



## Deliverable Report

<b>HEI Project</b>	
HEI Project Name:	NOBALIS
HEI Project start date:	01.07.22
<b>Deliverable</b>	
Title:	Phase 1 report on the NOBALIS Entrepreneurial and Innovation Capacity Development Programme
Deliverable No.:	D4.1
Type of Deliverable	Document, report
Authors:	BIA
Level of completion (0 – 100)	100
Delivery date (due):	28.12.22
Due deliverable (actual):	31.12.22
Dissemination level	PU = Public, fully open access, e.g. web





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## 1. Summary of the NOBALIS EICD Programme

The NOBALIS Entrepreneurial and Innovation Capacity Development (EICD) Programme is in essence a pre-acceleration type of programme supporting the **development of initial ideas related to new products/services in food, biotech and bioresources towards valid business models**. The participants are students (all levels) and staff members (both academics and non-academics) from Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU), Estonian University of Life Sciences (EULS), Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LLU), Linnaeus University (LNU) and Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU). On top of that, mentoring is also supported to startups/ scaleups in the NOBALIS countries (Estonia, Latvia, Sweden and Norway).

The EICD programme forms work package 4 (WP4) of the NOBALIS project, led by Baltic Innovation Agency (BIA). Over the course of the project, the program is run in **3 online editions, each for 3 months**. The 1st edition of the programme was carried out in Phase 1 of the project (July to December 2022). Phase 2 of the project will include the 2nd and 3rd editions (lessons learned and feedback from the previous edition taken into account in preparing the new edition). Each edition starts with a hackathon and matchmaking event, followed by focused activities for students, staff members, student-staff teams and start-ups (the core programme includes three intense training and mentoring days, including 2-3 joint presentations by experienced mentors, followed by 1:1 mentoring for the teams and individual work in between the intense development days). The 3-month programme will end with a final event: Demo Day, bringing together all participants and also external parties from the partners' ecosystems. The programme is carried out online (Zoom platform used) to facilitate the participation of people from different countries taking into account travel costs, COVID-related issues as well as environmental concerns related to travelling.

The **main goals** of the EICD programme are to:

- support the development of the initial ideas of students related to new products/services in the focus fields **towards valid business models** (*student track*);
- **increase the capacities of staff** (academic and non-academic) related to innovation management with the help of experienced mentors, and facilitate exchange of related best practices (*staff track*);
- facilitate student-staff collaboration in innovation activities and provide **focused support on student-staff teams** (staff members are asked to propose their own ideas/ challenges that students can connect with, so that student-staff teams are formulated);

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- **support existing start-ups** linked with the participating HEIs' ecosystems via focused 1:1 mentoring by leading experts (researchers, industry representatives).

### Key topics covered in the programme

- sustainable product development and minimum viable product
- branding and sales
- fundraising (both public and private financing)
- pitching training and presentation skills.

## 2. Key results and lessons learned

All in all, implementation of the first edition of the EICD programme can be considered successful. All KPIs related to Phase 1 were achieved, as outlined in the table below. What is not clearly reflected in the KPIs is the progress that the eight teams graduating from the programme made over the three months. The best teams made a big leap from an initial idea to a more solid business model. The workshops and, in particular, the 1:1 mentoring sessions helped the teams to focus their idea better, some also managed to prepare their first prototypes and MVPs, and there was also clearly visible progress in terms of branding and presentation skills.

WP4 KPIs for the entire project period (July 22 - June 24)	Phase 1 planned	Phase 1 achieved	Phase 2A	Phase 2B	TOTAL
	JUL-DEC 22		JAN-DEC 23	JAN-JUL 24	
# start-up/scale-ups supported	2	2	3	2	7
# students mentored	12	16	13	13	38
# academic staff members mentored	4	4	5	4	13
# non-academic staff mentored	4	4	5	4	13

The first edition of NOBALIS Entrepreneurship and Innovation Capacity Development Program provided some valuable lessons in terms of both what works well and what needs adjusting in the next editions of the programme (2<sup>nd</sup> edition in Autumn 2023 and 3<sup>rd</sup> edition in Spring 2024). Some of these lessons learned can also be considered relevant for other EIT HEI projects and institutions organising innovation and business development support for students and staff in



higher education institutions. Therefore, some of the topics addressed below have also been included in the short video produced under WP5 of the project, targeting the HEI community in general.

