

Project no. 311919

## **StarTree**

# **Multipurpose trees and non-wood forest products a challenge and opportunity**

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Collaborative Project

FP7-KBBE-2012-6-singlestage

## **D 5.7 Innovation strategies, recommendations and support materials – the Innovation Generator**

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## Reference

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## Executive summary

The StarTree Innovation Generator (IG) aims to disseminate innovation support material for companies and institutional actors in a comprehensive package on the project website. The IG builds on the work done in Task 5.6 “Innovation strategies, recommendations and support materials”, which were developed in an inter- and transdisciplinary way by researchers and practitioners. The IG itself was developed in a cooperation between WPs 5 and 6.

The StarTree Innovation Generator has a page on the project website and contains the following elements: a link to the innovation case database, inspiring questions, stories and a collection of tools and guidelines. The elements of the IG are assembled in a way that a comprehensive appearance of the IG is reached as a tool or “machine” with a number of distinct but connected elements.

The “Innovation case database” is a collection of real innovation examples from the field all across Europe that we came across in the project or from literature and web-search. It is a classical web-based database with search functions and giving short case descriptions, links and additional material if available (see D5.5).

One of the inspirational components is a collection of “Inspiring questions” – unexpected, thought-provoking questions. They appear unexpectedly on the screen, connected with different images, and should be unusual or even a bit disturbing – in order to catch the readers’ attention and provoke new lines of thought. There are 15 such questions.

Another component is the “Inspiring stories” which picture crucial moments or critical points in innovation projects. These insightful stories are taken from interviews, case studies or any talks with practitioners that we had during the project, with innovators, entrepreneurs, managers, researchers, advisors or consultants, etc. At the moment, there are 11 stories on the IG.

The IG furthermore includes tools, guidelines, checklists or similar instruments useful in developing new products or new businesses in wild forest products. They present useful knowledge on established or new instruments or tools in product or business development. The tools refer to the various stages or phases of innovation processes, including: researching and developing, producing, selling and marketing, and communicating. In total, 15 tools and lessons learnt documents are in preparation.

The StarTree Innovation Generator is already accessible online but the work on certain parts of the IG will continue in the upcoming weeks, in particular, the collection of tools.



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# 1 Aims and background of the innovation generator

## 1.1 Introduction

The StarTree Innovation Generator (IG) is a major dissemination output of the StarTree project directed to a broad audience, particularly policy and practice. The IG was developed in order to disseminate in a comprehensive package important concluding results of the project, including recommendations, strategies, guidelines and support material for companies and institutional actors as developed in different parts of the project but particularly in WP5. As such it is a joint endeavour from WPs 5 (innovation) and WP6 (dissemination) and was developed in collaboration of BOKU and PlanSinn.

The IG particularly builds on the work done in Task 5.6 Innovation strategies, recommendations and support materials. These practice oriented outputs were developed on the basis of the comprehensive analyses in the WP, and in collaboration with practice partners from within the project and external stakeholders. Part of this work was coordinated and facilitated within WP1 (stakeholder interaction and action research). The products are developed with the aim to support the work of companies and other actors active in innovation processes.

In the StarTree's Description of Work (DoW), an open process was foreseen for developing these products, depending on the work in the Task 1.3 - collaboration with stakeholders from the Regional Case Studies (RSG) and Task 1.4 (action research with partner companies). The Action Research work was successful and had contributed with its valuable inputs to the IG (tools). According to the DoW, it was furthermore planned that support materials will be prepared for web-based dissemination in order to guarantee broad outreach. In this view, a publicly accessible online database of innovation cases in forestry (coming from Task 5.1) with an innovation tool-kit (all of which will further be maintained after the life-time of the project by EFI) was envisaged. Both was realised – the online database of innovation cases was established (as documented in the D5.5) and integrated into the IG. The innovation tool-kit was developed in the form of the IG as mentioned under Task 6.4 Science-Practice interaction. All in all, the outputs of Task 5.6 are purposefully disseminated to practice audiences through different channels, including electronic and print media as well as the IG. The purpose of this deliverable D5.7 is to document the work on the IG.

