

Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture and Ministers of Research of the
BIOEAST Initiative's Member States

We, the Ministers of Agriculture and Ministers of Research representing the countries of the BIOEAST initiative—Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia—reaffirm our commitment to fostering collaboration and addressing key challenges in the realm of knowledge-based agriculture, aquaculture, and forestry in the bioeconomy.

Acknowledging the significance of the joint declaration signed by 11 countries and 22 ministers during the Slovak Visegrad4 Presidency in May 2019, outlining the future trajectory of the BIOEAST Initiative within the framework of Horizon Europe;

Recognizing the ongoing debates surrounding sustainability and competitiveness, particularly regarding indispensable, but vulnerable natural resources such as soil, freshwater, and ecosystem services, as well as the critical importance of the European food system security and the potential of the bioeconomy in driving socio-economic and sustainable development in Europe;

Having regard to the future European Research and Innovation Framework Programme and synergies with other European Funds, including the Pre-Accession Funds, recognizing the significant role could play in cohesion of EU Member States and facilitating the accession process of Western-Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries to the European Union;

Considering discussions on European Strategic Autonomy, the re-evaluation of Europe's role in global supply chains, future policies concerning European food system security and sustainability, the context of natural resource management, climate targets, biotechnology and biomanufacturing initiative, and the growing digitalization of sectors;

Emphasizing the necessity of collective national efforts supported by European cooperation, and recognizing the imperative for a paradigm shift from import dependence to self-sustainability. Local biomass production and processing, alongside the precious soil, freshwater, and ecosystem resources in Central and Eastern Europe, are vital for securing a sustainable European food system and ensuring Europe's strategic autonomy;

Stressing that achieving these aforementioned objectives necessitates substantial investment in research and innovation, knowledge adaptation and dissemination, and the establishment of a specific and an effective research funding framework, alongside active societal engagement;

Recognizing the growing interest and appreciation for the role of the BIOEAST Initiative in identifying common strategic research and innovation priorities, while also leveraging the accomplishments of the initiative;

We commit to strengthen our cooperation in research, innovation and development by involving other countries, such as the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries, to facilitate their integration to the European Research Area in agriculture and other bioeconomy sectors;

We pledge to establish a joint research and innovation driven partnership aimed at addressing the interconnections between sustainable natural resources, the food system, and the deployment of the bioeconomy in Central and Eastern Europe. We foresee an in-depth discussion with all Member States and European Commission on the structure of the partnership, its scope, role of participants and financial aspects, thus this declaration does not imply an immediate financial commitment for the signatories.

We appreciate the Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence actions under the European Research and Innovation Framework Programme. However, we emphasize that there is a need to take further action in order to strengthen valorisation, knowledge exchange, and bridge the gap between research and implementation within Europe;

We invite the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, and the European Parliament to take this declaration into consideration during the strategic planning process of the new multiannual financial framework.