

Business Opportunities

Innovate, Create, Sustain:
Unlocking business opportunities
and potentials for Bioeconomy



Funded by
the European Union

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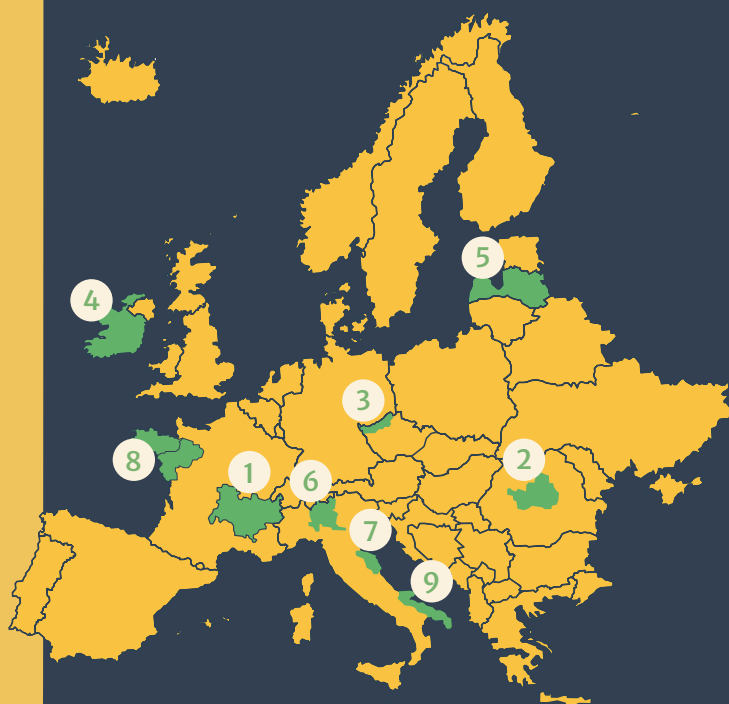
The RuralBioUp Project

Driving rural development through our regional hubs

RuralBioUp is a project funded by the Horizon Europe programme, running from October 2022 to September 2025.

Our mission is to scale-up local bio-based solutions for rural development by strengthening cooperation among two key groups: regional actors (like policymakers, producers, and citizens) and knowledge holders (such as industries, researchers, and EU agencies).

We set up 9 Regional Hubs in 9 regions in 6 EU countries.



- 1 Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region, **France**
- 2 Centru Region, **Romania**
- 3 Charles Spa Region, **Czechia**
- 4 **Ireland** (The hub operates nationally with a focus on County Tipperary)
- 5 **Latvia** (The Latvian hub is a national initiative with stakeholders from all over the country)
- 6 Lombardia, **Italy**
- 7 Marche, **Italy**
- 8 Pays de la Loire & Bretagne Region, **France**
- 9 Puglia Region, **Italy**

What is a Bioeconomy Hub?

A bioeconomy hub is a collaborative space and facilitation tool that brings together diverse stakeholders – such as entrepreneurs, researchers, innovators, policy makers, civil society, media, and other regional actors – across the entire bioeconomy value chain.

Its purpose is to foster dialogue, knowledge exchange, and networking to identify synergies, share best practices, and co-create solutions to regional and cross-regional challenges and opportunities in the bioeconomy.

Through training, consulting, and strategic collaboration, bioeconomy hubs aim to build capacity, influence policy, and support the effective and sustainable use of renewable biological resources.

Ultimately, they contribute to the development of functioning bioeconomy systems that align with broader goals such as regional development, climate neutrality, and the European Green Deal. The implementation differs highly from the regional identified opportunities, chances, and cultural working modes.



Business Opportunities



Beyond a Vision: An Economic Opportunity

The bioeconomy is not just an environmental vision – it's an economic opportunity. From agricultural residues to food by-products, Europe's rural regions are home to untapped bio-based resources that can fuel sustainable businesses. How can local entrepreneurs and SMEs get empowered to identify, develop, and scale innovative bioeconomy solutions?

The Challenge

Many rural actors are unaware of the economic value hidden in their bio-resources. Even when ideas exist, support for turning concepts into viable business models is limited.

Entrepreneurs need access to networks, funding insights, technical knowledge, and market validation to take the leap. Bridging this gap is key to making the bioeconomy both real and profitable.



Lessons Learned

1

Business Models Need to Be Local and Adaptable

Successful bioeconomy ventures reflect the regional context – available resources, market access, and cultural identity. Copy-paste solutions rarely work.

Practical Tip: Support SMEs in adapting proven concepts to local supply chains and consumer demands. Use feasibility tools and business mentoring.



2

Visibility Creates Market Pull

Public awareness and clear communication of benefits drive acceptance and demand. Showcasing real products helps make the bioeconomy 'real'.

Practical Tip: Encourage participation in fairs, media outreach, and product showcases. Use storytelling to highlight impact.





3

Small-Scale Innovation Has Big Potential

Innovation isn't limited to high-tech labs. Simple, low-cost solutions – like turning plant waste into packaging or cosmetics – can be powerful drivers of value.

Practical Tip: Highlight grassroots innovation and support low-barrier pilot projects to reduce perceived risk for SMEs.

