

GRESS - GREEn Startup Support

Improve policies for SMEs' competitiveness by strengthening capacities to trigger and support formation of sustainable and competitive of green start-ups and spin-offs

Action Plan for the Metropolitan City of Bologna

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Part I: General information

Project: GRESS

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Other partner organizations involved	Not applicable
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Introduction

1.1) GRESS – GREEn Start-up Support

Interreg **GREEn Startup Support (GRESS)** project started on 1st August 2019 and will end in 31st July 2023.

It is co-funded by European Union through the European Regional Development Fund and it involves 5 partners, Kristiansand municipality (Norway), Municipality of Piraeus (Greece), Westpomeranian Region (Poland), the Metropolitan City of Bologna (Italy) and Foundation Cleantech (Bulgaria).

The goal of the GRESS project is to analyse the green economy framework in Europe, pointing out critical aspects and opportunities for SMEs and start-ups in the five territories covered by the initiative.

The overall objective of the Interreg Europe GRESS project is to improve policies for SME's competitiveness by strengthening capacities to trigger and support the formation of sustainable and competitive start-ups and spin-offs within the green economy.

Gathering partners with a range of development levels in terms of GDP, from Poland, Greece, Bulgaria, Italy and Norway, interregional collaboration was essential for mutual learning, effective coaching and bringing innovations to the market. Partners have experienced different experiences, approaches, and performance regarding green start-up support.

Through workshops and online tools, GRESS promoted policy learning between partners and regional stakeholders in a holistic manner; the horizontal actions created value and delivered innovation across multiple sectors. Specifically, GRESS generated input to the improvement of policy instruments and enabled scaling up of green innovation through the potential for replication of

results in other European regions.

The project sought to improve five policy instruments through governance measures, new projects, and structural change. Around 26 MEUR in Structural Funds and 7 MEUR of other funds were estimated to be influenced by the project.

Partners within the GRESS consortium improved awareness of opportunities for SMEs in the green and blue economy with the view to:

- increase the number of participants at and improve the quality of training programmes for green start-ups
- attract more SMEs to participate and succeed in public procurement of green products and services
- enhance access of SMEs to risk capital outside the local region
- make cities and regions more attractive for young entrepreneurs in green sectors
- introduce improved incentive schemes for green start-ups, enhance the performance of ecosystems
- grow the number of competitive start-ups and spin-offs within the green economy and improve their chance of survival.

The current economic crisis has further exposed the need for a reconsideration of traditional economic models and approaches. With the economic crisis continuing to affect growth, and environmental challenges mounting, governments around the world are increasingly seeking more innovative ways to promote economic activity and tackle global environmental challenges such as climate change and the scarcity of natural resources.

Green growth policies need to encourage innovation, as this can enhance efficiency in the use of natural capital and foster new economic opportunities from the emergence of new green activities. Green innovation not only has the potential to provide efficient and effective solutions to environmental challenges, but can also contribute to making companies more competitive, and hence work towards a stronger economy. Firstly, eco-innovations can lead to increased productivity and energy efficiency, thus improving the cost competitiveness of businesses.

Secondly, the market for environmental goods and services is growing fast; a comparative advantage in such markets can therefore be an important source of economic growth. Thirdly, eco-innovation can contribute to the emergence of new business opportunities. Against this background, partners in the GRESS Project have been working since 2019.

1.2) The importance of green start-up support

Europe has ambitious goals for the future - under the Paris Agreement, the EU committed itself to become carbon-neutral by 2050 and a 55% reduction of emissions by 2030. The 25 million SMEs in Europe account for 99.8% of all firms and are both a significant source of job creation and prosperity and an engine for the green transition especially now, during the recovery period post-COVID.

SMEs and start-ups are deeply woven into Europe's economic and social fabric; they provide two out of three jobs, bring training opportunities across regions and sectors, including low-skilled workers, and support society's welfare, including in remote and rural areas. The daily challenges of European SMEs to comply with rules and access information, markets, and finance are thus challenges for the whole of Europe.

Green entrepreneurship is a business approach that considers not just profit, but also social and environmental sustainability. Green entrepreneurship is also a means to improve the management of natural resources while simultaneously ensuring that they are used in an efficient and sustainable way. Therefore, a business established according to principles of efficiency and sustainability becomes an interesting opportunity for the whole ecosystem, spurring imitation and innovation, and attracting capital and interest from relevant stakeholders.

Entrepreneurship developed according to the principles of sustainable consumption and production can help manage better scarce natural resources (water, land, energy, etc.) ensuring economic growth that is both efficient and sustainable. From this perspective, increasing the numbers of start-ups and spin-offs within the green economy is an opportunity for the whole society, promoting innovation, inspiring others to follow the same path, and ultimately attracting interest and capital to the economic sectors that improve the environment and the economy at large. Developing an ecosystem where green start-ups and spin-offs can flourish will require also requires the creation of national, regional, and European infrastructures that can support them.

The European Union acknowledges the essential role of SMEs and start-ups during the recovery and transition phase. As part of the industrial package, its SME strategy is viewed instrumentally for implementing, among others, the Green Deal. The European Green Deal seeks to achieve climate neutrality across Europe by 2050 by encouraging the adoption of environmental practices that promote low carbon emissions, a circular economy, and economic growth that does not jeopardise our ecosystem and natural resources.

The European Green Deal recognises the key role SMEs can play in this transition towards a more sustainable future, allowing SMEs to make the most of their flexibility and position themselves in the market as leaders in eco-innovation. For SMEs to be able to continue to grow and offer a wide range of innovative and sustainable products and services, Member States need to ensure that

appropriate green industrial policies are put in place to further stimulate their onboarding in this sustainable journey, such as capacity building and support for transition, reducing regulatory burden, enhanced market entrance, and improved access to finance.

