



SCALEUP
community-driven
bioeconomy development

WS6 Training Programme Protocol

Governance of regional bio-based systems

Session #2: Digital Innovation Hubs: A Game-Changer for leveraging the circular bioeconomy potential

17 October 2024

Session #3: Digital Innovation Hubs: A Game-Changer for leveraging the circular bioeconomy potential

Session 3 of WS6, titled "Digital Innovation Hubs: A Game-Changer for Leveraging the Circular Bioeconomy Potential," took place on October 17, 2024, from 9:00 am to 11:20 am CET. The session concentrated on exploring how Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) can expedite the transition to a circular bioeconomy at the regional level, promote collaboration among stakeholders, and address challenges in establishing effective DIHs.

The first presentation was delivered by **Maria Beatriz Rosell** from Geonardo Environmental Technologies Ltd., focusing on the "**CEE2ACT Project: E-solutions for Sustainable Governance and Green Transition.**" Maria discussed how e-solutions facilitate sustainable governance and support the green transition in Central and Eastern Europe. She emphasized the project's methodology of building trust among stakeholders through workshops and discussions. Maria highlighted challenges such as engaging major private sector players and stressed the importance of involving civil society and youth in bioeconomy initiatives to ensure a holistic approach.

Following Maria, **Victor Falguera**, the General Coordinator of Catalonia Bioeconomy Hub (BioHubCat) and DIHAFcat, presented on "**BioHubCat & DIHAFcat: From 8 Small Villages to the Entire Region – The Growth of a Strategic Need.**" Victor illustrated how these hubs evolved from local initiatives in small villages to region-wide strategies addressing the bioeconomy's strategic needs. He underscored the importance of building trust among diverse stakeholders, understanding their objectives, and aligning bioeconomy actions with their individual goals. Víctor shared insights on managing different government levels and departments with varying priorities, highlighting the role of clusters in reaching all sectors of the bioeconomy and the necessity of coordination to achieve common objectives.

The third presentation was by **Stefan Ehrenberger**, Project Manager at THI TECHHOUSE GMBH, on "**EDIH InnovATE: Driving Digital Transformation in Agriculture, Timber, and Energy Sectors.**" Stefan discussed EDIH InnovATE's efforts in promoting digital transformation within traditional and often fragmented sectors like agriculture and forestry. He highlighted challenges such as varying levels of digital readiness among stakeholders, data sharing barriers due to concerns over intellectual property and data protection, and the need for building trust with participants. Stefan elaborated on strategies like using real-world case studies to demonstrate the benefits of digital technologies, customer journey mapping to enhance participant engagement, and collaborating with regional networks to broaden outreach and encourage adoption among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The final presentation was given by **Carola Häggström** from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, focusing on "**Digital Impact North: Northern Sweden's Gateway to the European Innovation Network for Digital and Green Transformation**" Carola introduced Digital Impact North, emphasizing its role in connecting Northern Sweden to the broader European innovation network. She addressed the challenges of engaging SMEs, particularly those at the initial stages of the value chain, and the importance of networking and increasing digital competence within the public sector to drive digitalization forward. Carola highlighted the complexities of working with small companies, especially those recently acquired by larger

global entities, and the strategies employed to foster collaboration, innovation, and effective participation in bioeconomy initiatives.

After a brief intermission, participants engaged in an open discussion moderated by representatives from CTA. The dialogue delved into several critical themes. Participants concurred on the fundamental importance of establishing trust when bringing together stakeholders with diverse objectives. Understanding each party's goals and demonstrating how collaborative actions can help achieve them was deemed essential for effective cooperation.

The conversation also tackled the challenge of managing the broad scope of the bioeconomy, particularly the coordination across various sectors and government departments. Strategies such as **aligning bioeconomy initiatives with the existing objectives** of different departments and fostering inter-departmental collaboration were discussed as means to streamline efforts and enhance efficiency.

The **potential for conflicts over the use of biomass resources** was acknowledged, with Victor noting that while such conflicts are currently minimal due to the early stage of industrial-scale bio-processes, proactive forecasting and management are necessary to prevent future disputes. Engaging civil society and SMEs was another focal point, with participants sharing experiences on involving these groups in bioeconomy initiatives. They discussed organizing workshops, leveraging existing networks, and showcasing tangible benefits through real-world examples and case studies to encourage participation and demonstrate value.

Legal and administrative structures of hubs were also examined. Victor explained how BioHubCat operates as a commissioned satellite of an existing science and technology park, highlighting both the advantages and challenges of this arrangement. The importance of establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor the effectiveness of hubs was emphasized. Victor mentioned that due to the evolving nature of bioeconomy projects, experimenting and refining KPIs over time is necessary to accurately assess progress and impact.

In concluding the session, **Antonio Carlos Ruiz Soria from CTA** summarized the key insights and reflections. He highlighted that Digital Innovation Hubs are indeed game-changers in accelerating the transition to a circular bioeconomy. They play a pivotal role by **integrating people, technology, and regional strategies**, thereby facilitating sustainable development. Antonio underscored the importance of **building trust and fostering collaboration** among stakeholders, noting that DIHs serve as vital platforms for networking and aligning objectives across different sectors.

He also pointed out the significance of **integrating both physical and digital interactions within DIHs** to ensure comprehensive engagement and support for all stakeholders. Addressing **barriers** such as varying digital readiness, data sharing concerns, and coordination among government departments was identified as crucial, with the need for tailored strategies and continuous dialogue to manage these challenges effectively.

Antonio concluded by emphasizing the transformative potential of DIHs and the necessity for ongoing efforts to engage all stakeholders, including civil society and SMEs, in the bioeconomy transition.

Conclusions

In conclusion, several key ideas emerged from the session:

1. **Digital Innovation Hubs as Catalysts:** Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) are pivotal in accelerating the transition to a circular bioeconomy at the regional level. They act as integrative platforms that bring together people, technology, and regional strategies, facilitating collaboration, innovation, and the adoption of digital solutions in traditional sectors like agriculture and forestry.
2. **Building Trust and Collaborative Networks:** Establishing trust among diverse stakeholders—including government departments, SMEs, academia, and civil society—is essential for effective cooperation. Understanding and aligning with each stakeholder's objectives help in fostering collaboration. Strategies such as leveraging existing networks, organizing workshops, and demonstrating tangible benefits through real-world examples enhance stakeholder engagement.
3. **Overcoming Challenges in Digital Transformation:** Addressing barriers such as varying levels of digital readiness, data sharing concerns, and inter-departmental coordination is critical. Tailored approaches that include capacity building, legal and administrative structuring, and continuous dialogue are necessary to manage these challenges effectively.

These concepts collectively provide a robust framework for regions aiming to leverage the potential of the circular bioeconomy through digital innovation. The session underscored that by utilizing Digital Innovation Hubs as strategic tools and fostering collaborative approaches, regions can navigate the complexities of bioeconomy governance more effectively. This not only enhances sustainability and economic development but also contributes to a resilient future where sustainable circular bioeconomies are a reality.

Participants:

If you wish to get in touch with one of the participants from this session, please contact someone in the SCALE-EP consortium.

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