



First BE-Rural inter-regional webinar

Overview	
Date	18 March 2020
Location	Online
Aim of the event	This first webinar was dedicated to providing a better understanding of the current situation and plans for further bioeconomy development in each OIP region. Another pursued goal was to have the Open Innovation Platform facilitators and their stakeholders network together and exchange on experiences and best practices.

Short summary

41 participants from Northern Macedonia, Poland, Latvia, Bulgaria and Romania, representing national, regional and local public authorities, clusters and other categories of relevant stakeholders as well as project partners were present in the first inter-regional webinar held on 18 March 2020.

Each represented region has a different approach concerning the build-up of the regional bioeconomy, influenced by the available natural and technological resources against the wider cultural background. While Northern Macedonian and Latvian regions capitalise on the richness of available resources (agriculture and forestry, respectively), Romania relies on regional clusters to trigger a sustainable development towards a bioeconomy, whereas Poland intends to fully revive the potential of traditional food consumption in the fishing sector in combination with modern tourism. In spite of all these different strategies and business models, one commonality observed across regions is that mobilisation of the regional actors accompanied by a sustained effort in educating the society from early age are critical factors of success.



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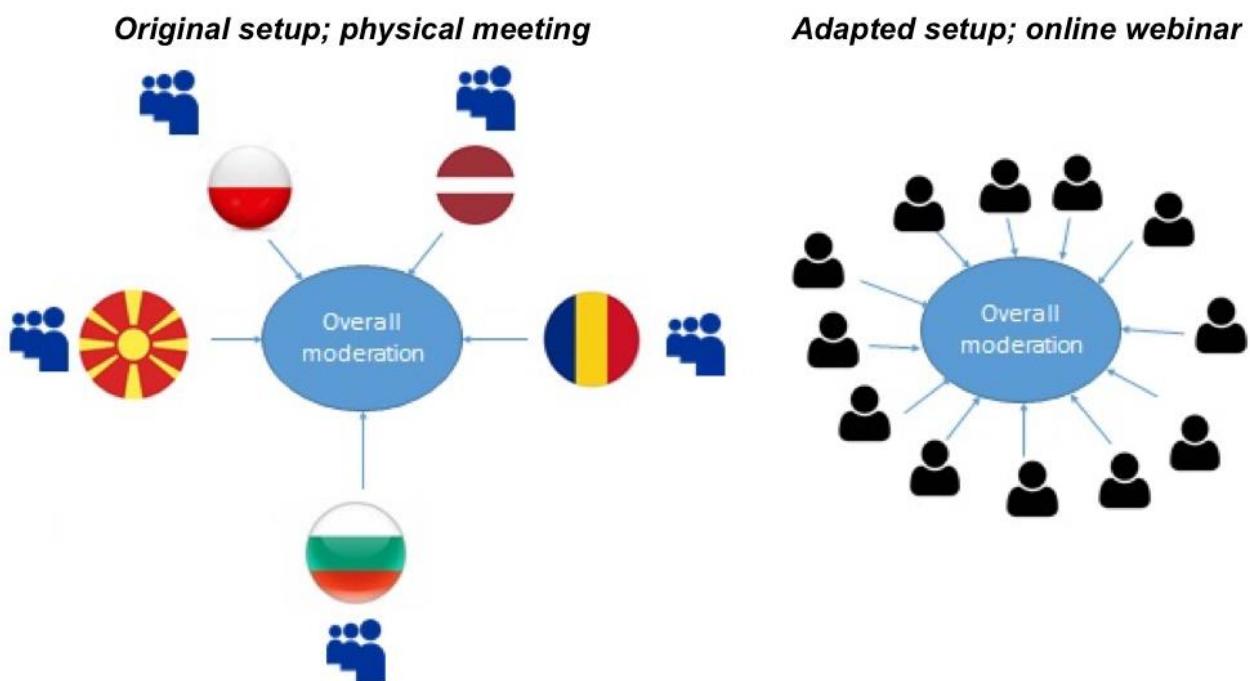
The webinar has been positively evaluated by the participants both in terms of methodology, organisation and content. A main conclusion that can be drawn is that participants in the first webinar would like to see in the future more and deeper exchanges of best practices between the BE-Rural regions, which have a high replicability potential.

Background

The webinars are part of BE-Rural's Work Package 4 „Knowledge Exchange and Capacity Building” aiming at stirring the interaction and mutual learning between the OIP regions, in order to facilitate the learning process and to accompany the elaboration process of business models, strategies and roadmaps. Hence, the first webinar was dedicated to a better mutual understanding of the current situation and plans in each OIP region.