## 1.2 Structure of the Deliverable D 5.7

The Deliverable D 5.7 describes the StarTree Innovation Generator, by presenting the conceptualisation and development process (section 2) and its structure and elements (section 3). Section 4 gives conclusions and a future outlook.



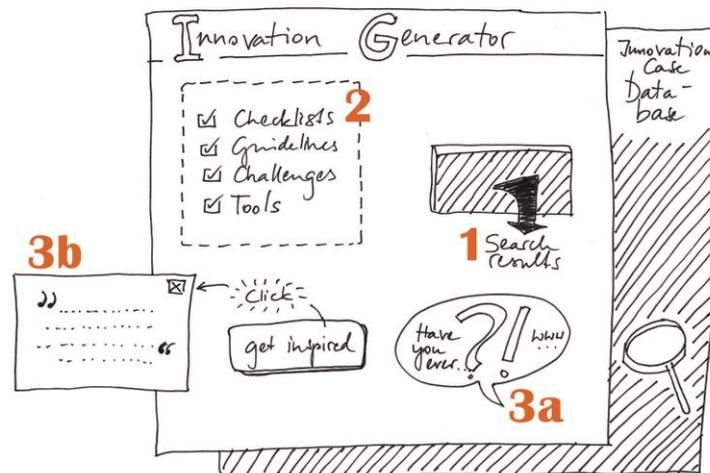
## 2 Conceptualisation and development process of the Innovation Generator

### 2.1 Idea

The idea of the Innovation Generator of the StarTree project was to create a tool that would disseminate material and insights we gained when working in StarTree, and at the same time to transport an innovative spirit. It aims to combine research results and creative elements to spark innovative ideas.

It was clear from the start that there is no such a thing like an innovation-generating machine – this would be a contradiction in itself. Nobody can give a prescription or recipe for generating innovations. In consequence, we did not want to be too academic or teaching innovation. We believe that innovation cannot be learnt theoretically. Our ambition thus was not to explain innovation or to present a guideline but rather to give inspiring examples, ideas or stimulations. Innovations are always unpredictable and inevitably happening in the mind of the person who happens to become an innovator.

The specific quality of innovation is that by definition it connects two quite different things: First, the novelty, but second, to implement it in real life. What is needed is always the combination of two elements: i) a new/inspired/risky idea, and ii) a very down-to-earth realistic and sober approach for making it real.



**Figure 1.** The Innovation Generator – the original idea, containing 1) the innovation case database, 2) the tools and lessons learnt, 3a) systemic/challenging questions and 3b) inspiring stories. (author: Efa Doring, PlanSinn)

We concluded, the Innovation Generator would have to include both elements. The concept therefore was to assemble a number of elements that would be able to inspire in different ways but would also give some practical knowledge and experience and point to the practical needs and possible pit-falls on the way.

1. Inspiring elements: What would inspire? What could trigger innovative thoughts? It is often the new, the strange, the unfamiliar, the unexpected. Therefore we ended up with giving examples in different ways (innovation examples and stories) as well as putting unorthodox questions.

2. Tools and experiences: For the earthy part of the process we aimed to assemble a collection of possibly useful tools together with “lessons learnt” from our own applications. The tools should relate to different phases of innovations or product development, including researching, developing, marketing and communication.

Some elements – such as the innovation case database – in fact serve both purposes.

## 2.2 Development process

The idea and basic structure of the IG was developed in a joint brainstorming session of BOKU and PlanSinn, the responsible partners for WPs 5 and 6, presented to and discussed with the StarTree consortium at various GAs and refined on the basis of those discussions and with the collection of the content. For instance, the names of the elements and the structure of the tools section was adapted a few times. Furthermore, the actual realisation on the website had to be discussed together with the web designer company in order to find an attractive layout design and a suitable and programmable structure.

For realisation, it was necessary to collect the content material from all the project partners, and to make a design which would be attractive and easy to use for those who find the website. The target audience was defined rather broadly – anybody interested in the project, in the results, and in doing business in wild forest products in general.

