

EVALUATION OF CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

MAIN RESULTS / OUTCOMES

The capacity-building activities in SCALE-UP included 21 online training sessions, 4 regional field trips and one international study tour. These activities were designed to enhance stakeholder collaboration, facilitate knowledge exchange, and promote the adoption of innovative bio-based solutions. The training programme engaged over 1,300 participants from 32 countries, covering topics such as nutrient recycling, digitalisation, social innovation, and governance. Tailored content and breakout sessions in regional languages enabled interactive discussions, allowing participants to relate technical knowledge to practical, local contexts, while also strengthening regional platforms, fostering networking among participants, and supporting the development of long-term collaboration plans among stakeholders. While participation was high overall, some regions faced challenges related to language barriers and time constraints, affecting stakeholder engagement.

The field trips and the international study tour complemented the trainings with hands-on experiences, showcasing bioeconomy practices in five European countries. Case studies, best practices, and local project examples were shared, encouraging replication of successful approaches.

The activities empowered regional platforms to promote multi-actor partnerships, stimulate innovation, and support the development of sustainable bioeconomy solutions aligned with ecological boundaries. It was also identified that continuous involvement of regional governments is crucial to maintain stakeholder engagement, facilitate investment, and secure the long-term impact of these efforts.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage regional platforms to continue organising interactive training sessions for regional stakeholders and local field visits using materials developed during SCALE-UP.
- Foster multi-actor partnerships by involving government, research institutions, SMEs, and primary producers in platform activities and decision-making.
- Important topics that were addressed during the training sessions should be included in the discussions among platform members.



Figure 1: Key figures of the online training sessions.



Figure 2: Field trip in North Macedonia.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The full evaluation and synthesis report on the capacity-building activities will be presented on the SCALE-UP website: www.scaleup-bioeconomy.eu.

ABOUT THIS ABSTRACT

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Date: 28-07-2025

The **SCALE-UP** project supported regional multi-actor partnerships, consisting of private businesses, governments and policymakers, civil society organisations, and researchers in identifying and scaling-up innovative and sustainable bio-based value chains that build on regional resources. The project ran from September 2022 to August 2025.

Website: www.scaleup-bioeconomy.eu



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No.101060264.



SMALL-SCALE BUSINESS MODELS

MAIN CHALLENGE, APPROACH AND RESULTS

Fragmentation and limited collaboration between key players can hinder innovation in rural areas. Misaligned innovation management disperses the efforts dedicated to expanding the uptake of bio-based solutions. Overcoming these barriers demands rethinking cooperation models and providing targeted assistance that provides communities and innovators with expanded capacities and strategic outlook.

The SCALE-UP Innovation Support Programme (ISP)—a common, yet flexible assistance framework—was implemented in a distributed manner to build lasting regional capacity. Twelve regional Task Forces were deployed to support selected bio-based innovators. Many of the innovations adopted principles of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), prioritizing social and environmental goals over profit. These mission-driven enterprises required access to finance and regional networks, legal support, and tailored capacity-building on business and strategy. The Task Forces oriented their activities to match the innovators' priorities, increasing the impact of the efforts invested.

The results demonstrated the critical importance of structured, yet adaptive innovation support in boosting market access. From an implementation standpoint, success depended on a sound methodology, adaptability, and strong stakeholder engagement. The ISP also evidenced the benefits of international collaboration, enabling Task Forces to adjust validated methods to their local contexts, and giving innovators access to new markets.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Future innovation support services in bioeconomy should build lasting community capacity by design, help develop specialized marketing and sales strategies, and increase the negotiating power of innovators. Needs are wide and varied, but improving access to finance, legal guidance, and capacity-building for social innovations were recurrent in SCALE-UP.
- Policies to promote sustainable consumption and increase the affordability of bio-based products can play a key role to play in boosting demand.
- EU-funded programmes should promote solid – yet flexible, distributed and open – support frameworks that approach business development iteratively and incrementally and that recognize stakeholders as key knowledge holders.



