2.1 RegioGreenTex Digital Tool

Interregional Innovation Investments Instrument (I3)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The RegioGreenTex tool serves as the digital place to capture the needs and challenges from the different SMEs and match them to relevant SME partners, coaches, experts, courses and more across regions.

This digital tool, and all content created within the different Work Packages in the project and shared via the Tool, are made available, for free and exclusively, to all the consortium members via www.regiogreentex.eu for the full duration of the project.

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2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Purpose of the deliverable

Within the framework of Work Package 2 (WP2), the objective is to develop a new digital tool that facilitates matchmaking and knowledge exchange among consortium partners across diverse regions.

Aim: The primary goal of this digital tool, the RegioGreenTex (RGT)tool, is to boost transparency and sustainability within the RegioGreenTex regions.

Functionality: The RegioGreenTex tool will act as a centralized digital platform for capturing the needs and challenges of various SMEs. It will then intelligently match them with relevant partners, coaches, experts, courses, and other resources across regions.

Accessibility: All content generated within the different Work Packages of the project and shared through the RegioGreenTex tool will be accessible at no cost and exclusively to all consortium members for the full duration of the project. At the end of the RegioGreenTex project, the digital tool will remain property of Ariadne Innovation, and will be made accessible to other interested stakeholders, such as SMEs not originally involved in RGT, and regional cluster organisations, based on the Ellie.Connect fee-based offering. After the end of RegioGreenTex, the project partners will retain some special access privileges (to be determined in detail at a later stage) to the tool, this to ensure continued collaboration both within and beyond the RGT consortium.

Communication Hub: Additionally, the RegioGreenTex matchmaking tool will serve as a communication hub for consortium members. It will systematically collect and match the needs and challenges of SMEs with suitable coaches, experts, courses, etc., fostering collaboration across regions.

Open Innovation Introduction: The matchmaking tool will play a pivotal role in introducing new content and concepts developed within the project to consortium partners. For instance, the Self-Assessment Tool, coordinated by Euramaterials, can be seamlessly integrated into the platform, enhancing collaborative efforts.

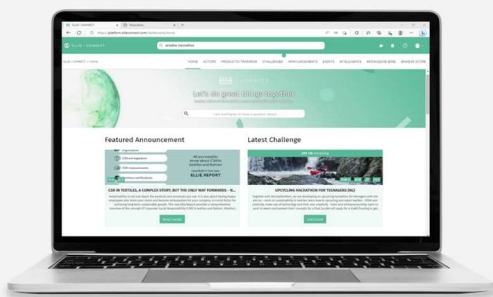## 2.2. Strategic Significance for Ariadne Innovation

The Digital Tool developed within WP2 serves a dual purpose as both the SME investment project for Ariadne Innovation and an evolution of the commercial Ellie.Connect platform. In the context of the RegioGreenTex project, the RegioGreenTex Tool, built upon the foundation of Ellie.Connect, undergoes ad-hoc optimization and adaptation for the RegioGreenTex project needs, and in a wider context to cater to the specific needs of the industry across regions. This process falls within Ariadne Innovation's company goals to establish a definitive roadmap for the growth and development of Ellie.Connect, laying a robust foundation for future investments. The RegioGreenTex project participates in this process as a first step to test and co-develop the functionalities within the consortium, thus de-risking Ariadne Innovation's current and future investments in the tool. In this sense, the RegioGreenTex digital tool is also an innovative pilot project within the SME pilots fostered by the project.

Upon the conclusion of the RegioGreenTex project, Ariadne Innovation will retain ownership of the digital matchmaking tool . Subsequently, the tool will be made accessible to a broader audience, including SMEs not initially involved in RegioGreenTex and regional cluster organizations. The access to a selection of tool functionalities may be widened during the project lifetime, if this is appropriate and beneficial to achieve the objectives of the project as a whole and of Ariadne's pilot project, as a means to test collaboration functionalities and / or market fit.