For the realisation of the Innovation Generator in the project, it turned out that it was not so easy to communicate this new idea to all the project partners, to motivate them all to contribute with their insights and ideas, and finally, to eventually implement the design on the website.

For filling the IG with material, an active “promotion” of the idea among the project participants was necessary, except for the Innovation case database which had been in the hand of the WP5 leader. A process was necessary to jointly decide which Action research work outputs were suited to be used in the IG, and in which form. Also the further tool elements were negotiated and developed together by the IG team and the authors. Furthermore, a common final layout work was necessary from the IG management.

For developing and collecting the “innovation stories” and “inspiring questions” various activities have been conducted: invitation letters were sent to the consortium members to provide ideas, questions and stories; some were developed in brainstorming sessions within the IG team; and workshop sessions were organised at GA meetings.



### 3 Elements and structure of the IG

#### 3.1 Integration into the StarTree website and external links

The StarTree Innovation Generator is accessible on the project website under the result section. It has a page of its own with sub-pages for some of the elements, as appropriate:

- IG-what is it? – sub-page with short information on the IG background, purposes and authors
- Innovation case database – link to the external online database
- Inspiring questions – no link, they appear randomly in form of a slider
- Inspiring stories – link to the sub-page with printed stories
- Tools – 4 categories of tools link to a collection of documents (4 sub-pages with downloadable files)

