



ALFA
UNLOCKING THE BIOGAS POTENTIAL
OF LIVESTOCK FARMING

D2.1

ALFA Hubs Operational Plan and activities - Initial Report

Q-PLAN INTERNATIONAL

30 / 05 / 2023



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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Advisory Board
BE	Belgium
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
IT	Italy
RES	Renewable Energy Systems
SK	Slovak Republic
KAM	Key Account Management
WP	Work Package

Executive Summary

The ALFA project aims at scaling-up the market uptake of Renewable Energy Systems (RES) by unlocking the biogas potential of agriculture and livestock farming across 6 European countries (Greece (EL), Denmark (DK), Belgium (BE), Spain (ES), Italy (IT), Slovakia (SK)). The great diversity which characterizes the frameworks and specificities of local biogas markets across Europe requires an adaptable application of tailor-made solutions beyond uniform approaches when it comes to supporting the deployment and market uptake of biogas solutions.

Thus, to accommodate this challenge and to effectively respond to the differences stemming from the framework conditions, market specificities, cultural differences, etc., the ALFA approach has incorporated in its methodology the setting up and running of local structures designed to respond to region-specific challenges through interaction and engagement with the quadruple helix stakeholders (Public Authorities, Business, Academia and Civil Society). The regional Hubs model encapsulates both the need to better inform the actions and measures to be employed but also the ability to act on them effectively.

According to the ALFA project concept the regional Hubs are the basic implementation tools for the delivery of the support measures for the market uptake of biogas solutions in livestock farming. The Hubs will be tasked with identifying, warming-up and engaging regional stakeholders in project activities, whilst facilitating the adjustment of the support in their regional context.

A baseline strategy and an operational model for the regional Hubs is outlined in this report to ensure coordinated action, based on which the regional partners will define the dedicated strategy and operational plan of their respective regional hub. A monitoring plan and framework is also defined to enable partners responsible for the Hubs to keep track and organize their engagement activities.

This report (D2.1) produced under Task 2.1 outlines the operational plan of each ALFA regional hub. A final report towards the end of the project (D2.8) will present the operational plans, activities and results achieved by each ALFA regional hub under Task 2.1 after the two rounds of the ALFA Hubs operation.

1. Introduction

1.1 Aim and Scope

The ALFA project aims at scaling-up the market uptake of Renewable Energy Systems (RES), by unlocking the biogas potential of agriculture and livestock farming. In particular, ALFA, through the regional Hubs will support 50 livestock farmers with tailor made support measures tested and validated across 6 European countries, namely Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Spain, and Slovakia.

Working towards this target, in the first semester of the project, the consortium completed both an assessment of the framework conditions impeding or favoring the uptake of biogas (T1.1¹) and an analysis of the needs, perceptions, and challenges of livestock farmers, market actors and stakeholders across the 6 targeted regions (T1.2²).

The data collected will provide the basis for the elaboration of demand-driven recommendations that will facilitate the customization and formation of support measures for the ALFA project's scope – to scale-up the involvement of livestock farmers in supporting and accelerating market uptake of biogas as a renewable energy source.

The ALFA methodology strives to ensure that the solutions applied will be tailor-made to region specific conditions and needs, whilst capitalizing on assets, resources and accomplishments developed locally to be shared and exploited globally.

The aim of Task 2.1 is twofold:

- the development and operation of the ALFA Engagement Platform to serve as a global digital hub, aggregating relevant news, tools and resources developed by the project (reports, inventory of case studies etc.) and other relevant initiatives and networks, utilizing the ALFA tools, of the Atlas Map, the Decision Support Tools, and the biogas Forum.
- the setting up of regional ALFA Hubs tasked with the mobilization of the regional multi-stakeholder communities of our biogas markets (Farmers: livestock farmers, biomass supplier, Authorities: regional authorities, policymakers, Business: energy suppliers, technology installers, technical consultancies, livestock-related businesses with biogas, Academia: leaders in respective research projects and studies, Civil society: NGOs, consumer associations, action groups, networks supporting livestock farmers) to ensure effective stakeholder engagement as well as efficient knowledge sharing, along with establishing a gender balance.