### Dealing with time pressure

The key challenge in running the first edition of the EICD Programme was time pressure in preparing the programme. As the EIT HEI project started in July 2022, the preparations needed to be made in the period of Summer holidays in order to deliver the programme as planned. This called for a very focused effort and did not enable engaging some potential cooperation partners (incl. getting ideas from industry for the hackathon, etc.). Time pressure also caused a challenge inside the HEIs for recruiting participants for all the different tracks, as there was very limited time for discussing certain aspects (e.g. possibility of engagement of student-staff teams from Sweden and Norway, as such collaborations are subject to some restrictions). Also, agreements with speakers and mentors needed to be made fast, in the context of which a rational choice was building upon the existing expert network of the EICD Programme Coordinator, Baltic Innovation Agency. This resulted in a group of strong experts being involved in the programme, however, the geographical balance of the speakers/mentors could be improved in the next editions.

As the next edition of the EICD Programme will take place in Autumn 2023, the NOBALIS partners now have a chance to properly analyse the experience gained from piloting the EICD Programme in 2022 and use the lessons learned for solid preparation of the next edition.

### Necessity for a clear value proposition

The organisers of the NOBALIS EICD Programme unanimously agreed that in order to attract enough motivated participants to take part in the programme, the value proposition from the side of the programme needs to be clear. Therefore, we took time to design promotional material of the EICD programme (please see Annex 2 for the 2-pager) and communicate the value proposition. The key elements of the NOBALIS EICD value proposition in the 1<sup>st</sup> edition were the following:

- **hands-on support** for developing your business idea
  - **great international mentors** in business and product development, marketing and sales, and other fields relevant to participants.
  - **help with IP management, prototyping facilities & tools** and building **contacts with investors**
- For best teams:







- **practical collaboration opportunities** with innovation platforms of the NOBALIS partners: e.g. with SLU Future Food Platform, fast track to upcoming Buildit Green acceleration programmes (offering full-scale acceleration + investment)
- **special prizes** by NOBALIS partners

To reflect on how the value proposition was actually delivered, some aspects were not fully realised (e.g. IP management support, fast track to Buildit Green programmes) due to the teams being very early-stage. An area of improvement for the next edition is the element of prizes – the project team was initially unclear how monetary prizes/awards can be budgeted in the project. This issue is clarified now and for the next editions, monetary prizes will be foreseen for the best teams in the budgets of partners involved in the EICD Programme. The prizes will also be clearly outlined in the promotional material for the next editions, supporting recruitment of participants.

### Using success stories to recruit participants

As some of the NOBALIS universities found recruitment of participants to the EICD programme somewhat challenging, the generally very positive experience from first edition of the programme will support recruitment to the second edition in 2023 and third edition in 2024. In addition, the winners of the first edition will act as ambassadors for the EICD programme, sharing their own journeys and takeaways from the programme.

### Virtues and challenges of the virtual format

Virtual format has advantages but also shortcomings. It facilitates international participation and makes the scheduling of events easier. On the other hand, it is more challenging in terms of engaging participants. A virtual experience is different from being physically present and able to interact with all other participants. In organising virtual programmes, it is essential to ensure that there are enough interactive tasks and elements in each session.

For the next edition of the NOBALIS EICD programme, we also aim to explore a structure where the core part of the programme remains virtual, but on top of that regional physical meetups are planned for the teams and staff from each NOBALIS country.

### Programme structure and methodology

A virtual program that is implemented over several sessions needs to be clearly structured and there cannot be too long gaps between the sessions. What worked well in the NOBALIS programme

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is the structure of monthly workshops with 2-3 topics covered, followed by 1-to-1 mentoring and individual work by the teams before the next session.

### Strengthening the engagement of the involved experts (speakers, mentors)

The NOBALIS program engaged a variety of experts to cover specific topics relevant to start-up development. An idea proposed as feedback was that to give speakers and mentors a better overview of the “bigger picture” and progress of the teams, there could be a joint meeting with all engaged experts to put different pieces of the puzzle together. Also, another potential solution is to use a system of lead mentors that deal with the teams throughout the programme so that eventually there is a better understanding of the progress of the team throughout the program.

### Improving the collection of feedback

Collection of feedback from both participants as well as speakers and mentors is invaluable for further improvement of the program. Unfortunately, the participants of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the NOBALIS programme were not too eager to fill in the feedback forms sent to them after each of the three sessions as well as after the Demo Day. At the time of preparing this report, feedback gathering on the entire programme is still ongoing. Points of improvement include 1) shortening the feedback form as it was perhaps too lengthy; 2) better communicating that getting feedback is essential to the organisers. Luckily, some feedback was shared by the participants as part of the joint workshops carried out. In addition to traditional feedback questionnaires, our experience shows that short virtual meetings with mentors are a great source for valuable insights.