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3. THE REGIOGREENTEX DIGITAL TOOL

3.1. The Starting Point: Ellie.Connect

The innovative RegioGreenTex matchmaking tool is an evolution of the established Ellie.Connect ecosystem digital platform (www.ellieconnect.com & www.platform.ellieconnect.com), under the ownership of Ariadne Innovation. Launched in January 2021, Ellie.Connect has a clear mission: to connect, inform, and inspire stakeholders throughout the textile and fashion circular value chain towards greater sustainability, digitization, and collaboration. By seamlessly bridging segments (interior, fashion, home, workwear, technical, etc.), transcending geographical boundaries, and unifying organizational functions (buying, research, sustainability, sales, etc.), Ellie.Connect offers a comprehensive solution with diverse value propositions tailored to different consumer needs. Whatever challenges or questions organizations or individuals face, Ellie.Connect facilitates access to the necessary connections, knowledge, and industry inspiration for progressive advancement.

[Mission Statement Ellie.Connect]

Founded in Flanders, Belgium, Ellie.Connect initially focused on growth within Belgium and neighboring countries like The Netherlands and France. In November 23, nearly three years since its inception, Ellie.Connect boasts a substantial network, with over 650 members and 390 companies spanning 23 countries. While solidifying its position as a matchmaker for sustainable change, the imperative now is to broaden and internationalize the ecosystem, concurrently reinforcing its value proposition and market offerings Ellie.Connect is commercialized as a SaaS solution, via different membership formula's ranging from free to 199€/month, providing access to different functionalities.

Ellie.Connect adopted a lean approach from its inception, entering the market with a Minimum Viable Product (MVP). This collaborative effort involved partnering with Datascouts, a Belgian company. Operating on limited initial investments, we employed an iterative approach, continuously refining the Ellie.Connect platform based on insights and feedback garnered from market testing.

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Throughout this process, Ellie.Connect has methodically tested the tool's proposition in the market, leveraging each opportunity to optimize its positioning and features.

Starting from the Ellie.Connect platform created with limited investment, the RegioGreenTex digital tool aims to expand functionalities, discover SME needs and expectations in terms of matching in a wider context than before, and adding possibilities for the development of the tool. he RegioGreenTex Project serves as a significant growth opportunity, providing an expansive testing ground for the technology within a large region. This initiative enables us to identify any existing gaps and fine-tune the technologies capabilities. Importantly, the insights gained from this project will inform the development of a comprehensive investment roadmap, laying the foundation for Ellie.Connect's global expansion.

3.2. The Evolution from Ellie.Connect to the RegioGreenTex Tool

From its inception, the primary objective of the RegioGreenTex digital tool has been to cultivate a close-knit network among diverse partners—a secure digital environment fostering seamless sharing, engagement, and interaction, driving open innovation and investment. Recognizing the distinct integration needs with other Work Packages (WP) and tools such as the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT), a decision was made to establish a standalone tool for the RegioGreenTex community, separate from the Ellie.Connect community, with its own identity.

3.3. Technology Partnership:

In collaboration with our technology partner, Datascouts, a comprehensive analysis was conducted to determine the optimal approach. Following this evaluation, the decision was reached to create a clone of the existing Ellie.Connect platform. This clone not only replicates the functionalities but also mirrors the established taxonomy.

3.4. M3-M4 (March-April 2023): Blueprint

The Ellie.Connect platform operates on a registration-only basis, ensuring visibility exclusively to registered members. To align the tool's functionality with its additional role as a communication channel for and between consortium partners, a collaborative effort with EURATEX as WP6 leader was undertaken to define the blueprint for the initial tool version:
  o   URL – Domain Name: Determining the link for accessing the tool.
  o   Visual & Branding: Establishing the visual appearance in alignment with the branding strategy outlined in WP6.

o   Accessibility: Defining which content should be publicly accessible and which should be exclusive to members.

