



**Advancing Circular Economy and Sustainability in Rural Business Activities. Skills for the Future
(CERAS)**
2025-1-RO01-KA220-HED-000361049

**TPM 1 – Meeting record
December 15-16, Maribor, Slovenia**

December 15th

10:00 – 10:45 – WELCOME AND OPENING

* Welcome by DOBA

Mrs. Mateja Greder, Head of Project Office and International Collaboration at DOBA University of Applied Sciences, and Lect. Tajana Toš present the teaching, research, and community implications of the host university. DOBA University of Applied Sciences, Maribor, has a unique profile, as it is the biggest private university in Slovenia, with about 2200 students, offering only online, modular courses, at undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels. Assoc. Prof. Miha Lavrič is currently involved in national and international research projects examining the impact of environmental pollution on human health, as well as the impact of human activity on the environment.

* Introduction of participants

- Vasile Alecsandri University of Bacău (UBc), Romania, Coordinator

Mrs. Silvia Leonte, from the International Relations and Community Programmes Office, and Prof. Elena Nechita, vice-rector for national and international relations of the University, show that the Coordinator is a comprehensive university with 5 faculties and has about 5500 students, at all academic levels. UBc sends abroad more than 100 students and about 60-70 academic and administrative staff per year under the Erasmus+ Programme. In the academic year 2024-2025, UBc organized 3 Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) and collaborated in 13 other external BIPs.

- Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH), Komotini, Greece

Prof. Vassiliki Kazana, Assoc. Prof. Vasilis Plakandaras, and Assoc. Prof. Dimitris Raptis describe DUTH as a major public university from Greece, with about 13,000 students, spread across the whole North-Eastern part of the country, with faculties and campuses in 7 cities. The School of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences, with Departments based in Orestiada and Drama. The Department of Natural Environment & Climate Resilience has a very wide experience in international research projects related to many aspects of the Circular Economy and sustainable rural and mountain management.

- University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia (UVic – UCC), Vic, Spain

Núria Francoli Sanglas, Lect. Feliu López Gelats and Prof. Laura Domingo Penafiel show that UVic – UCC has a very specific teaching and research activity, with about 15,000 students, being a private organization with a minor implication of national budget funds. The university is involved (among other directions) in agricultural studies, rural education, and SMEs.

- “Fan S. Noli” University of Korça, Korca, Albania

Lect Dorjan Marku from the “Fan S. Noli” University of Korça describes the educational partner from Albania as a small university with about 2500 students. It is a public, accredited university with four faculties. The department of Agro-business from the Faculty of Agriculture comes in this project with knowledge in circular economy implementations al national level.

- Farmers’ Association of Fruit and Vegetable Producers of Agios Athanasios (ASOP), Drama Mr. Panagiotis Athanasiadis represents ASOP and shows that the main activity is the pomegranate farming through rational management of plantation facilities, the processing of these fruits, and the commercial utilization of pomegranate products for the benefit of the Association. ASOP had established a wide cultivation network with high-quality standards and significant importance to local economies.

- Foundation for Comprehensive Training in Meat and Agri-food Industries (KREAS), Olot, Spain Mrs. Mònica Furtet and Mrs. Mercè Molist describe KREAS as a compound organization: it offers modular continuous formation, in partnership with UVic – UCC, and it is also a vocational education center. KREAS successfully completed a project in the business and educational environment that directly impacts the economic and social developments of Catalonia, Spain

- FIX PRO, Tirana, Albania

Mr. Lazjon Petri describes FIX PRO as a leading private company in the meat industry with about 450 employees. It offers diverse products, mainly oriented towards successful sausage recipes in terms of taste and aroma. Subsequently, the pursuit of innovation became imperative for the company’s consolidation towards European standards.

* Overview of the meeting agenda and objectives

Prof. Elena Nechita shortly presents the meeting agenda and the objectives of the project.

No modifications were proposed, so the agenda was accepted.