1.3) State of play for green start-up support in Europe/GRESS region – base line report

There is no doubt that green business is critically important for productive, healthy and sustainable societies. As green businesses use limited amounts of (or no) fossil fuels and have low (or no) emissions, they can play a key role in combating climate change while contributing to growth and the creation of decent and green jobs. But apart from macro-level benefits, going green also makes business sense for the entrepreneur. The benefits of greener business include access to untapped markets, improved resource efficiency and cost savings, and improved productivity of staff because of a cleaner and safer working environment.

Green start-ups also play a key role in promoting structural change. While established companies generally have their strengths in improvement innovations, it is start-ups that introduce fundamental environmental innovations to the market as pioneers. In the transformation bringing us towards a climate-neutral economy, the innovative start-up teams are the main drivers of change; green start-ups predominantly rely on digital business models, making particular use of the opportunities offered by digitalisation to implement new sustainable solutions.

However, green start-ups often must struggle with particularly high barriers in many markets and are often not rewarded for their outstanding sustainability performance. In some cases, they are even disadvantaged regarding start-up promotion programmes. How this imbalance can be remedied and how the economic and sustainable potential of green start-ups can be better utilised need to be addressed.

In view of the economic and ecological importance of green start-ups, it is essential to support this type of start-up from the outset, considering special characteristics and achievements and specific challenges visible in politics and start-up promotion programmes as well as to investors and established companies.

To identify and analyse the regional and territorial situation of the green economy (status of green growth) in the five partner territories of the GRESS project, a methodological framework was created which provides a top-down approach for the analysis of the regional business climate for green SMEs, including existing policies, support schemes and instruments, and the possible existence of strong regional markets and knowledge clusters.

This analysis served as a starting point for the exchange of experience and mutual learning process. A common template and methodology were used to ensure a harmonised approach to an activity covering territories that are very different in terms of their geography, economic and political contexts and the opportunities and capacities to realise the green economy.

The baseline document gathered the analysis of the green economy regional framework in the five GRESS project partner regions, to enable a deeper and more consolidated understanding of the existing factors and policies playing a role in fostering the sector in the five project regions.

The analysis assumed that territories are living systems continuously in evolution where diverse interests, economic drivers, social factors, and policy instruments may influence further development and valuable services for green start-ups and SMEs to develop. For this reason, a deep understanding of the existing situations in the regions was necessary as starting point for the GRESS project to pursue the objective to improve policies and reinforce SMEs' competitiveness in the green economy. In particular, the analysis focused on the diverse peculiarities of each project region in terms of existing policies at national or regional level, type of stakeholders involved, support services and innovation instruments, main start-ups economic sectors and potential for the future.

The report supported the fact that all countries consider the green economy as a driving sector for a more resilient and sustainable territorial development, and they are all positively influenced by the European policy framework stimulating and supporting the green economy. Nevertheless, fundamental differences may be found in the main green economy sectors to be fostered, the actual status of development of specific policies and instruments for the sector, as well as in the integration of European policies with more national and local policies providing strategic orientation and operative support instruments.

For instance, in some cases it was found that the national policies for innovation and green development are highly integrated with specific regional and local policies, as in the case of Kristiansand and the Metropolitan City of Bologna. However, whereas in the first case more attention should be paid on indirect emissions and supporting scaling-up processes, in the latter case the financing instruments and support services accessed by green start-ups and enterprises at regional level are currently not specifically designed for them and a more specific focus at this regard is needed in the future.

On the contrary, Sofia municipality is trying to boost green start-ups development through acceleration programmes, even if at Bulgarian national level national policies still play a more central role and the dependency on European funds is still significant. It was also noted that the demand for more green products and services had not previously been perceived as sufficiently high and that more incentives will be provided by public institutions through the adoption of Green Public Procurement.

A general positive asset in some countries is the presence of a wide variety of actors – businesses, university and research institutions, public institutions, public service providers – having a proactive role in fostering the sector and working in close cooperation to provide green businesses with more complementary tools. The analysis also showed that more policies for the increase in green jobs were needed in most of the project territories.

The positive case studies and best practices collected played a central role in the mutual learning exchange phase of the project, through which the partners had the chance to exchange experiences with each other and to integrate the lessons learnt in the existing policy instruments addressed at local level. Indeed, interregional learning was a key success in this instance, enabled by the Interreg Europe programme, which promotes exchange of experiences among diverse European regions for them to learn from each other and build innovative policies in their territories.

Methodology

The GRESS objectives are pursued through 3 main activities.

The **first activity** is centred on regional business climate for green SMEs.

The activity implies, firstly, selecting a stakeholder group who will give feedbacks on project surveys, ideas and outcomes. Then it requires an analysis of the state of art in green business support and its gaps and challenges.

Methodological framework started with a top-down approach for the analysis of the regional business climate for green SMEs, including existing policies, support schemes and instruments, and the possible existence of strong regional markets and knowledge clusters.

The methodology for the analysis was published in the report **Methodological framework to identify and analyse the regional and territorial situation of the green economy GREen Startup Support** (29 November 2019). The subsequent analysis of the overall context, undertaken by the partner organisations and published in the report **Green economy policies. Where we are: Baseline in the GRESS project partner regions**, served as a starting point for the exchange of experiences and the mutual learning process.

Following this first phase, the Italian partner in the GRESS project then adopted a bottom-up approach and collected experiences, insights and good practices from the regional territory through a **survey of businesses**, two stakeholder interviews and three Regional Stakeholder Workshops. This essentially comprised an **entrepreneurial discovery process (EDP)**, a stakeholder engagement technique which is commonly used in the planning and development of regional smart specialisation strategies (S3) to gain relevant inputs from the territory. Finally, seven different **policy options** were

examined and subjected to a SWOT analysis to better understand their suitability for application in the territory. The results of these activities were shared with project partners.

