extreme heat, as well as the growth of natural disasters. Established water councils aim to change the approach to the management of forest and agricultural land, as well as urban land, and to enable the establishment of water retention measures so that a substantial part of rainwater can be retained in the country.

Key priorities regarding the Landscape recovery program are the following:

2019 - In the first year of implementation of the Program, the activities of individual projects are proposed, which would lay the foundations for systemic change leading to the supportive achievement of environmental safety in the Košice region through start-up projects: establishment of Water Councils for separated regions

2020 – 26 official meetings of individual Water Councils took place and draft plans of integrated water protection were prepared.

2021 – The strategy for Water Councils was fully approved by the regional authority, based on these six methodologies were prepared and officially approved by the national public authority.

2021 – Advantages of participatory governance were considered a suitable tool for Water Councils' methodology which can lead to better decisions because the knowledge of all people involved is used.

2022 – Key priorities were set up: further elaboration of the methodology for the territories, organization of a regional conference, finding opportunities for financing activities, the possibility of involving a participatory budget in the Water Council's management.

The biggest challenge of the program was to bring different interested parties and stakeholders into one open discussion. If all interested parties are allowed to participate in a project that concerns them, the identification and satisfaction with the result are increased.

This point of view brings on an idea of the organized interactive workshop in which we were set up the methodology for the further functioning of the landscape recovery program and Water Councils based on participative governance.

Since the Water Councils were set up and established by the Košice Self-governing region, the whole package of knowledge transfer can be easily implemented in other regions through workshops and specialized training for beneficiaries. The main points that can be transferred to other regions are the implementation of measures in the structures of forest, agricultural and urbanized areas of the region, so that these structures can cyclically collect rainwater, replenish soil and groundwater reserves, saturate springs and reduce erosion activity using all the latest technologies and practices. To make the best practice as relevant as possible, it is important to connect the links not only between water, energy and food, but also the weather, climate change and biodiversity. Established Water Councils are working successfully, the next step is to find out how to support their activities with possible synergies within the GoDanuBio project implementation.

The webinar participants asked "how did you manage to bring all people together?" -answer: „We created an open process where everyone is welcome; if stakeholders feel that they are part of process they will do the next steps; Participatory governance tool is used in Water Councils' methodology”.

2.1.3 South Bohemian Association for Bioeconomy (SBAB)

The best practice "South Bioeconomy Association for Bioeconomy" was presented by Mrs. Eva Cudlínová from University of South Bohemia, Czech Republic.

South Bohemian Association for Bioeconomy (SBAB) was established in 2020 as an institutional outcome of the POWER4BIO project (10/2018–3/2021; H2020) by its Czech partner, the University of South Bohemia in Ceske Budejovice. Its primary mission is to support the sustainability of the POWER4BIO project results, respectively the creation of a regional bioeconomy strategy and implementation of bioeconomy in practice in the South Bohemian Region.

SBAB encompasses the entire spectrum of professional activities to be carried out in the field of bioeconomy and circular economy:

- bringing together people interested in bioeconomy and its application in industry, agriculture, health and other areas of the economy for the benefit of human society and the environment;
- monitoring and supporting research, development, innovation and implementation of new technologies;
- cooperation with relevant national and European technology platforms, clusters and umbrella organizations; scientific and professional institutions as well as with manufacturers and operators of related technologies at home and abroad;
- elaboration and updating of the regional bioeconomy development vision, strategic research agenda and implementation action plan;
- targeted improvement of the quality and expertise of the workforce, including education, provision of internships, stays abroad, creation of curricula and new ways of raising qualifications;
- organizing educational and conference events, professional promotional and publishing activities;
- participation in the legislative and normative processes, increasing the competitiveness of Czech society, industry and agriculture.

The SBAB has a legal form of NGO/NPO financed from projects, subsidies, membership fees, and custom services.

The main benefit of the SBAB establishment is the start of communication and cooperation among the regional bioeconomy stakeholders. Further, the bioeconomic potential of the region was evaluated and recognized, being represented both by the traditional production, such as fisheries, brewing, agriculture, forestry, municipal waste, and the new and emerging industries, such as algal biotechnologies, biogas, and bio-refineries. The South Bohemian Regional Authority appointed the SBAB to act as the Regional Innovation Platform for Bioeconomy and included the smart specialization domain of bioeconomy in its RIS3.

The SBAB organizes bioeconomy courses both for university students and the National Network of Local Action Groups (LAGs) and takes part in the Czech and European (H2020) bioeconomy R&D projects.

The most hampering factor for the SBAB is the lack of national government engagement in bioeconomy and the absence of targeted funding. To be done better: more intensive dissemination of practical examples and good practices from abroad and international exchanges of experts to increase the activities and motivation of the SBAB members.

