

DRIVE NEWSLETTER



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Welcome to the second Newsletter of **DRIVE - Driving Rural Innovation through startup Villages across Europe** - is a Horizon Europe Coordination and Support Action dedicated to strengthening rural innovation ecosystems. It does so by connecting startups with accelerators, mentors, and funding bodies through dynamic roadshows, hackathons, and training events.

The Roadshows

The DRIVE Roadshows are a series of three dynamic, two-day innovation events taking place in selected rural start-up villages across France, Slovenia, and Greece. These Roadshows are designed to catalyze innovation, digitalization, and sustainable entrepreneurship in Europe's rural bioeconomy. Each Roadshow will combine high-level knowledge exchange with hands-on problem-solving, bringing together local and international stakeholders including bio-based SMEs, startups, researchers, investors, cooperatives, and policy experts.

BOHINJ, SLOVENIA “Grown here, served here”	21-23 OCTOBER 2025
SERRES, GREECE “Serres Bioeconomy Hackathon 2025”	10-12 NOVEMBER 2025
LE BOURGET-DU-LAC, FRANCE “ Technolac 2050 – A Hackathon Serving Symbiotic Innovation”	3-5 DECEMBER 2025



DRIVE HACKATHON

After receiving an introduction to the challenges, the participant start-ups and formed teams will receive an intensive and in-depth explanation of the Hackathon challenge identified by the business experts and desired solutions. Start-ups and teams will be assigned to a technical and business mentor who will follow up with them and

give them further support during the following stages of the hackathon

- Team working session and coaching
- Technical solution validation
- Pitching mentoring
- Team working session

HACKATHON PARALLEL SESSIONS



Parallel Session 1: Sustainability and SME Business Models in the Biobased Sector

Will explore how SMEs can develop sustainable business models to support a resource-efficient bioeconomy and boost rural development.



Parallel Session 2: Social Innovation for SMEs

Will focus on fostering technological and social innovation, helping SMEs transition to circular, resource-efficient, and sustainable business practices.



Parallel Session 3: Access to Finance and Related Funding Opportunities

Will present EU and regional funding options for SMEs, including EIC Accelerator, EITs, SMP, EUROSTARS, and cohesion policy instruments like ERDF and ESF.

CHALLENGES FOCUS

BOHINJ

- Boost use of local food in HORECA and public institutions
- Improve traceability, logistics, and reduce food waste
- Strengthen regional food identity and ecosystem collaboration



SERRES



- Utilizes renewable biological resources for food, energy, or materials
- Adds value to agricultural by-products and biological waste
- Supports local ecosystems
- Strengthens collaboration with local SMEs and cooperatives

LE BOURGET-DU-LAC

- Pool regional resources (e.g. biowaste, skills, heat)
- Reduce negative externalities (carbon, waste, land use)
- Enable circular flows and regenerative tourism models



MENTORSHIP

After the Roadshow and related Hackathon 4 teams will be selected among the most promising and viable business ideas and will have the chance to access the DRIVE mentoring program focused on 5 topics:

- **Sustainability and biobased business models**
 - **Investors and digital platforms**
 - **Effective pitching and communication**
 - **Access to finance and related funding**
 - **Social Innovation for SMEs**
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Stay Connected

For more information visit the [DRIVE WEBSITE](#)

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