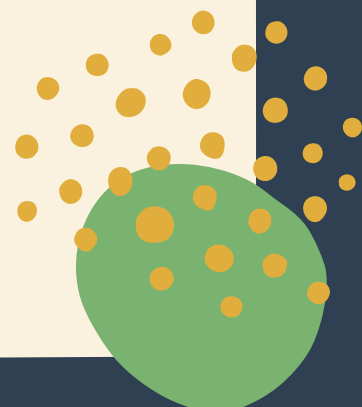


4

Connect Innovators with Networks and Capital

Entrepreneurs need more than ideas – they need connections to peers, funders, and buyers. RuralBioUp hubs acted as bridges to these networks.

Practical Tip: Host matchmaking events, provide funding guidance, and co-create roadmaps with local authorities and chambers of commerce.





Key Strategies: Make It Happen

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- 1 Map regional bio-resources and assess business potential using local data.
 - 2 Offer mentoring and coaching programs for early-stage bioeconomy ideas.
 - 3 Use exhibitions and demo days to make innovation visible and accessible.
 - 4 Foster cooperation between SMEs, research institutions, and local governments.
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Insights from the Field

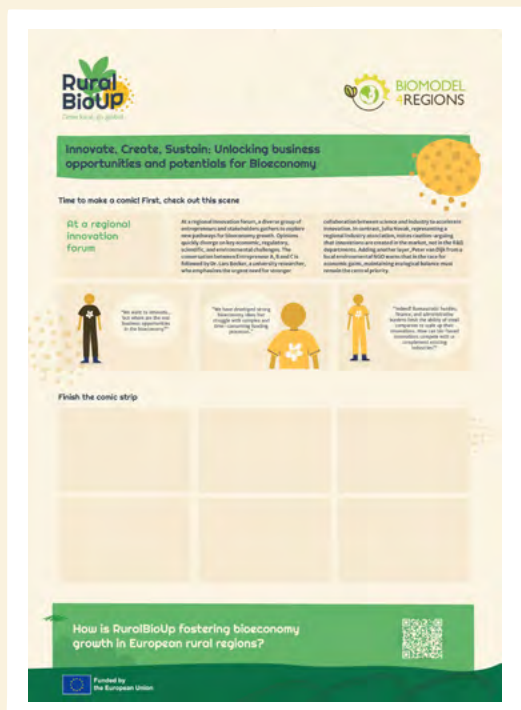
Our final workshop, 'Building Bridges in Bioeconomy,' took place in Brussels on May 14, 2025. The event explored a range of topics, from co-creation with stakeholders and bioeconomy training to business opportunities and replicating the RuralBioUp Hub model.



Within this broader agenda, this summary presents the key results from two specific roundtable discussions:

- Innovate, Create, Sustain: Unlocking business opportunities and potentials for Bioeconomy

To kickstart the discussion and encourage a dynamic exchange of ideas, we utilised a unique comics-based scenario (see the image below):



Workshop Outcomes & Key Learnings

The engaging discussions that followed the comic strip allowed us to collect and synthesise the key outcomes and learnings from the group. These points represent the collective insights on how to unlock new business opportunities and foster innovation within the bioeconomy.

Rural BioUp
Grow local, go global

BIOMODEL 4REGIONS

Innovate, Create, Sustain: Unlocking business opportunities and potentials for Bioeconomy

Time to make a comic! First, check out this scene

At a regional innovation forum

At a regional innovation forum, a diverse group of entrepreneurs and stakeholders gathers to explore new pathways for bioeconomy growth. Opinions quickly diverge on key economic, regulatory, scientific, and environmental challenges. The conversation between Entrepreneur A, B and C is followed by Dr. Lars Becker, a university researcher, who emphasizes the urgent need for stronger collaboration between science and industry to accelerate innovation. In contrast, Julia Novak, representing a regional industry association, voices caution—arguing that innovations are created in the market, not in the R&D departments. Adding another layer, Peter van Dijk from a local environmental NGO warns that in the race for economic gains, maintaining ecological balance must remain the central priority.

"We want to innovate... but where are the real business opportunities in the bioeconomy?"

"We have developed strong bioeconomy ideas but struggle with complex and time-consuming funding processes."

"Indeed! Bureaucratic hurdles, finance, and administrative burdens limit the ability of small companies to scale up their innovations. How can bio-based innovations compete with or complement existing industries?"

Finish the comic strip

"Many companies in the BE sector have innovative ideas, but the lack of financial resources and the bureaucratic complexity of securing funding make it difficult to scale their projects."

"Given our cultural, people tend to be cautious about new ventures, preferring stability over risk. Starting something new requires a guarantee that investments will yield returns."

"There's a gap in understanding what bioeconomy truly is; different perceptions prevail, and many still see it as simple, when in reality, it encompasses complex technologies like AI and biometrics, far beyond just harvesting raw materials."

"A bioeconomy business model needs key contacts, structured info, and funding opportunities—resources we gained through collaboration with other hubs, crucial for launching successful initiatives."

How is RuralBioUp fostering bioeconomy growth in European rural regions?

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This image shows the discussion results from one table at our 'Building Bridges in Bioeconomy' workshop, held in Brussels on May 14, 2025: Innovate, Create, Sustain: Unlocking business opportunities and potentials for Bioeconomy. The key results from the workshop are summarised in this fact sheet.

What to Remember

- Bioeconomy innovation is economically viable—and accessible to rural SMEs.
- Local context, visibility, and mentorship are key to scaling business ideas.
- Empowering entrepreneurs unlocks circular value chains and regional resilience.

Your Turn: Getting Started



Identify local bio-resources with hidden value.



Co-create innovation journeys with entrepreneurs in your region.





Our Consortium



Want to Learn More?

Visit our website for full project details or get in touch directly.

www.ruralbioup.eu info@ruralbioup.eu

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