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Empowering Underground Laboratories Network Usage in the Baltic Sea Region

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In the Baltic Sea region, there are world leading science organisations and industrial companies specialised in geophysics, geology and underground construction. There are also several highly interesting underground laboratories (ULs), research mines and test-sites, that are not utilised to their full potential.

Six of these facilities cooperate within the Interreg Baltic Sea Region program funded project, Empowering Underground Laboratories Network Usage (EUL) [1]. Underground facilities have been established into existing or historical mines, research tunnel networks or as a dedicated underground laboratory for a specific purpose. The EUL project continues in 2021 the work of the Interreg funded Baltic Sea Underground Innovation Network (BSUIN) [2], that ended in December 2020. While the BSUIN project concentrated on characterising the underground facilities and operational settings, the EUL project works on testing, validation, and enhancing previously created practices, tools, and approaches. During the EUL project, the emphasis is put on identifying the global user segments of underground facilities, the effectiveness of marketing of ULs and created network, now known as European Underground Laboratories Association, and customer relations management from the first contact to the realisation of the project.

The underground laboratories participating in BSUIN and EUL projects are Callio Lab (Pyhäjärvi Finland), ÄSPÖ Hard Rock Laboratory (Oskarshamn, Sweden), Ruskela Mining Park (Ruskeala, Russia), Educational and research mine Reiche Zeche (Freiberg, Germany), Underground Low Background Laboratory of the Khlopin Radium Institute (St.Petersburg, Russia) and the Conceptual Lab development co-ordinated by KGHM Cuprum R&D centre (Poland).

One of the main objectives of EUL project is to test the developed business and service concepts for the established network of underground laboratories and for the individual laboratories. Testing ensures the functionality of laboratory service concepts and customer relationship management processes for commercial and non-commercial users.

Another main objective is to test and develop the web-based tool (WBT). Users from partner and associative organisations and underground laboratories (ULs) will test it from their perspectives. The feedback helps to steer the tool into the more user-friendly and more purposeful direction for the potential customers and the underground laboratory managers to use.

To reach new customers and understand different possible customer segments, a big data analysis of users of ULs world-wide will be conducted. Also marketing the network and underground laboratories will be tested and best marketing strategies identified.

Main target groups are the ULs, their users and potential customers (companies and researchers). Another target group is regional development agencies that will be informed about the business possibilities in ULs so that they can provide information to potential customers looking for business opportunities.

In this paper, the EUL project's first outcomes will be discussed reflected to the BSUIN project. The BSUIN and EUL projects are funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme.

[1] Empowering Underground Laboratories Network Usage, www.bsuin.eu, 18 Jan 2021

[2] Baltic Sea Underground Innovation Network, www.bsuin.eu, 18 Jan 2021

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