PROGRAMME

BIOEAST CONFERENCE

Taking a Decade of Macro-Regional Cooperation for Research, Innovation and Bioeconomy Transformation to the Next Level

25 November 2026

European Committee of the Regions
Brussels, Belgium

Funded by the European Union

Hosted by European Committee of the Regions

The conference will provide **a high-level political and policy platform to reflect on the achievements of the BIOEAST Initiative and to shape the next phase of cooperation for a competitive, sustainable and resilient bioeconomy across Central and Eastern Europe and the wider BIOEAST region, including Ukraine, Moldova and the Western Balkan countries**.

Building on a decade of BIOEAST cooperation, the conference will bring together high-level representatives of **the BIOEAST countries, the European Commission and other European institutions, together with key regional stakeholders**. The ambition is to strengthen dialogue across the policy areas and their implementation that are essential for bioeconomy transformation and to identify how national, macro-regional and European actions can work together more effectively.

Research and innovation have been, and will remain, key drivers of bioeconomy development. At the same time, the next phase requires a stronger focus on implementation: translating knowledge, strategies and research priorities into investment, industrial development, market uptake and higher added value in the BIOEAST countries. The strategic work, governance structures and national action planning developed through the BIOEAST Initiative and the **BOOST4BIOEAST project** provide an important foundation for this transition.

Looking ahead, strengthening research and innovation capacities will remain essential for building competitiveness and enabling the region to move towards higher-value and more knowledge-intensive bioeconomy activities. The conference will therefore connect the achievements of the current phase with the future priorities of BIOEAST cooperation, supported by the **new BIOEASTWIDE project**, and discuss how research, innovation, investment and policy implementation can jointly accelerate bioeconomy transformation across the region.

Held in Brussels to connect BIOEAST priorities with European policy discussions, the conference is expected to welcome around 100 participants, with a particular focus on representatives of EU institutions and the Brussels-based policy community, alongside stakeholders from research, industry and other organisations active in the bioeconomy across Europe.

I. National Bioeconomy Implementation: From HUBs and Action Plans to Investment

Drawing on BOOST4BIOEAST results, this session will examine how eleven national HUBs, stakeholder engagement and national Action Plans can support sustained bioeconomy implementation. The discussion will consider policy ownership, coordination and investment, including connections with future national and regional programming.

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II. Research and Innovation Priorities for Bioeconomy Competitiveness

Building on the BOOST4BIOEAST SRIA work, this session will examine the research and innovation priorities needed to strengthen the region's bioeconomy and generate higher added value. The discussion will reflect on the relevance of these priorities, the capacities required to pursue them, and their contribution to competitiveness.

III. Widening the BIOEAST Macro-region: Cooperation with Ukraine, Moldova and the Western Balkans

The session will introduce the ambition of the new BIOEASTWIDE project to establish the foundations for a research and innovation partnership across the wider macro-region. The discussion will explore why this matters for Central and Eastern Europe and its partners, and where the challenge lies: engaging national authorities and funding agencies, aligning priorities, developing trust and learning how to invest together. It will consider the actors, instruments, and institutional capacities needed to make this cooperation possible.

IV. European Commission Perspectives: The Future of the Bioeconomy and the BIOEAST Engagement

This closing dialogue will bring together perspectives from DG RTD, DG AGRI, DG ENV and DG GROW on the future of the European bioeconomy and the role of the wider BIOEAST region. It will provide an opportunity to hear how the Commission approaches the bioeconomy across its research, agricultural, environmental and industrial policy responsibilities, and how these perspectives connect.

Following a brief moderator's introduction, the four Commission representatives will share their views on the opportunities, challenges and future direction they see for the region within the wider European context.

