

ENGAGING ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS FOR THE YOUTH

Communication & Dissemination Plan

Deliverable No.	D6.1
Due date	30.09.2023
Type	Report
Dissemination level	Final
Status	Public (PU)
Lead beneficiary	WH GE
Authors	Kerstin Meyer (IAT – WH GE), Anna Butzin (IAT – WH GE), Franz Flögel (IAT – WH GE), Maria Rabadjieva (IAT – WH GE)

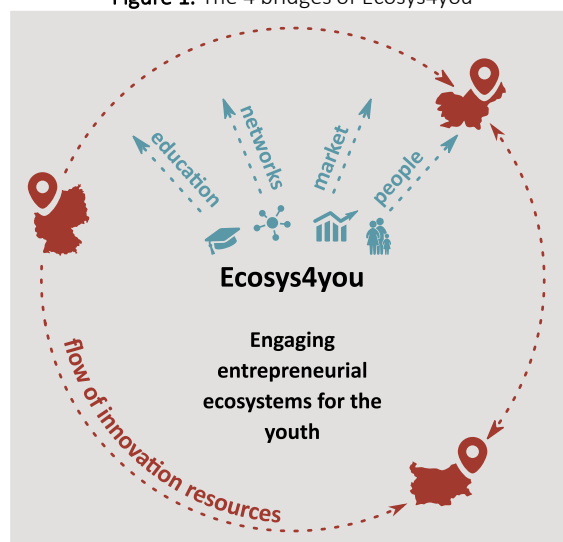


This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101100432

About Ecosys4you

The Ecosys4you project is funded by the European Commission under the Horizon programme. The project partnership is committed to improve the flow of innovation resources between entrepreneurial ecosystems (EE) of the regions Ruhr in Germany, Varna in Bulgaria, and Slovenia. It develops an entrepreneurial education programme by establishing innovative interlinkages between the actors of the entrepreneurial ecosystems. Private, public and educational actors are in the consortium and represent the three entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Figure 1. The 4 bridges of Ecosys4you



Ecosys4you mobilises innovation resources in four dimensions: education, networking, market expansion, and people. Private, public and educational actors co-create the programme. The main activities are joint classes, mentoring, real-world challenges and internships at start-ups. Experience of founders and established entrepreneurs drive the programme's design. Their benefit is the opportunity to enter new markets opened up by Ecosys4you. The programme is open to students and young alumni from higher education institutions (HEI's), professional schools, graduates who wish to found a company, and other young people who want to discover and develop entrepreneurial mind and spirit.

Ecosys4you develops a new and complementary understanding of entrepreneurship education by viewing ecosystems as collective educational actors essential to "raise" a start-up, and by empowering students to be an integral active part of ecosystems.

The main **objectives** are:

- To establish **improved flows of innovation resources** between the entrepreneurial ecosystems of the Ruhr, Varna and Slovenia regions. Business experts of the private sector significantly contribute their expertise to increase innovation potential and to establish and sustain the flow of resources.
- To **strengthen the innovation potential** of the entrepreneurial ecosystems by stimulating and supporting people, especially the youth, to create new businesses and increase the flow of skilled employees to start-ups and young companies. A focus will be on improving digital competencies, for example, by raising awareness for cyber security as a fundamental part of business development in the digital era.

- To **foster entrepreneurial thinking and practical knowledge** by interlinking higher education institutions, entrepreneurs, and intermediaries inside and across the ecosystems. Students are empowered to be part of it as entrepreneurs.

The project (06/2023 – 05/2026) is coordinated by the Institute for Work and Technology, Westphalian University of Applied Sciences (IAT – WH GE), <https://www.iat.eu/>. Project partners are AWARE7 GmbH <https://aware7.com/>, the Regional Agency for Entrepreneurship and Innovations Varna <https://www.rapiv.org/en/>, and DOBA Business School <https://www.dobabusiness-school.eu/>.

For more information

Project Coordinator: Anna Butzin, butzin@iat.eu

Dissemination Manager: Kerstin Meyer, kmeyer@iat.eu

Executive Summary

This document explains the communication strategy of the project and presents the contribution and cooperation expected from the partners. The aim of the Dissemination and Communication Plan is to ensure a well-balanced communication towards the target audiences, the media and the public to achieve the Ecosys4you project objectives. The Communication Plan starts with general information about the communication objectives and as well as internal and external communication. For all communication actions it is essential to refer to the H2020 funding by the EU.