### Importance of the role of passionate academic staff in HEIs

As a general finding/ lesson learned - the students’ feedback demonstrated how important is the role of academic staff in higher education institutions in creating interest in the students for a particular field. Passionate researchers inspired some of the participating students to work with their business idea. While such researchers were not directly doing anything entrepreneurship-related, the passion for their research subject and teaching led the students to proceed with their own ideas.





## Annex 1: Overview of the implementation of the NOBALIS EICD programme

### T4.1 Preparation and selection of participants

Task Leader: Baltic Innovation Agency (BIA)

#### *Task as planned in the application*

This task focuses on the **administrative setup** of the programme and identifying/attracting/selecting participants from among all target groups (students, academic staff and non-academic staff, startups) in the programme thematic focus area: food, bioresources and biotechnologies. Participants will be identified via an **open call published ca. 1 month before the start** of the programme.

#### *Reflections on implementation*

T4.1 was realised as planned. The open call was published one month before the hackathon, in 25<sup>th</sup> August 2023, via the NOBALIS universities' relevant channels (mailing lists, newsletters, social media, etc). In addition, the representatives of NOBALIS HEIs involved in WP4 promoted the programme in relevant lectures, meetings with students, etc.

### T4.2 Hackathon and matchmaking event

Task Leader: Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)

#### *Task as planned in the application*

The EICD program starts with a joint hackathon and matchmaking event (HME), focused on idea generation and team formulation. Participants can join with business ideas and teams, or present an idea to find team members among participants without as-yet formulated ideas or teams. The ecosystem (incl. industry) will also supply challenges. For stronger collaboration between students and staff in I&E activities, student-staff teams will be formulated.

The HME will include:

- inspirational presentations by entrepreneurs and/or examples of successful student-staff collaborations in the fields at focus
- presentation of initial ideas by participants
- team formulation and idea development in teams
- pitching session

The best teams will be invited to continue their work in mentoring sessions.

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### *Reflections on implementation*

The hackathon and matchmaking event took place on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022. 54 persons registered to take part in the event, proposing in total 30 ideas (this included 10 ideas backed by an already formulated team and 20 ideas proposed by individuals looking to find team members). 4 ideas were initially submitted from EULS, 6 from LLU, 1 from LNU, 5 from NMBU and 19 from SLU.

The actual participation rate at the event was somewhat lower, as expected: in total, 39 members of the target group participated, working jointly on 16 ideas: 1 from EULS, 5 from LLU, 1 from LNU, 2 from NMBU and 7 from SLU. The total number of participants including speakers and NOBALIS partners was 55 persons.

In sum, the HME was carried out successfully and as planned. Please see also the more detailed agenda of the event in Annex 2 of this document.

After the hackathon, all participants – as well as persons that were not able to participate in the HME - had a chance to fine-tune their idea and present their Idea Templates (a pre-defined template for describing the idea and team) by 3 October 2022. 12 idea submissions were received in total.

The jury/ selection committee evaluating the idea submissions included one representative by each NOBALIS partner. The selection criteria included:

- Strength of the idea (the idea has potential, is not too vague, can be developed further in 3 months)
- Strength of the team (at least 2 members in the team, enthusiasm and skills of the team representatives, coachability)
- Potential for adding value via the NOBALIS programme (we can see that the programme can help the team, the idea is not too early nor too mature for our programme, we are able to provide the right mentors for the team, etc.)

Based on the summarised results of the jury evaluation (an online Excel tool was used for this), 6 student teams and 2 student-staff team were selected to be invited to take part in the mentoring programme.

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### Student teams:

- 1) Canola protein bar (EULS)
- 2) Cork-based eating utensils (SLU)
- 3) Horticulture data analysis tool (LLU)
- 4) Mushroom cultivation (SLU)
- 5) Savoury Protein Bars (LLU)
- 6) Vegetable Peel Chips (LLU)

### Student-staff teams

- 7) Spanish slug power (LLU)
- 8) Algae for Food and Feed (NMBU/SLU)

NB! Please find more information about the teams in Annex 2 of the report.