The **second activity** pivots on **good practices** shared between project partners.

In GRESS partnership there is high potential for learning from others' experiences, as partners enlightened differing levels of relevant support within the regions.

The methodology used for this learning activity involves searching for the best practices in every region and share them with other partners during **study-visits** in each partner's territory. The practices focus on approaches/methods to attract/mobilise green start-ups, capacity- and competence-building measures for green start-ups, public support systems and services to green start-ups, measures for sustaining green start-ups beyond the first phase of business operation, easy access to risk capital outside local region but also on building beneficial and stable cooperation between actors within the regional entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The exchange is completed through the **import workshops**, an in-depth session where the representatives of a good practice identified as interesting for a region is explained in detail to the region that selected it.

The **third activity** improves the capacity to trigger targeted interventions responding to the challenges.

To do so, workshops with **Regional Stakeholders Groups (RSG)** on how to best support green business start-ups & spin-offs are regularly organised.

Through stakeholder engagement partners can assess the results of their researches and evaluate directly the responsiveness of the proposed actions, shaping them and adapting them to region's special needs, but also have a relevant advice on policy improvements and their implementation.

The engagement of RSGs contributes to raise awareness, influence attitudes and behaviour among policymakers and stakeholders in the partner regions, and also communicate project results to target groups.

Interregional exchange of experiences – lessons learned

For most of the duration of the GRESS project, society at large has been highly affected by COVID-19 pandemic. This was an unforeseeable event, which impacted our project activities greatly. Especially in early 2020, the uncertainty around the pandemic meant that it was neither possible to execute activities nor to plan. It quickly became apparent that the partnership could not conduct its activities as planned and needed to find new working methods to achieve the project's objectives. Consequently, all project activities developed into online events with a different approach but similar focus.

Working remotely had certain advantages; now, we could meet more frequently, engage more stakeholders, and organise spontaneous meetings with a particular focus. In addition, bilateral

meetings between partners became more natural and thus relations between partners became closer on a personal level.

However, an entirely digital work mode proved not recommendable for the exchange of experiences and the learning process. To undertake such exchanges successfully, face to face contact is required with relationships built on both the formal and informal meetings. Informal meetings build trust and confidence, which is the starting point for such exchanges. Experience shows that learning happens not only via structured channels, but also informally via networking. Virtual tools can help, but physical meetings remain important catalysts of cooperation. Outcomes vary from concrete solutions to intangible results such as changes in mindset. Both are important. Therefore, it is essential to note that the GRESS partnership recognises that the process has not been optimal as it should have under different circumstances and as planned initially.

Nevertheless, under the imposed and unforeseen conditions, we are pleased with our collaborative work to improve the five policy instruments.

Learning is a cognitive and social dynamic through which diverse types of actors involved in policy processes acquire, translate, and disseminate new information and knowledge about public problems and solutions. In turn, they maintain, strengthen, or revise their policy beliefs and preferences. A fundamental challenge in policy learning and experimentation is determining the underlying social and institutional criteria necessary to make policy learning successful.

A second related challenge is whether and how policy learning and experimentalist approaches are applicable across all types of regions. Success might depend on the ability of local leaders to form collaborative arrangements allowing public sector institutions to work with the private sector in devising experimental approaches. The ability to do so often depends on the willingness of policymakers to enhance their capacity to lead and work with change. Learning matters for innovation policy because policymakers face a complex and continuously evolving innovation system with insufficient evidence of how to influence it most effectively.

The GRESS partnership applied a five-step policy-learning process:

- 1) a review of the status on green growth in each region (further explained in section 4.2)
- 2) scan and exchange of experience and identification of good practice for mutual learning
- 3) assessment and ranking of relevant practices through peer assessments in RSGs
- 4) idea generation on policy intervention with interregional knowledge transfer
- 5) development and monitoring of regional action plans.

While the theoretical importance of policy learning is widely acknowledged, its implementation is challenging in practice. The challenges that need to be overcome to increase policy experimentation are multi-faceted, ranging from questions of commitment to learning by monitoring on the part of ruling politicians and their public sector managers to an organisation's technical capacity for learning by monitoring.

Guided by the five steps, each partner undertook a predefined and structured approach for collecting, analysing, and shortlisting suitable practices from the partner regions to respond to the identified challenges, learn, and improve the addressed policy instrument.

Through these interlinked and targeted activities, the GRESS Project promoted the exchange of experience, identification, benchmarking and transfer of good practice and knowledge between partners and regional stakeholders in a holistic manner and provided legitimacy by validating and confirming the benefits of importing good practice from other partner regions towards the policy responsible institutions.

GRESS partners designed learning activities aimed at improving policy instruments. Learning therefore took place at different levels; individual (through workshops), organisational (through internal seminars and dissemination events for staff in partner's institutions), stakeholder (through RSGs) and external learning (through the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform and targeted EU networks).

Survey analysis

As an integral part of the GRESS policy learning process, the partnership executed a survey in the project regions, targeting start-ups and SMEs to identify the drivers and challenges for green entrepreneurship.

The analysis focused on the positive effects of the green economy for businesses, not only in environmental terms but also in competitiveness. It aimed to identify the stimuli, the barriers and the public policies that could speed up green economy development and start-up processes. In particular, the survey focused on green investments, access to public and private funding, green jobs, and enabling external factors.

