



BIOEAST AS A DRIVING FORCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

*High-level conference on deploying sustainable and circular bioeconomies in
Central and Eastern Europe in the context of food, agriculture, natural resources
and bioeconomy related policies
20-21 February 2020*

Flash report on the thematic discussions of the 2nd day

21 February 2020

The aim of the conference was to provide a high-level political discussion forum for the Central and Eastern European countries' representatives who are part of the BIOEAST Initiative involving the Commission services and other EU institutions. The aim of the second day's discussion was to agree on thematic priorities.

The European Commission announced an ambitious roadmap to tackle the challenges ahead of us. The "European Green Deal" is designed in such a way as to leave no individual or region behind in the structural reform and forthcoming transformation. The main conclusion was that bioresources-based economy should be part of the sustainable and circular future. Moreover, the governmental initiative for knowledge-based agriculture, aquaculture and forestry in the bioeconomy (BIOEAST) of 11 Central and Eastern European member states could play a key role in helping to form the necessary partnerships, to join forces to develop the needs, priorities and to work together at the European level to reach the agreed objectives.

Synthesizing and building on the outcome of the 1st day high-level discussions, the BIOEAST Initiative's Thematic Working Groups planned half-day thematic debates on Food systems, Agroecology, Forestry, Bioenergy and Bio-based materials and Freshwater-based bioeconomy. The debates were organized in two consecutive sessions: an open discussion with invited speakers and guests and a closed session only for BIOEAST member states representatives. The five parallel open sessions informed the member states representatives about the forming policies and strategies at EU level, the future research and innovation priorities and funding schemes of the next Horizon Europe framework program, as well as role of the bioeconomy in the future CAP.

The open session provided an opportunity for Brussels based officers to be acquainted with the work and objectives of the TWGs within the BIOEAST Initiative.

Discussions during the closed sessions were related to the group's draft terms of reference, action plan in the context of the future BIOEAST Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda, national priorities for the biomass valorisation and possible role of the Initiative in the context of European Commission's priorities for the European Green Deal.

Closed sessions served as an opportunity for first face-to-face meetings for three of the BIOEAST TWGs: “Food systems”, “Agroecological intensification and sustainable yields” and “Freshwater-based bioeconomy”. The two other TWGs on “Forestry”, and “Bioenergy and Bio-based Materials” already had their kick-offs previously. The BIOEAST countries were also asked to nominate representatives for the TWGs. The point that nominees are expected to represent the member state's position within the specific TWG was clarified.

One of the main objectives of BIOEAST TWGs is to develop their thematic Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA). Although being developed by macro-regional group of experts, it should contribute to the national and European priorities as well. One of the main conclusions of the discussions was that the new Horizon Europe research and innovation framework program and other EU policies could benefit from TWG activities and outputs by channelling the research needs and priorities of BIOEAST countries.

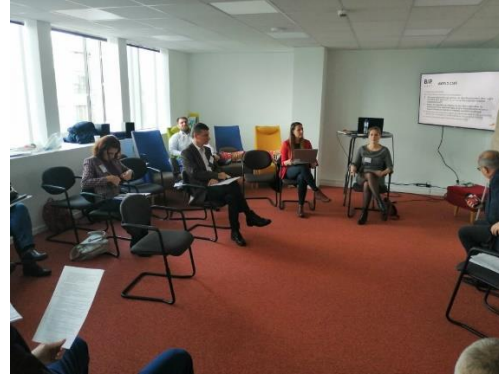
The first draft of the particular thematic SRIA is due in 2020 in order to contribute to the development of common BIOEAST SRIA at a later stage. The TWGs plan to meet face to face at least 2 times per annum. Due to the positive effect of mobilising all TWG representatives for the same event, BIOEAST representatives started a discussion about organizing the next TWGs meeting as a joint event.

This two-day conference was organized with the help of the BIOEASTsUP project.

TWG Agroecology and Sustainable Yields

DG AGRI representatives, Alexia Rouby gave the most up-to-date information on agriculture in the context of Horizon Europe and also the soil health and food mission, Susana Gaona-Saez on European Partnership related to agroecology and Inge van Oost presented the novelties around EIP-AGRI, multi-actor approach and AKIS in the future CAP. Robert M'Barek from the JRC gave an outlook on yields and sustainable intensification highlighting the differences in terms of yields between the EU15 and EU13.