### T4.3 Student track: mentoring sessions

Task Leader: BIA

#### *Task as planned in the application*

The HME event is followed by 3 intense development days (min. 6 teams of 2-3 people). Each day will include 2-3 joint presentations by experienced mentors, followed by 1:1 mentoring for the teams. Key topics covered: sustainable product development and MVP, branding and sales, fund-raising (public and private), pitching training and presentation skills. Mentors will be recruited in the partners' networks and the Buildit mentor network (200+ experts from all around the world). Each development day will include a PPP (progress-problems-plans) session of the teams for progress review and peer learning.

#### *Reflections on implementation:*

This task was implemented as planned.

The three intense development days took place as follows:

**I Intense development day:** 20 October, 13:00 – 16:00 CET

27 participants

Topics covered:

Business model development

Marketing and sales

Additional 1:1 mentoring took place between 21 October and 8 November;

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individual work: filling in the Business Model Canvas

**II Intense development day:** 9 November, 13:00 – 16:00 CET

27 participants

Topics covered:

- 1) Sustainable Product Development and Design, MVP
- 2) Impact management and measurement

Additional 1:1 mentoring took place between 10 November and 5 December;

individual work: developing and testing each team's MVP, plus developing an updated 3-minute pitch for the pitching training.

**III Intense development day:** 13:00 – 16:00 CET

27 participants

Topics covered:

- 1) Financing for the development of the teams' ideas
- 2) Engaging investors
- 3) Pitching training

Additional 1:1 mentoring took place between 7-14 December;

individual work: developing the final 3-minute pitch for the Demo Day

NB! Please see Annex 2 for a more detailed overview of each intense development day as well as the programme and involved speakers/mentors.

#### T4.4 Staff track: mentoring sessions

Task Leader: Ard Innovation (ARD)

*Task as planned in the application*

The staff track will focus broadly on **good practices related to innovation management** and **commercialization** of early-stage innovations in R&D activities. The key target groups here are **academic staff** interested in practical applications of their research; academic staff in charge of innovation management courses; research impact teams; and **non-academic staff** supporting innovation processes. As in T4.3, there are 3 intense mentoring days (topics and mentors defined by the needs of the participants) and peer-learning sessions. Participants are not selected via the hackathon event; they will be found in collaboration with all involved HEIs via an open call for participation.

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### *Reflections on implementation*

In phase I of the NOBALIS project, the staff track was merged with the student track. This means that in addition to the student teams and student-staff teams, two staff teams (combining both academics and non-academics) participated in the unified EICD programme: InSacco and REQUEST (both from NMBU). This was considered practical in terms of the general time constraints of running the first edition of the programme as well as taking into account the interests of the particular staff groups involved. In the second edition of the programme (in autumn 2023), the task leader, Ard Innovation, considers a potentially different approach, running the staff track as a separate parallel mini-programme inside the EICD programme. This will be feasible in the context of the next edition as there will be more time for preparations and focused communication with all the NOBALIS HEIs about the more specific focus of the mini-programme based on the interests of the universities and staff to be involved.

NB! Please see more on the two staff teams involved in the first edition of the programme in Annex 2.

### **T4.5 Specific support to start-ups and student-staff teams**

Task Leader: BIA (supported by Ard)

### *Task as planned in the application*

Start-ups and student-staff teams can also participate in T4.3, but T4.5 focuses on additional 1:1 mentoring based on the specific needs of such teams/start-ups (ca. 3-4 teams/start-ups will be granted 10 hours of 1:1 mentoring by leading experts in their field). Start-ups will be identified from the networks of all partners, with selection made based on evaluation of a short application form. EIT Core KPIs “Innovations launched on the market” and “Start-ups created” will be addressed. Target: 5 innovations and/or start-ups launched (phase 1+2).

### *Reflections on implementation*

Two student-staff teams participated in the EICD Programme – PowerFeed, focused on developing a protein powder from Spanish slugs use as animal feed (LLU) and OlaAlga, developing algae-based eating utensils (collaboration between NMBU/SLU). Given the development stage of the idea, both teams opted for going through the entire EICD Programme together with the student teams and two staff teams, making active use of the provided 1:1 mentoring activities as well.

Regarding support to startups, in Phase I NOBALIS provided support to two startups: CIOL (Norway) and GeneCode (Estonia). Both companies received mentoring and consultancy services from dedicated NOBALIS partners over the course of more than two months.

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CIOL AS is a Norwegian startup that enables producers of pressure treated and modified wood to deliver non-toxic and more durable alternatives to existing copper impregnated wood products at a comparable price point and with higher margins.