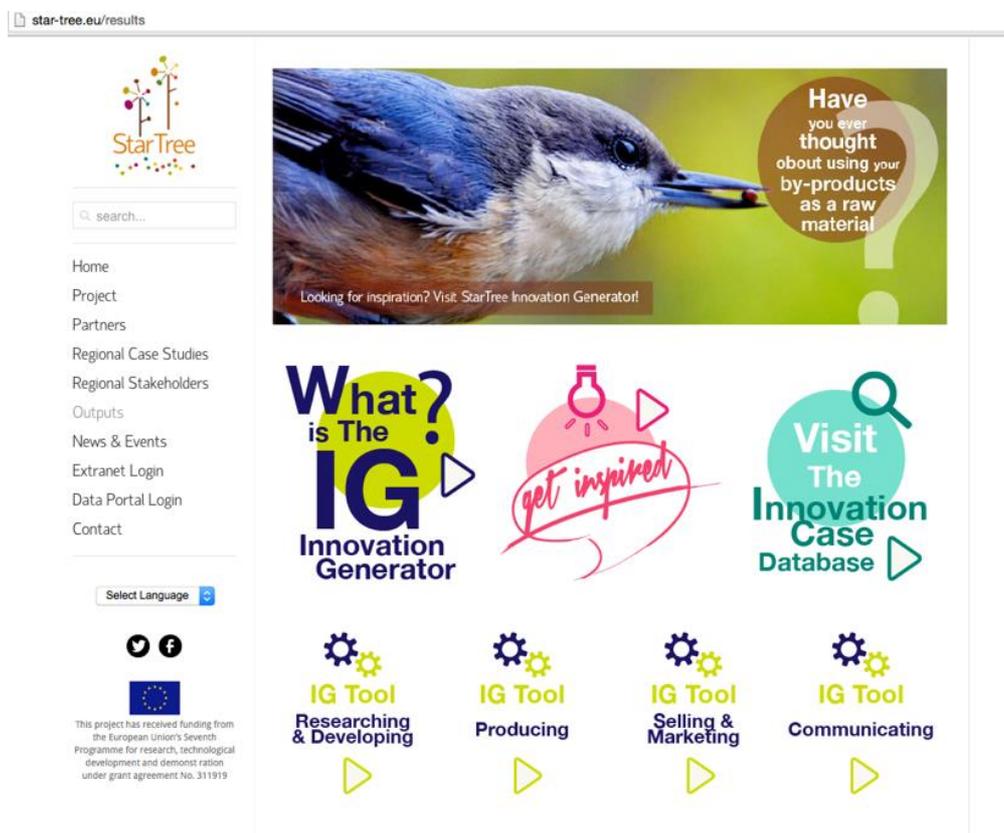


Figure 2. StarTree Innovation Generator



### 3.2 Page structure and programming

The StarTree Innovation Generator is simply programmed on the basis of the standard webpage of the project website. It thus basically follows a blog-structure, adding the different elements one after the other. The page has been adapted in order to make its presentation more attractive (no “home” link or similar features). It was possible to arrange the elements in a way that a comprehensive appearance of the IG as a tool or “machine” with a number of distinct but connected elements.

Accordingly, a special design was developed in order to support this impression of a comprehensive tool with distinct but connected parts, coming close to the original idea. It was possible to reach this still with a fairly simple programming structure and without large extra costs.

### 3.3 Innovation case database

This is a collection of real innovation examples from the field all across Europe that we came across in the project or from literature and web-search. Real examples are always a very good source for insights and they are actually serving both purposes of the Innovation Generator: they may inspire new products and at the same time they show how these examples worked in real life. We aimed to describe practical challenges and solutions as far as we knew about those examples.

It is a classical web-based database with search functions and giving short case descriptions, links and additional material if available (detailed description can be found in D5.5).

The StarTree Innovation Database is an integral part of the “Forest Policy and Forest Innovation Database” and can be found under <http://policydatabase.boku.ac.at>. Through this connection, synergies are expected regarding effective dissemination of the database and its future maintenance. Gaining access requires a simple registration and approval from the website administrator.

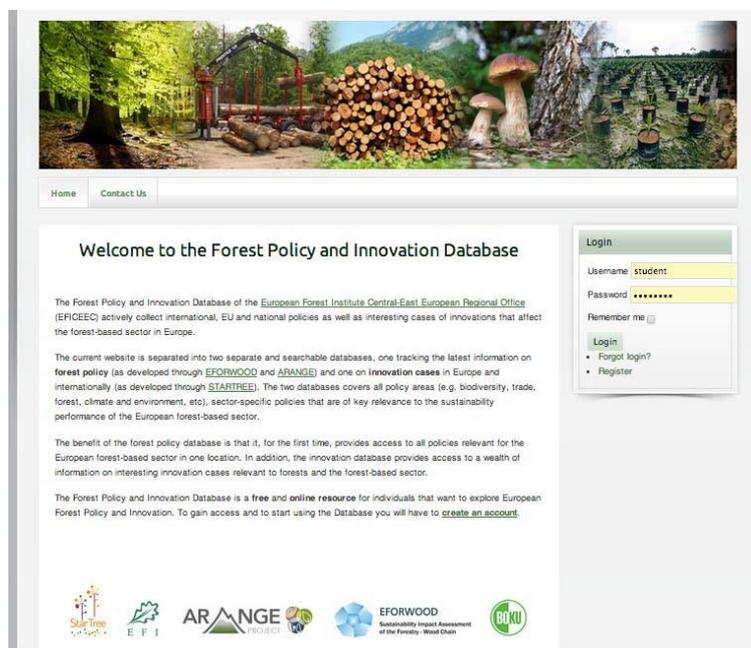


Figure 3. Forest Policy and Innovation Database (<http://policydatabase.boku.ac.at>)



### 3.4 Challenging/inspiring/systemic questions

One of the inspirational components is a collection of unexpected, thought-provoking questions – a creative element meant to inspire innovative thoughts in the users of the Innovation Generator. They appear unexpectedly on the screen, connected with different images, and should be unusual or even a bit disturbing – in order to catch the readers’ attention and provoke new lines of thought.

We called them “systemic questions” in the beginning as they could come from theoretical knowledge about the complexity and systemic character of innovation processes, however, rather than being too systematic, it was more important for us in the end to make them un-academic and not appearing in a text-book style. As an example, a more technical question from practical experience is: “Have you ever thought about using your by-products as a raw material?” A more provocative one is the following: “What would an artist see in your business?” In the question: “How would a child or troll play with your product?” we put to an existing or planned product a playful element that may lead the thinking to the very core quality of the product or even totally new and unexpected uses.