10:45 – 11:00 Coffee break

11:00 – 13:00 - PROJECT OVERVIEW

* Presentation of MULTITRACES (previous project)

Prof. Vassiliki Kazana presents the project MULTITRACES, which was completed in 2022. This project built a network of partners from Romania, Italy, Greece, and Spain. The main goal of this project was to set up a multidisciplinary formation of university students for business development in the rural area, in the framework of the circular economy for smart valorization of industrial production outputs and natural resources. A list of relevant indicators at agri-food businesses was set up. About 25 firms in each participant country implemented Circular Economy (CE) concepts.

As the partners wish to continue their collaboration, a new proposal has been set. The main idea of the new proposal was to build upon the previous results and to add a new dimension: the sustainability in the agri-food industry.

* Review of the approved application

All the project participants previously received online access to the folder with: the approved application, and its annexes (Budget, Risks, and Indicators).

The English version of the documents is presented on the interactive display.

- * Summary of project goals, target groups, work packages, and expected impact

Prof. Elena Nechita and Assoc. Prof Cerasela Crișan present the Working Packages, each with activities. For each activity, a responsible organization and collaborators are mentioned.

- * Clarification of project roles and responsibilities

Project roles and responsibilities are discussed among partners. All the questions are approached, discussed, and agreed upon by all the participants.

13:15 Lunch break

15:00 – 18:00 - PROJECT MANAGEMENT & COORDINATION

- * Administrative and financial rules (Erasmus+ KA2 requirements)

Partners must use their national administrative and financial rules.

The Handbook on the lump sum funding model for the Erasmus+ KA2 is also uploaded to the project's online folder.

- * Reporting procedures (timesheets, travel documentation, E+ reporting)

Partners must use their national administrative and financial rules.

An example of a timesheet is uploaded to the project's online folder.

- * Quality assurance and internal monitoring

Each University has to assign 4 credits for the students attending and passing A 4.3.

Each University has to assign 3 credits for the students attending and passing the Summer School (A 5.1), to take place in the second part of June 2028.

Each University must use its internal procedure for checking this indicator.

The indicators produced in WP2 must be appropriate for the specific needs of the agri-food rural organizations targeted by the project.

The platform has educational content.

The content is:

- Public, with the project development and results
- Private, with indicators and online and instant computation of each target organization's score from the CE point-of view.

The certificate of the blended course for the teaching staff (A 4.2) is granted by UBc. Each University provides a module of 6 hours, for a total of the blended course modules = 30 hours. There are 50 hours of individual study, a total blended course of 80 hours. The modules are available online on the platform.

The course sessions are recorded, with participants' agreement. Duration: 80 hours (4 months, Sept – Dec 2027). Minimum 5 teaching staff/country, including PhD students delivering classes

On site	Online	
	Synchronous	Asynchronous
32 hours	32	16 (individual study)

	6 hours x 4 partners + 8 hours UBC English	
Home univ.	On the platform	

Proofs of activities: time sheets.

The activities with students (A 4.3) add up 100 hours and 4 credits: 20 hours online course + 40 hours projects (1/2 students, in English) + 8 hours local visits to SMEs + 20 hours workshops + 12 hours individual study.

Workshops:

- Business model development, market analysis, and funding
- Hands-on: creating business plans, pitching ideas, and developing prototypes
- Innovative solutions to real-world problems. Case studies in partners' regions
- Open innovation in project partners' countries. Integrating open innovation with CE strategies
- Simulation of an entrepreneurial discovery process.

Duration: 100 hours (=4 ECTS x 25 ore/1 ECTS); 25 students or more; to divide the indicators between student groups; 7 months, Oct 2027 – Apr 2028.

Synchronous				Asynchronous	
5 HEIs x 4 hours/module (English, all the students)	Practical activities (rural business) - project lists defined	Workshops According to the (national, flexible) Pick a topic, or cover one or more topics, and do the workshop up to each partner 5 - UBC Evidence: participants' list, photo Decide on the title of the workshop (around the proposed topics)	Counselling (home univ.) - national, online, provided by the non-HEI partners/ HEI partners	Group project development National groups The description on page 76 How many pages? =<30 pages, in English	Individual study
(1)	(2)	(2 - possibly)	(4)	(3)	All the time
20	8	4	2	25	41
On the platform	On field	On the platform			

* Communication channels and tools (email, shared drive, project platform)

The participants agree to communicate by email, shared drive, and project platform.