Service provision to CIOL in the context of NOBALIS by Ard Innovation and Baltic Innovation Agency included:

- Offer to use the mentoring network and community created through the NOBALIS EICD-programme
- Mentoring and consultancy on product, services and business model development
- Mentoring and consultancy on impact measurement, assesment and management
- Introduction to the EIC-accelerator application
- Mentoring and consultancy on SME programs within the EU
- Consultancy on SME self-assessment for funding applications within the EU
- Legal advice on possibilities within the EU system
- Introduction to match-making areanas within CIOL's field

**GeneCode AS** is an Estonian pharma startup, developing innovative treatment strategies in neurodegenerative diseases and anti-virals. For neurodegenerative diseases, GeneCode applies proprietary drug design technologies for innovative target mechanisms. This enables the synthesis and development of novel small-molecule drug candidates which validates the target biology towards its proposed indications, such as Parkinson's disease, spinal cord injury, Huntington's disease, motor neuronal disease, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease and pain. NOBALIS partner Baltic Innovation Agency provided mentoring and consultancy to GeneCode in the process of preparing a public funding application to the European Innovation Council EIC Accelerator measure. The focus of the EIC Accelerator project is to develop a novel anti-Parkinson's Disease (PD) drug that contains a central nervous system penetrant compound imitating GDNF peptide pathway activation that alleviates both motor and non-motor symptoms in PD patients, protecting and restoring lesioned dopamine neurons as well as potentially increasing dopamine levels in brain tissue. The goal of the project is to develop the technology from TRL 9 to TRL 8.

More specifically, service provision to GeneCode in the context of NOBALIS included:

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- Mentoring and consultancy on product and business model development in the EIC Accelerator framework
- Review of the financing model of the proposed EIC Accelerator project
- General consultancy in preparing the EIC Accelerator Phase I application (short application)
- Overview of the next steps in terms of the EIC Accelerator Phase II application
- Consultancy on other EU funding opportunities relevant to GeneCode

#### T4.6 Final event and Demo Day

Task Leader: Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LLU)

##### *Task as planned in the application*

The final event brings together participants and audiences from partnering organizations and ecosystems. The event includes inspirational presentations related to good practices in innovation management and reflections on the results of the staff track, and pitches from participants of the student track, the student-staff teams and start-ups supported. An international jury (RD&I innovation ecosystem stakeholders and investors) will provide feedback and announce the top 3 who will receive awards provided by the consortium and potential other stakeholders, incl. jury members (tbs; e.g. voucher for consultancy services, or best teams can be shortlisted for strong external accelerator programmes, etc.).

##### *Reflections on implementation*

Demo Day was carried out as planned on 15 December 2022 (online, using the Zoom platform). In total, 31 persons participate in the Demo Day.

In the context of the event, eight teams that had gone through the mentoring programme were asked to present their pitches to an international jury but only student teams and student-staff teams competed for the prizes put out for the best teams (i.e., the staff teams were not competing for the prizes).

The key evaluation criterion for the jury was the objective strength/ business potential of the idea and the team (product, technological solution, business model, competences of the team) based on the pitch presented.

Each jury member named their TOP3 teams and provide explanations of why she/he considers those teams to be the best. An Excel tool was used to summarise the votes (TOP3 from each jury member received 3, 2,1 points, respectively).

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At the end of the event the best teams were announced:

I place and the best team from Sweden: **UNwasted**

II place and the best team from Estonia: **KESE**

III place and the best team from Latvia: **PowerFeed**

The best team from Norway: **OlaAlga**

Please see Annex 2 for a detailed overview of the Demo Day agenda, jury members and prizes.

The NOBALIS partners agreed with the best teams that they will act as ambassadors for the next NOBALIS batch/Hackathon in Autumn 2023 (sharing their experiences via inspirational social media messages, stories at the university newsletter, meetings organised to promote the programme).

## Annex 2: Full programme overview and participating teams

Implementation of the EICD programme included three main stages:

- (1) Hackathon and selection of participants to the mentor programme
- (2) Mentor programme
- (3) Demo Day

### Hackathon and selection of participants to the mentor programme

The hackathon served as the first step of the programme. This was an idea hackathon meaning that the participants were working on the development of an innovative idea (no prototype building at the event, etc). Most teams had very early-stage ideas and the hackathon served to help them with:

- Idea development – in the group work, the teams will be working on thinking through the idea jointly based on the Idea Template provided (see below);
- Team formulation – there were 12 teams participating, plus 18 individual 'idea owners' looking to find team members, plus a number of people without an idea or a team.