Methodology

The 1st webinar was conceived as an interactive meeting via an online communication platform allowing exchange of information and experience about the current status of the bioeconomy approaches in each OIP region. In order to facilitate the process, it was originally planned that each region stakeholders should physically meet and inter-regional communication should be moderated by each OIP facilitator, with an overall moderation managed by the Institute for Economic Forecasting (IPE) Romania. However, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the concept was changed to a fully decentralised approach.



The webinar was divided in 2 parts:

- Presentation of each OIP region; under the umbrella topic of “bioeconomy strategic approach in the region”, each of the regions had leeway in terms of content and the way they would structure and present the information;

- Questions and answers in the form of a moderated discussion aiming at finding out relevant topics for the next online meetings or face-to-face workshops.

The detailed agenda of the webinar is presented in the annex to the report.

An online evaluation of the webinar was made available as a follow-up to the event: This consisted in a questionnaire including both evaluation questions as well as topics of interest for future meetings.

The evaluation questionnaire is presented in annex to this report.

Description of the webinar

The webinar started with a tour de table. Then, the webinar was structured in two sections: OIP presentations and open discussion. Each region had about fifteen minutes of presentation followed by direct questions. The speakers were invited to talk about their views on the current situations in their regions in terms of bioeconomy business models, policy frameworks and bioeconomy potential. The speakers also described their own activities and expertise, as well as their hopes and priorities for the future. The aim of this session was to allow for exchange of experience between the partner regions.

North Macedonia was represented by Emilija Mihajloska, speaking on behalf of SDEWES Skopje, the OIP facilitator and project partner of BE-Rural. Emilija presented the Strumica Region, emphasising on the economic and technological conditions, potential business models as well as on the bioeconomy potential. The latter is heavily based on agricultural waste. The main issue that was highlighted in the North Macedonian region is the prevalent land fragmentation and the lack of cooperation between stakeholders. It was pointed out that this should be boosted by stronger involvement of cluster organisations and promotion of best practice examples via BE-Rural.

Romania was represented by Enikő Mátyus, speaking on behalf of the Sf. Gheorghe Accelerator from the local business incubator. The bioeconomy approach in the Covasna region is strongly relying on regional clusters; e.g. Green Energy, Pro Wood, Transylvania Textile and Fashion, the balneal touristic cluster etc. Each cluster has already achieved results in terms of developed products, technologies, and strategic approaches. Each cluster manager attending the webinar intervened and shortly described their own field of expertise.

Latvia was represented by Dagnija Lazdina, speaking on behalf of the Latvian State Forest Research Institute (SILAVA), OIP facilitator and project partner of BE-Rural. The bioeconomy approach in the OIP regions of Vidzeme and Kurzeme relies on the massive forest resources. The main problem identified in the presentation is the ownership of abandoned areas which are privately owned. It was emphasised that a strong educational effort is needed and SILAVA already made a strong commitment in this regard with the bio-based pop-up store that was organised in February 2020 at the occasion of the *Vidzeme Innovation Week*.

Poland was represented by Marcin Rakowski, speaking on behalf of the National Marine Fisheries Research Institute, OIP facilitator and project partner of BE-Rural. This OIP region is made up of two lagoons, Szczecin and Vistula. After an in-depth analysis of various small-scale technological options, it was considered that the most appropriate approach for the regions is the integration of the local fishery in the short agri-food value chains in cooperation with the local touristic sector, for which traditional food recipes play a major role.

Each of the interventions has been followed by immediate questions, either spontaneous or triggered by the moderator. The last part of the webinar was dedicated to an assessment of the most relevant topics and themes that should be approached in future meetings or webinars.

The topics of interest mentioned by participants include the following:

- Specific business models;
- Financing opportunities;
- Detailed description of regional best practices;
- Short regional value chains;
- Promotion system of local food;
- Online platforms to buy/sell waste

Evaluation of the webinar

20 participants have evaluated the seminar, i.e. 39.21%. 50% of the respondents appreciated the webinar as being very good while another 50% considered it good.

As regards the quality of the content, 65% of the respondents assessed it as very good, 30% as good and 5% as fair.

55% of the respondents considered the organisation of the webinar as “very good”, 40% as “good” and 5% as “fair”.

When asked about what they liked best about the webinar, the answers were:

- New ideas and new information;
- The different style in which each region chose to present itself;
- The presentations;
- The interactivity between participants;
- Communication efficiency;
- Good moderation;
- Having met all the partners in the project;

When asked about what they disliked the most about the webinar, the answers were:

- Technical problems;
- Low interactivity between partners.