The survey results implemented in the partner regions show that their green economy business ecosystems present several similarities, although various peculiarities also occur. The need to establish a more integrated, supportive, and holistic ecosystem for green business development is particularly emphasised in the cases of Piraeus (Greece) and Bulgaria. More comprehensive support in internationalisation processes, networks, and translation of strategies into policies is required in the West Pomeranian and the Agder regions. In contrast, more excellent public sector leadership in fostering the green economy is needed in the Emilia-Romagna region (Italy).

The role of private and public funding also differs quite significantly among the regions. In West Pomeranian and Bulgaria, most respondents mainly went through a complete self-financing process for their business. In the Agder region and Emilia-Romagna on the other hand, public and private

financing were significant in several cases. In addition, several respondents had access to external support services, incubators, acceleration programs or counselling.

Despite regional differences, numerous common challenges, obstacles, and drivers have been identified by respondents throughout all partner regions. For example, most respondents underlined that private and public funding was too small to support the development of new green start-ups and SMEs, which usually have to self-finance their business ideas. Access to public funding at the regional, national, and European levels was considered complicated and time-consuming. It requires high investment costs, human resources, time, and energy.

Complex application and administration procedures discourage applicants in all regions from submitting project ideas, in addition to high competition and selection criteria. The survey results clearly showed the need of more support services in the application phase, process simplification and institutions that can provide support to green businesses.

Respondents from all regions indicated the expectation for green jobs to increase in the future. However, recruitment of highly skilled employees and those qualified in green skills was considered an enormous challenge for green businesses.

Another common barrier encountered by green enterprises was the ability to afford the green investment and adaptation costs to be able to access the market. This is a crucial point as start-ups have identified insufficient market demand as hampering green investments.

In conclusion, the public sector must play an essential role in this sense and take the lead by improving green public procurement procedures, applying legislative, regulatory changes, providing more specific incentives for green businesses, and recruiting highly skilled green workers.

The Policy Actions presented in this report were developed on the basis of findings from the business survey, inputs from the stakeholders in the workshops and the experiences of the GRESS partner territories.

Structure

The present Action Plan is structured as follows:

Part I: General information, presenting the key elements of the GRESS project.

Part II: Policy context, explaining the policy instrument with which the Metropolitan City of Bologna interact for GRESS project and this Action Plan.

Part III: Actions envisaged, highlighting (respectively for each action) the relevant elements of GRESS which provided the inputs for the development of the Action, the scheme, the structure and the motivation for the action, the stakeholders involved, timeframes and monitoring of the action implementation.

Part II: Policy context

The action plan aims to impact the **Metropolitan Strategic Plan 2.0 (PSM)**, that is the main MCBO (Metropolitan City of Bologna) steering tool, right after the Statute. The scope of the PSM is to identify and co-ordinate the development strategies for the entire Metropolitan territory. MCBO territory is 3.702 km² wide, where there are 55 local municipalities, most organized in 7 Unions of municipalities for a better management of common tasks.

The PSM meets the first aim of the Metropolitan city, that is to identify and coordinate development strategies of the territory, beside achieving a holistic management of local services and infrastructures, and building and maintaining relationships with other regional, national and European similar entities.

The Plan is written together with the local municipalities and their Unions and the process findings are discussed with the Emilia-Romagna region and social and economic representatives of the territory. A PSM describe the development principles for the following 3 years and it should be revised annually.

The current PSM (and the first for Bologna as a Metropolitan City since its creation in 2015) is built around 3 pillars: sustainability, inclusion and attractiveness. In the PSM vision, development must be sustainable in a triple way: environmentally, economically and socially.

Around these pillars, the plan identified **7 strategic lines of intervention**. To the extent of GRESS project, we focused on the first and the fourth objectives of the PSM.

Objective I.2 addresses the need to build the identity of the Metropolitan City as attractive for young people. It aims at transforming the region as a fertile place where new talents grow, enhancing new job opportunities and therefore innovative companies.

Objective IV.2 objective intends to make the Metropolitan city of Bologna a “start-up valley”, addressing the need to foster the circular economy and green jobs in the metropolitan territory by creating a favourable environment for the creation of new 'industrial ecosystems' and directing the promotion of new enterprises towards the strategic themes of the circular economy. It also aims at promoting contamination between traditional industry and creative industry, to create innovation and alternative visions for the future.

Bologna is the economic heart of Emilia-Romagna, the 2nd Region in Italy for n. of innovative and creative start-ups and companies for inhabitants per entrepreneurs. In 2019 Emilia-Romagna counted 6.210 green businesses and the territory of the Metropolitan City of Bologna had the 19% of them, the highest rate (Osservatorio Green-ER).

With the past economic crisis and the Covid pandemic, the need has emerged to focus more attention on green enterprises as a development route to jumpstart the economy.

Therefore, in a rapidly evolving context characterised by the twin green and digital transitions and the launching of the Italian Recovery Plan, the Action Plan seeks to develop the awareness, knowledge and capacity of new small companies to be able to intercept the opportunities arising from the Green Deal, the new European Funding programmes for the 2021-2027 period and the National Recovery Plan. The Action Plan addresses improvement of policy instrument implementation to increase the capacities of new green businesses as well as to raise market awareness of green businesses among both citizens and public administrations.

To understand the Action Plan impact, it's necessary to have a short overview of how the PSM strategic objectives are pursued by the Metropolitan City of Bologna.

The Metropolitan city of Bologna is a local public entity and therefore it has a statute that constitutes the fundamental act governing its organisation and operation. MCBO statute at § 12¹ foresees that the PSM is the strategic overall policy instrument of the Metropolitan city of Bologna and that the actions implementing it are periodically monitored and evaluated.

