

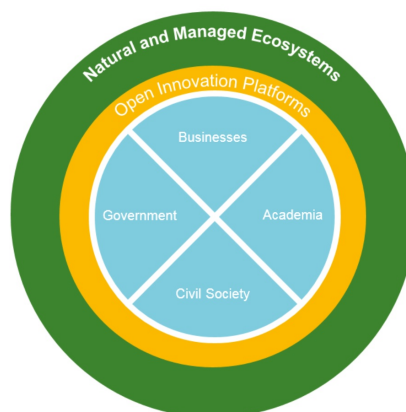


## PROJECT UPDATES



### BE-Rural officially kicked off!

A year ago, in April 2019, the [BE-Rural Consortium convened for the first time](#). Shortly after, a first report was published outlining the **conceptual framework** of the European project and providing **practical guidance** to the design and implementation of the five regional Open Innovation Platforms (OIPs) within BE-Rural. The foundations of the project build on the key concept of the **Quintuple Helix Approach**, which combines knowledge and innovation within the framework of the environment. >>> [Read more](#)



### Setting the scene for the project implementation

Led by [WIP Renewable Energies](#), a comprehensive work has been made towards the publication of a [handbook](#) that draws on a prior assessment addressing [new and sustainable small-scale technology options](#) and a preliminary analysis of [business models](#) suitable for bio-based economies. Substantial background research on the [macro-environments around the five OIP regions](#) was also conducted, making possible an analysis of [their bioeconomy potentials](#), among others.

## FOCUS ON...

### Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

As part of this regional Open Innovation Platform, stakeholders focus on seeking new technologies for the application of essential oils and herbal plants in the cosmetics and pharmaceutical industry. The small-scale production in this area will be combined with tourism-related activities to expand the existing business status quo and potential. Ultimately, the region will establish closer relations and network between companies.

[Learn more about Stara Zaroga](#)

## 3-MINUTE Q&A WITH...



Holger Gerdes, Senior Fellow,  
Bioeconomy Coordinator,  
**Ecologic Institute**

### - How does BE-Rural relate to its predecessor project BioSTEP?

Between 2015 and 2018, BioSTEP has designed and implemented a wide range of citizen and stakeholder **engagement activities** on the development of Europe's bioeconomy. These covered different modes of participation, ranging from education and information activities to intensive stakeholder dialogues and the co-creation of regional bioeconomy roadmaps. BE-Rural builds on **good practices and lessons learnt** from the activities generated in the context of BioSTEP. This applies to the communications and engagement formats we are currently fostering, as well as to the specific features of the strategy and roadmap documents, which regional stakeholders will jointly develop in the frame of our five Open Innovation Platforms.

### - It has been one year since you are now working with this very diverse consortium of partners coming from different parts of Western, Eastern and Southeastern Europe and involved in distinct sectors of the bioeconomy. How would you describe this experience of creating collaborations amongst such a wide variety of partners?

The BE-Rural consortium consists of nine partners from seven different countries, and our Open Innovation Platforms have been established in regions, which are shaped by a variety of natural and managed ecosystems and associated biomass streams. It might seem like a challenge to accommodate such a diversity of project partners and regional contexts in a **single conceptual framework**, but what we have learnt in our first year of activity is that the international and interdisciplinary setup of the consortium greatly facilitates **knowledge sharing** across different locations, settings and contexts. And this is what BE-Rural is about!

### - What can you already learn from this first year and what have been for you the major achievements of the project so far?

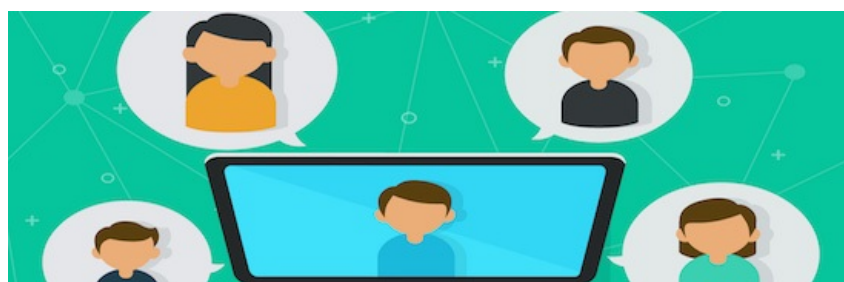
In our first operational year, we focused on assessing the bioeconomy potentials of our five focal regions, and on identifying and evaluating small-scale technologies and business models, which are suitable for application in a regional bioeconomy context. In this regard, we have created an **extensive knowledge base**, which will inform the regional stakeholder processes that BE-Rural facilitates in Bulgaria, Latvia, North Macedonia, Poland, and Romania. Additionally, our project outputs can also serve as valuable resources for relevant stakeholders in other regions across Europe who look into possibilities for **assessing regional bioeconomy potentials** and developing targeted roadmaps and strategies.

