



OREN

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM FOR RURAL ENTREPRENEURS

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National Report – EU Level

PR1 Survey of the most promising rural business models and stakeholders' map



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale of the OREN Project

While the role of rurality in the prosperity of the European Union (EU) is widely acknowledged, rural areas tend to lose their positions and opportunities in an increasingly urbanizing world. Despite the diversity of rural areas in terms of their socio-economic performances, natural characteristics, and cultural heritage, the majority of them demonstrates intrinsic fragility in social, economic and environmental aspects, and, consequently, different rural areas face common challenges, experience depreciation of their values and underutilization of the opportunities they are able to provide. In the 2016 High Level OECD Seminar “Delivering productivity and competitiveness for rural areas”, four “areas of opportunity” emerged: forestry, local foods, tourism and renewable energy. **Forestry** is considered to be an integral part of rural development. Beyond providing wood products, healthy, sustainably managed forests are valuable tools for mitigating and combating climate change. They are also locations for important recreational activities, such as appreciation of nature, hiking and mountain biking, and, together with other rural sectors, can produce a variety of local foods. In many EU countries, the **local food** system is used as part of a regional **tourism** strategy where specific foods are the focus for visitors who follow a “trail” that leads them from producer to producer. These local foods provide an opportunity to market a region’s food products to a global audience, as well as connecting local farmers to the communities in which they reside. To some, **renewable energy** is rural energy, because virtually all renewable energy technologies are space-intensive and thus rely upon a rural location. Wind, biodiesel, and photovoltaic technologies now represent the fastest growing energy industries, whereby windfarms require clear sites, biofuels rely on agricultural feed stocks, and solar generation, though somewhat more flexible, is increasingly implemented on open rural land. On the other hand, over the last few years experts on rural development policy have consistently identified out-migration and ageing as key trends affecting investment decisions in rural areas, along with “changes in the rural economic structure” and the “decentralization” process. Thus, rural areas share also common structural vulnerabilities: distance, lack of critical mass and low population density. Furthermore, the recession, the COVID pandemic in combination with the consequences from the ongoing climate change, and war crisis in Ukraine that contributed to the energy crisis have put an extra burden to rural entrepreneurs, who are facing increasing complexity and deep uncertainty in their business, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities were further compounded since the spring of 2022, with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine leading to a worsening of the energy crises that had been brewing in Europe. Maximizing the opportunities depends on a constellation of factors coming together. If one or two of the elements cannot be achieved, there could be continued stagnation or decline instead of transformation.



In other words, no matter how much progress is made towards tapping rural opportunities, if rural vulnerabilities are not addressed, they could render any form of progress shallow. These discussions underscore the importance of exploiting future opportunities in a manner that addresses rural vulnerabilities under a systemic perspective and current state of the art calls for new strategies and models of rural development to be found and applied so to turn lagging rural areas into resilient rural communities.

The main objective of the OREN project is to involve agricultural entrepreneurs in an interactive learning programme, specifically designed and addressed to the rural development issues in the COVID era, while also considering the fall-out from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The partnership will develop an interactive, multi-stakeholder platform that will contain sustainable rural business models, and simulation models, accompanied by a small set of managerial courses targeted to agricultural entrepreneurs. The purpose is to train the participants in some of the most needed managerial and business skills, as well as giving them a number of pointers in order to acquire more advanced ones, based on the most essential needs identified by the research. By acquiring such skills, the entrepreneurs will be able to analyze the root causes of successful business scenarios to improve their expertise and skills in understanding and modelling potential good practices.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to develop a sound and updated insight of agricultural business models across Europe and their driving and limiting factors among the project partners and stakeholders. Through a deep analysis, based on both theoretical and practical approaches and concepts from several academic and operative actors, the work performed under this first project result intends to deliver explorative and comparative findings by systematizing this knowledge, identifying the skill gaps and rural entrepreneurs' needs in terms of courses and trainings. The skill gaps concern mostly the IT skills (especially for tourism) and needs focus around having access to a potential knowledge database, where aggregated would be best practices and insights from other rural areas – both national and international, and also some more common needs like access to slow capital. The study will also harmonize main findings within a systematic framework that will guide the research, analysis and piloting that is planned for the other project activities.

We will try to enrich our conclusions by: examining different case studies, analyzing relevant support and training programs for rural entrepreneurs, and by retrieving feedbacks to surveys aimed at specific target groups, so to ultimately construct a balanced, comprehensive and up-to-date overview.



In particular, the purpose of this document is to highlight the findings and results of research that has been conducted in the European Union.

2.Desk Research at EU level

Analysis and review of literature on the implementation business models in rural areas

“Rural areas are the fabric of our society and the heartbeat of our economy. They are a core part of our identity and our economic potential. We will cherish and preserve our rural areas and invest in their future.” (Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission)

The key role of rural Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) has been well defined by the [European 2020 strategy](#), which refers to the rural SMEs when mentioning the need to keep investing on research and development, education and resource efficient technologies as this will benefit traditional sectors, rural areas and high skill service economies.

The disparity between urban and rural SMEs lands on some main challenges, such as digital infrastructure, the access to finance, human capital and skills, the variety of the seasons, and the access to new markets. Nevertheless, during the Conference on Rural Pact organised by the European Commission on 15 June 2022, Thomas Fisher from the Community Development Lens pointed out the strong level of resilience proved by peripheral areas and communities. This brings back the attention to the vital role those rural contexts have on the survival of urban areas and the need of building a collaboration among urban and rural SMEs. Fisher pointed out the need for supporting and promoting innovation in the rural contexts by enforcing the distinctive characteristics of rural contexts and communities. Rural areas should not learn from urban areas, but the mutual exchange should be advocated and implemented.

At European level, three are the main funding entities to support rural SMEs to align with the Sustainable Development Goals: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs (COSME) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

Rural areas cover the majority of the European continent, reaching 83% of the total of the EU area (in 2018) and hosting 137 million people, representing more than 30% of the European population. Although the high potential in terms of natural resources the development of the rural communities has to face specific economic and social challenges that build a break with the urban context. On 30 June 2021, the



European Commission adopted its communication “[A long-term vision for the EU’s rural areas – Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040](#)” promoting the initiative Rural Pact, which aims to “*mobilise public authorities and stakeholders to act on the needs and aspirations of rural residents*”. The EU Commission based its vision on key challenges and [data](#):

- Social inclusion: 22,4% of the people leaving in rural areas are at risk of poverty, which is causing a higher social exclusion compared to the inhabitants of urban areas.
- Access to services: the average distance between essential services is much shorter in urban areas compared to rural areas. In terms of high-speed internet connection, only 60% of households in rural areas have access to a connection >30Mbps, while 86% of the EU population has access to such a service.
- Employment: since 2012, the employment rate in rural areas for people aged 20-64 has increased from 68% to 73%, more than in urban areas. Nevertheless, the total number of employed persons has not increased, suggesting that the increase in the employment rate is due to the decrease of the rural active population. Data of 2019 shows a gender employment gap of 13 percentage points (67% for women and 80% for men), while the gap is 10% in rural areas.
- Education: the share of rural inhabitants aged 25-64 with a tertiary education has increased from 18% in 2012 to 22% in 2019, less than in cities.
- Digital skills: in 2019 the share of rural residents with basic digital skills was 48% against the 62% of urban residents.
- Economy: In 2018, the average rural Gross Domestic Product per capita was only three quarters of the EU average.

Four main potential development sectors have been analysed:

- Bioeconomy: with an annual turnover of €2.2 trillion-euro, bioeconomy employs around 17.5 million people, and it could reach up to €3 trillion by 2050, with the creation of up to 700,000 jobs, mostly in urban, coastal and rural areas.
- Tourism: the number of tourism nights per inhabitant in rural regions is three times higher than in urban regions.
- Democracy and local governance: while urban residents tend to trust EU and national governments more than their rural neighbours, rural communities are more likely to trust local and regional authorities (57%) and open to participate in formal and informal voluntary activities.
- Innovation: 53% of local innovation projects funded under the agricultural European innovation partnership focus on alternative types of farming, such as organic farming, conservation agriculture, adapting circularity principles to farming, agroecology, and bio-based production.

Based on this data and opportunities, the Rural Pact defines ten shared goals, as result of intensive participatory and stakeholder engagement processes:

1. Attractive spaces, developed in harmonious territorial development, unlocking their specific potential, making them places of opportunity and providing local solutions to help tackle the local effects of global challenges.
2. Engaged in multi-level and place-based governance, developing integrated strategies using collaborative and participatory approaches, benefiting from tailor-made policy mixes and interdependencies between urban and rural areas.



3. Providers of food security, economic opportunities, goods and services for wider society, such as bio-based materials and energy but also local, community-based high-quality products, renewable energy, retaining a fair share of the value generated.
4. Dynamic communities focusing on well-being, including livelihoods, fairness, prosperity and quality of life, where all people live and work well together, with adequate capacity for mutual support.
5. Inclusive communities of inter-generational solidarity, fairness and renewal, open to newcomers and fostering equal opportunities for all.
6. Flourishing sources of nature, enhanced by and contributing to the objectives of the Green Deal, including climate neutrality, as well as sustainable management of natural resources.
7. Fully benefiting from digital innovation with equal access to emerging technologies, widespread digital literacy and opportunities to acquire more advanced skills.
8. Entrepreneurial, innovative and skilled people, co-creating technological, ecological and social progress.
9. Lively places equipped with efficient, accessible and affordable public and private services, including cross-border services, providing tailored solutions (such as transport, education, training, health and care, including long-term care, social life and retail business).
10. Places of diversity, making the most of their unique assets, talents and potential.

Stakeholders and public authorities are called to express their support to the 10 goals and to take part in the discussion filling a [survey](#).

