

BIOECONOMY WORKING GROUP

ANNUAL PLAN 2023

WORKING GROUP LEADERS

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OBJECTIVES

The Working Group focuses on increasing the influence of regions and their stakeholders in shaping the European circular bioeconomy while also working to increase the awareness of the sector as a whole. The group covers the bioeconomy in the widest sense, tackling issues related to topics such as food systems, forestry, bioenergy, biowaste, bio-based products etc. Seeing the growing role of the bioeconomy in decarbonisation efforts, the group also concentrates on the ecological sustainability of these solutions (e.g. nature based solutions, green and blue solutions for carbon capture). The group develops contacts with European policymakers to increase cooperation and projects between European regions in bioeconomy, with a particular focus on Horizon Europe and the Circular Bio-based Europe Partnership.

CONTEXT

What are the key EU level priorities, strategies, and events that the Working Group aims to follow up in 2023?

As regards key EU level priorities and strategies, the working group will keep a close eye on the implementation of the Horizon Soil Mission and the new proposed Soil Charter. Many legislative proposals in discussion or upcoming also promise to be of interest for the working group, e.g. the new Soil health Law, the Nature restoration Law or the upcoming Sustainable Food Systems regulation. The European Circular Economy action plan as well as the Bioeconomy Strategy remain of course key policies for the working group, as well as the Food 2030 Strategy and the new Communications on Algae and Plastics.

Attention will be paid to opportunities that emerge in the context of the European week of regions and cities, EU Green Week, the European Week of industry, and other similar Brussel-based conferences related to the bioeconomy. The Bioeconomy working group has also been invited to the Swedish Presidency conference on Bioeconomy, organised at the end of February in Stockholm.

Which funding programmes are important for the Working Group and how does the WG aim to facilitate project development?

The main funding programme of interest is Horizon Europe, with a focus on Cluster 6 and its associated partnerships (especially “Circular biobased Europe”) and Missions (Soil Mission). Also, Erasmus+ opportunities, and potentially LIFE calls are of interest. Other funding programmes may be considered if the members express interest.

We will start the year with a coffee meeting inviting members to network and reconnect after in the new year. Our goal is to target funding programmes of interest to refine and define which calls are of particular interest for the members. A specific dedicated session on project development is also planned in the autumn on pre-selected 2024 Cluster 6 calls related to sustainable food and feed systems.

How does the group support partnership building and collaborate with other European organisations or networks?

The working group has established a strong dialogue already with the Circular Biobased Europe Joint Undertaking team and the Biobased industries Consortia (BIC), as well as with various representatives of the Commission. These connections are meant to continue in 2023, with a particular focus on the European Commission and DG AGRI in the context of the Soil Mission.

What topics and tailored activities could be proposed for less active regions, for example tackling topics directed to widening countries?

Ideally for the less active regions, we would recommend attending the coffee meeting in February. During this meeting, new members can connect with the working group leaders and ERRIN member representatives. Furthermore, they’ll have the opportunity to express their needs. Should any suggestion and request from less active regions emerge from the discussions, we could then think of organising specific activities. The working group leaders are also open to schedule separate conversations with members that are interested in increasing their involvement in the working group upon request. The coffee meeting and the interaction with the members will be a key step for us to plan the year ahead and see how we best serve our members.

Overall, it is also important to say that the working group members, be it active or less active regions, can be involved in the organisation of the activities of the working group by proposing to host one of the meetings. For the hybrid meetings in particular, offices with good technical settings are more than welcome to mention their interest in hosting a meeting of the working group.

ACTIVITIES

Bioeconomy WG coffee meeting: Kicking off 2023

8 February | 9:00-10:30 (in person meeting)

This meeting will offer an opportunity for all Bioeconomy WG members to come together to network and jointly kick-off the WG activities for 2023. The WG leaders will present the annual plan for the new year, providing an opportunity for WG members to familiarise themselves with the planned activities and discuss their potential involvement in the planned work. This will also be an opportunity for members to propose to host some of the sessions planned, provide feedback (should they wish so) on other meetings and highlight their interest when it comes to future Horizon Europe calls and project development. The Circular Cities and Regions Initiative (CCRI) and opportunities for WG members to participate in the activities of the initiative will also be presented.