## EVENTS



### Regional stakeholder processes are now running

Starting end of 2019, a number of workshops were organised in the five OIPs to engage and mobilise the **local stakeholder networks**. Key agenda points included, among others, the presentation of BE-Rural and its relevance for the region, the development of a local **bioeconomy strategy or roadmap**, and the contribution of the targeted stakeholders to the project activities. >>> [Read more](#)



### Exchange of knowledge and experience between OIPs

The first **inter-regional webinar** was successfully organised on 18 March 2020 with more than forty participants mainly coming from the five focal regions. OIP facilitators and their stakeholders had the chance to provide details on their sector of activity, describe the status of the bioeconomy development in their region and discuss **common points of interest**, such as the need for more cross-sector collaboration, the lack of financing, and the issue of land ownership in rural areas. >>> [Read more](#)



### Bioeconomy goes hand in hand with education

In line with BE-Rural's ambition to increase awareness, education and understanding of the bioeconomy, Dr Elsa João from the University of Strathclyde, Scotland, has been working closely with students from the MSc in Sustainability and Environmental Studies and MSc in Environmental

Entrepreneurship to develop **education materials** related to the **bioeconomy and sustainability**. On 9 March 2020, the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering run a successful **workshop** with these students. >>> [Read more](#)

## COVID-19: BE-Rural's response

In just days, the Coronavirus pandemic imposed upon all of us limitations that shifted the way traditional communication is practised across many sectors linked to the BE-Rural project. The fundamental activities of the project rely on the effective and continuous engagement of regional stakeholders in five [focal regions](#). To guarantee the successful implementation of the project, BE-Rural consortium partners are currently re-designing the involvement of their stakeholder communities in events and meetings. Please stay tuned with us for innovative ideas that will keep our stakeholder engagement processes up and running in these difficult times.

In the meantime, we would be keen on interacting with you on how to pursue outreach towards partners and external target audiences that would have usually been done via physical activities. We are convinced that solidarity and exchange of views are the best way to ensure the longevity of our social undertakings in this challenging period of time. **Please don't hesitate to connect with us and start the discussion!**

## BE-RURAL ON STAGE

### 24-26.09.19 // [European Research & Innovation Days](#) // Brussels, Belgium

Organised by the European Commission, the first edition of the European Research and Innovation Days took place in Brussels on 24-26 September 2019. This inaugural event organised by the European Commission featured a high-level Policy Conference, an Innovative Europe Hub and the annual 'Science is Wonderful' exhibition. The European Research and Innovation Days brought together leaders from industry, finance, academia and business to debate and shape Europe's future **research and innovation landscape**. It also sought to mobilise EU citizens and increase general awareness and understanding of how important research and innovation are in addressing societal challenges. Holger Gerdes from *Ecologic Institute* contributed to the session "Bio-based economy - innovations in practice", addressing the potential **implications of bioeconomy policies** in the context of the EU's Cohesion Policy, and the current limitations when assessing the **environmental performance of bio-based products**. >>> [Read more](#)

### 22-24.01.20 // [6th Central European Biomass Conference](#) // Graz, Austria

With more than 1,500 participants from over 50 nations, the 6th Central European Biomass Conference (CEBC) in Graz, which took place from 22 to 24 January 2020, was one of the world's largest events in the sector. Under the motto "Greening the Strategies", the 6th CEBC examined whether **green strategies** can be put into practice for a serious exit from fossil resources. Exploiting future markets and closing loops were some of the core elements of the conference. Within that scope, orals and workshops on the topics of bioeconomy, decarbonisation, and biomass and residue potentials were implemented. Felix Colmorgen from *WIP Renewable Energies* presented the BE-Rural project at the workshop "Bioenergy and bio-based economy in Europe". The oral presentation contained an overview on **the status of the bioeconomy in Europe**, including bio-based value chains as well as potentials and visions of the bioeconomy. Moreover, the vision, targets and the conceptual framework of the BE-Rural project were presented as well as first project results. Those included the macro-environment surrounding the BE-Rural's Open Innovation Platforms, regional bioeconomy potentials as well as potential technology options and business models that can be applied in a regional context.

[Click here to find out more about BE-Rural](#)



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