Overall, our development process aims at including our stakeholders as co-creators, with a view to iteratively improving and fine-tuning our solutions according to their needs and feedback, ensuring their alignment to regional specificities. Therefore, we are developing and employing these structures, that blend online and offline means for enabling our stakeholders to be included in the

¹ ALFA, D1.1 Framework and value chain conditions affecting biogas uptake in livestock farming

² ALFA, D1.2 Perceptions, acceptance levels and needs on biogas

development process as well as to connect, exchange knowledge, innovate and create new biogas opportunities within and across borders and the regional Hubs as a local mechanism for effective stakeholder engagement as well as efficient knowledge sharing.

Furthermore, our Hubs will be the facilitators for the successful implementation of the ALFA support measures providing a hands-on approach reflective to the local needs and ensuring successful matchmaking of needs and solutions.

The operations of the Hubs are expected to include:

- identifying and liaising with local stakeholders (such as livestock farms, biogas plant owners, biomass producers, tech providers, bioenergy end users, farmers associations, etc.).
- engaging them into our activities and events (e.g. interviews, surveys, workshops, capacity building seminars and webinars, etc.)
- facilitating the delivery of our market uptake support measures

A robust responsive monitoring and evaluation framework, which is essential to produce credible, comparable and quantifiable evidence will be also established. Based on proven evaluation methodologies tailored to the work we aim to evaluate the performance (input, process and outputs) and the impact of our measures, co-evaluating and validating their results alongside our users, stakeholders and Advisory Board (AB) members.

1.2 Report Outline

This report is divided in 6 parts as follows:

Part 2 describes the baseline strategy and the basic objectives and activities.

Part 3 contains the operational framework and plan of their basic activities and competences within the project Work Packages and Tasks.

Part 4 outlines the monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms in place to ensure the effective performance of the Hubs in relation to the project objectives and related KPIs.

Part 5 identifies possible risks and the mitigating actions to overcome them.

2. Regional Hubs baseline strategy

The great diversity which characterizes the frameworks and specificities of manure and livestock sector across Europe³ rules out the application of one-size-fits-all solutions when it comes to supporting the deployment and uptake of biogas solutions.⁴

Thus, the ALFA methodology employs the setting up and running local structures for effective quadruple helix stakeholder engagement, informed by a well-targeted market study to drive the evidence-based and demand-driven co-development of measures and actions for market uptake support, while at the same time providing the baseline against which we can measure our results.

There is growing evidence and consensus supporting that multi-stakeholder approaches are vital for driving the clean energy transition. Along these lines, the regional ALFA Hubs will follow a multi-stakeholder approach for supporting the market uptake of biogas with a focus on delivering solutions that can effectively tackle local challenges, yet also have high re-application potential. In order to ensure a consistent approach for their operation, this baseline strategy and operating model together with the monitoring framework, define their key objectives and main activities along with the means to monitor their results.

Along these lines, each regional partner (Q-PLAN – Greece, WR - Belgium, FBCD Denmark, APRE – Italy, SIE - Spain and PEDAL - Slovakia) will be responsible for the establishment and operation a regional Hub in their respective region, while EDF and EBA will support with their pan European network, as shown by the following figure.