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In the agricultural sector, it's relevant to mention the EU [Common Agricultural Policy](#) (CAP), which was launched in 1962 to build a partnership between agriculture and society. It aims at promoting and supporting rural economy and farmers, while tackling climate change and sustainable natural resources management, and protecting the biodiversity. The CAP replies to the special needs and challenges of people working in agriculture, through specific measures:

- Economical support with direct payments that ensure income stability, and reward farmers adopting environmentally friendly actions for delivering public services, such as taking care of the countryside.
- Market measures to deal with difficult unforeseen market situations out of the control of the farmers.
- National and regional programmes to support rural development.

The CAP is financed through two funds as part of the EU budget:



- the [European agricultural guarantee fund](#) (EAGF): direct support and funds market measures;
- the [European agricultural fund for rural development](#) (EAFRD): rural development.

The Interreg Europe programme is another relevant measure of support, but especially a great source of inspiration with several good practices from their consortium regions focused on the achievement of policy changes to enhance rural entrepreneurs and to develop a stronger business ecosystem. The Policy Brief "[How to boost entrepreneurship in rural areas?](#)" published in April 2020 by the Interreg Policy Learning Platform on SME competitiveness describes several Interreg Europe projects that tackle the challenges of rural SMEs competitiveness and innovation. The projects mentioned focus on different sectors and challenges.

The list provided below selected the projects that implemented activities to foster the networking among different stakeholders, designing sorts of community-based initiatives.

- **[P-IRIS](#) - *Policies to improve rural areas' innovation systems by professionalising networking activities and use of innovation tools*** - seeks to improve rural areas' innovation systems by professionalising networking activities and use of innovation tools. The project is set up to boost innovation in rural areas through triple and quadruple-helix cooperation practices, referring to a set of interactions between academia, industry and government (plus the civic society and the media for the quadruple-helix), to foster economic and social development.
- **[RATIO](#) - *Regional Actions To Innovate Operational Programmes*** - seeks to reinforce innovation culture in regions by facilitating networks and clustering between actors in rural areas so that beneficial exchange of experiences could occur.
- **[RuralGrowth](#) - *Increasing competitiveness of SMEs in the rural visitor economy sector*** - focuses on SMEs in the rural visitor economy. In many rural areas there is a strong reliance on traditional activities and often the cooperation or cross-fertilisation between relevant sectors, stakeholders and local actors is lacking. The RuralGrowth project seeks to establish local and regional support schemes promoting entrepreneurship and innovative capacity development of SMEs operating in the visitor economy and to stimulate cooperation within the sector.
- **[SARURE](#) - *Save Rural Retail*** - gathers best practices to ensure the survival of rural shops and to improve the policies focused on retail SMEs. Rural shops are central to rural communities as they supply the population with necessary goods, they provide employment in these demographically fragile rural areas and they also tend to be social hubs for local communities therefore contributing to the overall quality of life.

The OREN project will pay particular attention to the opportunities provided by community-based business models as social innovation and participatory processes are key elements for the co-design of new solutions and the generation of rural business opportunities. The case studies analysed on this report will highlight the role of participatory processes to facilitate the interaction of different actors for the development of innovative solutions and sustainable business models.



3. Case Study analysis

The international aim of ACR+ and its connection with local authorities more than with businesses shaped the research since the beginning, focusing the analysis on the rural Belgian context, being based in Brussels. The data collection process was based on the search of connection with international networks working on the topic of rural development, such as the [European Network for Rural Development](#), the [European Regions for Competitive and Sustainable Tourism](#) (NECSTouR), the [European Rural Parliament, Communities for future](#), and the [European Network for community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability](#) (ECOLISE). Furthermore, it was established a first contact with some Belgian regional and local authorities such as [Parc Naturel Gaume](#) in Wallonia and the [East Flanders Province](#). The study allowed us to create a first contact with these international and local entities, which will facilitate the promotion and dissemination also in the following phases of the project.

For this report, three case studies have been analysed. Below, also three projects that promoted rural sustainable development through community-based initiatives will be shortly described as they could be kept into consideration for future OREN activities.

The first case study is based in Flanders, and it's named [Linked.Farm](#), a sales & distribution digital platform for local Farm2Fork (F2F) products. The goal of Linked.Farm is to enable local entrepreneurs to set up their local business facilitating the contact between producers and consumers, shortening the local food value chain. Linked.Farm acts as a cooperative platform that wants to help local F2F initiatives to become economically viable. The philosophy of the business lays on the will to structurally change the food system to make it fairer, healthier, and more transparent. The business model wants to contrast the need of traditional farmers to intensify as much as possible their productivity in order to face low earnings and dependency on public subsidies. For this, the model gives space to local farmers with the aim of increasing the demand of sustainable, healthy, local and zero waste products, by covering the lack of information in terms of labels and official certifications, and while keeping convenient prices due to the implementation of a short value chain.

The second case study proposed is [Ma Ferme](#), a facilitator and incubator for rural entrepreneurship based in Wallonia region. On the one hand, it offers flexible infrastructures and opportunities of synergy between project leaders, self-employed people, non-profit organisations, SMEs in creation or already mature, present on the site and in the whole region. At the same time, it offers services and products, and it processes raw materials. The business model is based on the idea of considering the economy not as the final goal, giving more importance to a new societal model based on solidarity, exchange of knowledge and complementarity. The model aims to maximize positive impacts on the ecology and society, under



the constraints of profit. The creation of a network of viable projects has the objective to participate in the economic development of rural areas, encouraging the cooperation and support between producers, processors, and distributors.

The third business model is about Cocoricoop, a cooperative with a social purpose that trades products from local, peasant and environmentally friendly agriculture. It brings together producers/processors who want to make a decent living from their work and citizens who are looking for healthy, local, sustainable, and accessible food. After 4 years from its foundation, the cooperative has now a physical shop in the town of Ciney in Wallonia and recently launched an online shop. The business was developed on a community initiative so it is based on the precious work of volunteers, and since some years on employees that take care of the economical aspects of the cooperative. A key characteristic is the inclusion approach that Cocoricoop adopts in its activities, through a programme that involves people with disabilities in the daily work of the business.

The three cases offer the example of different, but likely complementary, leading factors to achievements:

- a cooperative structure
- good working conditions
- the diversification and complementarity of activities
- sharing spaces and services.

Linked.Farm is a cooperative, meaning that each farmer is an owner and can express a vote. The prices are kept convenient for both sides and this attracted over 1000 producers and 35 hubs so far. A hub works with around 30 farmers. Furthermore, the short value chain allows to preserve the right prices offering very good working conditions to the farmers. In facts, they receive the right incomes for their work and the platform incentives them to move towards organic products, while managing automatically all the transactions, logistics, pricing, invoicing, etc.

Ma Ferme works as well as a cooperative based on the creation of a significant asset with a limited return, which will serve as a breeding ground for the development of projects with higher added value. Once the first investment was made by the acquisition of the Courte-au-Bois farm, which offers a basic income (rental of covered areas and rental of agricultural land), the diversity of activities and the strength of the community of cooperators makes then possible to identify, attract and facilitate complementary investments with a higher return on investment. This high return is shared between the investors and the users. The future complementary investments for the implementation of different projects and activities will be based on the analyses of the needs of producers who are active or in the process of setting up on the site and in the surrounding region. The installation of new activities, such as a mushroom farm, market gardeners, a baker, and livestock farms will follow the concept of shared spaces and services, for instance in terms of offices that may be essential for many different projects, but also in terms of services that have an increasing high demand on this sector, such as communication services, management supervision and entrepreneurial support.



Cocoricoop aims at ensuring good prices for both the farmers and the consumers. It was based on a community initiative, and it keeps preserving the function of a cooperative, strongly based on the work of volunteers. The producers and processors have to accept specific rules and guidelines to be part of the cooperative, in terms of the quality of food, local production, short circuits and inclusivity.

Finally, the case studies are based at local level and have involved since the starting point farmers and rural entrepreneurs active in the two Belgian rural regions. The three businesses replied to the rural economic and social challenges by putting the local workers (and volunteers) at the center of the investments and of the business models. The cooperative structure is a clear signal of strong local engagement, and it is a relevant factor of success.

In conclusion, it seems interesting to mention three projects, the first two supported by the European Network of Rural Development (ENRD), for which was not possible to gather information on specific successful business models but that provide some interesting insights, in particular on community-based approaches.

The [Flourish Destinations approach](#) is a model for community-led sustainable tourism development developed by communities in Romania, Flanders (Belgium) and Scotland (UK). The partners played the role of tourism developers with the goal of implementing activities that could be mindful for both the community and the natural capital of their areas. The project aimed at identifying a touristic model that could integrate communities with the visitors' experiences in a sustainable and mutually productive way, avoiding over-tourism and preventing the visitors' identity from overwhelming the local identity. The project has highlighted the need for local shared interests to find a way of interacting and of co-producing the touristic offer. The Scottish partner, [Angus](#), was the first local authority region to use "pride of place and community" as one of the main themes in their tourism strategies and frameworks. This is now being mirrored across the country and nationally in tourism policy. Meetjesland is now doing the same in Belgium.

The [Agrinew-Belgium](#) project focuses on improving access to agricultural land for local new farmers and on adapting conventional agriculture to new agricultural systems based on the production or maintenance of biodiversity through profitable and innovative practices. It gives to the farmers viable opportunities to develop their farming activity through public/private or private/private partnerships; as well as ensuring the availability of agricultural land and promoting the restoration of abandoned farmland with high ecological potential. The project supports the research and development of innovative agricultural systems that maintain biodiversity, it promotes environmental farming systems, and it brings together a wide network of stakeholders in the region. To facilitate access to land for new farmers, the project worked on two types of collaborations. The first is a public-private collaboration aiming to restore municipal agricultural lands that are managed by the Wildlife and Forestry Department and make them available to farmers. The second is a private-private collaboration which involves cooperation between a vegetable producer and citizens. This is based on the concept known as 'home gardening'. In this case, a landowner who no longer cultivates the land lends it out through a convenience agreement that is free of



charge. Through the project, 67 hectares of agricultural land were restored, while 15 will be sown with native flowering plants, and 6 farmers were supported in setting their businesses up.