**Figure 4.** Example for a systemic question

The questions are accompanied with images that not directly but in an associative way connect to the questions. They were selected from a picture library and are loosely related to nature and landscape.

The following list of questions was selected to be used in the IG:

- Who would be immensely interested in promoting your NWFP?
- What is the driving force against innovation in your field of work?
- Have you ever thought about using your by-products as a raw material?
- Which part of your supply chain is the most sensitive one?
- Who would never buy your products? And why not?
- Who would be an unexpected partner for your business idea?
- What joy is in your products?
- Can I really eat this?
- How would I cook a forest?
- Do mushrooms pay taxes?
- How would your product be reborn in its next life?

- Where in the forest do new ideas linger?
- How would a child play with your NWFP?
- What in your work could inspire others?
- Bear or berries - which business type are you?

### 3.5 Inspiring stories

When listening to stories how people did an innovation, we discovered that there is often a crucial moment or critical point when something important happened, e.g. the idea was borne, or the way how to make it happen or to solve a tricky problem. It seems that innovation projects often have this one or few critical moments from which the whole success seemed to depend.

These insightful stories are taken from interviews, case studies or any talks with practitioners that we had during the project, with innovators, entrepreneurs, managers, researchers, advisors or consultants, etc. They often work with or without knowing who the person or what the product was.

There is a number of different stories prepared; users can “request” an inspiration by clicking on a button and a pop up window with one randomly chosen story appears. The full list of stories is not accessible on the website nor in any menu as they should appear as a surprise.

We aimed at having between 10 and 30 stories in the IG. At the moment, there are 11 stories available which, however, may be complemented by additional ones retrieved from interviews or case studies.

In order to have original ideas and stories and a broad range of experiences, we looked for stories from anyone connected to our project, being a researcher or company in the consortium, or somebody from the field (stakeholder). Here is an example for a story which was provided by one of our researchers in the consortium:

*“My inspiration from StarTree is seeing that the 'new' opportunity for Europe is the way people are finding ways to tap into forest culture and traditions to re-connect people to their forests through enterprise activity based around re-introducing people to forest gathering (e.g. fungi forays) and to use of non-wood forest products (e.g. basket weaving courses). The people who deliver these services are themselves often seeking lifestyles which allow them to make their own deeper connections with nature i.e. are making 'life-style' choices.”*

Researcher, consultant and expert on stakeholder engagement, Wales

The following statement is from an artist who was a stakeholder in one of our in-depth case studies:

*“I didn't want to visit giant culture places, but rather to come to places where truffle has strong roots. Soria was the good choice. For making a film on truffles, even if I am French, I had to come to Spain. I change my mind about the “scary” image that Spain has among the French truffle specialist - by visiting the small village where 3 generations of family history began in the golden age of Spanish truffle, only 60 years ago. Today the sons, grand daughters and grandsons are growing their own truffles. Even if truffle is something “new” in the Spanish cuisine, there are chefs here who know what it is about. Yes definitively this is a place to visit.”*

Filmmaker, Work in Progress for Documentary Film on Truffles in Spain



The following citation was taken from an interview done with a stakeholder in course of data collection in a regional case study:

*Our motivation was to keep the agricultural areas open, after cattle was not profitable any more. So we looked out for alternative cultivations. First, we started with berry production but also that was not profitable against the cheap imports. So, we tried out planting chestnuts. Chestnuts grow wild in the forest and we started selecting our own varieties. Our own was not good, but we also tried out other sorts. We did a lot of experiments over the years and have now a lot of experience with domestic and European varieties.*

Former manager of the provincial agricultural estate Remschnigg, Austria

### 3.6 Tools

We were looking for tools, guidelines, checklists or similar instruments that could possibly be useful in developing new products or new businesses in wild forest products. They should present useful knowledge on established or new instruments or tools in product or business development.