Participants asked: “how do you finance association?” answer: “SBAB has legal framework as NGO since 2020 and it is financed from projects, subsidies, membership fees and custom services”.

Another question was if bioeconomy is mentioned in the RIS strategy. The answer provided was that “bioeconomy is included in RIS strategy, but bioeconomy strategy does not exist at national and regional level”.

2.2 Strengthening Regional Circular Bioeconomy ecosystems

The subject „strengthening regional circular bioeconomy ecosystems” was approached in the second part of the online webinar .

Discussions were focused on ways to strengthen regional circular bioeconomy ecosystems, alongside the following topics:

- The concept of bioeconomy;
- Prior involvement in bioeconomy projects;
- SWOT of circular bioeconomy at regional level;
- Ways to foster circular bio-economisation at regional level.

The online interactive tool „AhaSlides” was used during moderated discussions.

The same questions during moderated discussions were also included in the web-based questionnaire.

2.3. Outcomes and Conclusions

34 respondents shared their opinion on the topics raised by the online questionnaire while other 32 participated to the moderated discussion within the webinar (externals in relation to the project partnership). Regional Development Agencies (29%), regional/central government (17%), enterprises (14%) and research institutes (10%), clusters (7%), cluster networks (7%), university (5%), chamber of commerce (4%), state agencies (4%), and NGO (3%). The enterprises were among the best represented types of participants.

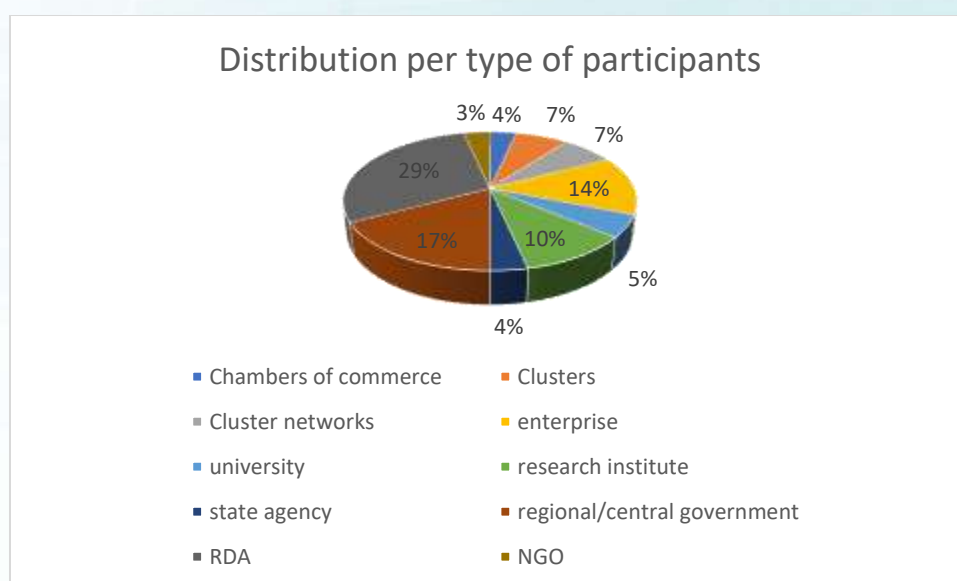


Figure 1 Distribution of respondents to the 3rd webinar per type of participant

When asked about the concept of bioeconomy, 55% of the respondents indicated the sustainable use of resources, followed by 14% which see bioeconomy in relation with the environment, and 12% which regard it as a business opportunity. Other answers referred to agriculture, health, and innovation.

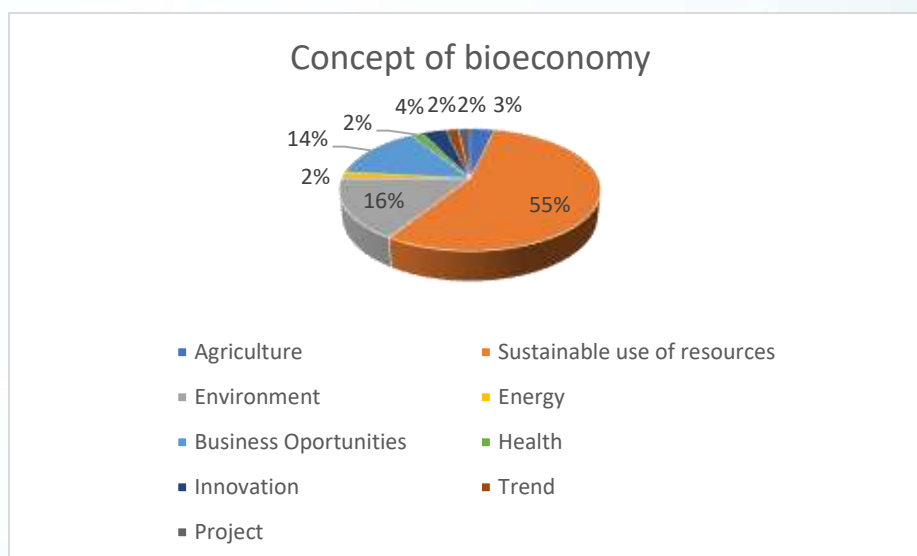


Figure 2 Answers to the question regarding the concept of bioeconomy

53% of the respondents have been involved in bioeconomy projects so far, either as partners in publicly funded projects (47%), education & training activities (18%) and as individual experts (17%).