From an operational point of view, other documents are needed to translate the PSM strategic objectives into actions and programme. This function is fulfilled by the DUP (*Documento Unico di Programmazione*, i.e. Joint Planning Document) that points out the strategical direction of the MCBO in the medium term and that is written considering the main demographic, economic and social trends, the policies of the Metropolitan Strategic Plan and the general objectives of the mandate, metropolitan strategic planning, territory planning, economic development, social development, administrative simplification and innovation, the review of the public finance framework, the framework of participated companies, the framework of investments and capital facilities, as well as policies for staff needs.

The DUP is sided by the Performance Plan (*Piano della Performance*) that indicates year-by-year the operational goals that should be achieved by the Metropolitan city in order to monitor the successful implementation of the DUP and – more in general – the PSM. More technically, the DUP defines the contribution the public entity intends to provide through its action. It is written explaining the link between the needs of the local community, the mission of the Metropolitan city, its political priorities, strategies, objectives and indicators.

This Action Plan wishes to improve two activities to better reach the strategic goals set in the PSM and implemented through the DUP and the Performance Plan, thanks to the learnings acquired through the GRESS learning process.

In particular, through the first action, MCBO would empower an existing business competition, taking inspiration from project partners' good practices. Through the second action MCBO would improve the awareness raising initiatives set in the DUP and aimed to boost green entrepreneurship.

¹ More info and the text can be found at <https://www.cittametropolitana.bo.it/portale/Documenti/Statuto>

Part III: Actions identified

List of Actions

- 1) Support for financing opportunities applications for sustainable business projects
- 2) Communication strategy to raise awareness on Green Economy, Green start-ups and their needs



Action 1) Support for financing opportunities applications for sustainable business projects

1.1) Background

The existing competition for the Premio Barresi (Barresi Prize)² is a precious instrument for the MCBO. Since 2016 it has been helping young entrepreneurs to stand out and to develop their ideas through financing support and business advice. More specifically, the Premio Barresi supports young entrepreneurs in the metropolitan area of Bologna by offering them contributions in cash (cash prize) and in kind (i.e. added-value services for the development of their business project, networking facilities).

Since 2020, the competition addresses businesses focusing on economic, social and environmental sustainability, in the framework of MCBO actions to pursue the 2030 Agenda goals.

The office in charge of the Premio Barresi is **Progetti d'impresa**³, that is the business start-up guidance centre of the Metropolitan city of Bologna. Its aim is to support the creation and development of new entrepreneurial activities. Progetti d'impresa is part of the Economic Growth department and, together with SUAPs (*Sportello Unico per le Attività Produttive*, i.e. One-Stop Shops for Productive Activities) coordination Service, chase the goal of innovating and simplifying business start-up and changeover paths.

The Barresi competition takes place in several **stages**:

- MCBO Economic Growth Department discuss the specific features of the competition and the budget;
- the proposal receives the approval by the political bodies;
- the call is prepared and published on different media (websites, social media, press);

² More info at <https://www.cittametropolitana.bo.it/premiobarresi>

³ More info at <https://www.cittametropolitana.bo.it/progimpresa>

- the call opens to applications for about two months;
- the selection process is carried out;
- companies are awarded in a public ceremony;
- benefits are granted.

Benefits consist in a cash prize alongside with a specific business support, participation in training activities and study-visits, access to further opportunities offered by partners and promotion, networking and communication activities through the network of MCBO and its partners.

1.2) Goal

The goal of the Action is to **improve the support offered to the sustainable start-uppers** in order to increase the number of participants to the competition and, through it, increase the number of contacts between the business support services of the MCBO and the start-ups.

Among the findings of the GRESS survey disseminated to the stakeholders the difficulty to apply for supporting instruments emerged.

As described above, the PSM aims at encouraging youth entrepreneurship through innovative ways. The main actor involved in the implementation of this goal is the Economic Growth Department; in particular SUAP Coordination Service and Progetti d'impresa are the forefront of business relations and support.

Thanks to the GRESS learning process, MCBO had the opportunity to analyse some good practices and get new insights on how to better support start-ups applying in the business competition Premio Barresi, and more in general approaching green transition.

The learning has been translated into a change of the competition layout with the creation of a specific pre-application support service.

This should lead to an improvement of the services for the start-ups participating to the Premio Barresi competition, tackling in particular Objective IV.2 of the PSM.

In order to measure the improved implementation of start-up support offered by the Metropolitan city of Bologna through its services, the Performance Plan for 2022 has been changed accordingly. Indeed, the target number of the meetings with businesses has been increased by 10 units compared to the previous year.

1.3) Expected impact

The Action 1 will result in the improvement of the MCBO activity to support sustainable start-ups, introducing a new pre-application service, fostering the achievement of the goals outlined in the

DUP and in the Performance Plan and therefore there should be an improvement of the **implementation of Objective IV.2 of the PSM**. This enhanced management of the selected Policy Instrument (Type 2 of policy change) should lead to new business growth with a special focus on environment, through a delivery of improved MCBO services for green start-ups, therefore encouraging new talents and new jobs in green businesses.

1.4) Lessons incorporated thanks to GRESS

Among the findings of the **analysis** conducted in GRESS project is that the public role in promoting the development of the green economy could be strengthened by *public policies aimed at increasing awareness in the market, as well as incentives, legislative or regulatory changes and green public procurement* in the territory. The public sector can play a leading role in *leading by example* and making *investments allowing more sustainable consumption and mobility, building green infrastructure, engaging in green procurement from local companies and promoting public awareness of products and services that reduce environmental impact*. Indeed, in Norway (Kristiansand) it was found that the “Public sector and municipalities could play an important role and stimulate more green innovation”, though “the framework of working with public sector must be more adapted to facilitate small companies and start-ups”⁴.

Moreover, the **survey** developed thanks to GRESS highlighted a difficulty to apply for supporting instruments among businesses in Bologna territory.