3.5. M4-M5 (April-May 2023): Creation & Development of the Visual Identity

In close collaboration with WP6, the design for the public homepage and visuals for the digital tool was crafted to align with the project's visual identity. The tool was linked to the custom URL www.regiogreentex.eu, and in collaboration with Datascouts, all content was implemented on the tool. Visitor settings were carefully configured to ensure optimal functionality.

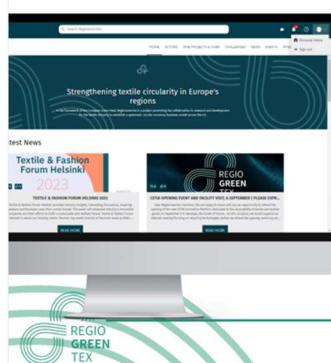### 3.6. M4-M5 (April-May 2023): Creation & Development of the public homepage & digital tool

In close collaboration with WP6 we created the designs for the public home page and visuals for the digital tool as well did we link the tool to the custom URL www.regiogreentex.eu. Together with Datascouts, all content was then implemented on the tool itself.

3.7. M6 (June 2023): Content Upload & Manual Creation

By June, the foundational aspects of the tool were in place. A pre-upload of partner pages, including a basic company description and logo, was done to fulfill the request for a publicly available partner list. Once registered, companies could build upon this foundation.

The tool, integrated into the communication strategy, received uploaded content by EURATEX. To facilitate partner registration, a series of manuals and user guides were meticulously crafted, offering step-by-step explanations of different processes.

[Example of the Manuals]

3.8. M6-8 (June-August 2023): First Test group to the tool

A crucial objective of the RegioGreenTex digital tool is to ensure a seamless user experience, starting from the registration phase. Given our extensive experience in collaboration with Belgian, Dutch, and French partners through Ellie.Connect, an initial test group was strategically selected over the summer of 2023. This group included partners from diverse regions, and its purpose was to gather valuable feedback on the user-friendliness of the registration process across different areas.

For the first test group, 17 partners out of the total 43 were invited. The objective was to guide them through three essential steps:

- o Registration: Understanding the process of registering on the tool.
- o Company Page Creation: Guidance on how to create their company page within the tool.
- o Page Update and Taxonomy Alignment: Instructions on updating the company page and aligning it with the designated Taxonomy.

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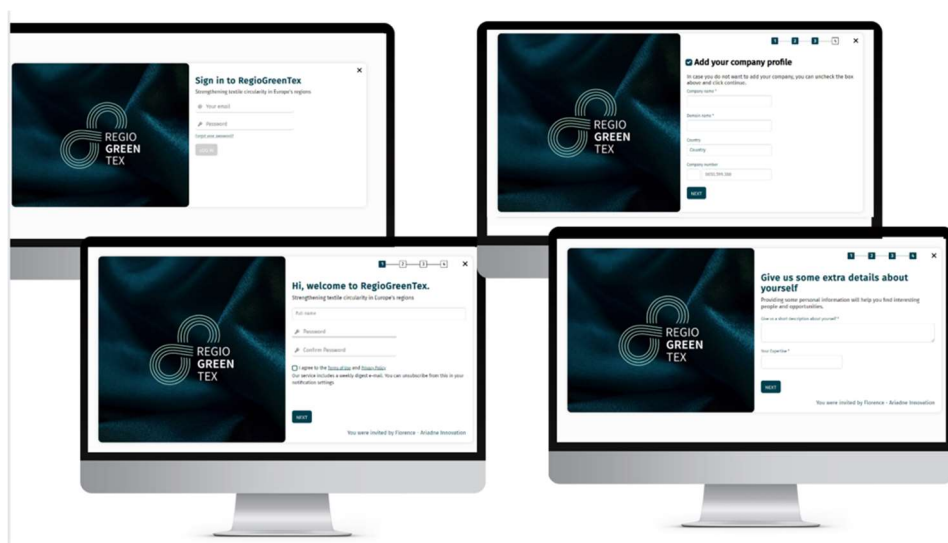
[Example of the Registration Flow]

