

Deliverable 4.1

RuralBioUp Portfolio of Services

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Abstract	This Report provides information on a portfolio of supportive services for the Regional Hubs, while also serving as a guideline for Regional Facilitators to offer most suitable services and aid towards successful Action Plan implementation.
Keywords	Bioeconomy, Rural Regions, Innovation Hubs, Innovation Support, Training, Mentoring, Study Visits, Networking Events

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The information and views set out in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Neither the European Union institutions and bodies nor any person acting on their behalf.



Table of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation	Meaning
HUB	RuralBioUp Regional Innovation Hub
RF	RuralBioUp Regional Facilitator
CE	Civitta Estonia (Task 4.1 leader)
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
APRE	Agenzia Per La Promozione Della Ricerca Europea
IBF	Irish Bioeconomy Foundation
IPE	Romanian Academy National Institute For Economic Research
LOBA	GLOBAZ, S.A.
SPRING	Spring Sustainable Processes And Resources For Innovation And National Growth
ITABIA	Itabia-Italian Biomass Association
WP	Work Package



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Introduction

RuralBioUp aims to enhance collaboration among influential stakeholders and knowledge experts within nine project regions, empowering them to create an environment that promotes the integration of bio-based business models in rural areas. Within the RuralBioUp project, nine regional Innovation Hubs (HUBs) are created in Europe with the forementioned aim.

To ensure the successful implementation of each Regional Innovation Hubs' Action Plan, RuralBioUp offers an extensive portfolio of services to the HUBs, its facilitators, contact points and followers. This report gives an overview of tools and means to support building the Regional Hubs.

This report draws its information primarily from Work Package 4 (Empowering and Supporting the Regional Hubs), while also gathering relevant insights from Work Package 3 (Building the Regional Hubs) and Work Package 2 (Data Collection and RuralBioUp One-Stop-Shop).

In addition to reporting the EU Commission of the tools offered to the Hubs within the RuralBioUp project, this document also serves as a guideline for the Regional Facilitators to help them offer the Hubs the most suitable and requirement-based services.

Within WP3, implementation of several activities is foreseen in each Hub to ease the adoption of inclusive small-scale bio-based solutions in each project region. Within Task 3.1, ZSI developed a Handbook for building the Regional Hubs (Deliverable 3.1), most notably drawing on the benefits of local collaboration. Task 3.2 had the aim to establish nine Regional Hubs and develop Action Plans for each of them – indeed all Hubs kicked off by the end of December 2023, as planned. After the kick-off of all HUBs, the carrying out of Task 3.3 has begun. This will start with the implementation of Action Plans in each Hub and setting up the training, study visits, coaching, mentoring and networking plan.

Within WP2, work is ongoing in Task 2.3 and the building the RuralBioUp One-Stop-Shop tool (RuralSpot hereafter) has reached the phase of first validation, following the results of a validation focus group organised in November 2023.

Within WP4, tools to support the Hubs - coaching, mentoring, information sessions, training and knowledge sharing, networking and study visits - structure and elements have been set up and are ready to be implemented in the Hubs, with Civitta Estonia overseeing and coordinating the activities.