The **RSGs** and in particular the meetings with Progetti d’Impresa and SUAPs held on 16th September and 16th December 2021 have drawn attention on how the learning from the GRESS project could be implemented in the MCBO. More particularly, the **good practice Green Business Idea Competition** brought by the Norwegian partner **Kristiansand** was the starting point for a rethink of the Barresi competition.

Since 2013, the Norwegian business idea competition raises awareness of business ideas that contribute to sustainable development, circular economy and low/zero emissions. The competition focus is on start-ups and early-stage businesses with international ambitions.

MCBO requested special details from the Norwegian partner, in order to further investigate the similarities and differences between the Italian and the Norwegian competitions, and shared them with the Premio Barresi management team, to discuss them in details and compare them with the Premio Barresi procedures.

MCBO stakeholders pointed out that there were a number of Premio Barresi applicants who were excluded because of the scarce precision in applying for the award. In order to tackle this issue, from

⁴ Cavallo, Culver, Rau, *Green economy policies. Where we are*, p. 38.

the analysis of Green Business Idea Competition we took the pre-competition guidance from the Kristiansand good practice, adapting it to the MCBO needs and possibilities.

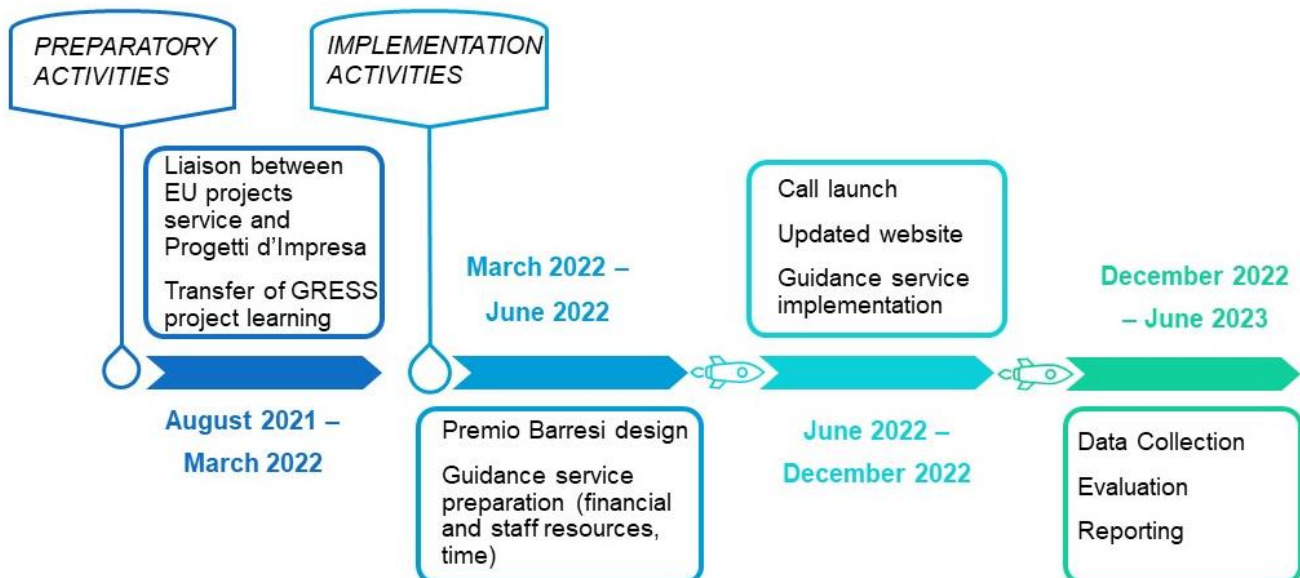
1.5) Action description

As described above, the Norwegian Green Business idea competition offered a specific support to start-uppers willing to apply to the competition. From this example MCBO picked up the pre-competition guidance.

Therefore, the action will consist in the **set-up of a tailored specific support for Premio Barresi candidates**. Through this new possibility the applicants will have the opportunity to take advantage of a service offering one-to-one guidance sessions. The tailored meetings will help the candidates through the eligibility and selection criteria of the Premio Barresi. This will be displayed in the information material accompanying the call.

In order to reach the highest number of companies with the new service, a section dedicated in the competition website will be created.

1.6) Activities and timeframe



1.7) Players involved

The main stakeholders involved in the Action implementation are the following.

NAME	ROLE
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Research, Innovation and European project management service , Metropolitan city of Bologna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - overall coordination of the action implementation - monitoring and evaluation
Economic Growth department , Metropolitan city of Bologna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - steering of the Premio Barresi design
Progetti d'impresa , Metropolitan city of Bologna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - overall coordination of the competition - drafting of the call - guidance service provision
Service for coordination for business activities and enterprise simplifications , Metropolitan city of Bologna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - overall coordination of the competition

1.8) Indicative costs and funding sources

The Metropolitan City of Bologna will make available its own resources, covering:

- **Staff costs:** time dedicated by internal staff to the activities of design, coordination and implementation.

1.9) Monitoring

The Metropolitan City of Bologna will steadily monitor the implementation of the Action through the collection of the following data in order to evaluate the success of the Action implementation.

INDICATOR	TARGET
- Total number of applicants to the competition	12
- Number of applicants who will profit from the guidance service	7
- Number of successful applications (even if not winning)	10
- Number of sustainable start-ups supported	15

This last indicator is intended to modify the indicator originally included by MCBO within the project

Application Form (Number of new start-ups in clean-tech and circular economy: 15).

The goal is to specify the description of the indicator that results to be too general after the learning acquired through the project. Thanks to the survey and the analysis conducted during the first phase of the project it emerged clearly that in order to have an increased number of green companies on the territory we have to create a fertile environment for them to grow.

