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## **HEGO BSB 987**

### **Report on consultation process results**

Activity A.T4.2 - Consultation process and discussion on the aims, objectives and structure of the Cluster with stakeholders and end beneficiaries

Deliverable title: D.T4.2.1. - Report on consultation process results

Responsible partner - LP (ANETXA)

Project Partner - PP5 CARD Foundation, Armenia

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Short description of T4

The purpose of the report is to analyze the data collected from the implementation of the Activity A. T4.2 Consultation process and discussion on the aims, objectives and structure of the Cluster with stakeholders and end beneficiaries and to proceed the processing of answers and feedback taken from the meetings, discussions and interviews, analyze the data for providing findings, information, recommendations for A. T4.3 Development of the maturity toolkit for Black Sea Herb Cluster.



The objective of the GA4 is to develop the concept and the maturity toolkit for the preparation of a cross-border Cluster in herb sector in Black Sea Project countries (extended after the end of the HEGO Project funding) which will engage enterprises from collection/ production, processing, marketing and promotion, trade as well as research organizations and local/ regional/ national public organizations from Black Sea Project countries. The objective of the Cluster will be the promotion of the environmentally responsible economic activity with reference to herb plant species as well as the improvement of trade and exporting opportunities of high value herb products produced in Black Sea Project countries. The GA4 will contribute to the Project Specific Objective 2 “Networking and establishing trade linkages”.

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The following activities are implemented under GA4:

- ✓ A.T4.1 Review on case studies with clusters in Black Sea Project countries: in Armenia, an extended review research was performed in national level to identify best practices and specific clustering schemes of collaboration among enterprises. Based on this review, CARD team evaluate the aims and objectives of these clustering schemes. Their activity, their experience gained from the operation of these schemes, their difficulties and barriers, the legal framework and the finding opportunities and tools adjusted to clusters' needs. Final feedback reports in national level was delivered with findings and recommendations.
- ✓ A.T4.2 Consultation process and discussion on the aims, objectives and structure of the Cluster with stakeholders and end beneficiaries: an extended consultation process in national level followed the review activity aiming at discussing in depth and assessing the stakeholders' and end-users' perceptions with reference to the scenario of a future development of a cluster scheme in herb sector. During the consultation process, members of target groups were directly engaged in the planning process of such an initiative with specific scenarios on its potential operation, structure, legal framework, training and trade opportunities and linkages with training and trade promotion enterprises.



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- ✓ A.T4.3 Development of the maturity toolkit for Black Sea Herb Cluster: after the findings, the conclusions, the suggestions and the recommendations from review and consultation process, a toolkit with all the necessary legal and operational documents will be developed. This maturity toolkit will be used after the end of the Project as a strong sustainability tool for the whole HEGO Project.

## 2. Materials and Methods performed

In the scope of implementation of the A.T 4.2 extended consultation process in Armenia was implemented, under which more than 60 members of the selected target groups were approached and interviewed via meetings.

CARD team addressed to organizations and enterprises from their direct and wider environment and communicated the establishment of the network via mobilization meetings, information and publicity tools and social media communication tools, identified and approached all major relevant stakeholders playing a significant role in herb sector as well as any interested individual or organization who is interested in participating in the conferences and follow the HEGO e-Business Portal. Especially for local, regional and national authorities, sectoral agencies, interest groups including NGOs and business support organizations direct connections were established. The established relations facilitate to effectively attract these organizations to participate

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in Forum conferences as well as to follow the HEGO e-Business Portal and provide their feedback.

An extended consultation process in national level aimed at discussing and assessing the stakeholders' and end-users' perceptions with reference to the scenario of a future development of a cluster scheme in herb sector. During the consultation process, members of target groups (target number of people were defined from the methodology of the review protocol DT4.1.1) were directly engaged in the planning process of such an



initiative with specific scenarios on its potential operation, structure, legal framework, training and trade opportunities and linkages with training and trade promotion enterprises. CARD team prepared the presentations that was used during the meetings with information regarding the project implementation, aims, goals and planned activities. Based on the List of Target Contacts, CARD team communicated with stakeholders and target groups' members and arranged meetings. CARD team also participated in similar BSB funded projects meeting and presented the project and upcoming steps. - The consultation meetings were implemented according the below presented meeting guide prepared by LP. - Interviews data were analyzed with simple word analysis methods according the guides of the Interview Protocol.