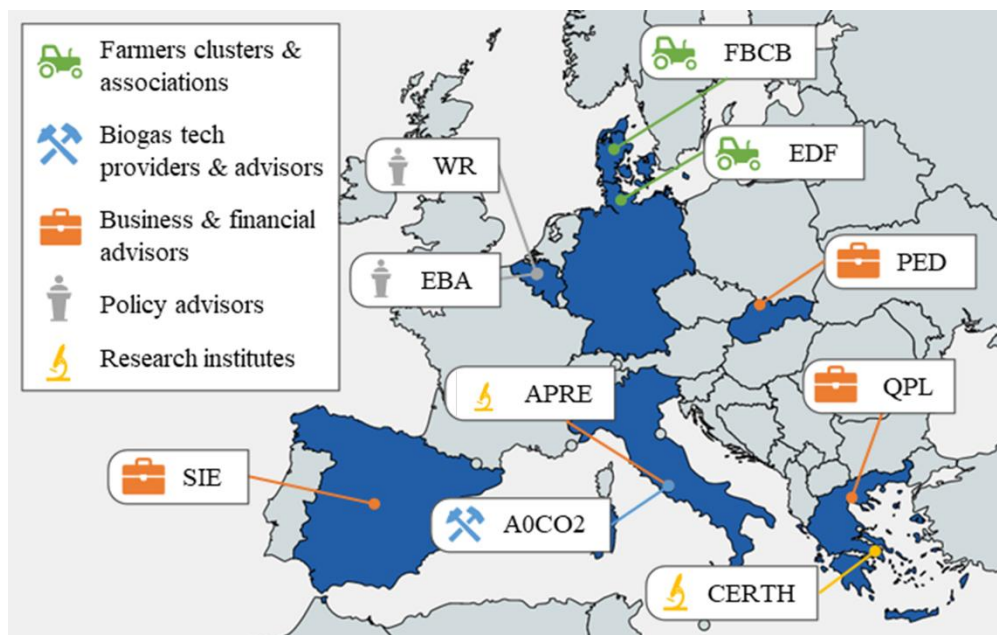


Figure 1. Map depicting ALFA regional Hubs

³ IEA (2021). [Potential and utilization of manure to generate biogas in seven countries](#)

⁴ Ferrario M, et al. (2018), [Potential of biogas production from livestock manure in Europe](#)

The key activities and objectives for ALFA Hubs will include (these are further elaborated in Part 3 Operational Framework and Plan):

- Scouting, identification and engagement of livestock farmers with and without biogas systems and other stakeholders through the whole value chain of biogas (e.g. biogas plant owners using manure as biomass source), to receive and benefit from market uptake support measures (more info on the measures will be provided in the deployment and testing phase).
- Supporting projects from the livestock biogas value chain with tailored blends of technical and business support services, leveraging expertise available both locally as well as across borders with the help of consortium experts and other stakeholders connected to regional ALFA Hubs.
- Delivery of seminars and webinars aimed at building the capacity of livestock farmers and other key stakeholders in investing in, implementing, maintaining and upscaling biogas solutions.
- Design, implementation and monitoring of awareness raising campaigns with a view to dispelling biases and changing broad perceptions in biogas acceptance.
- Set-up of mutual learning workshops and missions to mobilise biogas value chain actors and stakeholders towards tackling key barriers as well as for catalysing connections and opportunities for new biogas projects.
- Organisation of cross-regional/-border networking event with a view to fostering knowledge exchange (on good practices, lessons learnt, etc.) for supporting the uptake of biogas systems.
- Keeping track and streamlining their activities based on feedback from stakeholders with a view to making a case for their added value and their vital role for driving the uptake of biogas market in local markets.

Aligned with this baseline, each regional partner will define and implement a tailored strategy, for their regional hub during ALFA, taking into account the local capabilities and circumstances of each target market, as revealed by the rest of the preparatory activities conducted during the first semester of the project.

3. Operational Framework and Plan

Each regional hub will be run by a hub manager responsible for the activities of the hub. The team of hub managers should be selected from people that are already closely working with regional market actors and stakeholders and are experienced, networked, trusted and thus, well-positioned to play this role under this approach.

The operational framework generally will be based on a Key Account Management (KAM) approach to engage with market actors, stakeholders and communities more effectively. The importance of KAM in building long-term and trustful relationships is widely acknowledged in theory and practice, even more so in complex market environments thus making it a great fit for livestock and agricultural markets. The figure below offers an overview of our approach.