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## HACKATHON AGENDA 26 September, 13-17 CET in Zoom

### 13.00 – 14.00 INSPIRATION AND INTRO

#### **Lauri Reuter: The road from being a scientist to an entrepreneur**

Lauri Reuter is a scientist turned investor and partner at Nordic FoodTech VC, the 1st foodtech VC fund in the Nordics and Baltics.

**SLU Future Food platform and SLU Holding:** working together to get good ideas commercialised at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)

#### **Nemailla Bonturi: the story of Äio Tech**

Nemailla Bonturi is a senior researcher at TalTech and co-founder of Äio Tech, a startup synthesizing food & feed ingredients from sawdust and other industrial waste.

14:00 – 14:15 NOBALIS & the EICD programme. Intro to the hackathon - Kadri Uus, Baltic Innovation Agency, Coordinator of the NOBALIS EICD Programme

*14:15 – 14:30 Short break*

### 14:30 – 17:00 HACKATHON & MATCHMAKING

- 14:30 – 15:00 Initial presentation of ideas (idea owners/team leads).  
1 minute for each idea: covering (1) the essence of your idea; (2) if you are looking for additional team members, which skills/competences should they have?
- 15:00 – 16:00 Idea development in teams (Zoom breakout rooms; working on the Idea Template, mentor help provided)
- 16:00 – 16:45 Presenting results of group work
- 16:45 – 17:00 Wrap-up of the day & next steps

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## IDEA TEMPLATE

### Description of the product/service idea

- What is the problem or challenge we are solving
- What is our product or service
- What is new/innovative about our idea

### Key aspects of the business model

- How will we make money related to our idea
- Who is our key customer
- What is our value proposition to the customer

### Team and plans

- Who are our team members and what is their previous experience
- Which skills are missing from our team
- What are our expectations and goals to achieve for the next 3 months during the NOBALIS programme, what do we particularly need help with

After the hackathon, the teams had one week to further develop/fine-tune their idea template and submit it for final evaluation by the NOBALIS jury/selection committee. This also gave an opportunity for an additional entry in the programme for teams who could not be present at the hackathon.

## Teams selected to the mentor programme

### Student teams

#### 1. S.U.R.V. Bar - Savoury Protein Bars from brewing dregs and hemp seeds

The team wishes to manufacture ready-to-eat savoury protein bars from beer industry byproducts using efficient protein sourcing technology. The nutritious snack is flavorful due to natural ingredients with an umami taste, capable of being heated and served as a meal, and more on the “savoury” side with less sugar to cater to the ‘salty’ tooth. The team focused on figuring out the technology behind protein sourcing and the full recipe for protein bars while also seeking to learn more about product development.

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Team members: Alvīne Henriete Auziņa, Andris Jugāns  
University: Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LLU)

### 2. Vegetable Peel Chips

The team plans to make chips from potato and carrot peels using less oil than regular chips. The team members have 3 years of hands-on experience studying food quality and innovations. The main goal in the programme is to build a marketable prototype.

Team members: Bella Anna Štamere, Gunda Glazere  
University: Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LLU)  
*Unfortunately, this team did not complete the EICD Programme because of lack of time for participation.*

### 3. UNwasted - Sustainable mushroom cultivation

The team utilizes food waste and residual materials from local industries as the substrate for the domestic cultivation of mushrooms. After culturing and acclimatizing fungal strains and species suitable for the different substrate materials, the team aims to develop home-grown kits with AI sensors and achieve the possibility of decentralized production. The team is excited to learn more about how to secure research funding and grants, sharpen their pitching skills, engage investors, prototype and pilot their product.

Team members: Caroline Sandberg, Riddhi Parakh  
University: Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)

### 4. GardenNote - Plantation and horticulture data collection and analysis tool for vegetable growers

The team plans to create an application for exchanging best practices of food microgeneration, including many related aspects such as crop sequence, applied methods, and selected varieties for optimal results. The application will help a community of enthusiasts and professionals thrive on shared experiences and accumulated knowledge by enabling them to create garden plans, add relevant descriptions and lists, and collect photos to expand and store valuable expertise. The team strives to test the idea with a wider public and attract the necessary IT competence.

Team members: Agita Bičevska, Matīss Bičevskis  
University: Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LLU)







### 5. Corky - Cutlery from recycled natural corks

The team wishes to manufacture alternative cutlery products to substitute single-use plastic counterparts at supermarkets, cafes, restaurants, festival venues, and street vendors. Their solution to plastic pollution is grinding recycled natural corks into environmentally-friendly spoons, forks, and knives. The team expects to conduct a business analysis of the product, build a prototype, and craft a go-to-market strategy during the programme.

