



Authors: **Katarzyna Rull Quesada**
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Networking event in Warsaw report



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Technical References

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¹ PU = Public

PP = Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)

RE = Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)

CO = Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)

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Summary

The UNLOCK project aims at unlocking a feather bioeconomy for keratin-based agricultural products. The overall objective is to contribute to replacing fossil-based raw materials with biobased, renewable material by valorizing current unused and underused by-products of poultry processing.

This deliverable includes a summary from the organization of the UNLOCK networking event in Warsaw and held on 15th October 2024 within the Mazovia Development Forum – the biggest innovation and EU-related forum organized annually by the Mazovian Unit of the EU Programmes Implementation under the honorary patronages of the Mazovia Regional Government.

The main objective of the networking event led by UNIMOS was to showcase the UNLOCK project innovative solutions, cross-fertilize with relevant projects and initiatives, explore technological, project and business cooperation opportunities, generate synergies and explore available and forthcoming funding sources

Special focus has been put on supporting dissemination and exploitation of the UNLOCK solutions through strategic networking with quadruple helix stakeholders representing private, public, academic and non-governmental sectors. Networking activities were also oriented on gathering first-hand insights into UNLOCK developments and better understanding of the specific target customer segments.

The networking event is closely connected with clustering activities implemented in Poland, Spain, France and at Pan-European level and contributed to empower cooperation linkages to ensure of continuation of project activities after the end of project financing.



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1.Introduction

The European poultry sector produces 3.6 million tons of waste feathers annually, mainly valorised in low added value products. In line with EU Bioeconomy strategy, the UNLOCK project aims to transform this waste into valuable raw material to create a new sustainable value chain.

UNLOCK is led by CIDETEC and driven by a well-balanced consortium of 15 partners that covers the whole value chain, from feedstock and supply chain analysis to processes, end-product fabrication and sustainability assessments.

The main objective of the UNLOCK project is the design and demonstration of an economically and environmentally sustainable supply-chain for a feather-based bioeconomy which will generate innovative bio-based functional materials for agricultural applications.

The initiative is working on the creation of bio-based products for agriculture, such as:

- Seed trays
- Mulch films
- Hydroponic foams
- Nonwoven geotextiles

And to do it, is using three different technologies for feather treatment:

- Mechanical grinding
- Steam explosion
- Microbial fermentation.

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2. Objectives

The UNLOCK networking event was part of the communication, dissemination and exploitation activities organized within the UNLOCK project.

The main objective of the event was:

- to showcase the UNLOCK project innovative solutions,
- to cross-fertilize with projects and initiatives related to circularity, sustainable innovations and bioeconomy developments,
- to interact directly with stakeholders to explore technological, project and business cooperation opportunities.

The event was also oriented on identification of available and forthcoming funding possibilities to ensure further market take up and commercialization of new keratin-based end-products. In accordance with the UNLOCK stakeholder engagement strategy, the approach for the organization of networking event was based on:

- Quadruple Helix (4H) Innovation Framework - to ensure a collaboration space for academia (R&D, universities), government (local, regional, European policy makers), industry (SME, start-ups, large companies) and users/civil society where they can interact, learn from each other and create or discover new knowledge, technology, products and services along the bio-based innovation process.
- Cross-cluster cross-fertilisation - to ensure mobilization of knowledge, generation of linkages and synergies creation between different projects, initiatives and networks that can support promotion of circular innovations and releasing the potential of feathers to create feather-based bioeconomy.

Having in mind those interconnected axes, the selection of venue was motivated by the networking, collaboration and funding opportunities that can bring added-value to UNLOCK's project, partners and stakeholders and contribute to boosting feather-based industries clustering activities and further uptake of UNLOCK's developments.

3. Implementation

UNLOCK Networking event organized by UNIMOS and was held within the Mazovia Development Forum – the biggest innovation forum in Warsaw related to the EU funds, innovations and cross-sectoral cooperation held annually in the city of Warsaw (Poland).

