



**RDI2CluB:**  
*Rural RDI milieus in transition towards smart bioeconomy clusters and innovation ecosystems*

[projects.interreg-baltic.eu](http://projects.interreg-baltic.eu)

## **Report on Platform Test-use and Benchmarking**

Summary of user experiences from a test-use and benchmarking of H2020 platforms developed in bioeconomy related projects with findings and implications for development of Open Virtual Biobusiness Hub.

Anna Aalto

15.4.2019

## Content

Report on Platform Test-use and Benchmarking.....	0
Introduction to Assignment .....	1
Tested Platforms .....	1
Summary of Responses .....	2
Preferences Identified in Responses.....	2
Findings and Implications.....	4
Added value and engagement!.....	4
Connections for Wider Impact.....	4
Lessons for Piloting of Open Virtual Biobusiness Hub .....	5
Annex 1. Assessment Questionnaire .....	6

## Introduction to Assignment

In the course of designing the Open Virtual Biobusiness Hub requirements, it was found that there is an interest to develop a knowledge base service as a bioeconomy information source and sharing tool for the platform. To support the designing of the functionalities of the knowledge base, the Innovation Hub developers' team was given an assignment to test-use two platforms with a knowledge base service for registered users.

As per the assignment, the test-use time should be few weeks, preferably up to one month. This means that the test user should register to the platform and try-out the service for one month in order to explore the networking impact as well as the knowledge base. Different networking, matchmaking and information services available at the platform should be explored. The user should identify any created connections or other benefits that have arisen from the use of the platform during the test period. The main purpose was however to assess the user friendliness of the service, which can also be analyzed based on one time use where the user is taking some time to test and analyze the offered service.

## Tested Platforms

The tested platforms are developed in ongoing Horizon 2020 projects and all relate to the bioeconomy theme. Here is a short introduction to the tested platforms.

**BIOPEN** is a matchmaking database, and a knowledge base platform, pre-filled with relevant information on funding opportunities, and the ability to search for bio-based information on patents, literature and in any other open access knowledge repositories.

<https://www.biopen-project.eu/about/>

**BioWatch** is an interactive online library for bio-based research and projects. Each project will have a SEED, which is a multi-media digital brochure. It displays information about your project in an accessible and engaging format.

<http://www.bioways.eu/biowatch/the-biowatch-platform-/>

**BIOVOICES** social platform that supports pro-active discussion and co-creation among stakeholders promoting the direct engagements of citizens and society.

<https://www.biovoices-platform.eu/registeredarea/index>

**ROSEWOOD** is a European Horizon 2020 project dedicated to Sustainable Wood Mobilisation. ROSEWOOD aims at building a trans-European network among stakeholders of the forestry value chain for the transfer of best practices & innovations in sustainable wood mobilisation.

<https://rosewood-network.eu/>

## Summary of Responses

The Innovation Hub Developers working group (WP3) provided in total 10 documented reviews of the recommended platforms for test-use. The reviews were discussed in a WP3 working group meeting and some additional notes were received from other partners. These have been addressed in the 'Findings and Implications'. The findings were collected during January – March 2019.

Table 1. Responses to the platform test-use assignment

Respondent	BIOPEN	BIOWATCH	BIOVOICES	ROSEWOOD
PP1:	1 REVIEW	1 REVIEW	2 REVIEWS	
PP7:	1 REVIEW	1 REVIEW		
PP9	1 REVIEW	1 REVIEW		
PP10		1 REVIEW		1 REVIEW

## Preferences Identified in Responses

The test use showed preliminary information on features that the test-users valued and the features that the test users wanted to avoid. The example cases are indicated in brackets where relevant.

Table 2. Identified preferences in the test use

	Preferred features
Type of use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjustment to mobile device is seen important; the mobile use could help to increase the frequency of visiting the site, e.g. reading news and discussions. Content creation might be mostly done on laptop or desktop.</li> <li>• Quick Contact was found very helpful (Biopen) and 'Send a message' (Rosewood)</li> <li>• Should work with all common browsers</li> <li>• Biovoices: The groups in the platform have their own working space called a lab with documents, posts, polls, video streaming possibility. There is also a user manual that we can benchmark as an example for developing the processes for forum users. The approach to community building is similar to the one we have in Biobord.eu, however, the hub-based approach with potential for regional dialogue is missing.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biovoices offers one example of a dashboard; where you have your profile information, your contact and your newsfeed based on what you are following in the platform.</li> </ul>
Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy password adjustment</li> <li>• Registration and sign-in logically placed together</li> <li>• Registration included categories to select to indicate the involvement in the sectors: 'Civil society and end users', 'Industry and business', 'Media', 'Public administration policy' and 'research and education'. This is a type of user profiling that might be relevant for us in some format. (Biowatch)</li> <li>• Registration was possible also with Google or Facebook accounts. The registration included checking the willingness to take part in the matchmaker feature and willingness to be contacted. You can register as private person or organisation. (Biovoices)</li> </ul>
Navigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple search features</li> <li>• Easy-to-use categories for understanding the site content</li> <li>• Intuitiveness of use</li> <li>• Easy category names for filters and search features</li> <li>• Clearly organised document library (Biowatch)</li> <li>• Library needs to have good search features</li> <li>• Navigation area should be fixed and not to hide when scrolling the page forward (Biovoices)</li> <li>• Biovoices: Interesting categories in the point of view of innovation (market phase). The categories could be connected to the innovation phase and JAP theme, if we wish to use similar structure. However, there were two overlapping categories, which is a bit confusing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Market phase: ACCELERATION, MARKET DEVELOPMENT, GO TO MARKET</li> <li>○ Icons and colours are used to identify categories</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
User profile and view	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to modify preferences to find interesting content (Biowatch)</li> <li>• There should be a 'Manage profile' dashboard easily available</li> <li>• User should be informed why information is collected – how he/she can benefit from selecting interest fields etc.</li> <li>• Biowatch members' matchmaking feature is a good example from operational point of view for planning the dashboard – however, it is not providing enough information on the people to encourage people to get connected.</li> <li>• Biowatch and Biovoices: In the user data management, you can download your photo.</li> </ul>
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibility to link up with ongoing projects (Biowatch)</li> <li>• Use of photos and illustrations alongside the text (Rosewood)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target groups should be identified and reference cases could help identifying what the platform could be used for (what are the benefits)</li> <li>• Avoid:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Information is written in the EU/project language/jargon</li> <li>○ Slow response time</li> <li>○ Outdated information</li> <li>○ Registration emails going to junk mail</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
--	---