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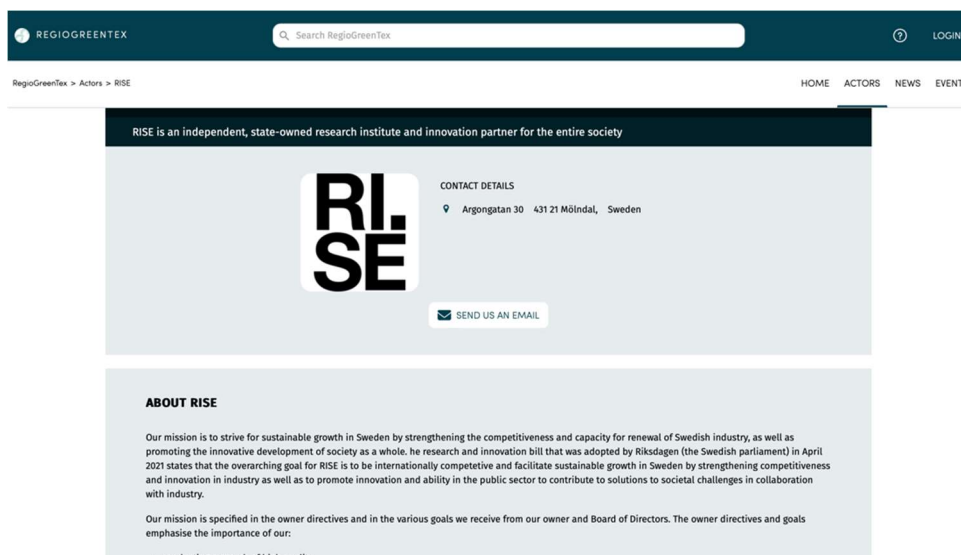
[Example of a company page on the tool]

Methodology:

The approach adopted was step-by-step, allowing members ample time to complete each phase, especially considering it was during the holiday period. For each step, an explanatory email was crafted, complemented by step-by-step manuals. This comprehensive approach aimed to facilitate members' progress at their own pace and convenience. Important feedback was collected on different elements of the Tool and processes.

Example feedback questions:

- o *Could you manage to register?*
- o *Were all steps in the registration process clear?*
- o *Was the step-by-step guide helpful and easy to understand?*
- o *Do you foresee any (expected) barriers?*
- o *Do you have any other feedback or suggestions regarding the registration process?*

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3.9. Summer: Implementation of the First draft Taxonomy (WP1)

A critical component of the RegioGreenTex tool, essential for facilitating effective matchmaking among partners, is the Taxonomy. This taxonomy comprises a comprehensive list of categories and values that characterize a company and its activities. Initially, the tool was constructed using the taxonomy from Ellie.Connect, which was integrated during the creation of the RegioGreenTex Tool.

[Implementation of the new Taxonomy]

Optimization in WP1:

As part of Work Package 1 (WP1), a dedicated effort was made to refine and optimize the taxonomy for enhanced effectiveness in the RegioGreenTex context.

During the testing period, the first draft of the optimized taxonomy was implemented into the tool. This implementation was a proactive step to gather valuable feedback from users. User insights during this phase were instrumental in further fine-tuning the taxonomy to align seamlessly with the specific needs and nuances of the RegioGreenTex community.

3.10. September 2023 (M9): Feedback Session - Points for Future Improvements

On September 20th, 2023, a comprehensive online feedback session was conducted, inviting all members of the test group to share their insights and recommendations for future enhancements. Key feedback points were:

- **Crucial Taxonomy Elements:**
    o Value Chain Activity: Identified as crucial for effective matchmaking. (need optimization)
    o Category
    o Raw Materials (Not yet available): Highlighted as essential additions.