*Suggested Messages:*

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*PPs are encouraged to use messages that are directed mainly towards expert audiences and the general public so as to motivate them to participate in the HEGO Cluster, such as:*

- ✓ Stimulation of interest in HEGO's Cluster*
- ✓ Awareness Raising*
- ✓ Motivation for Participation in HEGO's Cluster*
- ✓ Dissemination for Understanding*

*Suggested Communication Tools:*

*In order to reach the above mentioned Target Groups, PPs are encouraged to use predominately interpersonal, two-way communication targeted towards expert audiences, such as:*

- 1 on 1 telephone calls,*
- E-mail information service,*
- Voip communications*

*and to a lesser extent mass media, one-way communication, such as:*

- Announcements via PP's websites,*
- Public free announcements via newspapers,*
- Press releases,*
- Social media communication*

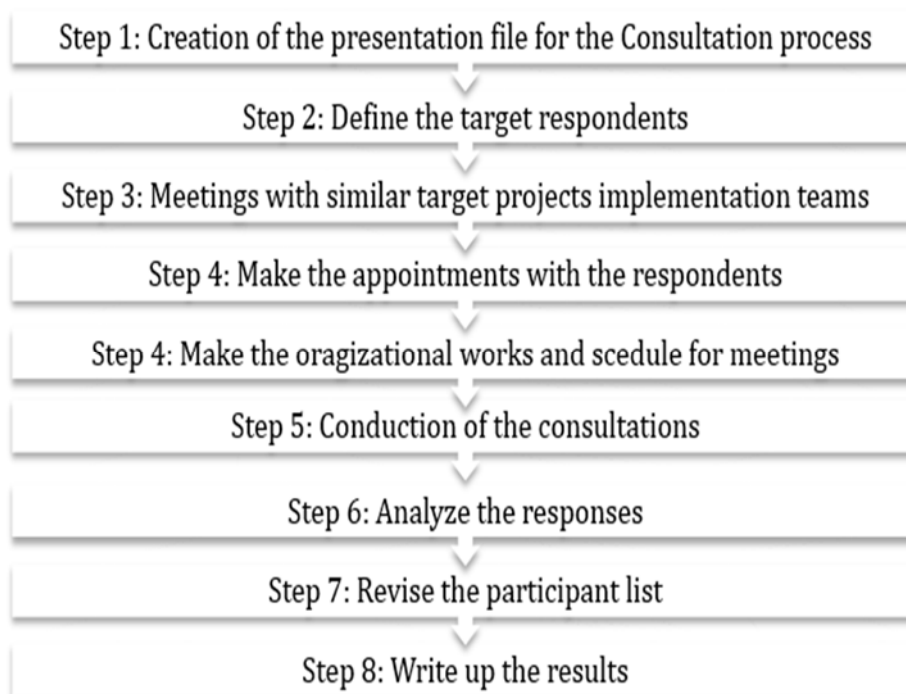
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### 3. Implementation of the Activity A.T4.2 Consultation process and discussion on the aims, objectives and structure of the Cluster with stakeholders and end beneficiaries.



CARD team started the implementation of the Activity A.T4.2 by creating a presentation about HEGO Project with its main outputs and goals, to effectively attract these organizations to participate in Forum conferences as well as to follow the HEGO e-Business Portal and provide their feedback. An Action plan was drafted for the implementation of the activity. After defining the target respondents, the CARD team made the appointments and clarified the implementation schedule. The messages were used that were directed mainly towards expert audiences and the general public so as to motivate them to participate in the HEGO Cluster, such as:

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- ✓ Description of the Project Overall Objective and HEGO cluster
- ✓ Awareness Raising about the significant positive impact of the HEGO Project in herb sector
- ✓ Motivation for Participation in HEGO's Cluster which will give them opportunity to establish multi-lateral cross-border and international trade links for herb products in BSB countries by using ICT and Marketing and Branding Strategies
- ✓ Dissemination for Understanding communicating knowledge to target audiences so that it may be used to lead to changes in herb sector and to improve the accessibility of desired knowledge for herbs cultivation

The project was disseminated also by CARD website and Facebook page.

Questions discussed during the meetings:

- ❖ Are you ready to join HEGO's cross-border Cluster?
- ❖ Are you ready to join the e-Business Portal?
- ❖ If not, what could be a problem for not joining?
- ❖ What do you expect from HEGO's Cluster and e-Business Portal?
- ❖ What kind of improvements does the herb sector need?