The SCALE-UP Innovation Support Programme: a modular, flexible approach to innovation support. Source: own elaboration

FURTHER INFORMATION

The full version of the report will be presented on the SCALE-UP website: www.scaleup-bioeconomy.eu.

ABOUT THIS ABSTRACT

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Date: 5-8-2025

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GUIDANCE FRAMEWORK FOR REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE BIO-BASED SOLUTIONS

How can we develop biobased solutions in rural areas? How can we scale-up production and ensure developments remain within ecological boundaries? How can we combine this with sound and sustainable regional development?

Under the EU-funded SCALE-UP project regional platforms with that goal in mind have been established in six regions across Europe. Important lessons have been learnt of what should be done to enhance bioeconomy practices in rural environments.

MAIN RESULTS / OUTCOMES

Regional platforms for sustainable rural development. Six platforms have been established, in Northern Sweden, Upper Austria, Strumica (North Macedonia), the French Atlantic Arc, Andalusia (Spain), and Mazovia (Poland). The aim of the platforms is to develop sustainable biobased production and to connect local actors from public, private, research and civil society sectors to share experience and to shape strategies on basis of regional assets and challenges. Each platform has adapted its activities to local contexts and has implemented voluntary participation and bottom-up governance. This improved participation and ensured commitment among stakeholders.

Targeted innovation support. In all six regions, biomass assessments have been carried out and many small-scale bio-based solutions have been identified. Twelve projects have been supported by a targeted innovation support programme. Innovators received mentoring, business model development, and links to funding opportunities. This support improved the maturity of the innovations and strengthened value chains.

International and regional exchanges. Training sessions, study tours and activities within the regional platforms connected stakeholders across regions and countries. This resulted in knowledge transfer and opportunities regarding the replication of successful strategies. This was supported by extensive information packages on biomass and technology data and nutrient recycling.

Policy alignment and integration. Regional platform activities were aligned with policy frameworks such as rural development policies, Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3), circular bioeconomy strategies, and national or EU programmes. By linking local initiatives to policy goals, coherence improved across governance levels, which helped to define funding opportunities and support for the initiatives.

Monitoring and evaluation systems. Monitoring systems were developed to track the economic, environmental, and social impacts of activities. In several regions, bioeconomy indicators were integrated into existing innovation or development frameworks, ensuring data relevance and comparability. These systems provide a basis for evidence-based decision-making, allow for timely adjustments to strategies, and enhance transparency for stakeholders and policymakers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish platforms with stakeholders from public, private, research and civil society sectors. Define stakeholders benefits to create engagement and ensure participants see value in their involvement.
- Design attractive programmes with participatory methods (e.g., workshops, trend radar tools, interactive exercises) to share ideas and align perspectives and create shared objectives.
- Design a blended financing approach that combines public and private contributions.
- Monitor results on the economic, environmental and social impacts of activities.
- Integrate ecological boundaries to balance economic growth with environmental sustainability. Discuss developments within the platforms.
- Promote knowledge transfer and cross-regional exchanges on biomass data, nutrient recycling, technology and policy developments to replicate successful strategies and foster a broader Community of Practice.

01

DESIGN

Contextual analysis

Begin by assessing regional assets, challenges, and existing policy frameworks.

Regional platform establishment

Set-up a stakeholder platform and outline objectives.

02

IMPLEMENTATION

Stakeholder engagement

Mobilize, organize and engage diverse actors from industry, academia, public administration, and civil society.

Innovation identification and support

Facilitate the identification and development of promising small-scale bio-based innovations. Bring together stakeholders for supply chain and project development.

Pathway realization

Facilitate access to finance, connecting innovations to regional smart specialization strategies, and integrating actions into long-term rural development plans.

03

MONITORING

Monitoring and evaluation

Establish indicators and mechanisms for tracking progress and impact. These should align with existing monitoring systems where possible and cover economic, environmental, and social dimensions.

Sustainable, participatory
bioeconomy that builds on small
scale solutions

FURTHER INFORMATION

The full guidance framework report will be presented on the SCALE-UP website: www.scaleup-bioeconomy.eu.

ABOUT THIS ABSTRACT

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Date: 20-08-2025

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