The Ecosys4you key audiences are students, alumni and young entrepreneurs. Moreover start-ups, businesses and entrepreneurial lecturers as well as academic institutions, ecosystem intermediaries, policy makers and the public/society in general.

Ecosys4you key messages are:

- Ecosys4you designs and implements a cross-country education programme for young people with passion for entrepreneurship.
- Through Ecosys4you, the flow of innovation resources in four dimensions (education, networking, market expansion, and people) are mobilised.

Special communication planning tools will be developed to manage, monitor and report about all activities.

The central source for information is the Ecosys4you website (<https://www.ecosys4you.eu/>) for the general public and the MS Teams Intranet for consortium members. Communication tools include a mailing list and newsletters, brochures, presentations, and social media accounts of project partners (X/Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Research Gate).

The activities will be presented in newsletters, press-releases and external and self-organised events, the results published in peer-reviewed journal articles and presented on conferences.

Ecosys4you will cooperate and exploit synergies with other groups like ecosystem intermediaries, start-ups, universities to facilitate the exchange.

From this strategy, a general communication plan that involves activities of all project partners throughout the entire project will be produced. An annual detailed plan will be prepared to better coordinate the activities of the consortium.

Finally, the document also presents an overview of events in which the project members will be represented.

Project members have identified a clear set of key performance indicators to evaluate the performance of the communication activities.

This document may be revised after formal delivery, and/or augmented with separate mechanisms for detailed information (such as tables and lists stored in the cooperation tool used by the consortium). Any such revisions will be made available on request.

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1 Dissemination tools

The consortium will make use of tools provided by the EC to support the project’s dissemination and exploitation activities, especially the Open Research Europe platform, and the Horizon Results platform to highlight the research results and to identify collaboration opportunities and get inspired by previous/ongoing projects. Dissemination activities are subject of a dedicated working package but also an integral part of all other work packages. Substantive effort is on the dissemination and exploitation of the project results to ensure that the activities find their way into entrepreneurial ecosystems in Europe and beyond. The project will liaise and coordinate with other projects funded under the EIE programme, and other ongoing initiatives at national, European and international level. Specific attention has the creation of strong collaboration links with groups and forums on entrepreneurship education. Possible collaboration in joint workshops and other activities are sought wherever possible. Dissemination builds around four “dissemination arenas”: Cross-ecosystem exchange, capacity building, policy fora and scientific discussions.

1.1 Project identity and branding

1.1.1 Project logo

To recognise the project, a logo was developed with the project acronym, which is to be used in all project-related public relations work.

Figure 2. Project logo

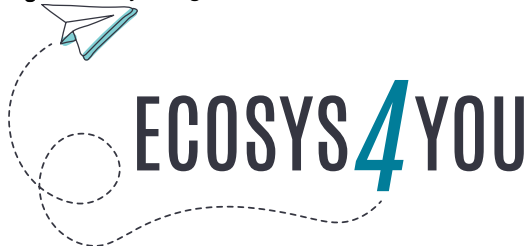
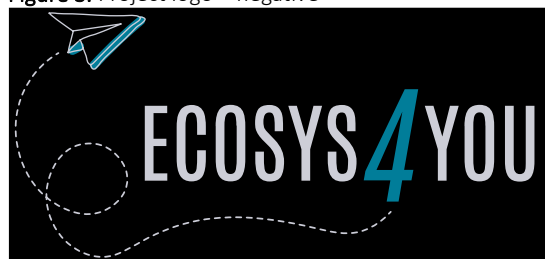


Figure 3. Project logo – negative



Font: Antonio Regular

1.1.2 Visual identity guidelines

The projects colour scheme is as follows:

Figure 4. Colour scheme



As main colours we will use the four colours at the top. For charts and graphics the other colours are possible to use.

1.1.3 Presentations (Powerpoint) and EU funding acknowledgement

The presentations for internal and external communication should use the Ecosys4you PowerPoint template. Presentations, roll-ups, flyer etc. will display the European flag including the text “Funded by the European Union”, besides the project logo. When displayed together with another logo, the EU emblem must have appropriate prominence.

Any publicity, including at a conference or any type of information or promotional material must specify that the project has received EU research funding and display the European emblem and include the following text:

- (1) For communication activities: *“This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101100432”*
- (2) For key outputs: *“This [insert type of result] is part of a project that has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101100432”.*

1.2 Internal project communication

For the consortium members, we use MS Teams Intranet and Sciebo provided by WH GE. In addition, internal jour fixes are held via MS Teams monthly. A meeting in presence takes place once a year. For further information, see Data Management Plan (Deliverable 7.1).