Figure 2. Overview of KAM operation for market uptake support of projects

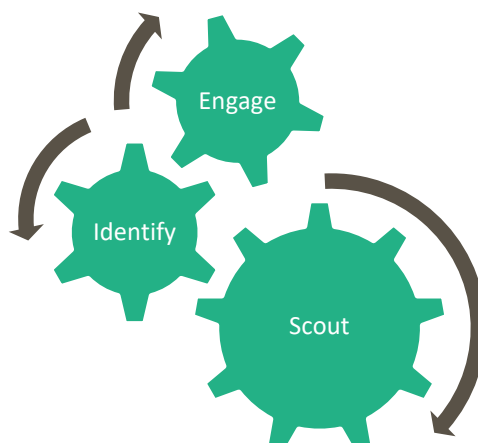
A qualified KAM from our consortium will be assigned by each regional hub. KAMs will scout for, identify and engage with promising livestock projects to understand their needs, align on any relevant confidentiality issues and ultimately to develop a personalized Service Action Plan (SAP) with KPIs and targets. In collaboration with our business and technical support partners, they will align on the most appropriate service or services to be delivered as well as the appropriate partner to deliver them and follow-up with the supported projects from the beginning to the completion of their journey, ultimately collecting feedback for co-evaluation. Service delivery will leverage a blend

of personal contacts by regional KAM on the field along with digital collaboration means for bringing in cross-border expertise.

3.1 Scouting, identification and engagement of projects and stakeholders

The ALFA Hubs with the support of all partners will identify, engage and select 50 promising projects (livestock farmers, biogas plant owners, farmers' associations, energy communities etc.) in two rounds (25 per each round) to receive and benefit from hands-on market uptake support services according to their needs and challenges. The profile of potential cases includes livestock farmers, biogas plant owners using manure, farmers' associations and energy communities for a new installation or improvement of existing biogas systems. This process will be conducted through open calls of interest across all regional Hubs to ensure an open and transparent participation process. Overall, a suggestion of 50 projects is expected per round to ensure adequate participation, a total of 100 nominated projects in the two rounds.

Figure 3: Hub engagement process



Activities will begin as early as October 2023 (M12) and build upon leads generated by other project's activities (interviews, surveys, case studies developed under Work Package 1) to ensure that an adequate number of suitable projects has been identified, assessed and selected by January 2024 (M15) to timely kick-start delivery of technical support and consultancy and the provision of business and innovation support services. Potential projects identified will be assessed against specific criteria before being selected and approached for participation. These criteria will be defined during a dedicated (digital) meeting and cover business, technology and contextual aspects (e.g. biogas techs employed, maturity level, market potential, geographic spread, barriers faced, etc.), to ensure representativeness to the degree possible.

The selection of the projects will be performed with a selection matrix, whereby partners will score nominated projects, based on guidelines prepared by Q-PLAN. Regional Hubs will contact the winning projects and inform them about their expected involvement. If any of the initially selected projects will not affirm their participation, the following projects in the ranking list will be considered.

3.2 Supporting projects with technical and business support services

Support services will be comprised of business, access-to-finance and technical support services for enhancing the market uptake of biogas solutions in livestock farming. These services build upon already established successful services and well-tested methodologies and tools ensuring that they can be delivered cost-effectively and efficiently, while also meeting the expectations of the market.

Moreover, through the KAM methodology our services will be adjusted to the needs of farmers driving biogas solutions in their facilities. The features, functions and resources required for the delivery of these services will be defined in detail by SIE, with the contribution of all partners, based on their existing service portfolio. The definition of each service shall include:

- i. A service summary
- ii. Features and functions
- iii. Resources required
- iv. Service process
- v. Materials required for the delivery of the services, such as guidelines, questionnaires, presentations, templates, and resources.

Along these lines, our preliminary technical and business service portfolio (to be developed and updated during the project) is concisely outlined below.

The **technical support services** to be provided to each project will depend on the particularities of each one (e.g. stage of development, target deployment site, etc.) drawing from a pool of services offered thanks to the competencies of our consortium partners:

- Concept design and development for biogas systems.
- Evaluation of biogas potential based on preliminary calculations.
- Energy and environmental analyses assessing the energy and carbon footprint across the life cycle.
- Consultancy on the implementation and monitoring of biogas solutions, including operation and maintenance training.
- Biogas potential solutions assessment (e.g. direct biogas utilisation, upgrade into biomethane, cogeneration of heating and thermal energy, etc.)