The choice of this new indicator is to focus on the implementation of the policy improvement by having a look at the services offered by the MCBO to all the businesses – project ideas or newly-established companies - that have the features of sustainability.



Action 2) Communication strategy to raise awareness on Green Economy, Green start-ups and their needs

2.1) Background

Development of the green economy builds on a number of different factors, including the choices of citizens and public administration in selecting products and services to address their needs. One of the biggest challenges for new smaller companies and start-ups is **raising awareness** of their green and sustainable products in the market.

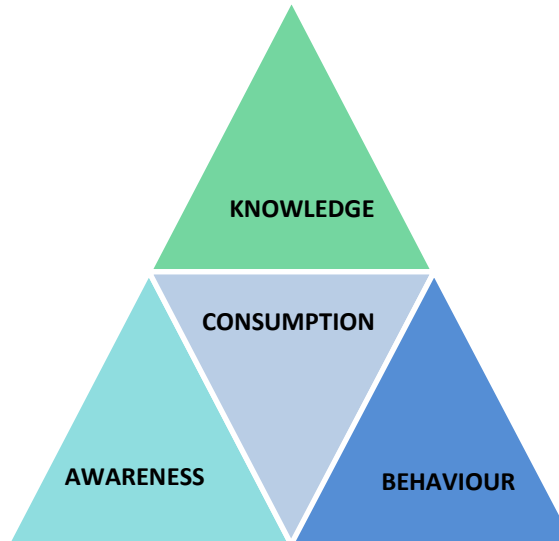
Awareness can be promoted through a series of communications actions targeting different sectors. This can help green businesses growth by educating the market to new visuals, that will result in a change in behaviour.

This idea can be communicated through the **Green Awareness Pyramid (GAP)**.

The GAP is inspired by the idea that a green and sustainable economy can be more successfully promoted when the society in which it is rooted also becomes “green” in its orientation. This rests on four elements that work together and are crucial in allowing the “green transition”⁵ to take place:

- **Knowledge:** of climate and sustainability issues; the impact that consumption and behaviour can have on the environment;
- **Awareness:** of green products and choices, but also personal and institutional responsibilities for the shift towards a greener economy;
- **Consumption:** choices of types of products, quantities consumed; green public procurement;
- **Behaviour:** how behaviour can affect the environment.

⁵ The European Green Deal focuses on the twin “green and digital” transition.



The Green Awareness Pyramid (GAP)

2.2) Goal

While Action 1) is focused on a specific start-up support, Action 2) addresses a wider public in order to achieve broader results with the implementation of the specific activities put in place by the MCBO.

More precisely, with this Action the Metropolitan City of Bologna intends to better support entrepreneurship and innovation process by raising awareness of green businesses.

A communication strategy is an essential instrument to enlighten the results of GRESS project and to support the actions and boost their impact.

The main tool of the strategy is the publication of the methodological outcomes of the project. By sharing them with a wider audience of stakeholders and general public we will achieve a twofold **objective**:

- a) tackle the issue come out through the surveys and the consultation process of a lack of market sensitiveness to green consuming, offering to green business a market readier to receive green products and services;
- b) improving policies and support schemes for SMEs competitiveness by strengthening capacities to understand, trigger and support formation of sustainable and competitive start-ups and spin-offs within the green economy, will create a consequent benefitting favourable business climate for SMEs.

2.3) Expected impact

The main result expected from this Action is an **improved overall awareness** of sustainability issues, green products and services, that will result in an improvement of the implementation of the selected Policy Instrument (Type 2).

Metropolitan Strategic Plan has as goal under Objective 4.2: to promote new enterprises and a greater entrepreneurial spirit. The PSM designs Bologna as a start-up valley, with a special attention to circular economy start-up.

Moreover, PSM in Objective 1.2 target at building an attractive city for young talents through the creation of the conditions for the growth and enhancement of the many different knowledge.

Increased public awareness on Green Economy, Green start-ups and their needs will create a **more favourable environment for green young business**, boosting the corresponding activities put in place by the Metropolitan city of Bologna.

Action 2 will increase the effectiveness of the other actions carried out by MCBO and planned in the DUP leading to an improved way to pursue PSM objectives and so enhancing its implementation.

2.4) Lessons incorporated thanks to GRESS

The **business surveys** conducted in the GRESS project revealed that one of the biggest obstacles to further investment in the green economy was insufficient market demand or rather lack of market awareness of green options. Indeed, public policies aimed at increasing awareness in the market was indicated as one of the most important factors in stimulating investments in the green economy in the Bologna area.

Moreover, during Semester 4 of GRESS, project partners organized a session on **good practices**, exchanging local policies and green economy activities freely, outside the scheme of the programme platform so as to have a wider range of ideas from which to draw. Among the exchanged notes, MCBO found that West Pomerania was facing the same lack of information that the survey highlighted for MCBO territory. Therefore, MCBO asked the Polish partner for more details, in order to better understand how West Pomerania tackled this issue.

Two projects were of particular interest:

- **Innovative West Pomerania**, a task aimed at planning, preparing and conducting a promotional and information campaign that promotes business innovators and the scientific and economic potential of Western Pomerania, especially in the areas of smart specialization; The lesson learnt from this practice is how an interesting, effective and precisely targeted promotion will not only increase the awareness of the region's inhabitants on the importance of science and innovation, but may also be helpful in the implementation and commercialization of research and development projects, and above all in increasing the level

of social acceptance for innovators.

- **Green year 2021 in West Pomeranian Region**, a project targeting the creation of favourable conditions for sustainable development through the implementation of promotional activities for the natural values of the region as an element of education and building a proper social attitude towards the natural environment. Building awareness and social attitudes while strengthening the bottom-up mechanism of implementing these attitudes into the lives of the final recipients of the project - the inhabitants of the region - is the main interesting aspect of this project.