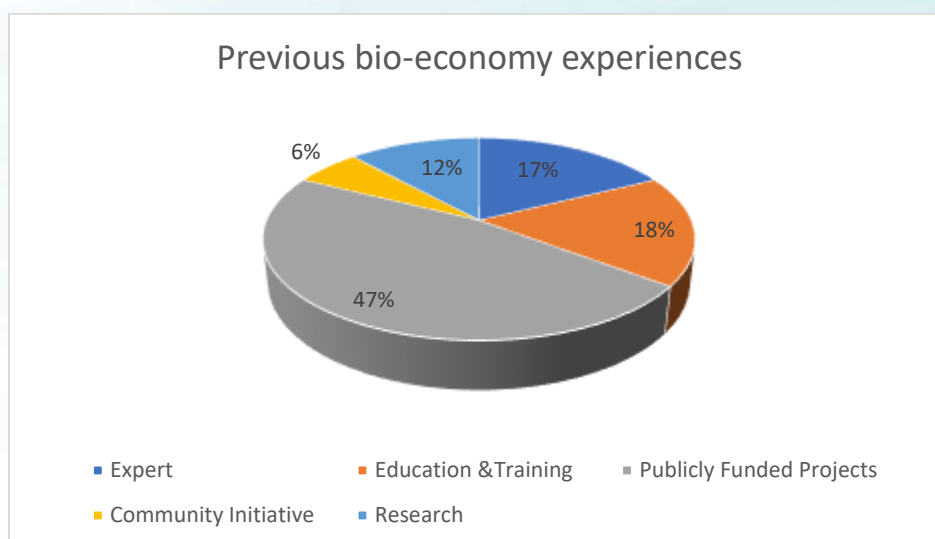


Figure 3 Involvement in previous bioeconomy initiatives

The results of the “mini” online SWOT can be summarised in the following table:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of natural resources - Mitigation of climate change - New jobs and business opportunities - Availability of funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient awareness among decision makers - Lack of knowledge about bioeconomy leading to lack of interest - Too expensive; fuel-based economy is more competitive in terms of costs
Opportunities	Threats

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher added value for farmers - Healthier lifestyle - Raising awareness about bioeconomy - Improved access to EU funds - Scarcity of fossil resources will boost bioeconomy - Replacement of conventional materials with organic products - Implementation of existing RDI results into business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Polarisation of society in pro and contra bioeconomy processes - Lack of adequate policies - Rural depopulation - Bureaucratic barriers - Energy crises - (Lack of) availability of bio-resources - Lack of funds - Green “washing” of older technologies
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Table 1 SWOT of circular bioeconomy

The best instruments to incentivise a better participation of stakeholders in circular **bioeconomy processes would be policy measures & support instruments** (strategy, taxation, investments, funding) **(54%) followed by awareness raising (32%), multi-actor cooperation** (clusters, cooperation platforms, PPP etc) (7%) and **interregional cooperation** (7%).