The [Liege food belt](#) (*Ceinture Aliment-Terre Liégeoise* in French) is a project based in Liège, Wallonia. The association is dedicated to promoting sustainable food amongst the general public and to fostering local food production and distribution in the Liège region, with a special focus on vegetable growers. It's interesting to highlight that it was launched in November 2013 by a group of citizens and local non-profit organisations and cooperatives involved in short food supply chains and rural development, with the support of the City of Liège. The initiative was an answer to the disappearance of many farms and the loss of regional food sovereignty. It founded inspiration in the several local citizens-led initiatives focused on alternative local production. The Liege food belt aims at connecting these initiatives creating a network to enable a change of scale and increase the power of short-scale food production initiatives.

A description of the three case studies and an analysis of the main success factors and challenges is provided in the Annex 1.

4. Analysis of existing relevant programs

The analysis of interesting training programs at the European level focused, for a part, on the identification of training courses as results of EU-funded programs. This analysis strategy was based on the need of learning from similar projects, planning in advance the management of the course after the end of the OREN project and considering the capitalisation of the results that will be produced. On the other hand, the research analyse and compare programs targeting different stakeholders, based on very different supporting resources, and which used both online and offline educational strategies.

The analysis considered 3 training programs:

- [Skilltour](#): granted by the European Commission, with the support of Erasmus+ Programme. The Skilltour project, closed in August 2017, aimed to develop the entrepreneurial skills of those who run/plan to run small rural tourism businesses to be able to deliver innovative, high-quality products and services and manage their businesses in a sustainable manner. The program focused on small/family rural tourism businesses.
- [Scalibur](#): result of the Horizon 2020 [Scalibur](#) project, focused on identifying innovative solutions to transform urban food waste and sewage sludge into high-value-added products. The training course is a two-module course addressed to public authorities and businesses to share knowledge on circular bioeconomy and its triple bottom-line benefits. The course is online and based on videos of experts produced within the Scalibur consortium.



- **Job Yourself:** managed by a Brussels-based cooperative and subsidized by Brussels region. The training aims to provide the participants with a structured and secure framework for developing and testing the economic profitability of an entrepreneurial project on the market. It addressed un-employed people or anyone willing to launch their own business. The program is based on individual counseling by expert entrepreneurial coaches, who follow the entrepreneurs from the creation of the business plan until the test phase.

All three programs incorporate directly sustainable objectives in their courses. However, the programs differ in other aspects. Skilltour targets rural areas, while Scalibur and Job Yourself are focusing on urban areas. Besides, Job Yourself targets the city of Brussels, specifically referring to the Belgian context; while Skilltour and Scalibur are broader, reaching Europe in general.

The programs have been analysed also in terms of the targeted audience. Job Yourself offers the possibility to all job seekers willing to launch their entrepreneurial project to develop and test their idea in a legalized and structured way. Skilltour is focusing on entrepreneurs and businesses. Finally, Scalibur has a larger audience, as the courses are divided in two separate modules: one for entrepreneurs and one for municipalities, public authorities and local/regional managers working in bioeconomy.

As mentioned above, Skilltour and Scalibur are composed of free online courses, with no interaction between the entrepreneurs following the course and the organizations that developed it. On the other hand, with Job Yourself, entrepreneurs can choose between three support formats: group coaching, auto coaching and individual coaching (depending on their level of skills), and in each case trainees are supported by experts at all steps.

Lastly, Scalibur is available in English only, resulting in restrictive possibilities for trainees to follow the course. Skilltour is available in several languages (English, Romanian, Greek, French and Spanish) and Job Yourself covers English, French and Dutch as Brussels is a two-language city.

The analysis could not focus on the role of local communities since very few information on this topic were available online and the communication with the responsible people of the programs were difficult due to the summer break and the end of the projects. In the case of the Scalibur program, the project is still active but the specific aspect of local engagement was not considered, as the program was kept general and with an international point of view.

The analysis of the above-described training programs, highlighted some considerations that could guide the construction of the OREN Multi-stakeholder platform and Interactive Learning Environment:

- The use of videos where participants can have a direct experience of selected case studies may help the success of the courses and improve the learning process;
- The material available in English and in all partners' languages (Italian, French, Dutch, German, Bulgarian, Spanish) would enlarge the target of people involved;
- Collecting reviews from the participants may help not only in the promotion of the program but, in case, in adapting it to the changing needs.



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A description of the three training courses is provided in the Annex 3.



5. Analysis of Questionnaires Results

Following the same reasoning adopted for the analysis of the 3 business models, ACR+ decided to focus its research on Belgium. For this, the questionnaire was disseminated online through 3 Google Forms: in English, Dutch, and French, in order to cover the two main Belgian regions.

The dissemination strategy was based on building a connection with some key European and regional networks active for the rural development:

- The [European Network for Rural Development](#) (ENRD) connects rural development stakeholders throughout the European Union. The network serves as an exchange and communications hub for the sharing of information about how Rural Development policy works in practice and how it can be improved. The network sent a newsletter to its members promoting the OREN project and providing the links to participate in the survey.
- [East Flanders Province](#) was involved in a project supported by the ENRD named "The Flourishing Destinations approach", which implemented pilots activities to imagine a new kind of rural and sustainable tourism in the region. Through the Province, all the actors involved in the project have been contacted and invited to fill in the questionnaire and to express their interest in being informed of the future steps of the project.
- Wallonia Service Public - [Circular Wallonia](#) is the first circular economy deployment strategy and it was adopted on 4 February 2021 by the Government. As result of a participatory process, Circular Wallonia includes 10 ambitions translated into more than 60 measures. These have been designed in a coherent manner and will be strengthened during their implementation: they can be adapted and completed over time in order to respond to the reality on the ground thanks to a flexible and participative governance. The government shared the information about the OREN project and its survey with the rural entrepreneurs adopting a circular approach active in the region.
- [European Council of Young Farmers](#) (CEJA) acts as a forum for communication between young farmers and European decision-makers. Its main objective is to promote a younger and more innovative agricultural sector across the EU-27 and to create good working and living conditions for young people setting up in farming and those who are already "young farmers". The Council published an article about OREN and its questionnaire in the survey. The publication was done only some days before the official end of the survey so not many results arrived from this channel, but CEJA expressed its great interest to support the project in future.

The three surveys received 9 answers in total, with a geographical distribution as shown in the table below.



| Country | Region (if applicable) | # |
|---------|------------------------|---|
| Belgium | | 3 |
| Belgium | Flanders | 3 |
| Belgium | Wallonia | 1 |
| Greece | | 1 |
| Norway | | 1 |

Two answers among arrived from rural entrepreneurs based outside of Belgian borders, in Norway and Greece. This could be the result of the dissemination process activated by the European Network for Rural Development.

The first part of the survey focused on general information and produced the following results shown on the tables below. The respondents have a high level of education since 4 of them completed a Master and 3 a Bachelor. The level of experience as rural entrepreneurs goes over 10 years for 5 of them, while only 1 is within the first 5 years in this field. Finally, in terms of area of expertise, the impact of the Flourish Destinations project is clear since 5 respondents are working in the field of rural tourism, while the others are distributed among farming, agriculture and general promotion of short circuit.

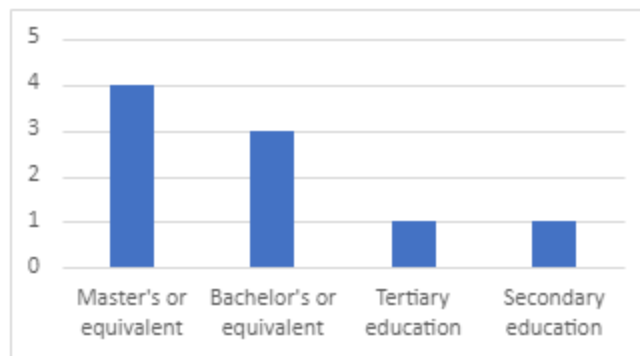


Figure 1. Level of education

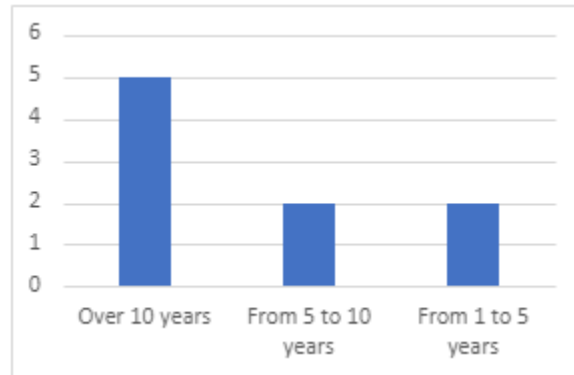


Figure 2. Level of professional experience

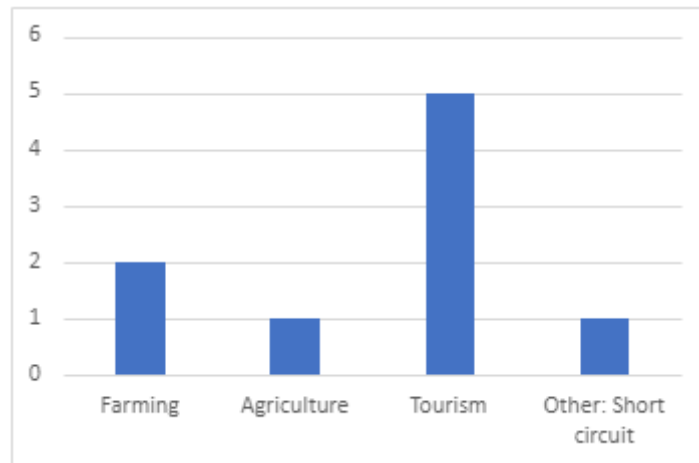


Figure 3. Area of expertise

The second part of the questionnaire focused on the challenges and success factors. In terms of main challenges related to entrepreneurship skills, the respondents distributed their answers among 3 main challenges:

- Human capital expertise
- Knowledge gaps
- Socio-economic background

The importance of the context and of the social aspect has been highlighted also by the selection of “lack of vision” as one of the most important obstacles for the establishment of successful rural businesses, followed by access to funds and environmental changes.