The identification of the projects' technical needs and the definition of the respective support to be provided will be performed by CERTH (and A0CO2 and FBCD if needed) with the help of the Key Account Managers of each regional ALFA Hub. If these needs cannot be effectively addressed with the expertise and service portfolio of CERTH, A0CO2 and FBCD, the projects will be connected with suitable technology suppliers, technical consultants or professionals outside of our consortium.

The **business and financial support services** comprises:

- Market research. This service builds on primary and secondary marketing research and other techniques to analyse local biogas value chains and end users. We will help livestock farmers and other stakeholders to avoid unnecessary development costs and capitalise on

market opportunities to raise their chances of successfully integrating biogas solutions and unlocking the potential of their livestock manure.

- Business modelling and planning. Innovative business models can de-risk and stimulate investments in RES. We support farmers in designing or improving the business models of their biogas solutions with easy-to-use and effective tools employed in practice to facilitate sustainability-oriented business model innovation from an economic, environmental (life cycle) and social perspective (triple layered business model Canvas).
- Access to finance support. Access to finance is a common barrier for deploying RES. This service supports livestock farmers and stakeholders to identify suitable financing solutions (private or public). Investment readiness support will also be available depending on the availability of alternative funding (Angel Investors, Charity funding, Crowd Funding etc).
- Corporate and sustainable finance. With this service we support livestock farmers and stakeholders in assessing the return of their investment in biogas solutions. We foresee two major axes: (i) corporate financial evaluation analysing key aspects (e.g. CAPEX, OPEX) and evaluating indicators to assess the effectiveness of the investment (NPV, IRR, ROI, etc.); (ii) sustainability evaluation using Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) metrics; ESG metrics are used to identify potential risks and growth opportunities providing incentives for such investments and prospects for long term sustainability.

Services will be provided with the help of KAM responsible for contacting and onboarding selected projects. The process will begin with a meeting (physical or digital) between the KAM and the project representative, to analyse their specific needs and define the blend of services that could best meet them. Based on the outcomes of the needs analysis, the KAM will match the project with the suitable consortium expert(s) who will be then in charge of providing the required service(s), based on a tailored Service Action Plan (including KPIs and a time plan), co-defined with the project representative.

3.3 Capacity Building Seminars and Webinars

All regional ALFA Hubs will offer 1-day capacity building seminars with a view to training decision-maker in livestock farming and regional stakeholders (farmers, cooperatives, farmers associations, energy communities etc.) on the different biogas production methods and consumption approaches (anaerobic digestion, combined heat and power generation, fertilizer production, waste management, etc.) as well as the tools developed by the project (e.g. Decision Support Tool, Atlas Map, Biogas Forum, etc.) and other relevant topics as per the table 2 (the topics will be streamlined following the insights collected from the surveys of T1.2 and the co-creation workshops of T2.2.). The seminars will be organized by the regional Hubs, who will be trained by SIE to ensure quality of delivery. The resources required for their delivery (e.g. training material, presentations, exercises, quizzes, etc.) will be defined and developed by SIE with support from experts from all partners, building upon existing content that is openly available or available to them from former activities, safeguarding efficiency and quality.

Table 1: Topics for Capacity Building

1. Introduction to biogas energy	2. Biogas Concepts planning and budgeting
3. Livestock Farming potential for Bioenergy	4. Biogas (from manure) policies and good practices

5. Business case for a livestock farm	6. Technical operation and maintenance of a biogas system
7. Circular Bioeconomy practices for farms	8. Environmental and social benefits for biogas in farms

In addition to the seminars, 1-2 hour webinars will be organised to attract the international audience of the livestock farming industry with material provided by SIE with the contribution of experts from the consortium.

3.4 Awareness Raising

All regional ALFA Hubs (with the support of regional partners) will undertake the deployment of at least 2 campaigns throughout the project (1 per round) to:

- inform farmers about the benefits of biogas solutions and the available opportunities
- promote a better understanding of livestock farming challenges in the biogas market and how to overcome them.