Therefore, in order to increase the effectiveness of the green business support activities, MCBO decided with Action 2) to implement a communication strategy to facilitate a favourable business climate for SMEs. It is necessary to keep separate the supportive communication initiative of Action 2), from Action 1) as they have different stakeholders, different targets and they involve different means.

2.5) Action description

The MCBO will promote awareness of “green choices” among citizens and public administrations, encouraging more sustainable behaviours.

It will pursue this goal through the **publication** of the methodological outcomes of the project and the **dissemination** of its contents. The publication and the dissemination will be carried out with the support of the key stakeholders, that will advise MCBO on the design, the target audience and the dissemination instruments. The dissemination could take place through events, newsletters, targeted communications, articles and social media appearance.

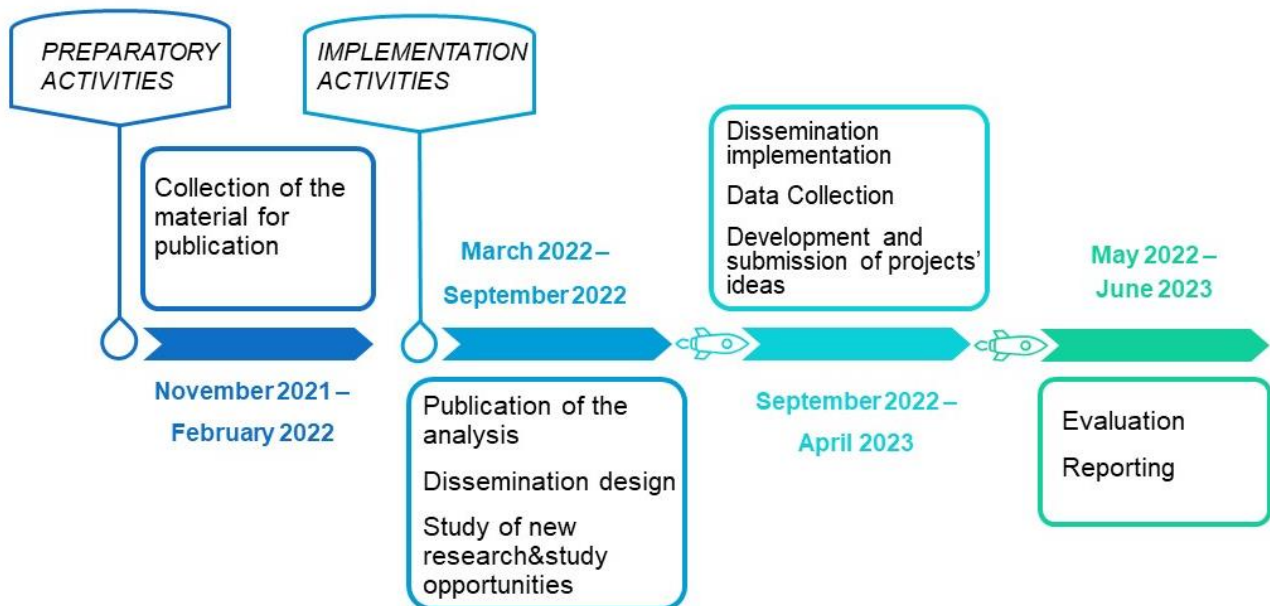
The role of MCBO - as policy maker - is fundamental in spreading communication and awareness on the themes of green choices and support to green businesses because it has authority and competence to influence local metropolitan policies and behaviours. Moreover, MCBO has a leading role in promoting innovation in services management, in particular through cooperation with other regional, national and European entities. For these reasons dissemination of results of GRESS project can increase the awareness of the region's inhabitants.

Additionally, it will be the enabler to explore new ways to implement green support policies on the territory through the research of new projects and new partnerships, between all the various stakeholders with which MCBO is connected.

A particular attention will be reserved to the sustainable tourism sector, that represents one of the main focus for the future strategy of MCBO, as evinced in the Metropolitan Strategic Plan 2.0 Objective 1.4 and 1.5, targeting to make Bologna and the Apennines mountain areas that surrounds it a sustainable, responsible and attractive tourist destination. Indeed, sustainable tourism enterprises and start-ups demonstrated to play in MCBO territory an important role in the green

and innovation sector in the last years, so that further studies and support to the sector are fundamental for the implementation of the green development of the MCBO territory.

2.6) Activities and timeframe



2.7) Players involved

The key stakeholders involved in the Action implementation are the following.

NAME	ROLE
Research, Innovation and European project management service , Metropolitan city of Bologna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - overall coordination of the action implementation - administrative and organisational tasks - monitoring and evaluation
Research and consulting centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research, publication and dissemination support
Progetti d'impresa , Metropolitan city of Bologna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - communication campaign development and dissemination support
Service for coordination for business activities and enterprise simplifications , Metropolitan city of Bologna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - communication campaign development and dissemination support

2.8) Indicative costs and funding sources

The Metropolitan city of Bologna will make available its own resources, covering:

- **staff costs:** time dedicated by internal staff to the activities of organisation, communication and dissemination.

2.9) Monitoring

The Metropolitan city of Bologna will monitor the implementation of the Action through the collection of data about the number people reached with the communication campaign.

INDICATOR	TARGET
- Total number people reached with the communication campaign	70
- Number of new project ideas presented	3

Part IV: Signature

Institution Metropolitan City of Bologna

Name of Signatory Matteo Lepore

Position Metropolitan Mayor

Date 05/07/2022

Stamp (if available)

Signature