1.3 External project communication

1.3.1 Website

A new project website completely devoted to the Ecosys4you project will be set up in fall 2023 with a direct, simple and easy to remember URL, which includes the acronym of the project:

<https://www.ecosys4you.eu/>

Objectives

The Ecosys4you website will be continuously updated and will remain life for three years after the project so that results continue to be available (in an archive version). The website provides a place where the open parts of the detailed knowledge generated in the project can be accessed directly by users. This includes public project deliverables, invitations and further details on events and activities of the project, the possibility to (un-)subscribe to the newsletter via the subscription form, team and project information, as well as copies or links to scientific publications / conference proceedings, etc. Downloading those articles by the public at large will be granted for free.

Structure of the website

The main sections and their subsections that will be available to each user are listed here:

- Home
- News: Newsletters
- Participate: Advertising, further details and sign in mask for events and activities
- Project: Information about the project
- Team: Contact details
- Publications: List of publications including download links.

The website will contribute to increase Ecosys4you's visibility. The website publishes information about what is planned and what has been achieved in the project, who is involved, and the role of Horizon activities and funding, newsletters, etc. will be on the website. There will be sections addressing different audiences:

- Students and young entrepreneurs, start-ups, lecturers, policy makers, researchers, etc. Special attention will be given to making the site relevant to each target group.

Accessibility and usability

All necessary edits to the Ecosys4you website for Search Engine Optimization (SEO) have been made. In addition, all partners will be asked to link to the Ecosys4you website from their websites to improve it for SEO (Keywords might be: Ecosys4you, entrepreneurship ecosystem, startup, startup-ecosystem, founders, funding, European, ...).

The newsletter will increase the engagement and will help to expand the network. Information about the newsletter content and structure can be found in paragraph 4.3.

Project website traffic

Webalizer is being used to measure external interest in the site. Other tools are being examined.

1.3.2 Newsletter

The project newsletter will be one of the main communication tools for the regular dissemination of information to reach important players. The newsletter will cover ongoing project activities, and main findings of already conducted project activities (workshop summaries, final reports, results of work packages etc.). It will also focus on special topics (e.g. piloting results). The target audience will be ecosystem intermediaries, lecturers, researchers and other research infrastructures users, consultants and other relevant stakeholders interested in the project outcomes.

There will be around six editions of the newsletter. The content will be prepared by the Editorial Board consisting of all core partners. Each core partner is responsible for leading the content production for at least one newsletter. The newsletters will provide information on project progress, events, activities and results, as well as contain links to public deliverables, articles and interviews for external communications. It will be made available on the project website and social media channels of partners to improve visibility of the project via electronic means and will be sent to the Consortium partners and other registered stakeholders.

The first newsletter will be issued in December 2023 with the aim of improving the visibility of the project by giving an overview of the objectives and timeline, present the partners involved and sketching the first results from WP1 activities of existing entrepreneurial ecosystems in the three regions.

The structure of the first newsletter might be as follows:

- 'The Ecosys4you project – Kick-off Meeting in Gelsenkirchen' [Heading] – short presentation with focus on objectives
- 'Varna (Bulgaria) open for startups' - first results from the desktop research, interviews and literature review (WP1)
- 'Slovenia' small but powerful – first results from EE research (WP1)
- 'Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Ruhr Area (Germany) - quo vadis?' [Heading] - short introduction into results from EE research (WP1)
- 'Ecosys4you timeline'

Newsletters will be circulated via partner communication channels, interviews, personal contacts and workshops (WP1).

Registration to the newsletter will be enabled on the project's website. The aim is to have at least through the three years an average of 80 registered subscribers. The broader audience will include the readership of additional communication channels from partners, related projects and initiatives.

Guidelines:

- 3-5 topics | 3-5 photos
- Font size 12 (max) for text and size 20 (max) for titles.
- Each topic/section will include approximately 150 words maximum.

1.3.3 Social Network presence and guidelines

It is not planned to have a project presence on social network platforms. Instead, the Social Media Networks of the partners will be used. However, the Hashtag #Ecosys4you should be used in every post.

Various information about the project can be shared via social media, such as:

- Updates on the project status;
- Updates on the publication of Ecosys4you official documents/ deliverables;
- News on upcoming meetings and events, where the project is directly involved (as an organiser or as participant);
- To share project information or single topics from the newsletters.

We develop a visual language for the posts, which should create a recognition value. We keep ourselves open to adapt the presence on social media if necessary.