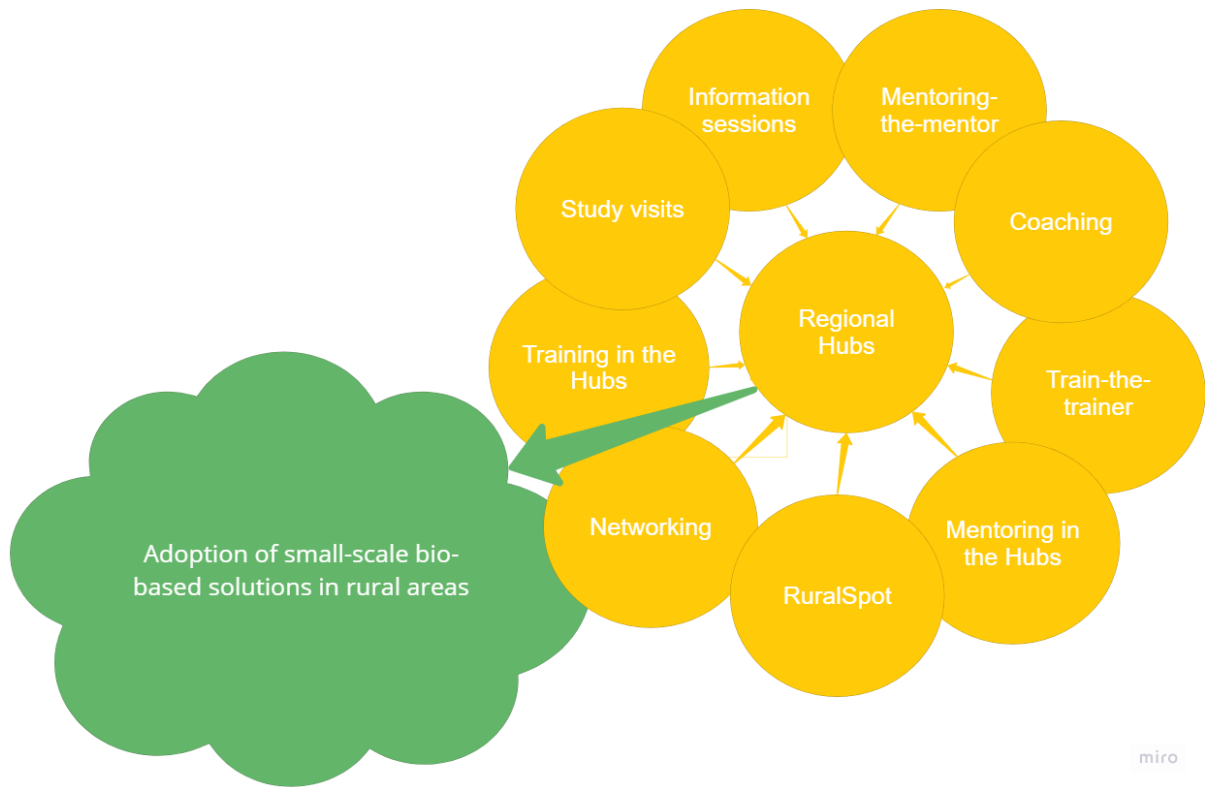


Figure 1 RuralBioUp portfolio of services

The present deliverable describes the portfolio of nine services that are offered by RuralBioUp (as shown by Figure 1 above), gives an overview of the timeline of implementation of the services and presents a preliminary service implementation calendar. Furthermore, the service implementation KPIs are presented.

Deliverable D3.3 ‘Report on RuralBioUp Regional Action Plan implementation’ (due M36) will report on the results of the service provision in the Hubs and progress towards achievement of the Action Plan goals and the set KPIs in each Hub.



1 Services offered in the Regional Innovation Hubs

1.1 RuralBioUp Information sessions

WHAT | RuralBioUp information sessions are dedicated sessions to communicate to HUB facilitators and HUB members the RuralBioUp project specific information and topics essential to each HUB.

HOW | The information sessions are delivered in a format of international online webinars in the English language. Webinars are available for all HUB members to participate. All HUBs are required to participate in the 4 RuralBioUp information sessions.

WHY | The information sessions support the HUB Action Plans implementation, present available support resources and ensure smooth delivery of RuralBioUp KPIs.

CATALOGUE | Information sessions available for the RuralBioUp Hubs and Hub Facilitators are the following:

RuralSpot | A webinar and video tutorial on how to use the RuralSpot information tool. Support to the HUB members will remain available from the RFs. LOBA, SPRING, ITABIA and CE will advise RFs if any questions arise. Workshop by each Regional Facilitator will be delivered in HUBs (with train-the-trainer available for RFs).

RuralBioUp Impact Assessment | Training offered to regional RuralBioUp HUBs by their respective RF, using the training materials provided by IPE. The training will explain the RuralBioUp impact assessment system to the stakeholders. Workshop by each Regional Facilitator will be delivered in Hubs (with train-the-trainer available for RFs).

Access to Finance and Funding | International online Webinar for HUB members with sessions on international private funding and international public funding. International experts will be available for Q&A and RFs will support HUBs on local funding topics.

Better Nutrient Recycling in Circular Bioeconomy | International lecture series made up of two online lectures - the quality and safety using waste for maintaining and improving soil fertility and green chemistry for improving soil health.

KPI | Each HUB members and RFs will participate in all 4 information sessions. Number of participants is recorded by RF.



1.2 Training and knowledge sharing

WHAT | A portfolio of trainings is available for implementation in the HUBs. The portfolio includes 12 trainings/training series on various topics that support rural bioeconomy and innovation. Furthermore, beyond the initially scheduled training modules, additional training modules will be continuously incorporated throughout the lifetime of the project. This is to make best use of the knowledge gathered at the EU, national and local lever and to offer the widest variety of trainings possible.

HOW | Trainings are organized either internationally by RuralBioUp experts or locally by RFs.

WHY | The trainings are designed to support the HUB members in their pursuit to develop bio-based solution and technological innovations; or communicate about bioeconomy to further stakeholder or learners.