This meeting will be an information and networking session directed towards Brussels-based people.

CCRI dialogue: What are the R&I gaps in the circular economy and how to overcome them?

7 March | 10:00-12:00 (hybrid/online meeting)

This meeting will be organised in collaboration with the Circular Cities and Regions Initiative (CCRI) and will be structured as a multi-stakeholder dialogue. The aim of the meeting is to validate the R&I gaps and solutions identified by the CCRI Coordination and Support Office from the stakeholder perspective, to gain a better understanding and prioritising of their R&I needs. The multi-stakeholder dialogue will facilitate a learning-from-each-other-process towards the implementation of systemic circular economy activities in cities and regions. The dialogue will give the opportunity to promote regional success stories and highlight challenges encountered. The output of the dialogue will be used to influence future EU funding in the field of circular economy (e.g. DG RTD for new Horizon Europe calls for new CCRI projects) and will lead to policy recommendations, for example by DG ENV and DG GROW on regulatory aspects or financing of circular economy solutions' implementations. In addition, the European Commission will be invited to present the ongoing CCRI projects.

This meeting will be an interactive working session open to stakeholders beyond the ERRIN network. The session is aimed for professionals within the R&I field, focusing on circular bioeconomy.

A Soil Deal for Europe: Soil Charter & Living Labs

18 April | 10:00-13:00 (in person meeting, followed by a networking lunch)

Following-up on the past meetings organised by the Bioeconomy working group on the Soil Mission, this new event is meant to introduce a new development around the Mission, i.e. the new Soil Charter. The Commission (DG AGRI) will be there to present the Charter and its features in the context of a dialogue where regions will be able to ask their questions and provide feedback on the initiative. Time to present in more details the concept of living labs and their role in the Mission (ENoLL) and regional examples of living labs is also envisaged.

This meeting will be an information and networking session directed towards Brussels-based people. The meeting aims to provide the members with an understanding on what the Soil Charter is and how they could support it and get involved in the activities that will be organised.

Sustainable and circular packaging

September 2023 (online meeting)

Linking to the proposed regulation on packaging and packaging waste and the EU policy framework on biobased, biodegradable and compostable plastics, this meeting is meant to provide regulatory insights and highlight the innovation priorities when it comes to plastics and packaging. The Commission would first present the new policies (DG ENVI) and a second speaker might be considered to dive more into the project funding opportunities, highlighting for instance the calls from Cluster 6, the DUT partnership or even LIFE (speaker to be determined). Finally, some time will be set off for an exchange of best practices from the regions.

This meeting will be an online interactive information session open to the members and their stakeholders in the regions and cities.

Project facilitation: Sustainable food and feed systems

October 2023 (online/in person)

This meeting will constitute a combined information and project facilitation session around new Horizon Europe calls linked to sustainable food systems. A potential link could be made with the new Horizon Europe Partnership on “Safe and Sustainable Food Systems” and give an update on the implementation of the Food 2030.

This meeting will be open to the members and external stakeholders and is meant to be a project facilitation/ open discussion on a few pre-selected calls related to food systems for 2024. The members will be able to provide feedback on calls of interest ahead of the meeting. Ideally only 4-6 calls would be selected, specifically calls where regional and local authorities are at the center. are

The meeting would potentially take place in two parts: starting with a general meeting where the calls would be briefly introduced, ahead with some tips about the writing of proposals, followed by parallel roundtables that the participants can join according to their needs and where projects ideas can be pitched.

Nature Restoration Law: Showcasing local challenges and opportunities

November 2023 (online/hybrid)

The new Nature Restoration Law, proposed by the European Commission in June 2022, will present challenges to cities as it proposes ambitious restoration requirements for urban ecosystems. This meeting, which will be organised jointly with the Smart Cities WG, will discuss some of these



challenges while also showcasing the innovative solutions urban areas are adopting to fulfil the requirements of the law.

WG members will be invited to present their innovative solutions, such as integrated green infrastructure solutions, compensation models as well as improving and monitoring the quality of green areas, in this best practice exchange, with the aim to jointly discuss and explore the innovation aspect of the new law. The meeting will be directed both towards Brussels-based people and regional stakeholders.