Team members: Pamela Huskin Okinedo, Markus Oskarsson, Svea Bertolatus, Aliyah Abdi  
University: Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)

*Unfortunately, this team did not complete the EICD Programme because of lack of time for participation.*

### 6. KESE – Canola protein bar

The team is developing a healthy savoury protein bar based on the use of Canola protein. In Estonia, Canola is the most cultivated protein-rich crop. Since the demand for sustainable proteins is rising, the team's goal/mission is to give the canola a greater value and use its proteins for human consumption instead of animal feed. Cutting out animals from food production will also help to reduce the carbon footprint of the food industry.

Team members: Sander Liiva, Stiven Vatin, Jürgen Vahter, Egert Pihlak, Martin Pent  
University: Estonian University of Life Sciences (EULS)

## Student-staff teams

### 1. PowerFeed - Protein powder from Spanish slugs

The team plans to make protein powder from Spanish slugs for animal (ducks, chickens, geese) feed. In this way, the team aims to prevent agricultural losses caused by the pest and provide an alternative animal feed for poultry farmers. Team members are looking for help with technological issues concerning the production of snail powder as well as sustainable packaging solutions for the product.

Team members: Dina Popluga (academic: researcher and Vice-dean at Faculty of Economics and Social Development at LLU), Andžejs Petkevičs, Jordan Uzarama, Filipe Sanc, Raivo Ločmelis  
University: Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LLU)

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## 2. OlaAlga - Algae-based eating utensils

The team wishes to produce eating utensils such as cutlery, straws, cups, plates, and bowls made of seaweed harvested from the ocean, which could be further consumed as food or fertilizer. The seaweed products are meant to provide an environmentally-friendly alternative to metal and paper single-use supplies for cafe and restaurant owners. The team is new to the entrepreneurial scene and welcomes all available support, especially with business development.

Team members: Anna-Kajsa Elvira Schippers, Juline M. Walter (academic: Environmental scientist, currently as a postdoctoral researcher at the Faculty of Chemistry, Biotechnology and Food Science at NMBU)

University: Anna-Kajsa: Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU); Juline: Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)

### Staff teams

#### 1. InSacco

Focus of the idea: Environmental monitoring is a prerequisite for a sustainable development of Norwegian Aquaculture industry. Present methods for environmental monitoring are unprecise, time consuming, expensive and they are mainly based on subjective assessments. Modern DNA technology has opened up possibilities for rapid and objective monitoring of the environment at a fraction of the cost of traditional methods. However, a bottleneck for DNA analysis of the environment is sample processing. InSacco will make available precise methods for isolation and analysis of bacterial DNA on site, and hence contribute to a DNA revolution within environmental monitoring in aquatic environments. The need for precise environmental analysis is increasing, and large, global industries like oil and gas, waterworks and aquaculture will benefit from the InSacco technology verified in this project.

Team members: Kaia Rod (non-academic), Knut Rudi (academic), Inga-Leena Angell (non-academic) and Ragnhild Pettersen (non-academic)

University: Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)/ Ard Innovation

#### 2. REQUEST

Focus of the idea: All major and relevant players in the Norwegian agriculture industry have defined yield registration as one of the key bottlenecks for increased yield and quality of Norwegian forage. REQUEST will contribute to the removal of this bottleneck by providing the farmers with a simple to

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use, yet advanced solution for yield registration, an facilitate increased utilization of Norwegian feed resources in dairy production. The REQUEST project will verify and commercialize a modular and affordable tractor mounted sensor solution for yield registration that will be available for all farmers, regardless of prior technology choices.

Team members: Elin Andersen (non-academic), El Houssein Chouaib Harik (academic)  
University: Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)/ Ard Innovation

## MENTOR PROGRAMME

The ten teams introduced above were invited to the NOBALIS mentoring programme, comprising three intense development days (each covering 2-3 topics relevant to startup development), and additional 1:1 mentoring plus individual work in between the joint sessions. Eight teams successfully completed the programme while two (Corky from SLU and Vegetable Peel Chips from LLU) dropped out due to the time constraints of the team members.

This section provides the detailed agendas of all Intense Development Days/ workshops.