The event is characterized by being highly dynamic and co-creative, open to public and engaging partners and participants representing a wide range of sectors. It is orchestrated by the Mazovian Unit of the EU Programmes Implementation (MJWPU) responsible for distribution of EU funding in Mazovia region that via open call, invites partners to co-design and run dedicated activities within the EU-funded projects they are implementing.

The UNLOCK project networking event was held in Warsaw, Poland on 15th October 2024 within the Mazovia Development Forum.

Figure 1. Pictures from the event



Source: own pictures





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The networking zone was open from 09 :00 to 16:00 and the agenda included seven interconnected activities:

1. Demonstration of biodegradable agricultural products from UNLOCK, including presentation of prototypes and their development, practical application and benefits to public, private, academic, cluster, non-governmental and civil society representatives.
2. Collecting first-hand insights on UNLOCK innovative solutions from:
 - farmers and farmers associations,
 - technological centres, clusters,
 - small and medium enterprises
 - public institutions,
 - accelerators and incubators, among others,
 - engaged in agriculture and connected activities.
3. Facilitation of individual and group meetings at different levels, including business-to-business, cluster-to-cluster, business-to-science, cluster-to-business.
4. Cross-fertilisation with synergic EU-projects and initiatives, such as:
 - BIO-BOOST linked to boosting bioeconomy innovations (GA101096150)
 - SCALE-UP related to community-driven bioeconomy development (GA101060264)
 - SUAVE related to urban agriculture development (GA101074762)
5. Attendance to debates related to funding opportunities
6. Visitation of partners 'zones to identify and engaged actors and new initiatives that may appear and bring value to UNLOCK project and support partners in project execution.
7. Distribution of the UNLOCK leaflets.

The attendees of the UNLOCK networking event included representatives of:

1. Network organizations, clusters and digital innovation hubs;
2. Academia, research and innovation and educational organizations;
3. Industry stakeholders from traditional and high-tech industries;
4. Policy makers at regional and national level;
5. Financing and regional development agencies and intermediaries;
6. Professional formation, educational and cultural organizations;
7. Civil society and consumers.





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The networking zone was open to general public and received more than 100 visitors. The UNLOCK innovations were directly presented and showcased to +21 representatives of the above-mentioned sectors.

The meetings and discussions were held on multiple levels and were oriented on reaching end-users of new keratin-based products, facilitating access to the latest knowledge, expertise and technology, connecting with policy makers in collaborating within new feather-based regional clusters and identifying funding opportunities.

The networking event was also an opportunity to interconnect with other exhibitors gathered at the Mazovia Development Forum representing different industries (energy, high-tech, logistics), sectors (public, private, academia, business support) and projects, as well as formation profession and education entities to engage youth, entrepreneurs and potential to foster business and growth opportunities in bio-based sector and keratin-based agricultural products.

4. Conclusions and follow-up

The objective of this report was to provide an overview of the UNLOCK networking event that was organized in Warsaw on 15th October 2024.

The event was focused on interacting directly with quadruple helix stakeholders, sensing and seizing cooperation, identifying funding and synergies opportunities in the field of circular agriculture to transform them into business, cooperation and innovation projects. It was also intended to gather better understanding of the specific target customer segments, identify early adopters, and gather first-hand insights on UNLOCK developments. Additionally, the networking event was oriented on identifying potential public and private funding sources to allow further UNLOCK developments in terms of research activities, commercialization paths and new collaborative projects.

Specific actions agreed with attendees as next step included, among others:

- Facilitate online interactions and networking between UNLOCK partners and SUAVE awarded SMEs working in the field of urban agriculture before February 2025;
- Promote UNLOCK developments in the educational and innovation support programmes conducted by the farmers within the SCALE-UP project;





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- Explore cooperation opportunities with Drone Space Valley in terms of potential applications of the UNLOCK innovations in agriculture and forest sectors;
- Organization of the follow-up meeting dedicated to the UNLOCK developments with representatives of Mazovian startup and cluster communities.
- Identification of potential synergies with the initiatives and projects led or supported by the regional and local governments.

The networking event is part of clustering and networking activities foreseen for the upcoming months, with special focus on the UNLOCK project participation in the Poultry Farming and Egg Production Industry Trade Fair (Poultry Tech) organized in November 2024.

