

PROGRAMME



ANNUAL BIOEAST BIOECONOMY CONFERENCE

From Strategy to Impact: Inclusive
Decision-Making in National
Bioeconomy Action Plans

22nd – 23rd April 2026

University of Zadar
Zadar, Croatia



Funded by
the European Union

In recent years, the BIOEAST Initiative together with its supporting project, [BOOST4BIOEAST](#), have played a key role in mobilising the Central and Eastern European (CEE) macro-region to align its research and innovation efforts with EU policies, fostering a more coordinated response to enable bioeconomy transition to address complex challenges such as climate change, food security, and resource efficiency. At the core of this endeavour is the **national action plan development process**, realised within the frame of BOOST4BIOEAST, which has built participatory, multistakeholder spaces to co-create and futureproof national bioeconomy action plans organised by the BIOEAST HUBs across the eleven BIOEAST countries since April 2025. This co-development process comes to an end in June 2026 when all eleven national action plans will be published containing clear policy priorities, targets and actions for bioeconomy deployment until 2040 aligned with needs of bioeconomy actors. To contribute to the refinement of the bioeconomy action plans in an inclusive way by bringing together the BIOEAST community, the **BOOST4BIOEAST project organises its flagship annual event, the BIOEAST Bioeconomy Conference on 22–23 April 2026 in Zadar, Croatia.**

While [last year's Conference](#) revolved around assessing the macro-regional strategic research and innovation priorities and directions, and identifying research and knowledge gaps, this year **the event focuses on validating the bioeconomy action plans in terms of policy implications, future impact and valorisation opportunities at national, macro-regional and European levels.**

Specific objectives of the conference are:

- to review the **latest developments and the role of BIOEAST Initiative** could play in the context of changing European policy processes;
- to showcase as an **inspiring example, the creation of the Croatia bioeconomy strategy and action plan**;
- to **highlight exceptional innovators from the BIOEAST macro-region** leading the way towards bioeconomy transition;
- To **foster dialogue** between wide range of stakeholders **on the impact of bioeconomy action plans through thematic interactive sessions.**

The event will also offer opportunities for **networking and knowledge-sharing, with a poster session** dedicated to inspiring bioeconomy examples and projects from the BIOEAST countries or relevant for the BIOEAST macro-region and a **field trip** showcasing practical applications of bioeconomy.

The Conference is **part of a series of events**, organized back-to-back with the meetings of the BIOEAST governance, Thematic Working Groups Coordination and BOOST4BIOEAST annual project meeting making the week between 20-23 April specifically dedicated to BIOEAST in Zadar.

The **BIOEAST Governance, Thematic Working Groups, national BIOEAST HUBs including networks, mirror groups, and communities of bioeconomy, research and innovation funders, Horizon Europe Programme Committee members and National Contact Points of the BIOEAST** countries are all invited to take part in the conference and its side-events.

The conference is primarily dedicated to the bioeconomy stakeholders of the BIOEAST macro-region, but it welcomes any interested parties from all EU countries.

Join us in shaping a sustainable future for the Central and Eastern European bioeconomy!

AGENDA

22 April 2026 (DAY 1)

09:30 – 10:00	Arrival, registration	
10:00 – 10:20	Greetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Josip Faričić, Rector, University of Zadar • Ante Ćurković, Deputy Mayor, City of Zadar 	
PLENARY		
10:20 – 10:45	Bioeconomy Strategy of Croatia	Tugomir Majdak, State Secretary , Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
10:45 – 10:55	Ministerial Welcome	David Vlajčić , Vice president of Croatian Government and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Croatian Ministry of Agriculture
10:55 – 11:20	Implementing the EU Bioeconomy Strategy	Wim Haentjens , Head of Sector for Bioeconomy at DG Research and Innovation
11:20 – 11:45	BIOEASTWIDE macro-regional cooperation supporting R&I and competitiveness	Barna Kovács , Secretary of the BIOEAST Initiative
11:45 – 12:00	Q and A with the plenary speakers	
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch	
IN SPOTLIGHT PANEL: BIOEAST OPEN INNOVATION CHALLENGE WINNERS		
13:00 – 14:15	Changemakers Leading Bioeconomy Transition across the BIOEAST macro-region	Moderator:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rossen Kolev, co-founder and CEO of SmartFarm Robotix Simona Kelher, Head of sales and marketing, KNOFmowa Alen Hrutić, CEO of ALGO EKO d.o.o. Camelia Tulcan, University of Life Sciences "King Mihai I" 	Kevin Ryan , Irish Bioeconomy Foundation
14:15 – 15:00	Networking break and poster session (voting)	
ACTION PLAN WORKSHOP: How to transform strategic documents to action		
15:00 – 16:40	<p>Valorisation workshop with all participants about the national bioeconomy action plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15:00-15:20: Keynote presentation on the implementation of bioeconomy Action Plans 15:20-16:20: Workshop and group discussion on translating strategic documents into concrete measures under varying decision-maker attitudes, while exploring alternative valorisation pathways 16:20-16:40: Reporting back and main conclusions 	<p>Moderator: Valéria Csonka, Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, HU</p> <p>Speaker: Aleksejs Nipers, Associate Professor and Leading Researcher at the Institute of Economics and Finance and Associate Professor at the Institute of Forestry, LV</p>
Closed session for TWG members		
16:40 – 18:00	<p>Parallel TWG sessions to discuss activities for 2026 and progress on updating the BIOEAST thematic Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TWG Agroecology and sustainable yields TWG Bioenergy & new value-added materials TWG Food systems TWG Forestry value chain TWG Freshwater based bioeconomy TWG Bioeconomy education TWG Advanced biobased materials 	Closed sessions for TWG members

18:20 – 18:30	Poster Awards Announcement
18:30 -	Cocktail dinner at the venue (with surprise)

23 April 2026 (DAY 2)

07:30 – 08:00	Arrival and registration	
08:00 – 12:00	<p>Field trip with take-away lunch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option A: Paška Sirana (Island of Pag): the oldest cheese dairy on the island of Pag, is the birthplace of the renowned Paški sir. During the visit, participants will learn about the full production process – from sheep farming to cheese making – in a modern facility that meets the highest EU standards. The visit highlights a successful example of traditional knowledge combined with innovation, strongly linked to sustainable and circular bioeconomy practices. Option B: Solana Nin & Town of Nin: Unique educational path through the salt fields of the Nin Saltworks. During the visit, participants will learn about the traditional and fully natural process of salt production while also being introduced to the local flora, fauna, and historical context. As an ecological saltworks, Solana Nin produces salt using exclusively natural methods, making it a strong example of sustainable resource use. The visit also includes time to explore the historic town of Nin. 	All registered participants