CATALOGUE | Training modules available for the RuralBioUp HUBs as per January 2024 are the following:

1. **Relevant policies in bioeconomy** – interactive online session by an international RuralBioUp expert
2. **Bioeconomy in the agriculture & forestry sector** – videos and study materials by international experts
3. **Best practices in different value chains** – interactive webinar by an international RuralBioUp expert
4. **Technological trends in bioeconomy** – series of webinars by an international RuralBioUp expert
5. **Innovation in Bioeconomy & “Do no significant harm” principle** – session by an international RuralBioUp expert
6. **How to pitch (to impact investors)** – workshop by Regional Facilitators (train-the-trainer available for RFs)
7. **Innovation support & technology transfer** - webinar by an international RuralBioUp expert
8. **Awareness raising & education in bioeconomy** – info materials by an international RuralBioUp expert
9. **How to co-create activities for Bioeconomy** – training by an international RuralBioUp expert
10. **Communicate the bioeconomy: tools & methodologies** – webinar by an international RuralBioUp expert
11. **Bioeconomy in Education for young ones** – session Regional Facilitators or education expert
12. **SCALE UP project trainings available for participation** – SCALE UP project experts



KPI | Each HUB will implement or participate in at least 6 training sessions. In total 4000 HUB members will be trained in the lifetime of the project, meaning approximately 445 people per HUB.

1.3 Train- the- trainer activities

WHAT| Train-the-trainer activities will be organized for the Regional Hub Facilitators to support them in implementing trainings in their local Hubs in local languages.

HOW| The trainings that are designed to be implemented on a local scale in local language and with a focus on the local stakeholder group will be implemented locally by Regional Facilitators. The RFs will be provided with training materials and they will be trained to implement the trainings.

WHY | Trainings in local language and with the specific focus on the local stakeholder group ensure the engagement of regional stakeholders.

CATALOGUE | Train-the-trainer activities available for the RuralBioUp RFs are the following:

RuralSpot training for RFs | Training given to RFs by LOBA. Accompanied by video tutorial. RFs will deliver the training in their local HUBs.

RuralBioUp Impact Assessment training for RFs | Training given to RFs by IPE. Accompanied by video tutorial. RFs will deliver the training in their local HUBs.

How to pitch to impact investors training for RFs | RFs are provided with training materials and a train-the-trainer training video to implement the training in their local HUBs.

KPI | Each Regional Facilitator will provide 3 trainings in their local HUB.

1.4 Mentoring service for Innovation Hubs

WHAT| Regional Hub facilitators will assist HUBs in the daily implementation and monitoring of their Action Plans (Tasks 3.2 - 3.3), and in the design and realization of Networking Events (T4.3) and Study Visits (T4.4) in all its stages.

HOW| The mentoring is mainly provided to the Hubs' stakeholders by the HUBs Regional Facilitators. However, an additional service called mentoring-the-mentor (see section 1.5 below) is provided to guide the Regional Facilitators on certain topics. Mentoring takes place via online formats, including video calls, phone calls, emails, chats etc.

WHY | Mentoring will ensure that HUBs' stakeholders receive sufficient support in the daily implementation and delivering their Action Plans, the design and realization of the Networking Events and Study Visits in all its stages.



KPI | At least weekly mentoring sessions are held within the HUBs by the Regional Facilitators, including video calls, phone calls, email exchanges, sessions.

1.5 Mentoring-the-mentor service for Regional Facilitators

WHAT | Mentoring-the-mentor service is a dedicated service offered to the Regional Facilitators by a RuralBioUp consortium partner who is responsible for the specific topic and WP within the project.

HOW | Mentoring-the-mentor services are offered in the format of workshops, group mentoring sessions, 1:1 sessions or guideline documents.

WHY | Mentoring-the-mentor considerations are likely to enhance overall mentorship quality in the topics that are in the project implementation foreseen for dedicated consortium partners – IBF, APRE and CE.

SERVICE CATALOGUE | In mentoring-the-mentor sessions IBF, APRE, IPE and CE provide mentorship to the regional facilitators on need basis on the below topics.

Setting up mentoring and coaching in your Regional Hub | 1:1 mentoring session, CE

RuralBioUp Portfolio of Trainings and Training implementation | group sessions, CE

Study Visits organization | mentorship and guideline documents, IBF

Networking events | mentorship, APRE

RuralBioUp Impact assessment and KPIs | individual and group sessions, IPE

KPI | Smooth running of the Hubs by RFs. RFs have sufficient knowledge to support their Hub activities and realization of their Action Plan.