On the other hand, the main highlighted success factors refer to proper entrepreneurial skills and the connection with a diverse network of stakeholders, while financial capacity was indicated only by one respondent.



The third part of the questionnaire focused on the definition of the key skills for rural entrepreneurs. First of all, the majority of the respondents agreed or fully agreed on the sentence “Due to the growing complexity of agriculture, rural professionals have to become more businessmen”, which shows how much the rural context could benefit of dedicated business management trainings. This is well explained also by the results on the question related to the most important skills that a rural entrepreneur should have. In fact, the most important skills indicated were:

- Networking skills (selected 6 times)
- Management skills (selected 5 times)
- Planning and Business management skills (selected 4 times)

A special remark also for Communication skills that was selected 4 times and that the analysis of the case studies showed that the communication was quite high considered in terms of transparency of the processes and good website development.

The need of trainings on business management and communication was well expressed also in the following question: “According to your experience, for which type of the above-mentioned skills you consider that training courses would be valuable for potential rural entrepreneurs?”



Figure 4. Skills that should be included in trainings for rural entrepreneurs

In terms of key factors to foster a rural business model with positive benefit for the local community, the respondents highlighted two main aspects to consider:

- **Starting from local needs.** An analysis of the economical background and of the social needs will define the right base on which to build a business which is not just economically successful but also will be integrated and accepted by the local community.
- **Collaboration among local entrepreneurs.** The need of building a network among different local actors is perceived as a must.

Furthermore, the importance of working with passion and self-commitment was raised.

The final part of the survey focused on the needed factors to overcome the expressed barriers. The respondents were asked to provide feedback on how rural entrepreneurs could be supported to recognise, realise and start a business. The most important raised aspect is connected to the need of exchange of expertise and experience.

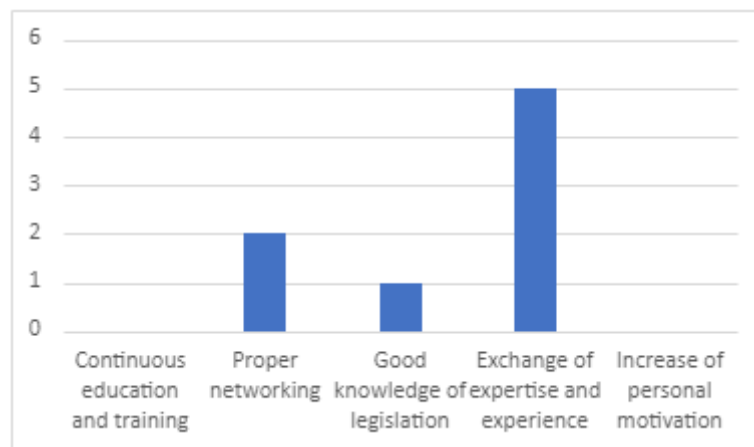


Figure 5. How could potential rural entrepreneurs be supported to recognize, realize, and start business opportunities?

Once defined how the rural entrepreneurs could be supported, the respondents highlighted that the main barriers limiting the development of successful business models are related to the economic background since this kind of business often requests a lot of effort for very few economical results.

As suggestion to overcome the main economical, and also social barriers, the respondents suggested some (good) practices to adopt:

- Understand the market
- Share the information, knowledge and experiences directly among the rural contexts
- Good external communication (up-to-date website)
- Raise awareness of citizens on the important role of agriculture for the urban life
- Build opportunities of exchange among rural entrepreneurs
- Fair information accessible to everyone



Furthermore, a specific case study was presented and shortly described: [Livinushof](#) in Sint-Laureins (Belgium). This rural farm is provided of a local shop and it varies in experimental (organic) crops. Furthermore, it's deeply involved in the educational sector, by offering seminars directly at the farm. The collaboration with local farmers and the connection with the local community are key aspects in the business strategy and promotion of the activities of the farm. Finally, it's highlighted that the area (Meetjeslandse krekengebied) hosts many farms run by young people.

The survey was closed by asking to the respondents to suggest the factors that would contribute to build a successful rural business. The main highlighted factors are:

- Promote local cooperation, especially on the first phases of a business.
- Build the business with a bottom-up approach by analysing the needs of the territory and the community.
- Take responsibility. A rural business needs a strong commitment of the responsible person.
- Build a strong and local-spread communication.

6. Concluding Remarks & Recommendations

The report provides a general background of the role of rural communities and businesses in the European strategy for a sustainable development. The key role played by the rural context to foster an ecological and social transition is well defined by several European measures and supporting programs. Furthermore, the development of the rural contexts needs to keep into consideration specific needs and challenges, while supporting the overcome of the main barriers that increase the distance between urban and rural communities.

The analysis of three cases of Belgian rural businesses raised the role of cooperatives to build a strong connection among rural productive sector and local communities. The inhabitants of the rural areas become part of the business, both on voluntary bases offering their time, and in terms of economic support and income by owning shares of the business. This specific structure allows the community to feel part of a common plan for the sustainable development of its own territory. On the other hand, he challenges are strongly connected to the need of building managerial and financial skills in order to make the business profitable. The promotion of fair working conditions and of the social inclusion keep being defined as basic needs and factors to build a rural business.

In terms of training programs, the report analysed three case studies that provide the base on which to build the OREN training courses. Firstly, the partners will have to keep in mind the language barrier that many rural contexts may have to overcome. For this, I will be key the support of the OREN team in the translation of the training material, in order to foster the local promotion. A key aspect to consider was



raised both by the analysis of the training programs and by the results of the questionnaire: facilitate the building (or the participation in) a network of rural entrepreneurs. The exchange of experiences is a strategic action to build the skills needed to run a business in the local context. For this, the OREN program could take advantage of already existing European, national or regional networks of rural entrepreneurs. During the construction of this report, ACR+ had the opportunity to build contact and start a collaboration with some networks active at local level that will be involved in the future steps of the project.

Annexes

Annex 1: Case Study Identification

CASE 1 – Linked.Farm

Country: Belgium (Flanders)

Name of organization/business : Linked.farm cooperative



Contact person and contact info: Laurence Claerhout / we@linkedfarm.eu

Website/link/more information: www.linked.farm

Category: Please indicate:

- **Agriculture**
- **Direct involvement of stakeholders**
- **Community based activities**

Short Description of business model

Linked.Farm is a sales & distribution digital platform for local Farm2Fork (F2F) products. It's a SCALE UP in Farmtech, operating under a cooperative Software as a Service (SAAS) model. The goal of Linked.Farm is to enable local entrepreneurs to set up their local business facilitating the contact between producers and consumers. Linked.Farm acts as a cooperative platform that wants to help local F2F initiatives to become economically viable. The philosophy of the business lays on the will to change the food system structurally to make it fairer, healthier, and more transparent.

The business started in 2015, when the founder Laurence Claerhout decided to drive along farms, pick up their goods and deliver it at home to households in her town. The digital platform quickly proved to be a 'must have' in order to make everything run smoothly from order to delivery to invoicing, returns, book keeping, etc. By talking to farmers, it was clear that they wanted to be in charge of their own IT tools and to decide collectively upon developments they needed the most. The digital platform aims to remove all difficulties for F2F for both farmers and eaters. The producers have access to the software to make F2F easy. Furthermore, Linked.Farm supports them in activating a hub and it provides marketing services.

Socioeconomic background:

Describe elements related with social/cultural/geographic origins related with the development of business model, origins.

Since its foundation, Linked.Farm wanted to address several challenges related to rural development. Since 1980, the number of active Belgian farmers reduced by 40%, due to low earnings and dependency on public subsidies. This brought many agricultural businesses to adapt to a long supply chain and to intensify at any costs their productivity. The main result has been a reduction of the nutritional value and a massive use of chemical products and water. The Linked.Farm business model is built on the need to give space to local farmers to the increasing demand of sustainable, healthy, local and zero waste products. The platform covers the lack of information in terms of labels and official certifications, while keeping convenient prices due to the implementation of a short value chain.

Main achievements:

e.g information on most essential qualitative and quantitative achievements

Linked.Farm is based on a cooperative structure, which means that each farmer is an owner and can express a vote. The prices are kept convenient for both sides; this attracted over 1,000 producers, and 35 hubs that have joined the platform so far. A hub works with around 30 farmers, which increases the availability of products and farmers can arrange and plan in autonomy the delivery and collecting points.



Main driving factors and criteria that play significant role for achievements:

e.g Factors acting as catalyst, instigators or motivators leading to success

The strategy of Linked.Farms lays on three main principles that made this business model worthy of interest:

1. Promotion of healthy and local food: the products come directly from the fields at affordable prices and ensuring a full inclusivity.
2. Good working conditions: the farmers receive fair incomes for their work and the platform incentivizes them to move towards organic products. Producers sell Business-to-Consumer (B2C) and Business-to-Business (B2B) and the platform manages automatically all the transactions, logistics, pricing, invoicing, etc.
3. Low carbon emissions: the waste is reduced as much as possible thanks to an effective schedule of the online orders, which reduces the waste since the production phase. The decreasing of the value chain and the direct connection between producers and consumers reduce the emissions in terms of transport and packaging.

