

Best practices from Lombardy: the case of ROLD

"Sharing good practices from other European regions with our own value chains offers several advantages and opportunities: for example, the introduction of new ideas, techniques and processes can stimulate innovation and continuous improvement within industrial activities, which can lead to the optimization of operational efficiency, a reduction of costs, a minor environmental impact, the increasing of global competitiveness and promotion of knowledge flow and mutual learning" - stated Laura Rocchitelli, President and CEO of ROLD, referring to the company's participation in their first On-Site Deep Dive (OSDD) Visit in Catalonia on the 28th and 29th November 2023, organized within the activities of the PLASTIX (Plastics Revolution for European Regions) project, where AFIL - Lombardy Intelligent Factory Cluster is involved as a partner.

ROLD is a company based in Nerviano, in the province of Milan, which has been producing innovative and technological components for household appliances for over sixty years. It has 230 employees and a turnover of 40 million Euros. Among its clients, there are major players of the so-called "White Goods" industry, such as Whirlpool, LG, Bosch and Electrolux. ROLD's products include innovative locking systems, smart sensors, modular encoders, microswitches and push-push switches.



Figure 1. AFIL's Strategic Community on Advanced Polymers at ROLD in July 2023

The company is strongly involved in the activities of AFIL, the Lombardy Technological Cluster on Advanced Manufacturing. In fact, ROLD coordinates the Lombardy Sustainable and Smart Value Chain on Advanced Polymers, which was born within AFIL's Strategic Community on Advanced Polymers, engaging 35 stakeholders from the regional ecosystem, including companies, universities, research centers and associations.

The goal of this initiative promoted by the Lombardy Region within Call for Expressions of Interest for Value Chains (i.e. the Policy Instrument for Lombardy within PLASTIX) is to progress in digital and ecological transition.

In light of this coordination role as well as the interest for plastic recycling, ROLD is involved as a representative of the Regional Stakeholder Group in the activities of the PLASTIX project and has regularly taken part to the OSDDs organized in the regions represented by the Consortium, such as the one to Catalonia (Spain), where it was accompanied by AFIL Cluster and Lombardy Region (in its quality of Associated Policy Authority within PLASTIX) and to Savinja-Šalek Region (Slovenia) at the beginning of March 2024.

These missions, like the others in 2024, have represented a precious opportunity to gather interesting insights both during the seminars and during the subsequent visits to different organizations. In the case of Catalonia, two visits have taken place at Barcelona Supercomputing Centre and at GCR - Sustainable Plastic Solutions company. In Slovenia, ROLD have visited the facilities of Veplas d.d. and Plastika Skaza.



Figure 2. The Lombardy delegation (AFIL, ROLD and Lombardy Region) during the OSDD in Catalonia in November 2024

In particular, in these occasions, the Lombardy-based company had the opportunity to listen to the presentations from local stakeholders regarding the ecosystem, the circular economy initiatives, the plastics sector, the role of Clusters and the support mechanisms. ROLD also had the chance to present its activities to local companies involved in the OSDDs and to network with them. All the experience and knowledge gained has been regularly made available by ROLD to the Regional Stakeholder Group through the periodical meetings organized by AFIL.

AFIL has discussed all of this not only with Laura Rocchitelli, but also with Daniela De Lucia, Director of the ROLD Academy (an entity created by the company for continuous training) and Alessandro Migliavacca, Material Specialist at R-Lab (ROLD Innovation and Applied Research Laboratory).

"We had the opportunity to learn best practices from companies different from ours, which, for example, produce recycled polymers" - said Daniela De Lucia.

"It was all very interesting because it helped us understand how we could transfer the strengths of other regions to Lombardy. Moreover, the companies we have met could become partners with whom developing projects at various levels" - commented Alessandro Migliavacca.

"Although we speak with companies or organizations different from ours, the language is the same, so we understand each other. In the end, it's the stakeholders table where we engage in discussions, with the aim of strengthening our skills" - affirmed Laura Rocchitelli.