1.6 Coaching service for Innovation HUBs

WHAT | Coaching will be provided to discuss how the bioeconomy could be better shaped in the project regions and how it can be better developed outside the Action Plan (e.g. improvements to regional strategies, structural funds, programs, etc.), as well as on how to better develop social innovation approaches in the sector.

HOW | Individual and group sessions will take place online on needs basis. RFs will provide coaching sessions directly to their Hub and an expertise form within the consortium will be made available for RFs based on specific needs and experts sought on ongoing basis. The expert coaching sessions are lead by RuralBioUp consortium experts or RuralBioUp Advisory Board experts.

WHY | Expert coaching sessions will provide support for delivering further impact in the regional development in addition to the Hub Action Plan implementation.

SERVICE CATALOGUE | The following expertise is available for coaching sessions:

Coaching sessions from RFs to the HUBs | each RF based on the specific needs of the HUB.

Regional Pool of Expertise | RuralBioUp expertise will be made available to seek for further consultations if need arises.

KPI | Smooth running of the HUBs by RFs. RFs and HUB members have sufficient support to reach impact in the region beyond their Action Plan.



1.7 Networking (APRE)

WHAT | Local networking events are organised on the selected value chains and according to the needs of specific HUBs. APRE will organize European level networking events.

HOW | Each regional event is organised either onsite, online or hybrid, events can also be in collaboration with other relevant projects to reach the maximum impact. APRE will guide the Regional Facilitators in organizing the regional events.

WHY | Collecting actionable knowledge and creating new partnerships.

SERVICE CATALOGUE | The following networking events are foreseen:

Regional Networking Events | local networking events organised by each HUB on the selected value chains and combining different formats according to the needs of each HUB.

European Networking Events | EU-level networking events organised in collaboration with EEN, organisers of already existing events, EIP-AGRI operational groups, other funded projects, and initiatives.

KPI | Two networking events are organized in each Regional Hub, and 2 networking events at EU level (20 events in total).



1.8 Study Visits (IBF)

WHAT | Study visits (at least 2 for each HUB) aim to “bring to the field” the RuralBioUp Followers and let them discover more about activities implemented and benefits obtained (thus creating replication opportunities in other regions), exchange experience and best practices, as well as establish new cooperation opportunities within value chains selected in each Hub. “RuralBioUp Followers” are entities (policymakers, clusters, innovation agencies, etc.) from rural areas not directly involved in the project (coming from the same or different countries, but at least from 15 countries not already covered by the consortium).

HOW | Study visits are to be discussed at each HUBs kick-off meeting to begin preliminary plans for these events. These plans should also be included in each HUBs Action Plan. Study visits are organised either onsite or in a hybrid way, they can also be organised in collaboration with networking events. IBF will support the Regional Facilitators in organizing study visits.

WHY | Study visits will facilitate the knowledge sharing and pick-up of best practices. As part of the mentoring services, the project partners offer study visits throughout the project to allow stakeholders discover RuralBioUp activities. The aim of RuralBioUp project is empowering EU rural regions to adopt small-scale biobased solutions. During the project, the study visits are designed to:

- showcase the RuralBioUp project activities implemented and benefits obtained,
- exchange experiences and best practices,
- establish new cooperation opportunities within value chains selected.

SERVICE CATALOGUE |

Study visits for each Regional Hub | Study visits are organised by each HUB to provide information on project activities to followers, exchange best practices and cooperation within value chains selected.

KPI | Each HUB will organise least two study visits during the project (18study visits in total).



1.9 RuralSpot

WHAT | The RuralSpot is an online platform that functions as an extension of the RuralBioUp project. It supports innovators, policymakers and local businesses by providing information on bioeconomy in a regional, national and European context.

The platform offers a range of bioeconomy-related information, including on biomass, soils, and training topics. It also provides practical knowledge, best practices, and data on financial support opportunities, with the aim of proposing different rural business models and new bio-based value chains.

HOW | A series of templates were created and are utilised to ensure uniformity in the data produced for various EU projects. This information is regularly updated throughout the project's lifespan to maintain its relevance. The validation of this data is a collaborative effort involving stakeholders, end-users, experts, and researchers in the bioeconomy sector. The initial phase of this validation process has been successfully completed with a validation focus group in November 2023.

WHY | Supporting regional development with available information on the market, business models, technologies, and best practices will be mapped and assessed. Full valorization of biomasses in rural areas, matching feedstock locally available, market information, business models, best practices, and technologies.