Main challenges/obstacles limiting potential for success:

e.g Factors that constrain or slow growth

It is challenging for a small company such as Linked.Farm that focuses all its strategy on producing local food to access to public tenders for schools, hospitals, cities or even the Dutch Parliament. This is because of the characteristics of Public Procurement, which doesn't specify a preference for SMEs producing locally. So, on paper, Linked.Farm has nothing special more than other more traditional companies. Local production should be preferred on public tenders. A second challenge is related to the decision of Linked.Farm to be a cooperative, where every farmer has a vote and invests benefits in due diligence (meaning that they invest only money they have). This doesn't allow to have a big return, especially since the company works a very local level. Accepting big investors would mean accepting to take decisions that do not always respect the philosophy of Linked.Farm, in order to get some return on the investment. This happened to other similar companies, former competitors of Linked.Farm, which, after accepting a relevant investment from external investors, the owners have been excluded from their own company, which was then sold.

Level and way of local community's or other organizations engagement in business activities:

The platform is based on a cooperative structure that makes co-owners all the producers. This gives to the platform a strong connection with the local communities active in the rural areas of Belgium.

Role of the local community and other organizations in the advancement of business models

As local farmers are part of the business, they have voting rights on the main decisions about the platform. This makes the local farmers key actors in the building of the business.



Main characteristics that model good practices

e.g (Legislation, specific knowledge, skills, background)

The local producers are part of the business and they are involved in a cooperative with a big diversity of farmers, which increases the resilience of the whole organization. The initial investment is very low since the farmers keep running their activities and they are guided by the more experienced ones towards organic agriculture and sustainable methods.

CASE 2 – Ma Ferme

Country: Belgium (Wallonia)

Name of organization/business : Ma Ferme

Contact person and contact info: Stephan De Brabandere : stephdebra@gmail.com

Website/link/more information: <https://www.maferme.be/>

Category: Please indicate:

- **Agriculture**
- **Circular economy**
- **Direct involvement of stakeholders**
- **Community based activities**

Short Description of business model

Ma Ferme is a farm that also works as facilitator and incubator for rural entrepreneurs. It offers flexible infrastructures and a maximum of synergies to project leaders, self-employed people, non-profit organisations, SMEs in creation or already mature, present on the site and in the whole region. At the same time, it offers services and products, and it processes raw materials. The projects are part of a short circuit, respectful of the environment and the neighborhood, and financially viable. They are based on a human scale, without minimising their economic impact.

The business model of MaFerme connects ecological, social and economic objectives. First of all, MaFerme is an open and inclusive place, a well-structured farm, meant to be pleasant. They aim to:

- Create rural, fulfilling and diversified jobs
- Connect and create synergies in a harmonious balance
- Participate in the development of the local economy with an open mind
- Participate in the construction of an inclusive society

All the projects installed on the farm have environmental considerations and ideally ambitions to preserve and regenerate biodiversity and natural ecosystems.



MaFerre is based on the idea of considering the economy as a way to reach the development of this model and not as an end, giving more importance to a new societal model based on solidarity, exchange of knowledge and complementarity. The model aims to maximize positive impacts on the ecology and society, under the constraints of profit. The creation of a network of viable projects has the objective to participate in the economic development of rural areas, encouraging the cooperation and support between producers, processors, and distributors.

The Courte-au-Bois farm is located between Enghien and Silly, in the Wallonia region. It is nestled in a small valley bordered by the Marcq, a river that rises one kilometre upstream in the Bois d'Enghien-Silly.

Socioeconomic background:

Describe elements related with social/cultural/geographic origins related with the development of business model, origins.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many have become aware of the fragility of our food economic system and the crucial role of the agricultural world around them. If the first lockdown showed the potential and the importance of the short circuit, the exit of the containment also showed the volatility of the consumers. The short circuit sector will be stronger with new players, but they will have to do more than just produce, they will also have to play a strong role in communication and activism.

The year 2020 has forced everyone to take a step back from their activity. For some, this has resulted in a desire, or even an urgent need, to reorientate themselves. For others, it was an additional motivation to develop or adapt their activity. Rurality is a meaningful field that attracts some of these aspirations, but the significant capital requirements associated with it are a major brake. Fears about the current economic situation are an additional obstacle. The motivation to undertake is real, but there is great reluctance to do it alone.

A growing number of people are looking for alternatives for their savings, for their money investments. The bank account is still the preferred destination for Belgian savings, but there is a growing awareness of its low financial return, and especially of the total lack of control over the use that banks make of their money. The impressive - some would say inexplicable - fundraising success of NewB or the permanent double-digit growth of the Triodos bank are two examples among many. In this context, Ma Ferre present itself as an investment opportunity based on just work, local development and sustainability.

Ma Ferre is part of a global movement to build common ground, to experiment with new entrepreneurial and economic models, to approach a measured agriculture, and to promote collective intelligence.

Main achievements:

e.g information on most essential qualitative and quantitative achievements

Today, a very short time after the foundation in 2021, around 1200 cooperators are involved in the project's activities: buy the farm, plant the first hedges which reinforce biodiversity, analyze and prepare the land, install a shepherd, an ironworker, an artist-sculptor, a carpenter, and prepare the buildings to



accommodate a flour mill, a micro-brewery, a micro-malting and several craftsmen. Many actors and pioneers have supported Ma Ferme on these paths, actively or simply by documenting their journey. Ma Ferme will contribute to this global learning by documenting and disseminating the expertise and experiences developed, by sharing its instructive failures and motivating successes.

Despite its young age, the cooperative has already demonstrated its ability to build and manage human resources, define and execute a successful multi-channel communication action plan towards multiple audiences, act on the agricultural land market and carry out a major fundraising exercise. Each element is structured, documented, archived and managed in an information system. This capitalisation of intellectual assets will result in a model with high sharing and replication value.

On the one hand, the large movable and immovable assets that Ma Ferme holds will have a strong local impact in the short term. On the other hand, this systematic approach will guarantee intellectual assets with exponential and widespread potential impact in the medium term.

Main driving factors and criteria that play significant role for achievements:

e.g Factors acting as catalyst, instigators or motivators leading to success

The development model of Ma Ferme's operations is based on the creation of a significant asset with a limited return, which will serve as a breeding ground for the development of projects with higher added value. In fact, the real estate investment for the acquisition of the Courte-au-Bois farm offers basic income with a very limited return: rental of covered areas and rental of agricultural land.

The diversity of activities present on the site and the strength of the community of cooperators, coordinated and supervised by the Ma Ferme team, make then possible to identify, attract and facilitate complementary investments with a higher return on investment. This high return is shared between the investors and the users. This first phase between the basic real estate investment and the complementary investments took place from the first months, or even before the installation of certain producers. An example of complementary investment is the installation of a mushroom farm, several market gardeners, a baker and some small livestock farms. All of them need a cold store, some of them all year round, others mainly at the peak of production or slaughter. The investment in an industrial cold room by the cooperative and the flexible rental to the producers should allow a return on investment in 5 years for the cooperative while reducing the costs for its users by 30 to 50%.

The model is similar for office space, which is essential for each project, with a strong economy of scale. It also applies to a cannery and a shared processing kitchen, projects which are in high demand in the region, but which do not materialise due to lack of synergy and cooperation. It could also be extended to semi-industrial composting, rainwater recovery and energy production, where the cooperative would be a "supplier" of secondary raw materials. Finally, the model could cover services, for which there is already a large demand in terms of communication, management supervision and entrepreneurial support.

These opportunities will arise from analyses of the needs of producers who are active or in the process of setting up on the site and in the surrounding region. Each of these future opportunities for sharing infrastructure and services will have its own case study, which will define feasibility and priorities on a



development roadmap. An investment reserve has already been set aside for this purpose. New share issues, mortgages or other institutional support will supplement the necessary equity.

Main challenges/obstacles limiting potential for success:

e.g Factors that constrain or slow growth

Ma Ferme included a SWOT Analysis on its business plan, highlighting the main points of weakness and possible threats:

- Low profit margin
- Very capital-intensive activities
- Sectors with high psychological barriers to entry
- Weak maturity of some client contractors
- Climatic threats: drought and overflowing streams.

In terms of financial support, the cooperative's plan is based on 3 axes:

- Axis 1: investment pledges. December 2020 - January 2021: collection of 2,000,000 euros of investment pledges from cooperators via a public appeal, in particular 200,000 euros from the founding team.
- Axis 2: issue of shares to cooperators. Spring 2021, issue of 2,000,000 euros of cooperator shares.
- Axis 3: New share issue and bank loan. 1st half of 2022: issue of 100,000 euros of cooperator shares. Investment funds, foundations and other actors supporting investment in the ethical and sustainable economy.

For the time being, Ma Ferme has not integrated any public investment funds into its capital. In some cases, Ma Ferme was still too young for the funds' criteria, in others, it refused the investment conditions. Only the small investment fund Citizenfund is today one of Ma Ferme's co-operators.

Main characteristics that model good practices

e.g (Legislation, specific knowledge, skills, background)

The complementarity of activities is essential for financial balance. The profit of the cooperative at maturity will remain below 5% of the equity. To this creation of financial value will be added human, social and environmental values. The whole must offer a considerable return on investment, balanced between financial and civic values, typical of companies with a social purpose.

The cooperative issues shares at €50, €500, or €5,000. These shares are not a donation or a loan. They are a share of the company's capital. Everyone is free to buy the number of shares they wish. The shares proposed are:

- The "Roseau" shares at 50 €, perfect for students or as a gift.
- Apple tree" shares at €500, perfect for one or more first steps in a cooperative.
- Oak" shares at €5,000, to invest in a meaningful project with a return of financial and civic value.



Subsidies are hardly taken into account in the financial model, since considered as an additional investment capacity, rather than as a guaranteed means by default.

In this scenario, market gardening is carried out by the cooperative itself, while livestock farming is carried out by an independent farmer, a tenant of the cooperative. Part of the active human resources for market gardening activities is linked to public inclusion: spaces for discovery, sharing, meeting, learning and solidarity. One example of collaboration is the social agriculture project initiated by the Belgian social security system CPAS (Centre public d'action sociale) of Tubize and the non-profit organisation "Nos oignons".