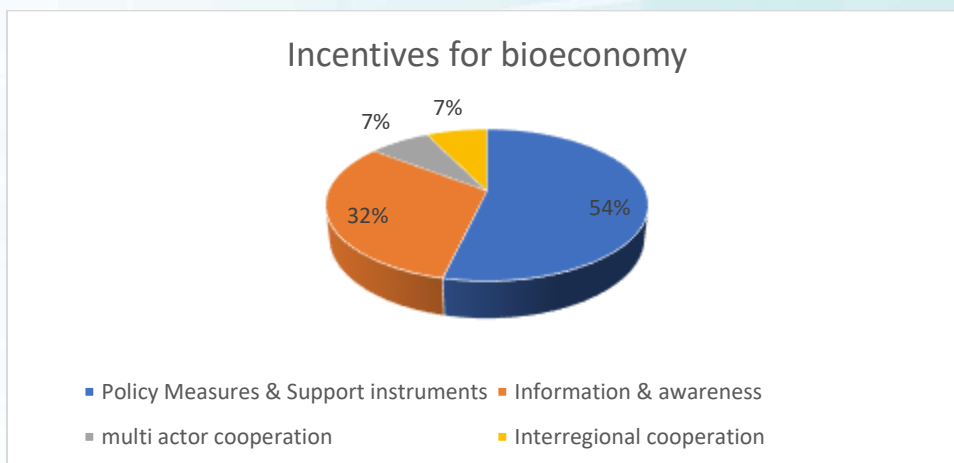


Figure 4 Incentives for the establishment of circular bioeconomy ecosystems

3. Annexes

3.1 Agenda of webinar

Webinar

Enhancing stakeholders' participation to regional bioeconomy ecosystems

Dear Madam/Dear Sir,

As you are one of the most relevant stakeholders for the circular bioeconomy ecosystems in our region/country, we have the honour to invite you to participate to an online webinar debating on the way of enforcing bioeconomy processes at regional level, which will take place on the 29th of March, 10 CET, online,

at <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89169601132?pwd=UGZxeHltUEpzcVh3RFU0QjJpdHNFQT09>

Circular-Bioeconomy is used as a tool, that promises to foster regional development: It is a concept focusing on the transition of a fossil-resource based economy towards an economy making use of sustainable production of biological resources and processes to develop new products.

In preparation for the webinar, please take your time to fill in the following questionnaire:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dfAPyYK0NIPBj-aXE1dCAuQ7n8EeAPR4MPTWngaxgfM>

It will be much appreciated!

The webinar takes place in the frame of GoDanuBio, a project run under the Danube Transnational Programme, aiming at co-creating future strategies to increase the attractiveness of rural areas based on bioeconomy processes. For further information about the project please go to <https://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/godanubio>

We count on your valuable expertise and active contribution to the discussion and look forward to meeting you on Tuesday, the 29th of March 2022.

Programme		
09:45	Zoom open	
10:00	Welcome address	Sergi Costa, BIOPRO Daniel Cosnita, CLUSTERO
Examples of stakeholders' involvement in the bioeconomy ecosystem		
10:15	Input presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Food for the Earth (BG)- Landscape Recovery Programme (SK)- South Bioeconomy Association (CZ)	Irena Sabeva, Food for Earth Michal Kravčík, Kosice Self Governing Region Eva Cudlinova, University of South Bohemia
11:15	Coffee Break	
Strengthening Regional Circular Bioeconomy ecosystems		
11:30	Moderated discussions: clarification of concept, SWOT, identification of regional needs	Daniel Cosnita, CLUSTERO, moderator
13:00	Conclusion and end of webinar	

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 Participants according to the category of stakeholders:

Industry (chambers of commerce, clusters, cluster organisations, enterprises, professional associations), Academia & Research (universities, research institutes, competence centers), Public (state agencies, local government, regional/central government, regional development agencies), Society (NGOs, informal civil organisations)

Participants according to the category of stakeholders: Industry, Academia & Research, Public, Society	Participants who filled in the online questionnaire.	Participants who filled in the questions of the online tool „AhaSlides.	Total	%
Chambers of commerce		2	2	4
Clusters	1	3	4	7
Cluster networks	1	3	4	7
Enterprise	6	2	8	14
University	3		3	5
Research institute	6		6	10
State agency	2		2	4
Regional/central government	4	6	10	17
Regional development agencies	9	8	17	29
NGO	2		2	3
Total	34	24	58	100

3.2.2 Participants according to GoDanuBio target groups

Participants attended the 3rd webinar according to GoDanuBio target group	Number
Regional public authority	10
National public authority	1
Sectoral agency	1
Interest groups including NGOs	2
Higher education and research	7
Enterprise, excluding SME	1
SME	6
Business support organization	5
Other	1
Total external participants	34
Partners	30
Total participants	64

Participants who filled in the online questionnaire according to GoDanuBio target groups.	Number
Regional public authority	11
National public authority	3
Sectoral agency	1
Interest groups including NGOs	2
Higher education and research	9
Enterprise, excluding SME	1
SME	5
Business support organization	1
Partner	1
Total online questionnaires	34

3.3 Pictures

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting in progress. The grid displays 20 participants arranged in 4 rows and 5 columns. The participants' names are visible above their video feeds. The bottom of the screen shows the Zoom toolbar with icons for mute, video, chat, and other controls.

Row	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
1	Flaviu Iorgulescu	Jan	Martin Stoyano...	Andrej Dover	Katrin Stökle
2	Helia Kovačević...	Teodora Atanas...	Esanu Ioana-Ale...	Adina Pacala	Dan Ioan Avasil...
3	Vladimir Borza	Nina Kovačič (5...	anca.petrean	Pavla Bruskova	Marcela Jokelova
4	Nirvana Kapitan...	Gabriela	Peter Kumer	Dora Maricic	

The bottom of the screen shows the Zoom toolbar with icons for mute, video, chat, and other controls.