Catalogue | The data in RuralSpot is organised into the following six categories:

Biomass

Business models and market application

Technologies

Knowledge on nutrient recycling and soil improving

Practical knowledge and training resources

Financial support

KPI | For generating awareness on the project, numerical goals for website users, page views and countries reached are set (at least 1500; at least 3000 and at least 10, respectively).



2 Services implementation process

2.1 Actions timeline and progress monitoring

The full portfolio of services will be ready for implementation after all the HUBs have been established, kicked off and HUB Action Plans developed (for RuralBioUp HUBs’ Action Plan guidelines see D3.2).

RFs will provide the services to their HUBs from December 2023/January 2024 until May/June 2025 - 18 months in total.

Table 1 HUB actions timeline

2023		2024												2025							
M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	M19	M20	M21	M22	M23	M24	M25	M26	M27	M28	M29	M30	M31	M32	M33	M34	
Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	
Kick off meetings	Implementation of services in Regional HUBs by RFs: mentoring, coaching, training																		Reporting		
									HUB Meeting 1									HUB Meeting 2			
	SK*			Q1*			Q2			Q3			Q4				Q1			Q2	

CE provides continuous support to the RFs in service implementation by overseeing and coordinating the entire process. For this purpose, the following mechanisms are set up:

- 1) Service implementation Workshop and Starter Kit (SK*),
- 2) Quarterly meetings for sharing knowledge and reviewing Action Plan progress (Q*),
- 3) Training provision coordination and Service Calendar,
- 4) Reporting template and KPI tracker.

The outcomes of those activities will be presented in Deliverable 3.3 ‘The report on the progress of Action Plans Implementation in Regional Hubs’ summing up on the networking events and study visits organized, training sessions attended, coaching support from partners, usage of actionable knowledge collected or developed and on-site and online meeting organized.

2.2 Preliminary services schedule for HUBs

By the end of 2023, all nine RuralBioUp Regional Hubs kicked off their HUBs, agreed on mentoring and coaching and selected trainings. The preliminary training calendar has been set up and more trainings are added as they come and as more RuralBioUp training times are scheduled.



Table 2 HUB trainings' calendar

Trainings and info session offered to Hubs	2024											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Digitalization in the Bioeconomy	■											
Improved Nutrient Recycling			■									
Practices of Social Innovation					■							
Governance and Regional Biobased Systems								■				
Strategies to Address Social, Ecological and Economic Trade-offs										■		
Communicate the Bioeconomy: Tools and Methodologies	■											
Bioeconomy and Key Principles of Sustainability			■									
Co-creating Activities for Bioeconomy			■									
Technological Trends in Bioeconomy			■									
Impact Assessment (1)	■											
Impact Assessment (2)	■											
RuralSpot	■											
Access to Public Funding			■									
Mentoring and coaching in the Hubs	■											

- Trainings from other EU projects
- Trainings to be selected
- Mandatory information sessions

2.3 Key Performance Indicators

With the objective of the enhanced cooperation between the key bioeconomy local players, the setting and monitoring of Key Performance Indicators stand as an important component. Key performance indicators are put in place to monitor the implementation of the Hubs' Action Plans and to fine them according to the progress made and to achieve maximum realistic adoption of the RuralBioUp approach.

Table 3 RuralBioUp Portfolio of Services related KPIs

KPI	Per HUB	Collaborative (for 9 Hubs)
Kick Off event to start the HUB	1 event, 30 ppl	9 events, 270 ppl
Value chains identified	min. 2	min. 18
On-site meeting 1 (M22-24)	1 event organized	9 events organized
On-site meeting 2 (M30-32)	1 event organized	9 events organized
People trained	444 ppl	4000 ppl
Study visits	2 events	18 events
Assistance activities (calls, e-mails, etc.)	111 pc	1000 pc
Regional networking events	2	18
European networking events	-	2

Table 3 draws attention to the most important KPIs related to the trainings and Portfolio of Services. Through a continuous focus on these KPIs, Hubs and RuralBioUp partners can refine strategies, ensuring that training and mentoring efforts are purposeful and moving towards achieving desired outcomes.



3 Conclusions

RuralBioUp strives to enhance the cooperation between key stakeholders in bioeconomy, to increase the visibility and reach of bioeconomy in rural areas, with the larger goal of successful uptake of existing scientific and practical knowledge and more biobased solutions introduced in rural European areas. Since the RuralBioUp project benefits from learning opportunities, different knowledge sharing options are incorporated to assure that the Regional Hubs have the best possibility of finding learning chances most suitable and tailored to specific HUBs needs.

This report gives an overview of the different services offered within the RuralBioUp project to the project Hubs while also serving as a go-to material to the Regional Facilitators.

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