The cooperative relies on key points of strength and opportunities:

- Focused on growing sectors
- A strong, multidisciplinary team
- An already large community of co-operators
- Incredible charm of the premises
- Diversity of activities and therefore diversity of risks
- Substantial equity capital
- The sector of sustainable and fair food is growing fast so it's the best moment to invest in it.
- Many possibilities to add high added-value- services
- New grassland plots available
- Support from local and regional institutional actors.

CASE 3 – Cocoricoop

Country: Belgium (Wallonia Region)

Name of organization/business : CocoriCoop

Contact person and contact info: Robin Guns: robin@cocoricoop.be ; info@cocoricoop.be

Website/link/more information: <https://cocoricoop.be/>

Category: Please indicate:

- **Agriculture**
- **Circular economy**
- **Direct involvement of stakeholders**
- **Community based activities**

Short Description of business model

Cocoricoop is a cooperative with a social purpose that trades products from local, peasant and environmentally friendly agriculture. Producers and consumers are brought together at the very heart of the project, through a shared governance approach. Cocoricoop aims to guarantee a fair price for all, set by its producers. It's a social project based on a solidarity economy that aims to create an inclusive and dynamic community around food-related issues.

The Cooperative lays on some specific objectives:



- To support family-based, environmentally friendly farms based in the Wallonia region.
- To encourage farmers to produce for the local market by ensuring an efficient local marketing system at a fair price.
- To allow access to healthy and local food to a maximum of citizens at a fair price.
- To connect consumers and producers.
- To create a dynamic and inclusive community.

Cocoricoop brings together producers/processors who want to make a decent living from their work and citizens who are looking for healthy, local, sustainable, and accessible food. This connection and all the cooperative's values are made very transparent through public charters which list the commitments that people involved are asked to accept.

The cooperative owns a physical shop in the city of Ciney, an online shop and several relay points.

Socioeconomic background:

Describe elements related with social/cultural/geographic origins related with the development of business model, origins.

The demand for local and seasonal products is growing. The supermarkets have understood this and are riding the wave. Unfortunately, they do not always guarantee fair and sustainable prices for local producers. Cocoricoop proposes an efficient marketing system that pays the producer's work, while staying accessible and practical for the consumer. It promotes local production for local consumption.

The cooperative was originally born in the municipality of Ohey (5.146 inhabitants in 2019) in the Province of Namur in Belgium. At the beginning, it was based on a community initiative that built a network of several local purchasing activities, which started growing when municipalities from the Condroz Namurois region joined it. After three years, the first shop was open in the biggest town of the area, Ciney with 19.007 inhabitants in 2022.

In its first phase, the cooperative was managed by volunteers, but very soon, the need of permanent employees that could support the activities also from an economic point of view became very clear. The first two people that joined Cocoricoop were selected without any specific background, training, or experience. They could learn day by day on the field guided by the community and the volunteers. Furthermore, since the first phases, the cooperative has been financed by public agencies such as Propage (Progrès Participation Gestion en Economie Sociale), an advice agency on social economy supported by the European Union, and the Wallonia Local Action Group (LAG). At the moment, it receives support by the Belgian public centre for social action (Centre Public d'Action Sociale - CPAS).

Main achievements:

e.g information on most essential qualitative and quantitative achievements

After 4 years, Cocoricoop managed to:

- mobilise around 30 producers all over the territory;
- open an online shop



- open a physical shop in Ciney;
- set several relay points in different municipalities.

The best achievement is the inclusion approach and the social aspect of the cooperative. Indeed, the based-community approach was the right base to start building an inclusion programme involving people with disabilities. The activity was born thanks to a successful cooperation with a health institute based in Ciney, which provided support in involving some local people with disabilities in activities related to the daily work of the cooperative such as placing the products in the right packaging to be sold. This was the starting point to build a collaboration with many other organisations active in the social field.

Main driving factors and criteria that play significant role for achievements:

e.g Factors acting as catalyst, instigators or motivators leading to success

The cooperative works as a tool for linking producers and consumers. Everyone is a stakeholder in terms of financial matters and decision-making. The quality of the products and the involvement of the producers in the cooperative influence the success of this collective distribution tool. The producer undertakes to be present in the life of the cooperative on a voluntary basis and to participate in the producers' meetings, as well as in a General Assembly per year.

The communication is made as much transparent as possible, connecting the producers directly with the clients of the cooperative. Indeed, the producer transmits a "technical itinerary" of production for crops and livestock. At the same time, processors inform about working methods and the origin of the ingredients. A list of producers and processors is provided on the website. The cooperative's newsletter is another very good tool to facilitate the presentation of the farmers and producers involved in the project. Furthermore, the producers organise at least one open house per year on the farm and they are present at one of the relay points or at the central logistics point at least twice a year, to directly meet the consumers.

An evaluation of the producer's performance is carried out on entry and over time. When a producer wishes to join the cooperative, a committee, composed of two producers from the same sector and two consumers, visits the farm. This committee sends its visit report to the cooperative's Board of Directors, which decides on the integration of the new producer. For each sector, the cooperative will give preference to smaller producers looking for outlets.

Being a community-based activity was a key driving factor for the success of the cooperative since the very beginning.

Main challenges/obstacles limiting potential for success:

e.g Factors that constrain or slow growth

The cooperative planned to be 100% financially autonomous, but the model shows to be still fragile. In order to overcome this obstacle, they had to search for subsidies. First of all, the cooperative launched a



non-profit association that could reach public subsidies. Thanks to this, two more people could be hired, one of them with disabilities following the objective of the Belgian social service to support the enrolment in the work sector people with difficulties. It is quite clear that the social aspect has always been kept as main characteristic of the cooperative.

Although the subsidies and the public support, the model keeps being fragile from a financial point of view. Indeed, the work of volunteers is key for the success of the cooperative.

An additional challenge is related to the workload, in terms of balance with personal needs and right salary. Indeed, it's challenging to make the cooperative economically profitable while preserving the social and environmental values and providing high quality working conditions. Furthermore, the employees need to work daily to keep a connection with the producers and a good collaboration with the volunteers.

Finally, in relation to the challenge to balance work and personal life, it's worthy to mention the difficulties for women to join this sector, also due to the cultural barrier that sees women more involved in raising the family than being part of a rural entrepreneurship. Cocoricoop also works to facilitate the gender balance and the engagement of female workers in the rural sector, but a cultural transition is needed.

Level and way of local community's or other organizations engagement in business activities:

Cocoricoop wished to further develop its social purpose, so it applied for a grant from the Social Economy Cabinet in 2020 in order to obtain a position specifically dedicated to the "social inclusion" mission. The cooperative received a favourable response with financial support to hire a 3/5 time worker for one year (from March 2021 to February 2022) so a "social inclusion officer" joined the team. Concretely, her mission consists of 2 axes:

- Inclusion of different audiences in the cooperative's activities
- Accessibility of products in a short circuit, for all

Through these axes, different concrete activities have already been defined such as:

- The continuation of existing partnerships, including "Les Chemins d'Ariane IMS Ciney Asbl" and the "Service de Logements Supervisés Mon Projet" in Ciney, with the inclusion of several people with disabilities in the cooperative's voluntary activities;
- The continuation of the pilot project in Havelange in collaboration with the LAG Condroz-Famenne, the CPAS and the social grocery shop;
- The setting up of a "social inclusion" commission, internal to the cooperative, bringing together citizens and professionals who wish to reflect and act collectively on the development of social inclusion
- The sharing of knowledge and experience with the network involved in these issues



The cooperative is also part of the Collectif 5C, which gathers around 40 Belgian citizen cooperatives. It federates, builds and disseminates the model of production and distribution based on a short value chain by strengthening the cooperative dynamics between producers, consumers and distributors.

Main characteristics that model good practices

e.g (Legislation, specific knowledge, skills, background)

The Cooperative is based on some specific key aspects that makes it an interesting case study for other community-based rural entrepreneurship with clear social and environmental goals. Below a list of the most important characteristics identified:

- **The Cooperative sets some specific guidelines in order to respect and promote a local production.** The products are local. The processor has to be active in the region, and the ingredients should preferably come from the cooperative, the territory and, if not, from the Wallonia region. In case some products are not present in the territory, the cooperative favours exchanges with other nearby cooperatives. For international purchases of products that cannot be produced locally, the cooperative requires products with an organic label or from former LAG suppliers. These products preferably come from other cooperative structures or from fair trade, as close as possible to a short value chain.
- **The producers are called to implement a good agriculture both for environment and society.** This includes also ensuring animal welfare and the health of the soil, by favouring natural fertilisation as much as possible. The use of commercial fertilisers is limited, as it is the use of animal manure from intensive livestock farms or from animals fed with on Genetically Modified Organisms, which are not accepted. Furthermore, the farms should promote energy saving and reduce the consumption of fossil fuels as much as possible, while preserving water resources and biodiversity. The cooperative encourages voluntary measures to protect and increment biodiversity (hedges, ponds, headlands, etc.).
- **A high quality of the products has to be ensured.** For this, the producers can provide the cooperative only with fresh, seasonal, and high-quality products. On the side of processors, they should refuse to use the semi-prepared products, but work with quality and diversified primary products. Organic certification is strongly encouraged, but is not an obligation per se.
- **Cocoricoop aims at being a fair, inclusive and cooperative business model.** The producers involved, which are mainly family-businesses, guarantee fair wage and decent working conditions for any employees. The producers diversify their marketing channels keeping a short circuit and only a maximum of 50% of the total production is sold via the cooperative. The producers have to take care of the packaging by themselves since the cooperative doesn't have the human resources to totally cover this aspect. The cost is kept low: the cooperative charges a margin of 20% on the selling price of the product, excluding VAT, which corresponds to a coefficient of 1.25. So, if a producer sells a product for €1 to



the cooperative (excluding VAT), the cooperative sells it for €1.25 (excluding VAT) to the consumer. Finally, the several activities implemented to ensure the strong engagement of people with difficulties and the voluntary approach make Cocoricoop an example of inclusive community-based entrepreneurship.