## Findings and Implications

### Added value and engagement!

The most pertinent lessons of the test-use was that people lack time and motivation for perusing various platforms in search of information, ideas or connections. The everyday work life is hectic, and there is simply no opportunities for leisurely studying information sources – even though the topics might be interesting. None of our potential test team of 8-10 people actually managed to use a platform for a month in any kind of systematic way. In fact, many of the team did not find the time for the test-use at all, and those how did, only used a platform for few days. Furthermore, not many of the test-users reported that they had reach benefits or have plans to continue the use of the platforms.

The lesson here is that the platform has to make your work easier – not create more work. We should be able to carry out multiple activities of our workday at the platform to ensure that we frequent the platform, follow and engage in the activities at the platform. In order for a platform to work, our colleagues, networks and target groups should be there. In short, we need to have a reason to use the platform, other than haphazard search of information.

It is also easier to connect with the platform actions if you are connected to the community of the platform. Now, the test-users reported feeling as outsiders to the community, which did not encourage engagement to the platform activities. The language used can make a difference. If the terminology is foreign to us, and a lot of jargon is used, we do not relate to the community of the site. The platform should feel like a friendly place, where actual people connect with you – preferably people you know already or can connect with via mutual interests and acquaintances. Furthermore, we do not have a lot time to make people feel welcome, as they will not stick around for long, if they do not find the value in staying.

### Connections for Wider Impact

For connections with European bioeconomy networks and projects, it was seen to add value to engage in EU-level platforms. In Biobord, we could identify few networks to get involved in jointly to get leads, promote our expertise and join consortiums. As already stated, getting involved in a network or platform takes time, so it might be an interesting trial to see if we can

share the work in the Biobord network – and also share the leads to engage the partners with most relevant knowhow to European level development projects. This requires trust within the network. However, this could be a good case for piloting, since no platform can function without trust between the users.

Some of the potential European bioeconomy networks and projects to join include:

- Biowatch
- European Bioeconomy Network – collaboration platform for EU projects that work in field of circular bioeconomy. To become a member of the EUBioNet, be able to interact with others and post events and news, they kindly ask us to sign the collaboration framework.

Some of the H2020 projects also present a potential source of increasing the connections to Biobord. In H2020 projects, the platforms are often not maintained after the project, so the Nordic bioeconomy hubs created in e.g. Rosewood and BLOOM, could transition their actions to Biobord after the project. This could be a great opportunity for us for building the network and achieving greater sustainability for the platform.

### Lessons for Piloting of Open Virtual Biobusiness Hub

- **Categories** should be one focus area in the feedback collection and testing – are they relevant for users, are they all active within the network, are they understandable and do they facilitate navigation
- **Time spend at the platform, response times and connections created** are also a key indicators for analysing the effectiveness of the platform and the user experience
- **Other user experience factors:**
  - Language used (terminology)
  - Intuitiveness and simplicity
  - Search features
  - Profile management options and ability to modify based on preferences
  - Human interaction
  - Visual outlook

## Annex 1. Assessment Questionnaire

### Questions for assessment

We appreciate all your inputs, insights and analysis on tested platforms as well as all your

1. Name of the tested platform
2. Test period (starting date and end of reporting date)
3. Type of use; identify the features that you tested.
4. Did you use the platform in mobile device? Did it work well in mobile device? Is it important that the platform works on mobile devices?
5. Kindly assess the user registration to the platform in terms of usability, structure and easiness. In other words, please describe whether you found the registration to be easy to use and understand.
6. Kindly assess the information services / knowledge base of the platform in terms of usability, structure and easiness. In other words, please describe whether you found the knowledge base to be easy to use and understand.
7. Kindly assess the navigation features of the platform. You can test and compare the platforms with few fact-finding tasks to see how many 'clicks' does it take you get to the information you are looking for starting from the landing page.
8. Who are the target groups of the platform? How would you evaluate the attractiveness, user-friendliness and relevance of the platform to the target groups?
9. During the test use period, how did you benefit from the platform? Did you gain any new connections, information ideas or other benefits?
10. Are you planning to continue the use of the platform?
11. Were there some elements, features or functions that we should use as an inspiration or example in the development of OVBH. Please also indicate why these elements would be a good example for us.
  - Registration
  - Data collection
  - User rights and data management features for the user
  - Search features
  - Other

12. Were there some elements, features or functions that we should avoid in the development of OVBH regarding... Please also indicate why these elements should be avoided.

- Registration
- Data collection
- User rights and data management features for the user
- Search features
- Other