The campaign messages, channels, target audiences and timeframe of the online and offline campaigns per region will be defined by APRE, with the support of regional partners, based on the specific barriers (limited consumer acceptance, information gaps, etc.) that each campaign is set on addressing in the regions. All partners will be responsible for defining the objectives of the campaigns in their region as well as support APRE with the definition of campaign strategy and plan for their region. The key messages conveyed at the regional awareness raising campaigns will be translated by the partners to their national language and will be tailored to the target groups and the socioeconomic context of each region, incorporating basic behavioural levers (e.g. incentives, etc.).

Table 2: ALFA’s Targeted Stakeholder Groups

Biogas Chain Value	<p>Actors involved in market uptake of biogas solutions in livestock and agriculture sector from the supply or demand side:</p> <p>Farmers, such as livestock farmers, farmer groups and associations, agricultural cooperatives and biomass owners looking to adopt biogas solutions and unlock the RES potential of their facilities</p> <p>Biogas plant owners, using manure from nearby livestock farms as biomass source</p> <p>Biogas End Users, for example local industries, energy communities and distribution system operators</p> <p>Biogas Technology providers seeking to introduce or already driving biogas solutions to market.</p> <p>Local professionals (planners, designers, installers, craftsmen) implementing biogas systems projects.</p>
Energy business advisors &	<p>Biogas Technology Advisors, such as ESCOs and associations (eg. EEEEC, IAEE)</p> <p>Energy agencies and Biogas Associations (e.g. IEA, IRENA, CRES, WBA, EBA, AEBIOM etc.) aiming to foster the adoption of biogas solutions.</p> <p>Business, financial and policy advisors and supporting networks (e.g. EEN, private consultancies, etc.) that support businesses to bring their biogas solutions to the market.</p>

Government and policy	Local authorities aiming to improve the environmental performance of the municipality (e.g. local agencies of agricultural planning, energy authorities, environmental departments, etc.). Regional, national and European authorities that design biogas and biomass policies and financial frameworks at regional, national, European and level.
Civil society	Action groups such as citizen’s initiatives, environmentalists and NGOs. Energy consumers (e.g. house owners, tenants, etc.) and their associations.
Academia and research	Research and development institutes researching, designing and testing biogas solutions. Academics and experts within the biogas community Staff of Technology Transfer Offices supporting the valorisation of biogas systems’ research results.
Other stakeholders	Financial Institutions (e.g. local banks) financing promising private or public biogas projects.

Our campaigns will be underpinned with strong social media engagement to better appeal to farmers and stakeholders in the respective markets. Driven by communication strategies developed specifically for each target context and multiplied through ALFA Hubs and their communication channels, the campaigns will convey simple and concise messages, translating professional and technical jargon of the identified biogas challenges and opportunities into a language that can be easily understood and mostly resonate with people, highlighting the relevance to their daily lives and problems. The stakeholder groups that need to be involved in each case will be routinely engaged through suitable channels (mostly social media but also other channels when deemed essential for achieving the objectives of a campaign) with a focus on spreading concise and understandable communication messages addressing the particular uptake challenges of each region.

3.5 Set-up of mutual learning workshops and missions

The ALFA Hubs at DK (FBCD), IT (APRE), ES (SIE) and SK (PEDAL) will organise 4 workshops that will challenge cross-regional stakeholders’ groups to collaborate in a hands-on exchange of good practices covering aspects from the design of biogas strategies over to assessing progress in local markets. The workshops will be organised in the form of full day events. The workshops will be combined with field visits to livestock farms with biogas systems or biogas plants using manure as biomass source. FBCD, APRE, SIE and PEDAL will organise these field visits as 1-day missions, where 5 – 6 market actors and stakeholders (e.g. farmers, policy representatives, investors, etc.) from other regions will be given a demonstration of locally deployed biogas solutions, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and good practices.