18:30 – Informal meeting of participants

December 16th

9:00 – 10:45 – DISSEMINATION & VISIBILITY

* Communication and dissemination strategy

Contact persons:

UBc: Assoc. Prof. Cerasela Crișan

DUTH: Prof. Vassiliki Kazana

DOBA: Lect. Tajana Toš

UVic – UCC: Lect. Feliu López Gelats

“Fan S. Noli” University of Korça: Lect Dorjan Marku

KREAS: Mrs. Mònica Furtet

ASOP: TBA by Greece

Almera: Mrs. Alina Balmus

ITC: Mr. Tomaž Zadravec

FixPro: Mr. Lazjon Petri

Steering Committee (SC):

UBc: Assoc. Prof. Cerasela Crișan, Assoc. Prof. Alissa Aruș

DUTH: Prof. Vassiliki Kazana

DOBA: Lect. Tajana Toš

UVic – UCC: Lect. Feliu López Gelats

“Fan S. Noli” University of Korça: Lect Dorjan Marku

KREAS: Mrs. Mònica Furtet

ASOP: TBA by Greece

Almera: Mrs. Alina Balmus

ITC: Mr. Tomaž Zadravec

FixPro: Mr. Lazjon Petri

* Project branding: logo, templates, social media, website

All the participants agreed on the project logo and site structure.

* Distribution of dissemination tasks among partners

Each participant will approve the documents of the project before uploading them to the project website.

All the participants will disseminate the project activities and results using their usual channels: website, social media accounts, flyers, and announcements during meetings.

10:45 – 11:45 - RISK MANAGEMENT & ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

* Identification of potential risks

All the participants agree that the identified risks described in Annex 4 are correctly assessed and addressed.

* Mitigation strategies

All the participants agree that the identified risks described in Annex 4 are correctly assessed and addressed.

* Data protection (GDPR compliance)
The EU data protection rules are mandatory.

* Ethical guidelines for project implementation
The project is promoting inclusion, diversity, non-discrimination, and respect for EU values.

11:45 – 12:00 Coffee break

12:00 – 12:45 - PLANNING THE NEXT STEPS

* Immediate tasks after TPM1
The TPM minute is uploaded to the project's online folder after participants' approval.
The first SC meeting will take place on Jan 28 2026, 10.00 CET.

* Deadlines and responsibilities
The file "Indicators" collects all the proposed indicators, proofs, and moments of reporting.

* Planning upcoming activities and meetings (including TPM2)
TPM 2 – to be settled.

13:00 Lunch break

15:00 – 16:00 - FEEDBACK & CLOSING

* Open discussion and Q&A
Final questions were addressed, and the solutions were agreed upon by all the participants.

* Evaluation of the meeting
The statistics of the responses to the questionnaire - 88% good and very good.
4 Questions (1 to 5 scale):

- **How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the first Transnational Project Meeting (TPM)?**
- **To what extent were the meeting's objectives clearly defined and achieved?**
- **How satisfied were you with the communication and collaboration between project partners during the meeting?**
- **Was the agenda well-structured and did it allow for enough time for discussions and decision-making?**

Best evaluation: 5-5-5-5.

Worst evaluation: 2-2-3-2.

Average evaluation: 4.2-4.3-4.6-4.4

Suggestions:

- **For all the partners: to better prepare the meeting.**
- **A PPT presentation for better understanding the information.**
- **To include Teams meetings in the list of communication channels.**

- **To prepare a list of decision-making issues.**

* Official closing of the TPM

The participants consider the TPM 1 beneficial.

The participants express gratitude for the TPM 1 organization.

Pictures taken and travel documents settled.