- **Loading Speeds:** Addressing concerns and ensuring optimal tool performance.
- **Enhanced Accessibility:**
  o Challenges: Facilitating communication for non-registered users.
  o Possibility for collaboration outside the project network: exploring broader collaboration beyond the project. Create open innovation platform possibility.
- **Communication Features:**
  o Public and/or Private Announcements & Events: Providing flexibility in communication settings.
- **Technological Enhancements:**
  o Automatic Company Profile Completion: Acknowledged as added value but requiring fine-tuning efforts.
- **Language Accessibility:**
  o Tool Available Only in English: No perceived barriers reported.
- **User Profiles:**
  o Diverse Usage: Recognizing that different profiles within organizations will engage with the tool based on specific needs and challenges.

Roadmap for Future Development: The feedback collected during this session will be incorporated into the roadmap for future development, ensuring continuous improvement and alignment with user expectations and project objectives.

3.11. Launch Tool: RegioGreenTex Community Talk #1

After collecting valuable feedback from the initial test group, the official launch of the RegioGreenTex tool was orchestrated during the first Community Talks webinar. This event, organized by ETP (as task leader) and integrated into the Ecosystem Animation (task 2.4) activities of WP2, served as a pivotal moment for introducing the tool to all project partners.

The webinar started with a brief recap of the preceding process steps, outlined as described above. This was complemented by an in-depth demonstration showcasing the functionality and usage of the digital tool.

Together with the project coordinator EURATEX and Upwell as project Technical Support, we are finalizing the custom privacy policies and terms of use for the tool. Awaiting this, we did already share some first guidelines on how to use the tool during the launch webinar.

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Guidelines to use the Tool

The RegioGreenTex digital tool has been created to facilitate knowledge exchange, collaboration, and innovation among the partners of the RegioGreenTex project. An extensive privacy policy & terms of use will be shared in the upcoming weeks for your feedback.

1. Access and Usage:
- Access is by invitation only and limited to direct partners of the RegioGreenTex project.
- Partners are encouraged to use the tool for connecting, accessing information, and knowledge exchange.
- Partners are responsible for their posted content, following guidelines and legal requirements.

2. Data Privacy:
- Information shared on the platform is confidential and should not be publicly shared without explicit consent.
- Partners must exercise caution when sharing sensitive or proprietary information. The digital tool serves as a first step to explore collaboration, we recommend in-person contact for sharing more details or specific information.

3. Communication & Contact:
- Preferred language of communication: English
- Partners should respect each other's preferred contact method (in-app messaging, email, telephone, ..).
- Allow ample time for responses, considering busy schedules.

4. Responsible Use:
- Use the platform for knowledge exchange, collaboration, knowledge exchange and project-related discussions.
- Prohibit offensive, discriminatory, or harmful content or behavior.

5. Intellectual Property:
- Respect intellectual property rights and share content you have the authority to distribute.

6. Reporting and Conflict Resolution:
- Report inappropriate behavior or violations to platform administrators for resolution.
- Address disputes privately and professionally.

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[Guidelines to use the Tool]

Following the webinar, each project partner received a personalized invitation to register on the tool. These invitations were thoughtfully linked directly to their respective company pages, streamlining the onboarding process, and ensuring seamless integration into the RegioGreenTex platform.

3.12.   Current Functionalities RegioGreenTex Tool

The digital RegioGreenTex Tool is now active and in use, equipped with the following functionalities:

1. Publicly Visible Part:
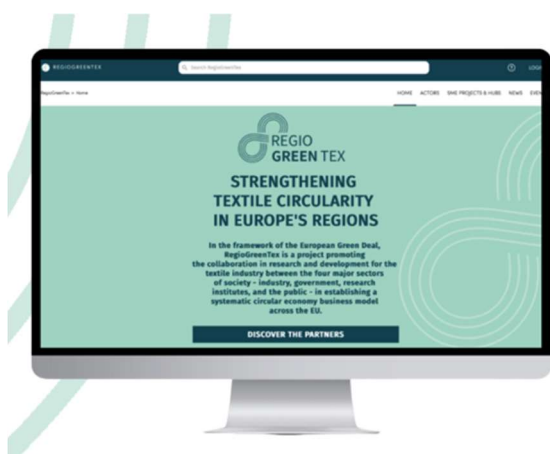
o   Showcasing Project Deliverables: Featuring key outputs of the RegioGreenTex project.

o   Limited Project Partner Overview (Actors): A filtered overview of project partners with region-specific filters. (Company descriptions are automatically retrieved from the website and can be updated later.)

o   Foundations for Hub (WP5) and SME Projects (WP4) Overview: Laying the groundwork for comprehensive overviews in Work Packages 5 and 4.

o   Announcement & Event Page (WP6): A dedicated space for announcements and events from WP6.