1.3.4 Events

External and self-organised events play an important role to reach out to the target groups (e.g. the intermediaries, students, alumni and start-ups).

The events need to be implemented in the timetable to check, when activities can be advertised.

As external events we have in mind Innowave in Varna or the RuhrSummit, TU Start-up Weekend, Ruhrvalley Convention in the case of the Ruhr entrepreneurial ecosystem, to give examples.

1.3.4.1 Flyer / Brochures or Business cards

To reach out to students, alumni and young entrepreneurs the project team will advertise the project activities at start-up events or university events. Therefore, flyers, brochures or business cards might be helpful.

As no budget is available for flyers, brochures or business cards, it is an optional tool. It might be fruitful to give dates, programmes on paper to the students including a QR-code to the project homepage which gives further details and allows applying to activities.

1.3.4.2 Roll-up banner / Poster or Beach Flag

At some events also roll-up banners might be fruitful to represent the project at external events, e.g. at universities or start-up-days as well as for own events like kick-off meetings and final events. If needed, each project partner could have one.

It should represent the project-logo, the key audience, a key message and contact details (e.g. link to the website incl. QR-Code, E-Mail address of the project-coordinator).

1.3.4.3 Bags / Pencils / Keychains or T-Shirts

As promotion and gifts for the participants in the challenges, we might provide bags, pencils or laser-cut keychains with the project logo, URL and a slogan. Depending on funding and number of participants we might use this as an optional communication tool. Further, T-Shirts for the project partners might be helpful to identify the project staff at events or activities.

2 Target groups and further communication activities

Diversity of target groups is very important due to Ecosys4you's character as a coordination and support action. Therefore, we have developed dedicated objectives and communication measures to ensure the integration of each target group supported additionally by a professional social media management and the project webpage.

The following five target groups need to be addressed in the project:

- **Students and young alumni** are a central target group of the Ecosys4you partnership. All programme development activities strive to stimulate their entrepreneurial passion. We aim at attracting at least 200 students. The risk of not reaching the number is very low, because of the direct contact of the HEIs in the project with their students and alumni and the integration of the programme activities into the regular curricular.
- **Lecturers and educational actors** are important for the implementation of Ecosys4you activities and the transfer to students. They are involved right from the beginning to become an integral part of the Ecosys4you community. We foresee no risk in getting lecturers and educational actors involved into Ecosys4you, because HEIs are part of our partnership.
- **Integration of private sector expertise** is the key lever to develop the study programme. To avoid risk of not achieving a sufficient level of start-up engagement in the project, we have asked 6 start-ups for letters of intent at the proposal stage. These are Physec GmbH, Fairnica GmbH, Xignsys GmbH, Grubengold GmbH, Wollow Software Solutions Ltd, Altscale Ltd. We expect their engagement in Ecosys4you attracts further start-ups.
- **Ecosystem intermediaries** need to receive relevant project information in a way they can easily understand it to ensure the actions are perceived positive and to gather support for a larger roll-out.
- **Scientific community** gets the key learnings and results from the project to develop them further or to answer upcoming research questions.

In the following, we describe the communication tools and channels in detail for each tool regarding communication channels, objectives, budget and the responsible institution. At annual meetings, the tools and communication channels are evaluated and adjusted as necessary.

2.1 Young people (especially students and young alumni) interested in entrepreneurship

Objective: To acquire participants (potential entrepreneurs) for the educational programme and its activities.

Audience characteristics: young, all genders (at least 40 % women), multicultural

Tools:

- An information campaign raising awareness for the Ecosys4you programme.
- Tailored activities such as classes, mentoring, co-ideation challenges, and internships addressing the needs of young people interested in entrepreneurship.

Table 1. Overview of tools, channels and objectives

Tools	Channels	Objectives	Responsibility
Information campaign	Email-lists Newsletters Institutional-/Project-/University- Websites Events (Roll-up / Flyer)	Awareness for project	WH GE
Joint classes	Project Website University Websites / Lecture Directory Email-Campaigns Student councils / Study Coordinators Video	80 students (per cohort)	DOBA
Mentoring	Project Website Email-Campaigns Student Councils On-Campus Events Matchmaking Event Video	15-25 mentees (per cohort)	RAPIV
Internships	Project Website Social Media Email Campaigns On-Campus Events Ecosystem Hubs Video	5-10 students (per cohort)	WH GE
Co-Ideation Challenges	Project Website Social Media Email Campaigns On-Campus Events Ecosystem Hubs Video	20 participants (per cohort)	AWARE7

(Existing) Communication Channels:

