

Press Release

Horizon Europe

BOLSTER Kick-off Meeting in Tilburg, Netherlands

The BOLSTER project (Bridging Organizations and marginalised communities for Local Sustainability Transitions in EuRope) officially started at the beginning of September with the successful kick-off meeting (KO) that took place on 7, 8 and 9 September in Tilburg, southern Netherlands, hosted by the project coordinator, Tilburg University.

Funded by the European Commission's Horizon Europe Framework Programme, BOLSTER is a 36-month project, with a total budget of nearly 3.8 million Euros, that is designed to understand how marginalized communities are affected by the European Green Deal (EGD)-related policies and to see if involving these communities in decision-making processes increases the support for transition plans. The project has 13 partners from 12 different countries that are working together on seven Work Packages (WPs) in order to make the BOLSTER project achieve its objectives, to actually succeed in helping marginalised communities and to become an example to other Horizon Europe related projects to come.

The KO meeting was an essential step in order to start the project, and was the opportunity, for the partners to get to know each other in person and to better understand everyone's role in the BOLSTER project, as each partner presented their WP and their role in it. The KO meeting not only allowed the partners to introduce themselves, their backgrounds and their expected contributions to BOLSTER, but also made possible and easier the alignment of methodologies, the design of the research methods, and the definition of basic ground rules and guidelines for future work. Other relevant subjects were discussed and set out, such as BOLSTER's logo and brand identity, and the obligations towards the European Commission and CINEA.



Moments of conviviality, dynamic discussions and ice-breaker sessions also contributed greatly to the success of the meeting. In fact, activities that promoted interaction and conversations amongst the participants were important exercises for partners to bond and invited them to reflect on some project topics. For example, the definition of "who should not be left behind", that is understanding which are the marginalised communities and groups that the project wants to support, why they are marginalised, or what are the best practices to adopt when approaching and working with such communities/groups. These brainstorming sessions and conclusions were discussed in thematic groups and World Cafés, raising some interesting questions and important factors to take into consideration in future developments of the project and that will later be supported by literature review and research.



Besides the partners, there were many guest lecturers and speakers: from Tilburg University, Nicola Jager and Martijn Groenleer; from the Cabinet of Frans Timmermans, Aleksandra Tomczak; from CINEA, Manuela Conconi; and to present a pilot project on social public housing (Pilot Abdijbuurt), Nicolaas Veltman.



The first two days ended up with the cherry on top – sociability around a dinner table. At the dinner of the first day, September 7th, there was an overview of the regions that will be the focus of the project, with three-minute presentations of the most relevant topics on each one, introduced by partners from those regions or who have visited the region before. The meeting on the 8th of September included a tour to a local neighbourhood that is an example of renovation and regeneration towards greener and more sustainable practices in a complex social context and was later concluded with partners getting together again for dinner. In this occasion, the answers to a quiz previously sent to the participants were shared and a special prize was awarded to the person that guessed the highest number of answers – delicious Dutch chocolates.



The last day was the day for qualitative method discussion and a final note of nostalgia - the partners will not meet again in person until next year. Nonetheless, there was a palpable feeling of excitement about the project's beginning and of satisfaction about the success of the KO meeting.



Soon, more about BOLSTER will be shared, the website and social media of the project will be available, and much more content and information will be accessible to all. Stay tuned!

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