PEDAL will also organise a networking event following the Common Ground Camp approach in a one (or two) day hybrid format (online and physical), engaging other EU funded projects/initiatives and formal/non-formal actors in the RES ecosystem (universities, policy makers, authorities, farmers, SMEs, investors, community groups, etc.), to facilitate cross-fertilization, good practice exchange and co-creation of innovative approaches for facilitating RES investments.

5. Risk Management

An essential part of ALFA is the quality assurance and risk mitigation approach with a view to ensuring project outcomes are of high quality and offer value to the project stakeholders. The underlying management and quality assurance mechanisms, are described in the Management Quality Plan, are obligatory for all ALFA partners, while they aim at complementing (and not replacing) the Grant Agreement and the Consortium Agreement of the project.

Risks that may affect considerably the progress and quality of the project have been identified and relevant contingency plans have been elaborated. Regarding the Regional Hubs possible risks have been identified as shown by the table below. The list of risks on project level and on regional Hubs level will be updated on an ad hoc basis or once every six months.

Table 4: Risks and contingency plans related to the regional ALFA Hubs

Description of risk	Linked WP	Risk mitigation measures
Limited capacity impeding the set-up and operation of the Hubs (Low probability / High impact)	WP2	If a partner responsible for operating a regional hub prove to miss the needed skills, then it will be supported by another partner of ALFA with vast experience and expertise in such activities.
Lack of interest from market actors to receive our services or follow their Service Action Plans (Low probability/ High impact)	WP3	We have tasks for scouting a long list of actors, running awareness-raising campaigns to foster interest and engagement of additional actors. Service Action Plans will be developed based on actual needs to align with their interests.
Lack of expertise in the consortium required to support a particular case (Low probability/ High impact)	WP3	If the needs identified by the Hubs cannot be addressed with the consortium's expertise and service portfolio, those cases will be connected with suitable external organisations.
Limited involvement of appropriate stakeholders in mutual learning (Low probability/ High impact)	WP4	The partners are well connected in their respective countries while some partners (EDF, EBA and FBCD) incorporate members from all over the EU, facilitating the selection of stakeholders to participate in the activities. Travel costs will also be reimbursed.
Limited technical expertise and involvement of technology providers for the implementation of biogas stations (Low probability / High Impact)	WP3	We already bring on board of our consortium technology partners with expertise in the implementation of biogas installations as well as access to broad stakeholder networks of technology providers. In case of limited involvement of technology providers or availability of respective expertise, these networks will be mobilised to identify and engage suitable providers (e.g. from EBA members and/or technical contacts of A0CO2, CERTH, FBCD and others). An initial pool of such providers for the needs of WP3 will be pro-actively developed to this end.

6. Conclusions

This report (D2.1) produced under Task 2.1 outlines the baseline strategy and operational plan for the ALFA regional Hubs. The report also includes the initial monitoring plan and framework to be operationalized by the Hubs to keep track, streamline and report on their activities during the project. An updated final report (D2.8) will present the operational plans, activities and results achieved by each ALFA regional hub under Task 2.1 after the two rounds of the ALFA regional Hubs operation. The reports will also update as appropriate the operational plans as well as the respective monitoring plan and framework outlined in D2.1. The final report is scheduled for October 2025 (M36).

The project

ALFA has the objective to help unlock the EU's biogas production potential by fostering the adoption of technologies using manure to produce biogas, thus helping increase the adoption of renewable energy sources in the EU and helping reduce emissions from untreated animal waste. The project will identify drivers and barriers for the uptake of biogas in the EU livestock farming industry and will support farmers from 6 EU countries (Italy, Denmark, Belgium, Slovakia, Greece and Spain) through its own co-created solutions, including financial, business, and technical support services as well as capacity-building seminars. In parallel, the project will develop an Engagement Platform to host tools that facilitate collaboration and knowledge exchange among industry actors and provide credible estimations of each farm's biogas potential, prospect profits, and environmental and social impacts. Moreover, ALFA will inform all relevant stakeholders via awareness-raising campaigns and policy recommendations and will provide guidelines for replication of its results in other regions.

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