Respondents also voted for their preferred topic of interest for the next meeting or webinar among the following options:

- Best practice examples (45%);
- Financing opportunities (20%);
- Promotion systems of local food (30%);
- Regional stakeholders (5%)



Annex – Agenda

1st Inter-regional Webinar – Task 4.1

Time	Topic	Comment		
Session 1: Introduction				
10:00	Introduction <i>Tour de table</i>	Moderated by IPE		
10:30	Presentation of the project	ECO		
Session 2: OIP presentation				
Each region should have a 10-15 min presentation followed by direct questions (5-10 minutes). Questions will be written and moderated accordingly.				
10:30	Bulgaria	BIA, external experts, to be decided internally; presentations, Q&A		
10:50	Macedonia	SEDWES, external experts, to be decided internally, Q&A		
11:10	Romania	IPE, external experts, to be decided internally; presentations, Q&A		
11:30	Latvia	SILAVA, external experts, to be decided internally; presentations, Q&A		
11:50	Poland	NMFRI, external experts, to be decided internally; presentations, Q&A		
12:10	Session 3: Open Discussion			
Aim of the session is to allow exchange of experience between the partner regions. “What is important to you in elaborating the bioeconomy strategy?” “What topics would you like to see in the next webinar?”				
As a guidance, following aspects could be highlighted: Invited stakeholders could talk about: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their views of the regional situation in terms of bio-based business models, policy frameworks, and bioeconomy potential;• Their own activities and expertise;				

- Their hopes and priorities for the future.

Project partners could talk about:

- What are the main priorities for action now in the regional bioeconomy?
- What kinds of bioeconomy strengths, expertise and resources exist in the region already?
- What kinds of capacities and support are needed to develop the region's bioeconomy further (e.g. human resources, funding, leadership...)?
- How can stakeholders and citizens be motivated to engage more fully with the bioeconomy in the region?

12:40	Conclusions and next steps	Moderated by IPE, only project partners
13:00	End of the webinar	

Annex – Presentations

Presentation slides are available [here](#).

Annex – List of participants

Participants		
Name	Organisation	Stakeholder category
Gaspar Maria	Agro Food	Cluster
Andrzej Wiśniewski	Association of Local Fisheries Group Vistula Lagoon	NGO
Monika Modzelewska-Koziół	Association of Local Fisheries Group Vistula Lagoon	NGO
Clément Robijns	BIOCOM AG	Project partner
Eniko Matyus	Clusterul Regional Balneoturistic	Cluster
Holger Gerdes	Ecologic Institute	Project partner
Zortiza Kiresiewa	Ecologic Institute	Project partner
Tomasz Kulikowski	Fish Industry Magazine	Media
Ilze Silamikele	Forest department at Ministry of Agriculture of Republic of Latvia	Policy
Boglarka Vajda	Green Energy	Cluster
Lajos Vajda	Green Energy	Cluster

Sebestyen Tihamer	Green Energy	Cluster
Carmen Beatrice Pauna	IPE	OIP facilitator
Christina Leucuta	IPE	OIP facilitator
Daniel Cosnita	IPE, Clustero	OIP facilitator
Tiberiu Diaconescu	IPE	OIP facilitator
Raluca Iorgulescu	IPE	OIP facilitator
Aleksandar Chebotarev	JSC MEPSO	Industry
Arta Bardule	LSFRI SILAVA	OIP facilitator
Kristaps Makovskis	LSFRI SILAVA	OIP facilitator
Dagnija Lazdina	NGO Meža projekti, SILAVA	OIP facilitator
Marcin Rakowski	NMFRI	OIP facilitator
Kamil Bemowski	Pomeranian Academy of Action	NGO
Andrea Sulyok-Pál	Pro Wood Regional Wood Cluster	Cluster
Czine Zolt	Pro Wood Regional Wood Cluster	Cluster
Michał Marczak	Rybacka Brać Mierzei (local fishery group)	NGO
Emelj Tuna	SDEWES-Skopje	OIP facilitator
Emilija Mihajloska	SDEWES-Skopje	OIP facilitator
Ljupcho Dimov	SDEWES-Skopje	OIP facilitator
Marina Filiposka	SDEWES-Skopje	OIP facilitator
Natasha Markovska	SDEWES-Skopje	OIP facilitator
Stefan Kah	Strathclyde University	Project partner
Emil Mutafov	Trakia University	Academia
Eva Gaszpor	Textil & Fashion Cluster	Cluster
Klara Fodor	Textil & Fashion Cluster	Cluster
Mirela Bogyo	Textil & Fashion Cluster	Cluster
Laila Gercane	Vidzeme Planning Region	Law

Joanna Prachnio	Zalew Szczeciński (local fishery group)	NGO
Małgorzata Całka	Zalew Szczeciński (local fishery group)	NGO
Raduly Bernadett Andrea	Invited stakeholder	
Raymond Gheorghita	Invited stakeholder	