

FUNGI PRENEURS

Inclusion of vulnerable groups in rural areas by environmental awareness and social entrepreneurship through mycology



**Newsletter 5
January 2025**

www.fungipreneurs-project.eu

2022-1-ES01-KA220-ADU-000087281



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission, through the ERASMUS+ programme. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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**Promoting social inclusion and sustainable entrepreneurship
through mycology**

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Developed by

ECM Environmental Engineering (Spain)

DISRUPTIA (Spain)

Mindshift Talent Consulting (Portugal)

Meta4 Innovations (Austria)

CSI - Centre for Social Innovation (Cyprus)

Innoquality Systems (Ireland)



Center for Social
Innovation



FUNGIPRENEURS International Conference in Palencia: A Meeting for Innovation and Sustainability

On January 28, 2025, the Yutera Campus in Palencia was the epicenter of a key event for sustainable entrepreneurship and social inclusion in the field of mycology. The FUNGIPRENEURS International Conference, organized by ECM in collaboration with the MEDFOR program and its Winter School, brought together more than 20 participants of various nationalities, including representatives from Ethiopia and Morocco. This congress has been a turning point in making visible the impact of the FUNGIPRENEURS project and the importance of mycology in sustainable rural development.



Event highlights:

📎 Scientific advances: Dr. Pablo Pinto and his team presented innovative research on the role of mycology in sustainability and the circular economy. They highlighted their work at the Chair of Mycology at the University of Valladolid, where they lead projects to promote mushroom cultivation as an agri-food resource in rural communities, including initiatives in Ethiopia.

The conference also featured the presence of experts in Ethiopia, including **Demelash Alem**, a PhD candidate in Conservation and Sustainable Use of Forest Systems at the iuFOR in Palencia. The work in collaboration with researchers from the **Ethiopian Environmental and Forestry Research Institute (EEFRI)** was highlighted, strengthening international cooperation in mycological research and sustainability.



✓ **Project impact:** Experts such as Jesús Boyano (Disruptia), Darragh Coakley (Innoquality Systems), Maria Evgeniou (CSI Center for Social Innovation), Raj Sethia (Meta4 Innovations) and Isabel Nunes (Mindshift Talent Advisory) discussed the achievements of the FUNGIPRENEURS project and its next steps. The role of the program in empowering rural communities and promoting sustainable mushroom-based entrepreneurship was emphasized.

🌐 **Key reflections:** The debate focused on social innovation in mycology, digitalization as a tool for inclusion, and the international impact of the project. The session ended with a networking space that allowed for strengthening future collaborations.

FUNGI PRENEURS Integration into MEDFOR Winter School

The MEDFOR Winter School, under the direction of Dr. Felipe Bravo and with the coordination of Dr. Pablo Pinto, has established itself as a key space for interdisciplinary exchange in sustainable forest management. The Mediterranean Forestry and Natural Resources Management (MEDFOR) Master is an international excellence program implemented in 2012, which addresses the economic, ecological and social challenges of forest management in the Mediterranean region. In its 13th edition in 2025, the master's degree brings together students from Italy, Bangladesh and Spain, offering top-level training in

forest modelling, conservation and natural resource management. Its integration into the Winter School has allowed students to connect with international experts and innovative projects such as FUNGIPRENEURS, enhancing the impact of both initiatives. Both leaders saw in this event a great opportunity both for the master's students and for the dissemination and institutional connection of the FUNGIPRENEURS project.

Tools for the Future: Training and Entrepreneurship in Rural Areas.

Thanks to FUNGIPRENEURS, innovative tools have been developed that can be used by rural trainers to support vulnerable groups on their path to entrepreneurship. These tools include:

FungiPreneurs Toolkit

- Interactive methodologies to train vulnerable groups in rural areas.
- Customizable materials for educators.

FungiPreneurs Training Route

- **Gamification:** An interactive method that improves motivation and engagement.

1. Someone to help beneficiaries to develop a plan “to engage in social entrepreneurship through mycology”

- Helping them pick a plan that is relevant to them
- Outlining what each area of the plan involves



The screenshot shows a digital interface for selecting training activities. At the top, it says "I would like to..." and "Please click on the items you wish to add to your training path". Below this are six activity cards, each with an icon and a title:

- Learn More Mycology:** Learn More about mycology and mushrooms.
- Collaborate in the community:** Form or join a community-based mycology group.
- Target Market:** Research and identify the mushroom product.
- Personal Development:** Support your own personal growth, coping strategies, and resilience building.
- Setup sustainable cultivation:** Learn how to grow through organic and sustainable cultivation.
- Make a brand:** Create a brand identity / mycology business.

- **Roadmapping:** A dynamic approach to designing flexible training paths and fostering collaboration.

These methodologies reinforce social inclusion by integrating environmental awareness and entrepreneurship into daily educational practices.

Next Steps: Visibility and Expansion of Impact

It is now essential to give visibility to the work carried out so that these tools reach the maximum number of final beneficiaries. We invite all institutions, trainers and entrepreneurs to use these resources and join the FUNGIPRENEURS initiative.

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