### WORKSHOP 1: Thu, 20 Oct, 13:00-16:00 CET

- 13:00 - 13:15 Welcome & quick progress overview from all teams
- 13:15 - 14:25 **Business Model Development** - Developing a sustainable and green business model, Business Model Canvas and other tools, starting with **describing your own business model**. [Yelena Zhovnikova](#)
- 14:25 - 14:40 Break
- 14:40 - 15:50 **Marketing and Sales** - How to build an efficient marketing strategy to reach your audiences; assessment of competitors, value proposition and product positioning enhancing. [Gunta Grinberga-Zälite](#)
- 15:50 - 16:00 Wrap-up and next steps

**Homework:** filling in your Business Model Canvas (Yelena Zhovnikova)





## WORKSHOP 2: Wed, 9 Nov, 13:00-16:00 CET

- 13:00 - 13:15 Welcome & quick progress overview from all teams
- 13:15 - 14:25 **Sustainable Product Development and Design, MVP** – product design in sync with circular economy principles, the waste hierarchy (prevention, reuse, recycle, recovery and disposal), how to come up with and test **your minimum viable product?** [Ragmar Saksing](#)
- 14:25 - 14:40 *Break*
- 14:40 – 15:50 **Impact management and measurement** – how to build a good framework for measuring/managing the environmental and/or social impact of your product/service? Tools, frameworks, setting KPIs. [Jaan Aps](#)
- 15:50 - 16:00 Wrap-up and next steps

**Homework:** *developing and testing your MVP (Ragmar Saksing); developing an updated 3-minute pitch*



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## WORKSHOP 3: Tue, 6 Dec, 13:00 – 16:00 CET

- 13:00 - 14:00 **Financing for the development of your idea** – Various sources of public & private funding for your idea in different stages of development, incl. relevant EU funding programmes, crowdfunding, etc. [Yelena Zhovnikova](#)
- 14:00 - 14:30 **Engaging Investors** – how to approach and engage investors, incl. the perspective of impact investments. [Aleksander Tönnisson](#)
- 14:30 - 14:45 *Break*
- 14:45 - 16:00 **Pitching Training**– how to put together a great pitch & present your idea impactfully. [Aleksander Tönnisson](#)

**Homework:** *developing the perfect 3-minute pitch for the Demo Day! (Aleksander Tönnisson)*



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## DEMO DAY

The Demo Day of the first edition of the NOBALIS EICD Programme was carried out on 15 December 2022 (online, using the Zoom platform). The Demo Day served as the culmination of the programme, in the context of which the teams that had gone through the mentoring programme had a chance to **pitch their ideas to an international jury**. The jury included the following individuals, representing all NOBALIS countries:

- **Agnese Oļševska**, Head of Jelgava Business Incubator, Investment and Development Agency of Latvia
- **Aleksander Tönnisson**, Partner at Cocoon Ventures, investor
- **Katrin Kepp**, Director of the Centre of Bioeconomy, Estonian University of Life Sciences
- **Charles van de Kerkhof**, Manager of SLU Venture Lab
- **Rene Tönnisson**, Member of the Management Board at Baltic Innovation Agency and Buildit Accelerator, investor
- **Tove Gulbrandsen Devold**, Researcher at the Faculty of Chemistry, Biotechnology and Food Science at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences

The jury evaluated the objective quality of the idea and the team base on the pitches made and decided the best teams of the programme receiving the following **prizes**:

- I place/ Best team: **UNwasted**. Prize: 500 EUR voucher by BIA for further development of the idea (prize from BIA's own means, not budgeted under NOBALIS)
- UNwasted also receive the prize of the best team from Sweden by SLU: 5000 SEK travel grant to be used used for realising the idea, prototyping, participating in a relevant event, study visit, etc.
- II place/ Best team from Estonia: **Kese**. Prize by EULS: Tickets to [sSTARTUPd Day](#), one of the key startup events in the Baltics
- III place/ Best team from Latvia: **PowerFeed**. Prize by LLU: Tickets to [sSTARTUPd Day](#).
- Best team from Norway: **OlaAlga** – prize by NMBU/Ard: tickets to [Tech Tour](#) and 6 hours of mentoring from Ard Innovation

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## NOBALIS Demo Day

15 Dec, 14:00 – 16:00 CET

- 14:00 - 14:10 **Welcome & intro to the day**
- 14:10 - 14:20 **Introduction of the Jury members**
- 14:20 - 15:35 **Pitching time!**
- 15:35 - 15:50 **Jury decision making**
- 15:50 - 16:00 **Announcing the winners**



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