There are innumerable such tools, so we have selected some of those we came across, developed or applied in our project. They have often been developed or tested in the Action Research part of our project. In the Innovation Generator we tried to summarise them shortly, to make instructive reports without the need to read hundreds of pages. In the short description, the reports are more like teasers that show what exists and the possible application in practice together with our experiences with trying them out (lessons learnt). There are no universal tools – even the classical Business Plan has to be adapted each time to the very project and purpose of its application.

In the beginning, we thought to categorise the tools into checklists, guidelines, manuals and tools but we realised that the differences between these categories are not very clear. We later came to a categorisation which mirrors the various stages or phases of innovation processes, including:

- i. researching and developing,
- ii. producing,
- iii. selling and marketing, and
- iv. communicating.



**Figure 5.** Four categories of tools with tooltip pop-up open

For the date of the final conference we aim to have ten tools downloadable, a few for each of these categories, but more are in preparation. The following is the tentative list of tools/guidelines/lessons learnt planned to be used for the IG:

- NWFP/Forest fruits Business plan
- Strategic sector plan for resources from the living forest
- Working with broadcast media (Briefing)
- One-Day Training Course on Marketing
- Online Training Course NWFP
- Facilitating innovation and business development
- How to create a Mobile Phone App on Mycology?
- Working with people/tiny companies (AR outcome)
- A decision support system for landowners
- Inventory of resources present on small woodlands
- Platform for Cork-Commercialization (Make it Public!)
- Amygdalin Study
- Passion, Patience, Practice – Three P's for successful entrepreneurship
- Certification and branding
- How to develop an innovation generator



## 4 Conclusions

This Deliverable D 5.7 presents the StarTree Innovation Generator which aims to present innovation strategies, recommendations and support materials that were developed in the StarTree project for a broad range of users. For this purpose, a page on the project website was created where the respective material from the project is presented in a user-friendly and easy accessible way for interested audiences.

The development of the IG was a joint endeavour of the WPs 5 on innovation and 6 on dissemination – a purposeful and successful collaboration of the innovation researchers in the project and the communication experts from PlanSinn. It can be seen as a good example for how research results may be transferred into a form well suited for dissemination to practice. In this example, it was not merely the “translation” of scientific texts into colloquial language but rather a systemic process to develop a new instrument to present a package of knowledge – the Innovation Generator as a platform for providing useful tools and knowledge as well as inspiring components in a comprehensive way.

The process involved the joint generation of the idea of this platform as well as the collection and preparation of the content. A number of preconditions were necessary to make this process successful:

- Having the expertise on both necessary fields represented in the project – first, the practical oriented outputs useful for innovation support, and second, the communication experience.
- This was planned and foreseen already in the design and formation of the project by including innovation researchers in the project, innovation support companies with the task of action research, a close collaboration with companies and stakeholders on the ground, as well as a specific communication company that accompanied the whole project and was therefore able to understand the project and the needs for this platform and possible solutions and how to manage and support the development process.
- Foresee budget for a website design company for implementation of the idea.

With this good framework in place, it must be noted that it was still not easy to communicate the idea and purpose within the project consortium: such a process which is not usually included in research projects – even in participatory projects with stakeholder involvement – needs sufficient time and support to connect to all consortium members. Furthermore, sufficient resources need to be reserved for the actual implementation as the coordination of all activities needs time and effort as well as editorial work to transfer various materials from the project (case studies, tools, guidelines, recommendations, interviews, etc.) into usable elements of the IG.

In summary, to make such an innovative tool happen in a research project, it is important to draft a good plan, to foresee the needed expertise, and to provide for sufficient time and budget resources in the project plan.



#### 4.1 Next steps

The design of the StarTree Innovation Generator is now finalised and the IG online accessible.

The work on certain parts of the IG will be continued in the upcoming weeks until the end of the project itself. In particular, the collection of tools will be complemented by further examples. It is planned that the innovation case database is permanently updated with new cases, which means that the work on the collection of the cases will be continued, during StarTree but also beyond (EFICEEC).