REGISTRATION LINK

Registration is open until **10 November:** [BIOEAST Conference 25th November, 2026 - Registration]

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DRAFT AGENDA

Timing	Session	Format and Indicative Contributions
08:30 – 09:15	Registration and welcome coffee	
09:15– 10:00	**High-Level Opening**	Opening addresses by **high-level representatives of the European Committee of the Regions, European Parliament and BIOEAST Initiative.** • **Barna Kovács,** Secretary, BIOEAST Initiative • **Stoyan Tchoukanov,** President of European Economic and Social Committee's NAT section • **Vladimir Vnuk,** State Secretary, Slovakian Ministry of Agriculture, *TBD* • **Eszter Lakos,** Member of the European Parliament (EPP), Member of Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, *TBD*
10:00 – 11:10	**Plenary I — National Bioeconomy Implementation: From HUBs and Action Plans to Investment**	**20 min keynote:** BOOST4BIOEAST presentation on HUBs, stakeholder engagement and national Action Plans. **Balázs Imre,** Assistant Professor, HU HUB Coordinator, Budapest University of Technology and Economics **50 min panel:** Moderated discussion with high-level representatives of ministries responsible for economy and environment, at State Secretary or equivalent senior level, alongside senior institutional leaders and implementation or investment experts. • **Tugomir Majdak,** State Secretary, Croatian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries • **Béla Kuslits,** Deputy State Secretary, Hungarian Ministry of Living Environment • **Adam Nowak,** Undersecretary of State, Polish Ministry of Agriculture, *TBD*

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		• **Ladeja Košir,** Founder & Director, SI HUB Coordinator, Circular Change
11:10 – 11:40	Coffee break	
11:40 – 12:50	**Plenary II — Research and Innovation Priorities for Bioeconomy Competitiveness**	**20 min keynote**: BOOST4BIOEAST presentation on the SRIA and research and innovation priorities. **Korinna Varga,** Head of Agricultural Policy Research Group, BOOST4BIOEAST Coordinator, Hungarian Research Institute of Organic Agriculture **50 min panel:** Moderated discussion, including audience questions, with high-level representatives of ministries responsible for agriculture and research, at State Secretary or equivalent senior level, alongside university rectors and research institute directors. • **Velislav Žvipelj,** State Secretary, Slovenian Ministry of Agriculture • **Michał Goszczyński**, Director, Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, *TBD* • **Dóra Drexler,** Director, Hungarian Research Institute of Organic Agriculture & President, IFOAM Organics Europe • **Mariusz Matyka,** Director, Polish Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation • **Miroslav Hájek**, Associate Professor, Czech University of Life Sciences
12:50 – 14:00	**Lunch**	
14:00 – 15:10	**Plenary III — Building on the Wider BIOEAST Macro-region: Cooperation with Ukraine, Moldova and the Western Balkans**	**20 min keynote:** BIOEASTWIDE presentation on the rationale and foundations for a future R&I partnership. **Vladislav Popov,** Professor, BIOEASTWIDE Coordinator, Agricultural University of Plovdiv **50 min panel:** Moderated discussion, including audience questions, with high-level representatives

		from Ukraine, Moldova and the Western Balkans, including senior ministry representatives, research funding agency directors, university rectors and research institute directors. The discussion will address the importance and challenges of partnership building, institutional participation and developing the capacity to invest together. • **Marija Gnjatovic,** State Secretary, Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia, *TBD* • **Jerzy Małachowski,** Director, Polish Research Funding Agency, *TBD* • **Milena Vukotić,** Head of the Department for International Cooperation and IPA Projects, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of Montenegro, *TBD* • **Vesna Bengin,** Co-founder, Biosense Institute • **Darko Konjevic,** Senior Project Manager, BIOEAST Contact, Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe, *TBD*
15:10 – 15:40	Coffee Break	
15:40 – 16:40	**Plenary IV — European Commission Perspectives: The Future of the Bioeconomy and the Central and Eastern European engagement**	**5 min:** Moderator's introduction. **55 min panel:** Moderated dialogue with invited Director-level representatives of DG RTD, DG AGRI, DG ENV and DG GROW, exploring their respective perspectives on the bioeconomy and the region's future. • **James Morrison,** Director, Healthy Planet, DG RTD • **Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea,** Director, Competitive Circular Economy & Clean Industrial Policy, DG ENV

		• **Diego Canga Fano,** Acting Deputy Director-General, Director for Outreach, Research & Geographical Indications, DG AGRI • **Kristin Schreiber,** Director, Chemicals, Bioeconomy & Retail, DG GROW, *TBD*
16:40 - 17:00	**Closing Remarks**	
17:00 -	**Networking Cocktail**	

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