[RegioGreenTex Digital Tool Homepage]

2. Restricted Member-Only Part (Invitation via Email Required):

o   Access to Public Features: Members have access to Actor Database, Hub & SME Projects Database, Announcements & Events.

o   Opportunities through Challenges (WP3): Members can address project partners through the Challenges feature.

o   Foundations for Training Database (WP2): Establishing the basis for a comprehensive training database.

o   Trend Monitoring (In Progress): Ongoing development of an automated overview of relevant articles for and about project partners.

o   Automated weekly newsletter with the latest updates happening on the RegioGreenTex Digital Tool.
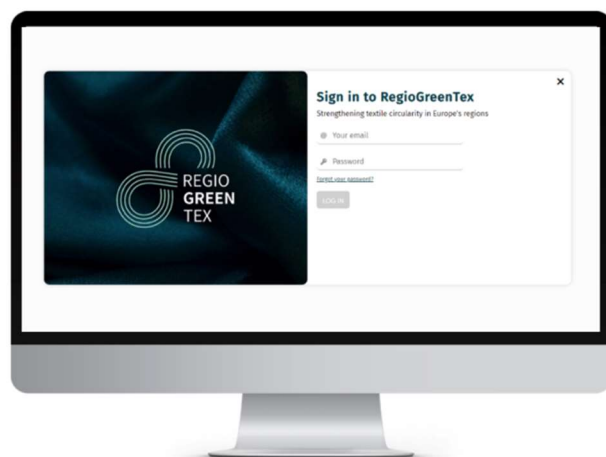
[RegioGreenTex Tool Sign In Page]

Next to the functionalities visible for the users of the digital tool, there are also some interesting insights to be retrieved from the tool from the admin side.

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o **Analytics about the ecosystems providing insights into the represented categories, value chain activities, related raw materials, maturity of the companies and more**. These analytics can help get an insight into the value chains in the different regions, as well as the gaps, and the potential for future investments. These analytics are closely linked to the final Taxonomy (WP1) implemented on the tool, which is planned for beginning 2024. The analytics are closely tied to the final Taxonomy (WP1) planned for implementation early 2024 and will be continuously monitored during the project to evaluate its impact on the value chains.
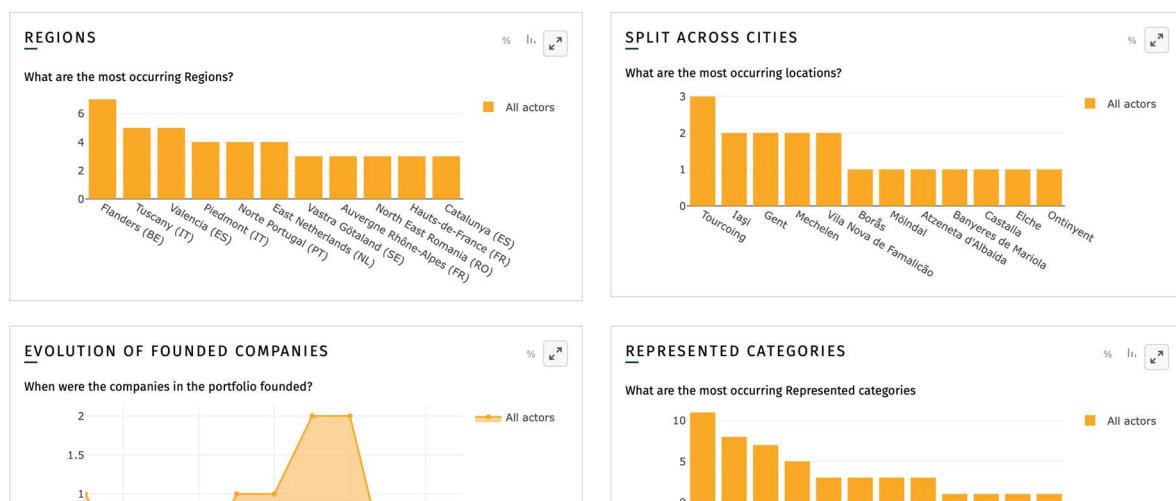
[Example of the Analytics in the Tool]

