

# PARTNERING FOR THE FUTURE

*‘BIOEAST and Beyond’ high-level conference on Central and Eastern European research and innovation priorities in the context of sustainable soil and freshwater resilience, food systems security and bioeconomy related policies*

4-6 December 2024, Budapest, Hungary

## CONCEPT NOTE

The Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU, in close cooperation with the European Commission, the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR), and the BIOEAST Initiative, aims to organize a high-level conference to discuss research and innovation priorities of Central and Eastern Europe in the context of European Strategic Autonomy, European Food System Security, and European Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing initiatives.

"PARTNERING FOR THE FUTURE" marks a series of events during the six-month Hungarian Presidency. The aim of these events is to familiarize, debate, and promote a specific Presidency priority focused on developing a new pan-European research and innovation initiative with a geographic focus on Central and Eastern Europe, including the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries.

A Stakeholder Manifesto initiated by the BIOEAST thematic working groups, and signed by more than 150 stakeholders, triggered a joint declaration by 20 agriculture and research ministers from 10 countries to assess the needs and impact of a future partnership to support knowledge transfer and enhance excellence-based research, education, innovation, and development capacities in the macro-region.

The policy forum on 4 July 2024 aimed to engage all Member States and EU institutions in the discussion. The forum's conclusions call on the Commission and Member States to begin reflecting on these priorities, with further discussions planned at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council and the Research Council.

The high-level conference from 4-6 December aims to deliberate on EU research, innovation, and development priorities by having a focus on the Central and Eastern European region, including the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries. The overarching goal is to highlight the specificity of a geographically focused approach to foster advancements that yield collective benefits across the European continent. The objective is twofold: on the one hand, to assess the shocks, challenges, drivers, and needs for a strong and ambitious R&I cooperation and where to invest collective national efforts; on the other, to

identify thematic research and innovation priorities for sustainability, resilience, and innovative biomass production and utilization for the macro-region.

Central and Eastern European biomass production and processing, along with available soil, freshwater, and ecosystem services, have the potential to contribute to European challenges concerning food, industrial, and energy security in the context of sustainability transition; however, unlocking this potential requires additional considerations.

The event will highlight the focus of the SCAR 6th Foresight Exercise, addressing complex interlinkages of thematic areas and identifying the types of research needed to better engage society and increase acceptance of bioeconomy-related research and innovation advancements.

The discussions will be based on two thematic nexuses:

- Carbon-water cycles nexus: The linkage between healthy soils and freshwater resilience.
- Nutrition-energy cycles nexus: Food system security and locally valorized biomass and biowaste in the bioeconomy.

Both thematic areas will feature focused panel discussions on system shocks and resilience, and science-policy discussions on future priorities for strategic research and innovation agendas, with a special focus on societal engagement. These discussions should contribute to understanding priorities at the Member State, macro-regional, and European levels for sustainable transition pathways and socio-economic needs, and should guide the future setting of the new programming period.

Regarding participants, we are seeking ministers and EU institutions' representatives, SCAR and concerned research program committee representatives of the Member States, policymakers from ministries including EU candidate countries, academia, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and key private sector representatives with priorities in the macro-region.

#### **Draft Agenda:**

- 1. 4. December gala dinner: Vigadó, Budapest**
- 2. 5. December conference: Várkert Bazár, Budapest**
- 3. 6. December field trip: Tata, Hungary**