- (1) **Project Website:** Details for programmes on own project website (IAT – WH GE) including the possibility to sign-in to the newsletter - it can be linked to other channels. <https://www.ecosys4you.eu/>
- (2) **Social Media:** Utilization of platforms like Instagram (DOBA, AWARE7), LinkedIn (DOBA), Tiktok (AWARE 7), YouTube (RAPIV) and X (IAT; AWARE7) to reach a younger audience. Share engaging content, stories of successful entrepreneurs, and program updates.
- (3) **University Websites/ Social Media:** Collaborating with partner universities to feature program information on their official websites, especially in relevant departments.
- (4) **Student Councils:** Collaborating with student councils in relevant departments and faculties of universities to feature program information in their channels.

- (5) **Email Campaigns:** Sending targeted emails/ newsletters to students in high-tech courses, highlighting the benefits of Ecosys4you and inviting them to join.
- (6) **On-Campus Events:** Hosting information sessions, workshops, or seminars at partner universities to directly engage with students (e.g., at information days, sustainability or business days with roll-up or poster and distribution of flyers).
- (7) **Ecosystem Hubs:** Partner and intermediaries with local entrepreneurship hubs or co-working spaces to promote the program to aspiring entrepreneurs in the region.
- (8) **Specific Ecosystem Events:** Presenting the project and activities at events like ruhrSUMMIT, ANDERSMACHER, ICT Cluster-Varna

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- Followers reach and engagement on social media.
- Number of students from high-tech courses who inquire about the program.
- Number of participants in Ecosys4you activities.
- Feedback from lecturers and educational actors.

2.2 Lecturers and Educational Actors

Objective: Lecturers and educational actors co-design cross-ecosystem educational activities, learn best practices from each other and from private sector actors.

Tools:

- Cross-ecosystem workshops (e.g., in WP 1).
- Common development/ design of teaching formats.

Table 2. Overview of tools, channels and objectives for engaging lecturers and educational actors

Tools	Channels	Objectives	Responsibility
Joint classes	Internal Workshops Academic Forums Newsletter	4-8 lecturers	DOBA

(Existing) Communication Channels:

- (1) **Internal Workshops:** Organizing cross-ecosystem workshops within partner universities to facilitate collaboration among lecturers and educators.
- (2) **Academic Forums:** Participating in academic conferences or forums related to entrepreneurship education to share insights and best practices.
- (3) **Newsletter/ Mailing List:** Sending regular e-mail updates with information about upcoming workshops and opportunities for collaboration (Surname, Name, E-Mail Address, Institution, and Address).

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- Number of lecturers and educators attending cross-ecosystem workshops.
- Number of collaborative teaching formats developed.
- Feed-back and contributions on the online collaboration platform.

2.3 Private Sector Actors (Especially Founders of Start-ups from the Ruhr)

Objective: To integrate real-world business expertise into the educational activities and to develop a study program significantly driven by private sector expertise.

Tools:

- Engagement through interviews, skills biographies, and designing program activities.
- Start-ups co-developing the four educational activities.

Table 3. Overview of tools, channels and objectives for engaging the private sector

Tools	Channels	Objectives	Responsibility
Mentoring	Call for mentors Match-making Event	20 mentors (per cohort)	RAPIV
Co-Ideation Challenges	Co-ideation challenges event Assignment for demanding challenges	1 Hackathon in Germany	AWARE7
Internships	Direct Outreach Ecosystem Events Newsletters	Funding for internships	WH GE

(Existing) Communication Channels:

- (1) **Direct Outreach:** Reaching out to founders of start-ups through e-mail or phone calls to schedule interviews and discussions.
- (2) **Ecosystem Events:** Participating in local entrepreneurial events like ruhrSUMMIT to meet and engage with private sector actors.
- (3) **Regional Ecosystem Ambassadors:** Leveraging regional ecosystem ambassadors like Matteo Große-Kampmann to facilitate introductions and discussions.
- (4) **Newsletters/ Mailing List:** Including updates about private sector involvement in Ecosys4you in newsletters sent to the entrepreneurial community (Surname, Name, E-Mail Address, Institution, and Address).

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- Number of private sector actors participating in at least three events per year.
- Number of interviews conducted with private sector actors.
- Number of private sector actors engaged in Ecosys4you activities (interviewed, internships, mentors, mailing list).

2.4 Ecosystem Intermediaries

Objective: To establish cross-ecosystem networks between intermediaries like start-up support infrastructures (hubs, incubators, economic development agencies, innovation agencies).