▪ **Analytics about the activity on the tool:** These analytics aim to provide insights into the tool's utilization, user interactions, and identify popular content. Monitoring partner engagement, news consumption, and training preferences will offer valuable learnings. Regular information sharing with other work packages will ensure relevance and alignment with project objectives. This data-driven approach will facilitate continuous improvement and optimization of the tool based on user behavior and preferences.

[Ecosystem Dashboard in the tool]

In our pursuit of fostering a vibrant and interactive community, while enabling matchmaking and innovation amongst the members we've set the following engagement objectives for the RegioGreenTex Tool:

o **Individual Representation:**

    o By the end of 2023, our aim is to have a minimum of one representative from each organization actively participating on the platform.

o **Regular Logins:**

    o Our goal is to encourage consistent engagement. We aspire to have every registered user log in at least once per month, ensuring continuous participation and benefit from the diverse functionalities offered by the tool.

3. NEXT STEPS FOR THE REGIOGREENTEX TOOL OPTIMIZATION

Now that the RegioGreenTex Tool has been launched, our focus for the tool is two-fold, aligning with engagement goals and enhancing impact by integrating with other work packages:

- **Engagement Goals:**
  o Work towards achieving the engagement goals, ensuring representation from at least one individual per organization on the tool by the end of 2023.
  o Encourage regular logins, aiming for at least once a month per registered user.

- **Integration with Other Work Packages:**
  o WP1:
    ▪ Taxonomy Integration: implement the final draft of the taxonomy developed in WP1 into the RegioGreenTex Tool.
  o WP2: Content Integration
    ▪ Incorporate the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) developed by Euramaterials into the digital tool.
    ▪ Enable the recording of Ecosystem Stories directly on the tool instead of just providing a link.
    ▪ Explore optimal methods to integrate training content developed by WUR into the digital tool.
  o WP3: Expert Connections
    ▪ Explore and implement features to facilitate connections to project experts via the digital tool.
  o WP4; Digital interregional space
    ▪ T4.4: Share the main findings of portfolio and funded SMEs and engage in matchmaking.
  o WP5: Regional Hubs Integration
    ▪ Include information from regional Hubs in the tool to enhance visibility and collaboration.
  o Cross-Work Package Insights:
    ▪ Generate insights into collaborations within the RegioGreenTex community to foster meaningful connections.
  o Blueprint for Optimization:
    ▪ Based on the collected feedback regarding tool performance and functionalities from the Feedback Session, create a comprehensive blueprint for upcoming optimizations and developments.

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Our strategy for optimizing and enhancing the RegioGreenTex Tool involves creating a comprehensive blueprint and implementing changes in a step-by-step approach. This approach emphasizes feedback loops and prioritization based on the needs of project partners.

Timeline:

Blueprint Availability: Aim to finalize the blueprint by early 2024.

Implementation Approach:

- Step-by-Step Implementation: Initiate changes gradually, ensuring a systematic and well-paced approach.
- Feedback Loops: Incorporate feedback loops at various stages to gather insights and refine developments based on user experiences.
- Prioritization Based on Partner Needs: Prioritize enhancements and features based on the expressed needs and requirements of project partners.

This methodical and collaborative approach ensures that each adjustment aligns with the evolving needs of the RegioGreenTex community, fostering a dynamic and responsive digital ecosystem.

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