2 meetings were organized in CARD foundation office with project target stakeholders each with estimated 18 participants. Totally 36 participant's consultation process was conducted during stakeholders' meetings. The rest 24 participants' target was reached through face-to-face interpersonal communication both in the CARD office and in CARD Farm Service Centers.

CARD team conducted meetings with EU BSB Smart Farming and EU BSB 1135/ AGREEN "Cross-Border Alliance for Climate-Smart and Green Agriculture in the Black

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Sea Basin" projects teams which implements similar projects and have similar target groups. We held discussions with the partner organizations about the awareness of the project, the goals, tasks and structure of the HEGO cluster, they expressed their willingness to join the HEGO cross-border cluster and the planned e-Business Portal. In the framework of the cooperation, the CARD team presented the project at the meetings of the target audience of those projects and held discussions on the next steps, gaps in the herbs field, necessary changes and collected recommendations from the target groups.

The purpose of the consultation process was to understand the situation and spherical knowledge about herb sector based on the collected answers, to collect common findings, conclusions and suggestions/ recommendations on e-Business Portal and needs, modernization practices and improvement of trade value of herb products among Armenian stakeholders.

The consultation was conducted in question and answer format. The discussion, considerations, recommendations were written down and analyzed.

Before the consultation process, the HEGO Project was introduced to the participants



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in its entirety, with its goals and the planned steps to achieve significant positive final impact of the Project.

In scope of HEGO Business Forum in Armenia the public television company of Armenia made a TV release about HEGO project, which was disseminated all over Armenia.

Below is the link for the TV report:

<https://www.facebook.com/lurer1tv/videos/3168737550106374>

#### 4. Findings and Recommendations

Totally we have 60 stakeholders for consultation process from HEGO Project target group in 10 regions of Armenia and in capital Yerevan, all the participants were provided with HEGO printing materials including DVDs and USBs.

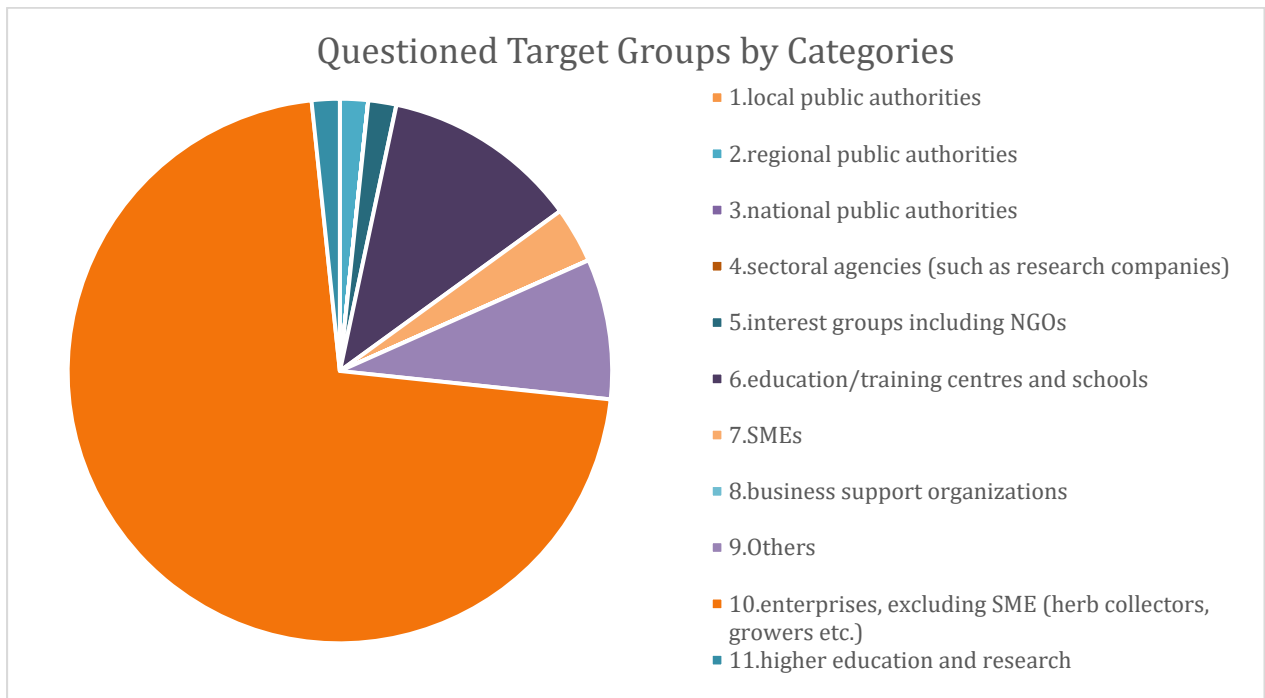
72% of the responders belonged to herb collectors and growers and the remaining 28% to the other target groups. Below is presented the target group by percentage in a matrix graphic form:



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With each of the first group respondents we discussed the current situation of the herb market, the issues in the field of wild collection, knowledge about biodiversity and endemism of herbs, the opportunities and the willingness for cultivation, issues and the knowledge gaps in production and export processes, the opportunities and the problems to enter the foreign market. We tried to spot the gaps and challenges in their field of activities and based on these discussions tried also to reveal needed actions and steps to make longer-term improvements in the herb sector.



Collectors of herbs prefer to collect herbs from wild because in that case the wild collection is carried out according to the need of the order. In case of cultivation,

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they are ready to grow the plant if there is a definite order with approved quantity and type of herb as they consider the cultivation as additional waste of time and money.



The farmers grow several types of herbs, especially with high value. In the case of new markets, they are ready to grow more types and big quantities. They state that they are growing the varieties that are in high demand in the market. Every year they meet with the producers to check the necessary quantities and types of herbs they need. Currently, the demand for organic raw materials has also increased, so most of the raw material customers prefer to buy from organic raw material suppliers.



Regarding the SMEs, we discussed the current situation in the herb market with the method of SWOT analysis and concluded that Armenia has all opportunities to grow high-quality herbs but our producers would like to expand their market and get new opportunities for export.

So, perhaps the strongest expectation for this target group from the HEGO project is the acquisition of new markets, in which case they are ready to cultivate the plants in high demand. The majority of those questioned expressed their willingness to participate in HEGO cross-border Cluster and also to follow e-Business Portal with other herb businesses/producers. They note that the e-Business Portal concept can create great opportunities for cooperation and acquiring new markets, they are ready to join

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and create a Cluster, through which there will be a greater opportunity to export to the foreign market. In the case of HEGO cross-border Cluster, they are ready to join the cluster and if needed export under the name of 1 organization, collecting the necessary products.

28% of the respondents belonged to the rest target groups. We discussed the current situation of herb sector in Armenia also with each organization from this target groups which are i.e. public authorities, sectorial



agencies representatives, related field education/ training centers representatives and trainers, business support organizations etc. We tried to spot the gaps and challenges in this sector. Each of the responders presented their activities and raised the issues encountered in the process of implementation. They also expressed their willingness to participate in HEGO Forum conferences and in cross-border Cluster and also to follow e-Business Portal with other similar organizations. Among these respondents we tried to reveal the possible cooperation for further activities of HEGO and to spot the knowledge gap and training needs in herb sector, as there are organizations who also provide trainings in agricultural sectors.

The CARD team collected, revised the stakeholders list for the further activities and added some project relevant new stakeholders to the mapping list. The CARD team collected and analyzed the questions, answers, suggestions, and recommendations raised during the discussions and meetings.

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## 5. Conclusions

In the scope of implementation of the Activity A.T4.2 - Consultation process and discussion on the aims, objectives and structure of the Cluster with stakeholders and end beneficiaries within the Deliverable D.T4.2.1. - Report on consultation process results below are presented conclusions gathered during the meetings with the project's target groups.

The majority of the participants are willing to join cross-border Cluster and also to follow e-Business Portal. By joining the cluster, they expect to get new opportunities for export. Within the framework of the e-business portal, they want to receive information about plants, as well as about cultivation, processing, and branding. According to the majority of participants, it would also be desirable for the website to provide information about the supporting projects available in the region. In case of receiving support, their businesses will start working with greater potential. There is a lack of Internet access and computer skills among wild collection groups, which can be a barrier for joining HEGO e-business portal. The target groups like public authorities, sectorial agencies representatives, related field education/ training centers representatives and trainers, business support organizations etc. expressed their willingness to join e-business portal, which will be a new source of information about the plant sector and why not, it will also create an opportunity to gain new connections and cooperation with the stakeholders of the plant sector in Black Sea Basin countries.

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## Notes

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## Disclaimer:

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