Tools:

- Initiating networking via four co-creation workshops where ecosystem intermediaries can come together, share experiences, and build networks.
- Setting up organizational and financial supporting infrastructures.

Table 4. Overview of tools, channels and objectives for engaging ecosystem intermediaries

Tools	Channels	Objectives	Responsibility
Co-Creation-Workshops	Personal Contacts Email Outreach	20 persons (per workshop)	WH GE

(Existing) Communication Channels:

- (1) **Personal Contacts:** Using existing personal contacts within the entrepreneurial ecosystems to facilitate introductions and discussions.
- (2) **Email Outreach:** Sending personalized e-mails to key intermediaries inviting them to participate in networking activities.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- Number of interviews conducted with ecosystem intermediaries.
- Number of intermediaries participating in co-creation workshops.
- Growth in the number of collaborative projects or initiatives among intermediaries.

2.5 Actors of other Ecosystems in Europe and Beyond

Objective: To disseminate Ecosys4you results to other ecosystems and encourage the use of the study program or its single activities.

Tools:

- Dissemination workshop/ final event.

(Existing) Communication Channels:

- (1) **Dissemination Event:** Organizing a high-profile final event or dissemination workshop where we showcase the program's achievements and benefits.
- (2) **Social Media:** Sharing program results and resources on academic and industry-related online platforms, forums, and communities like LinkedIn (IAT; AWARE7, RAPIV, DOBA).
- (3) **Press Releases:** Distributing press releases (IAT & AWARE7 – regional press Ruhr; RAPIV – local press Varna) and academic media outlets to generate media coverage (local radio channels).
- (4) **Partner Networks:** Leveraging the networks of Ecosys4you partnership to reach a wider audience and encourage adoption.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- Number of participants at the final event.
- Number of peer-reviewed papers and conference presentations showcasing program results.

By implementing these tailored communication strategies and utilizing the suggested channels, we can effectively reach our target groups and achieve our objectives for the Ecosys4you program. Regularly monitor your KPIs and adjust your approach as needed to optimize your communication plan.

2.6 Scientific Community

Objective: To disseminate Ecosys4you results to science and encourage the use of the study program.

Tools:

- Dissemination through journal papers and their presentation at conferences.

(Existing) Communication Channels:

- (1) **Journal Papers:** Writing peer reviewed papers.
- (2) **Conferences:** Presenting the papers at selected (international) conferences.
- (3) **Social Media:** Dissemination of papers via X (IAT), LinkedIn (IAT), Research Gate (individual researchers) and Mastodon (individual researchers).

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- Number of peer-reviewed papers;
- Number of conference presentations, Timetable.

3 Monitoring, Evaluation and Adjustment

We use a Gantt chart as timetable to get an overview of the communication activities. The timetable gives insights, when the target groups participate and when they should be reached to be prepared for their participation.

For monitoring, we use Table 5. If the targets will not be achieved in the first piloting phase, we will adjust the communication strategy.

Table 5. Monitoring table

	Target 2024	Target 2025		No. of applicants (male/female)	No. of participants (male/female)
	No. of participants	No. of participants	Advertising via...		
Information campaign					
Newsletter	80				
Co-Creation Workshops	4x10				
Joint Classes	80	80			
Mentoring	15 to 25	15 to 25			
Co-ideation challenges	20	20			
Internships	5 to 10	7 to 10			
Total	100	100			
	40% woman	40% woman			

Impressum

Publisher and Contact

Grant number: 101100432

Project duration: Jun 2023 - Mai 2026

Project Coordinator: Dr Anna Butzin, IAT - WH GE

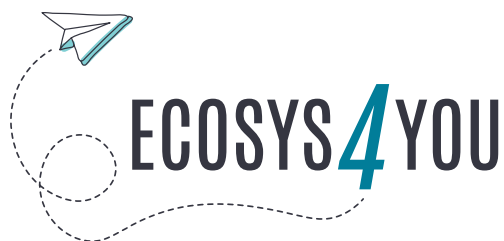
Westphalian University of Applied Sciences | Institute for Work and Technology

Kerstin Meyer

Munscheidstr. 14

D – 45886 Gelsenkirchen

<http://www.iat.eu/>



Ecosys4you – Engaging Entrepreneurial Ecosystems for the Youth (2023-2026) strives to bridge the entrepreneurial ecosystems of the of the Ruhr, Germany, Varna, Bulgaria and Slovenia by connecting young founders, start-ups, HEIs and other ecosystem actors.

Consortium



Funded by



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101100432