Annex 2: Online Questionnaire

| GENERAL INFORMATION | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Country/Region | What is your level of education? | What is your professional experience as rural entrepreneur? | Which is your area of expertise? |
| Norway | Master's or equivalent | Over 10 years | Farming |
| Greece | Master's or equivalent | From 1 year to 5 years | Agriculture |
| Belgium | Secondary education | Over 10 years | Tourism |
| Belgium | Bachelor's or equivalent | From 1 year to 5 years | Tourism |
| Belgium / Meetjesland | Master's or equivalent | From 5 year to 10 years | Tourism |
| Belgium, Flanders, Meetjesland | Bachelor's or equivalent | Over 10 years | Tourism |
| Belgium, East Flanders | Tertiary education | Over 10 years | Farming |
| Belgium | Bachelor's or equivalent | From 5 year to 10 years | Tourism |
| Belgium, Wallonia | Master's or equivalent | Over 10 years | short circuit |

| CHALLENGES AND SUCCESS FACTORS | | |
|---|--|---|
| In your opinion, which are the main emerging and promising sectors of rural entrepreneurship? | What typical challenges and hinderers do you see for potential entrepreneurs when it comes to entrepreneurship skills? | Which are the main driving factors for business success? |
| | | |
| Tourism | Human capital expertise | Other: Market understanding = how to approach a high paying market |
| Circular economy | Knowledge gaps | Financial capacity |
| Tourism | Socio-economic background | Proper entrepreneurial skills |



| | | |
|------------------|--|---|
| Tourism | Knowledge gaps | Connection with a diverse network of stakeholders |
| Tourism | Socio-economic background | Proper entrepreneurial skills |
| Circular economy | Human capital expertise | Connection with a diverse network of stakeholders |
| Farming | Socio-economic background | Proper entrepreneurial skills |
| Tourism | Knowledge gaps | Innovation |
| short circuit | Other: Farming organisations push farmers into a traditional economic model (monoculture, volume) that does not allow them to make a living. | Connection with a diverse network of stakeholders |

CHALLENGES AND SUCCESS FACTORS

On a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (very important) how would you rate the importance of the listed main obstacles for the establishment of successful rural businesses?

| Demographic changes | Workforce development | Skills shortage | Fewer educational opportunities | Access to funds | Lack of vision | Infrastructure | Environmental changes |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| 3 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 1 |



| KEY SKILLS FOR RURAL ENTREPRENEURS | | |
|---|---|--|
| In what level you agree or disagree with the following statement in your region? | In your opinion, which are the most important skills that rural entrepreneurs should have? Select up to three of the following listed skills. | Please briefly explain the reasons for your selections: |
| Due to the growing complexity of agriculture, rural professionals have to become more businessmen | | |
| Agree | Planning and Business Strategy skills (Developing and Evaluating a business strategy) | To understand the market, and the uncovered opportunities in the market, in addition to building a great team is important |
| Agree | Networking Skills ; Management skills ; Opportunity spotting (recognizing and analyzing business opportunities) | it takes a good manager to spot the opportunities. if you are all the time busy with your job and not able to talk/ interact with other people and have the mind to think the next step for your business then you cannot go on to the next step . |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | Networking Skills; Management skills ; Opportunity spotting (recognizing and analyzing business opportunities) | |
| Agree | Networking Skills ; Management skills; Communication skills | Management and communication becoming increasingly important |
| Agree | Networking Skills ; Management skills; Communication skills | in tourism, communication is key, including in other languages |



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | Opportunity spotting (recognizing and analyzing business opportunities) | I think the future farm should work broadly with the touristic sector, renewable technologies and contribution to the environment, with production but in addition to broad market production also focused on short chain. A wide range on the farm but nicely tuned to one concept where the sub aspects still form one beautiful story. Secure prosperity and production independent(er) of the world market. Don't do everything but still work broadly and certainly close to the local community and the occasional visitor. |
| Strongly agree | Technical skills ; Networking Skills ; Management skills ; Skills needed to innovate ; Planning and Business Strategy skills (Developing and Evaluating a business strategy) ; Communication skills | evolve with the times. further training |
| Agree | Technical skills ; Skills needed to innovate ; Planning and Business Strategy skills (Developing and Evaluating a business strategy) | |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | Networking Skills ; Planning and Business Strategy skills (Developing and Evaluating a business strategy) ; Communication skills | Not having the same financial means as other businesses, it is crucial to collaborate with others and not to limit oneself to agricultural subsidies that feed without considering the real cost. Of course, a rural business must be profitable, as must any business. |
| KEY SKILLS FOR RURAL ENTREPRENEURS | | |



| <p>According to your experience, for which type of the above-mentioned skills you consider that training courses would be valuable for potential rural entrepreneurs? Please fill three skills below, allocating them on by priority.</p> | <p>In your opinion, which factors would contribute most to successful business models that benefit local communities? (e.g surplus or profits are re-invested to community benefit or create a positive impact for the local economy)</p> | <p>In which of the following sectors are these skills mostly needed?</p> |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Market understanding, building brands, pricing, cooperation, value chains,</p> | <p>Coop's sees to be a good way to kick start rural economies. It lowers the barriers for starting and creates a business environment for others</p> | <p>Tourism</p> |
| <p>opportunity spotting, management</p> | <p>the help - programs must be orientated to the local needs and not organized according to factors out of the community</p> | <p>Circular economy</p> |
| | | <p>Circular economy</p> |
| <p>Management</p> | <p>short-chain operation</p> | <p>Tourism</p> |
| <p>communication skills</p> | <p>cooperation with other local entrepreneurs</p> | <p>Tourism</p> |
| <p>Opportunity spotting (through brainstorming groups and networking) Technical skills for innovation Business strategy</p> | <p>Is the business in the place, in the village, in the immediate region, a factor of significance in the thriving community where entrepreneurs, neighbours and visitors benefit? Get that question answered and you are left with a successful business model, not just financially but above all to be happier about it as a farmer (stand up, look in the mirror and say: I like doing it).</p> | <p>Agriculture</p> |
| <p>management skills; strategy of the company</p> | <p>managing one's own affairs well</p> | <p>Farming</p> |
| <p>Business operations and strategy</p> | <p>collaborate and work complementarily with other local businesses.</p> | <p>Tourism</p> |



| | | |
|--|--|-------------|
| commercial strategy (e.g. short circuit) - network - communication | collaboration between several local entrepreneurs, involving the community | Agriculture |
|--|--|-------------|

| HOW TO OVERCOME THE BARRIERS | | |
|---|--|--|
| How could potential rural entrepreneurs be supported to recognize, realize, and start business opportunities? | The main factors limiting the development of successful business models are linked with: | Please explain briefly your response. |
| Other: It's important to create a local/regional ecosystem for innovation | Social background | It's difficult to understand the "codes" and "rules" important to reach the higher paying classes with product's attractive to them |
| Through proper networking | Economic background | when ones struggle to make his living, he is not willing to make an effort to talk to people who can give him ideas or paths to follow. |
| Through good knowledge of legislation | Other | |
| Through proper networking | Political background | no unified policy across countries |
| Through Exchange of expertise and experience | Economic background | A robust cost/benefit analysis is crucial to survival and success |
| Through Exchange of expertise and experience | Economic background | Today's rural entrepreneur, especially the farmer, is very dependent on economics (see energy prices, war, EU policies...). By working more broadly, engaging in circular economy, having a strong leg locally and opting for renewable energy, the entrepreneur increases his independence from the global market and can endure a shock and buy himself time to innovate and/or convert. |
| Through Exchange of expertise and experience | Economic background | without capital little is possible |



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Through Exchange of expertise and experience | Social background | One should always think broadly and be open to new ideas |
| Through Exchange of expertise and experience | Other: agricultural unions and experts of all kinds who "offer" their expertise, without making them think | these organisations and experts have too much economic interest in maintaining the status quo |
| HOW TO OVERCOME THE BARRIERS | | |
| What (good) practices can you recommend for overcoming these barriers related to this? | In your opinion what factors would contribute most to successful rural business in general? | |
| | | |
| market understanding, dialog with the market | Create a innovation business environment, you lower the barriers by doing business in cooperation (in the beginning) | |
| networking, not only by making the information and the knowledge available, but also by making the information travel to the rural area, rather than making the people of the rural area travelling / [real time or web based] to the information | funding, and bottom up approaches to what is needed in different places, towns. no 2 villages are the same even in the same counties. | |
| | | |
| | | |
| a good and up-to-date website | good communication and economic management | |



| | |
|---|--|
| <p>I think the Livinushof in Sint-Laureins is a very good example. This rural farm does markets, varies in experimental (organic) crops and offers seminars and environmental education on the farm. But you can also buy eggs and vegetables there at the door, by leaving a penny for what you take away. On the farm itself, a lot of care has been taken to ensure cleanliness and its location in the beautiful polder environment. The water buffering there is also very ingenious and the farm works closely with fellow farmers in the street. They have a bench in the street where many tourists pass by, those people are addressed, you as a visitor can taste what is grown in the three farms. But there is also quite large market production. It is a farm that is strongly embedded in the community of St Margriete. It is striking that in the same area (Meetjeslandse krekengebied), many farms with young people in charge are going the same way.</p> | <p>Keeping a feel for what is happening around you. Especially the immediate environment. Farm sales, for example, are almost a must to stay aware of your production quality. Keep in touch with the immediate environment.</p> |
| <p>agriculture should be more respected by citizens. Especially animal husbandry</p> | <p>continued responsibility and be present on the farm!</p> |
| <p>Share and listen to ideas from other entrepreneurs</p> | <p>The level of drive of the entrepreneur and a good vision and plan of action.</p> |
| <p>neutral experts (not linked to multinationals) and fair information to farmers</p> | <p>collaboration</p> |



Annex 3: Analysis of existing relevant programs

Training course 1 - SKILLTOUR

Country: Europe in general

Name of Program: Skilltour

Website/link/more information: <https://skilltour.eu/en>

Category: Tourism

1. Short Description and objectives

The SKILLTOUR project has been granted by the European Commission, with the support of Erasmus+ Programme, and took place from 1st September 2015, until 31st August 2017.