The open discussion was followed by the kick-off meeting of the TWG where the Terms of reference (ToR), and the roadmap were discussed by the group. The group also worked on the topic suggestions during a short workshop. The TWG identified 8 main topics for the SRIA around which Central and Eastern European specificities will be elaborated (1) soil fertility, soil biodiversity and microbial communities, (2) transition to chemical pesticide-free agriculture, (3) proper management of plant genetic resources (4) crop production diversification, (5) precision farming and digital technologies, (6) animal health, nutrition, (7) local food systems and sustainable supply chains, and (8) rural development and innovation management.



TWG Forestry

Johan Elvnert, managing director of FTP, presented FTP the Strategic research and innovation agenda 2030 and FTP Vision 2040. These documents consider trends in forestry research and policies and should serve to inspire Horizon Europe to create opportunities for high-impact projects and encourage investments. Taneli Kolström, chair of the SCAR SWG, highlighted SCAR mission to strengthen transnational research and cooperation in forests and forestry. Dušan Šándor, DG RTD officer, introduced vision of Horizon Europe - a sustainable, fair and prosperous future for people and planet based on European values, tackling climate change, helping to achieve Sustainable Development Goals and boosting the Union's competitiveness and growth. While Tamas Szedlak, DG AGRI officer, presented the EU Forest Strategy review.

The afternoon session was dedicated to presentations of initial pillars of thematic forestry SRIA and to a discussion on the next steps in elaboration of the first draft concept paper.



TWG Food Systems

Peter Wehrheim, head of unit, DG RTD presented the topic of bioeconomy and food systems. Secondly Hans Joerg Lutzeyer, secretary of SCAR, and member of the DG RTD, gave a speech on food systems partnership. During the session Paweł Chmieliński coordinator of the TWG presented the role of SCAR FOOD Strategic Working Group. In the second part of the session Bartosz Zambrzycki, officer at DG SANTE elaborated the key challenges concerning food

waste and circular economy, and Natalia Brzezina, officer at DG AGRI explained the role of R&I in Green Deal, Farm to Fork Strategy and future CAP.

During the closed meeting of TWG Food Systems, a lot of emphasis was placed on sustainable, complex and adaptive food systems when identifying topics.

TWG Freshwater-based Bioeconomy

TWG Fresh Water BBE was initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic, Dr. Zuzana Boukalová was nominated as chair. At first Marek Veselský Czech BIOEAST NCP expressed interest and support of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic for the TWG Fresh Water BBE. Dr. Boukalová briefly presented BIOEASTsUP project as a cooperation and support project for the BIOEAST Initiative. Dr. Boukalová clarified the importance of fresh water in the context of environmental changes and presented priorities of the TWG Fresh water BBE provided in the first draft version of a concept paper. The first session was dedicated to presentations and also to discussions with the representatives of Directorate-General of the European Commission Ms Dora Barreira Ramos (DG MARE), Ms Josefina Enfedaque (DG RTD), Mr Nikos Zampoukas (DG RTD) and Mr Bela Halasi-Kovács, Ph.D. (SCAR FISH SWG) discussed the crucial issues of fresh water and also indicated how the connected research and innovation activities will be supported by the Horizon EUROPE programme.

During the afternoon closed session the participants discussed the priorities presented by Dr. Boukalová. They agreed that the representants of the BIOEAST countries will provide national priorities for the second version of the concept paper.

TWG Bioenergy and Bio-based Materials

Biljana Kulisic, the leader of TWG Bioenergy and New Value-Added materials, highlighted that the most important priority is to develop business models that serve decarbonisation. Head of unit, DG RTD representatives Pavel Misiga, presented that the EU Green Deal promote sustainability with focus on the future vision, addressing Carbon Neutrality 2050, Strategy 2030, Circular Economy, and Zero pollution. The cornerstones of it are carbon-neutrality, climate mitigation and restoration of natural systems Eleni Zika from BBI JU highlighted the the importance of realizing the European bioeconomy potential. Oana Neagu, from COPA-COGECA emphasized the Green Deal opportunities in context of Bioeconomy, Climate law, and Circular Economy action plan. Laura Jalasjoki policy analyst from ENRD elaborated the Pilar 2 of CAP with the key element that rural development policy should focus Bioeconomy issue in the next period. Martin Behrens from FNR and as BIOEASTsUP consortium member drew attention that the aim is to achieve sustainable processing of some varieties of biomass products in one location.

During the closed panel discussions, the members identified that Bioenergy business models have to be developed in order to serve low carbon transition and increase competitiveness of BIOEAST bioeconomy stakeholders.