The aim of the Skilltour project was to develop the entrepreneurial skills of those who run/plan to run small rural tourism businesses to be able to deliver innovative, high-quality products and services and manage their businesses in a sustainable and responsible manner. The second objective was to facilitate the development of entrepreneurial and transversal skills of owners who run (or plan to run) small/family rural tourism businesses.

2. Target groups

- People running micro or family business (pension, farm stay, restaurant, village inn, camping or guest house, etc) in rural areas
- People willing to diversify rural tourism services
- People willing to develop their and/or their staff's skills and competences

3. Sector(s) that this program concerns

- Rural tourism

4. Main Contents (Modules/Units)

Skilltour contains a 5 unit program :

- Creation and development of rural touristic businesses
- Sustainable management
- New ways of communication and digital marketing



- Cultural heritage and local traditions
- Personal approach

More information available here:

videos tour of competences (<https://multimedia.skilltour.eu/>)

videos of good practices (<https://skilltour.eu/en/page/150/good-practices>)

5. Type of involvement

The program is translated into all partners' languages (Greek, French, Hungarian, Romanian, and Spanish). The involvement is local, for each partner's country.

List of program partners:

- Point Europa : www.pointeuropa.org
- Spektrum Educational Center Foundation : www.sec.ro
- Inthecity Project Development : www.inthecitystudio.com
- Soluciones Tecno-profesionales Consulting : www.stpeuropa.eu
- CIEP asbl : www.ciep.be
- Technical Training center Cyprus : www.kekal.com.cy
- MEWCAT : www.mewcat.gr

6. Description of advantages and disadvantages

It is a well-structured course. The fact that it's an online course makes it very accessible for everyone, and the translation into 6 languages increases, even more, the range of people that can benefit from it. It doesn't require any registration or payment, and the modules are still available after the end of the project. On the other side, the course doesn't take into consideration the diversity of the regional rural contexts, which is a key aspect in the analysis of the touristic processes and the definition of a local business model.

7. Impact

The training is the result of an Erasmus+ project that based the development of the learning platform on a research study on the needs of targeted entrepreneurs and transversal skills of adults who run small/family rural tourism businesses. Through video interviews, the project analysed a set of 16 SMEs defined as good practice models focused on sustainable rural tourism in the different partners' countries. Then, the structure of the course and the training material was based on the research study with the goal to enable business providers to be able to deliver innovative, high-quality products and services and manage their business in a sustainable and responsible manner.

The project delivered also an interactive virtual tour of competences (study video) and attractive multimedia materials to support and motivate the autonomous learning of adult learners. The tour combines video situations and information about specific up-to-date, modern transversal and entrepreneurial skills. It is aimed for autonomous non-formal learning as complementary training to the general qualification of rural entrepreneurs, so they can improve existing professional competences, and practice new skills.



Training course 2 : SCALIBUR

Country: Europe in general

Name of Program: Scalibur

Website/link/more information: <https://scalibur.geonardo.com/>

Category: Agriculture, Valorisation of secondary raw material

1. Short Description and objectives

Scalibur training course is a two-module course to gain knowledge in circular bioeconomy and its triple bottom-line benefits. People will learn about the EU's support for circular business models, successful examples, business opportunities arising in the urban bioeconomy, emerging technologies, how to enter the circular bioeconomy and biowaste domain, or how to make biowaste business more sustainable and circular. It is the result of the Horizon 2020 [Scalibur](#) project, which aims at demonstrating innovative solutions to transform urban food waste and sewage sludge into high-value-added products, helping cities to increase their recycling rate and creating new circular economy business opportunities.

2. Target groups

One module is targeting municipalities, regions and waste managers, the second module refers to entrepreneurs, SMEs, graduates and companies.

3. Sector(s) that this program concerns

- Circular bioeconomy

4. Main Contents (Modules/Units)

a. Module 1:

Designed for representatives of municipalities, public authorities, and local or regional waste managers, interested to learn about the concept of circular bio-economy, EU regulations on biowaste and how to help transforming municipalities by practicing circularity principles applied to biowaste.

Outcome: By the end of the chapter, attendees will have a better understanding of the principles of circular bio-economy, EU regulation on biowaste, good practices of biowaste collection and treatment in the EU, SCALIBUR products and pilots, and the initial steps towards improving biowaste collection in their municipalities in accordance to circularity principles:

- Chapter 1- Circular bioeconomy in Europe



- Chapter 2- EU regulations on biowaste
- Chapter 3 – Best local practices on biowaste
- Chapter 4- Implementing an urban circular bioeconomy

b. **MODULE 2:**

Designed for entrepreneurs, SMEs and companies wishing to enter the urban circular economy domain, interested to learn about the concept of circular bio-economy, EU support to circular business models, successful cases of circular businesses, and the emerging technologies.

Outcome: This module will help the learner (entrepreneurs, SMEs and companies) to gain knowledge in circular bioeconomy, its triple bottom-line benefits, the EU support to circular business models, successful examples, businesses opportunities arising in the urban bioeconomy, what solutions the SCALIBUR project is demonstrating, emerging technologies, how to enter the circular bioeconomy and biowaste domain or how to make a biowaste business more sustainable and circular:

- Chapter 1 - Why circular bioeconomy?
- Chapter 2 - EU support to circular business models
- Chapter 3 - Successful cases of circular businesses
- Chapter 4 - Emerging technologies

5. **Type of involvement**

- European level

The user of the e-learning module 2 will be able to navigate the presentation consisting of 4 separate modules and the platform will also include downloadable reference documents and useful links, an “Ask the Tutor” function, and a Forum area to allow users to interact, ask questions and leave comments.

6. **Description of advantages and disadvantages**

The e-learning was prepared in English, and this may reduce the accessibility, especially for municipal employees in some parts of Europe that may have difficulties with English. On the other hand, the use of such an international language allows the training to be promoted and shared in every EU country.

7. **Impact**

The number of total users currently is 44 people. Some of these are SCALIBUR partners and others are people that the project partners managed to reach out through the communication and dissemination activities. Unfortunately, there are not reviews available yet.

Training course 3: Job Yourself

Country: Belgium



Name of Program: Job yourself

Website/link/more information: <https://jobyourself.be/>

Category: Please indicate: No specific category (but focus on construction, craftsmanship, design and green professions)

1. Short Description and objectives

JobYourself trainings were launched in 2010 and are subsidized by the Brussels region.

The JobYourself cooperative offers a structured and secure framework for developing and testing the economic profitability of an entrepreneurial project on the market. At the end of the JobYourself course, the candidate-entrepreneur has a clear vision of the economic viability of their project. They can make an informed decision to become self-employed. JobYourself offers any job seeker, who wants to launch their own entrepreneurial project, and any person who wants to become self-employed while unemployed, the possibility to develop and test it within the legal, structured, secure and ethical framework.

The support is free. However, when the participants are in the phase of "testing" activities on the market, they contribute 10% of their gross margin (turnover minus purchases of supplies) to the running of the structure, with a minimum of €50/month.

Several objectives:

- Participation to groups of experience exchange with other entrepreneurs launching a company in the same sector/activity
- Creation of a professional network
- Access to many useful information
- Focus on eco-construction and circular economy
- Help on drafting quotations/invoices
- Advice on how to build a customer base

2. Target groups

Jobyourself is accessible to anyone willing to launch a professional activity.

3. Sector(s) that this program concerns

No specific category (but focus on construction, craftsmanship, design and green professions)

4. Main Contents (Modules/Units)



The participants are followed up individually by an entrepreneurial coach; from the preparation phase of the business plan to the launching of the activity (6 months). As soon as they have customers and orders, they start the test phase (18 months max).

Phases of the training program:

- Align their entrepreneurial dreams and anchor their project in a market reality
- Define a business plan (with the Business Model Canvas tool)
- Build a simplified financial plan
- Acquire communication tools
- Develop a prospecting plan
- Write sales pitches
- Define a selling price and how to invoice
- Search for clients
- Build a solid professional network
- Access a wide range of training courses from job yourself partners

Once all done, there are two possible paths:

a. VALIDATION PROCESS

- they confront their project idea with the reality of the market and see what their place is in this market.
- 2 HALF DAYS + 1 individual interview (online for the moment) over a duration of 1 ½ months
- In group

b. CONSTRUCTION COURSE

- they develop, build and strengthen their project. The participants find their first clients thanks to the BMC Business Model Canvas tool.
- 15 HALF DAYS + 1 individual interview (online for the moment) over a duration of 4 ½ months
- In group / In self-coaching / In individual coaching

5. **Type of involvement**

As the program is subsidized by the region of Brussels, the involvement is local and focuses on Brussels.

6. **Description of advantages and disadvantages**

Good following from start to launch of activity. The program is developed with the region and counts many success stories. The activities of the cooperative are governed by a federal law (title VIII, p21) and a royal decree. This royal decree provides for an 18-month exemption from job search for candidate-entrepreneurs who are part of the target group of activity cooperatives (unemployment/CPAS).

Check success stories every month : [Portraits Archives – JobYourself](#)

7. **Impact**



The program helped to launch 719 companies since its creation in 2010. Currently, 195 entrepreneurs are in the test phase and 432 are in the preparation phase.