

ANNUAL PLAN 2024 - SUMMER UPDATE BIOECONOMY WORKING GROUP

NATURAL RESOURCES AND FOOD CLUSTER

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 focusing on the Horizon Europe Mission Soil. The group covers the bioeconomy in the widest sense, tackling issues related to topics such as food systems, soil health, forestry, bioenergy, biowaste, bio-based products, among other things. 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

Main long-term priority for the Working Group:

EU Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe' (Soil Mission).

The Soil Mission is a key priority of ERRIN's Bioeconomy Working Group, which has established a trusty relationship with the Mission Soil Secretariat over the past years. In 2023, ERRIN successfully launched the Mission Soil Manifesto, in a joint event with the Mission Soil Secretariat from the European Commission. The working group will keep a close eye on the implementation of the Horizon Europe Soil Mission. The results of the first Soil Mission calls are of interest and the working group will take the opportunity to exchange with the membership and support information sharing towards the second wave of Mission calls. Also, the European Commission's Circular Cities and Regions Initiative is of interest, particularly looking at the role of cities and regions in the circular transition, and how this is linked to the EU Cities Mission and the CBE JU partnership.

The key EU level priorities, strategies, and events that the Working Group aims to follow up on in 2024 are:

Key EU processes to follow

Horizon Europe Programme

- Project development around the Mission Soil calls
- Horizon Europe Cluster 6
- FP10 Development – Looking ahead towards FP10

Important strategies

- European Bioeconomy Strategy
- European Circular Economy Action Plan
- European Biodiversity Strategy
- Food 2030 Strategy

Partnerships

- Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking, including BIC
- European partnership for Agroecology
- European Partnership for Safe and Sustainable Food Systems
- EIT Food

Events

- R&I Week (18-21 March 2024)
- European Circular Stakeholder Conference (15 – 17 April)
- European Green Week
- CCRI related events
- EFI – EIB: Overcoming investment barriers in the forest sector (13 September)
- European Week of Regions and Cities (7 – 10 October)
- European Mission Soil Week (12 – 13 November)

OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTPUTS IN ERRIN PROJECTS

Projects of strategic interest to the Working Group:

SOILL START UP:

- Topic: support project for the Soil Mission's living labs and lighthouses
- Benefits for ERRIN members: network, support of potential applicants for future Soil Mission calls, project development opportunities; framework for soil health monitoring, guidance for setting up local and regional healthy soil living labs

Circular Cities and Regions Initiative (CCRI):

- Topic: circular economy in cities and regions
- Benefits: influence the 2025-2027 HEU Work programme by participating in Multi-Stakeholders Dialogues:
 - 21 February – Circular Construction
 - 6 March – Circular Electronics
 - 25 March – Circular Plastics

- Influence the 2025-2027 HEU Work programme for Textiles, Bioeconomy, by expression your interest for a bilateral exchange to CCRI project manager Astrid Hannes (ERRIN Secretariat)
- Provide input on the prioritisation of high impact demonstration projects at local and regional level for HEU 26-27 calls (September-November 2024)
- Project development assistance for cities and regions:
 - [CircularInvest: call open until 13 September](#)
- Knowledge sharing (webinars) and support materials for cities and regions implementing systemic circular economy solutions

Other relevant and member-driven projects:

HUMUS

- Topic: Healthy Municipal Soils (HuMUS), supporting municipalities and regions to protect and restore soil health
- Benefits for ERRIN members: A [Cascade funding call](#) has been launched. As a result, 20 selected local and regional soil health pilots, including 10 located in ERRIN member regions, will receive support to enhance participatory methods and tools for soil quality and health governance. Bioeconomy WG leaders are in the projects External Advisory Board

Member driven Regional Innovation Valleys with a focus on circular economy and bioeconomy

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Sustainable Food Systems: Funding instruments and collaboration opportunities for regional and local authorities

Date: 4 October 2024

This information session will focus on the funding instruments and collaboration opportunities offered at the European level on Sustainable Food Systems. Representatives from the European Commission, DG RTD 'Bioeconomy and Food Systems Unit', will give an overview of ongoing and upcoming EU initiatives and policies in the field of Food Systems. The two Horizon Europe Partnership for Sustainable Food systems and Agroecology will be presented, providing an opportunity to discuss the involvement of the regions in the EU Partnerships. EIT Food will present its 'Impact Funding Framework' funding opportunity, giving an overview of the scope and conditionalities of this instrument.

Nature restoration of marine ecosystems and rivers

Date: 15 or 17 October

Led by: ERRIN Blue Economy WG

With the Nature Restoration Law being adopted by the European Parliament last year, and by the Council on the 17 June, 2025 will mark the start of the discussions and early implementation of the targets. Several of the Nature Restoration Law's targets are related to ocean, seas, rivers and water.

This Natural Resources and Food Cluster meeting will help members understand the aspects of the law related to marine ecosystems and rivers as well as how these will impact regional authorities and their ecosystems and where local authorities can look for financing to fund new activities. The meeting will also look at the connection between the Nature Restoration Law and EU R&I initiatives, in particular the Ocean and Waters Mission and its offers, such as technical assistance and Blue Parks.

The meeting aims to prepare members to better handle any new obligations related to the law as well as to identify funding and financing opportunities at an early stage. This information session will be organised in person and online and is directed towards Brussels-based colleagues and regional stakeholders.

Issues/topics to be monitored:

- Financing and Investments schemes for Circular Economy at local and regional level. The Bioeconomy WG will keep an eye on and monitor new opportunity for the network on the existing European financing, investing and project development schemes with regards Circular Economy from a regional perspective.
- The Bioeconomy WG will continue to exchange with the European Forest Institute to collaborate on forest and bioeconomy related initiatives and opportunities for local and regional authorities.
- Future of the CCRI: advocate to make the Initiative more open to other regions and cities, and ensure sufficient (financial) support for future European project development

PAST ACTIVITIES

Natural Resources & Food Cluster: Breakfast kick-off meeting

Date: 9 February 2024

Joint with Natural Resources and Food Cluster

This informal coffee meeting offered an opportunity for all ERRIN members of the Natural Resources and Food Cluster to come together to network and jointly kick off the activities of the Bioeconomy Working Group, the Blue Economy Working Group and the Adaptation Task Force for 2024. The Working Group and the Task Force leaders presented the annual work plans for 2024, providing an opportunity for members to familiarise themselves with the planned activities and discuss their potential involvement in the planned work. The Head of the Food Systems and Bioeconomy Unit, DG RTD, presented the European Commission's ongoing and planned activities for 2024.

The ERRIN Secretariat presented the new ERRIN project development tool as well as updates on the implementation of the EU Missions of interest to this cluster: the Soil Mission, the Ocean and Waters Mission and the Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change.

Joint Project development session on the new Mission Soil and Climate Adaptation calls

Date: 29 May 2024

Joint with Natural Resources and Food Cluster

The Bioeconomy Working Group and the Climate Adaptation Task Force hosted a project development session on the Mission Soil and Mission Adaptation calls. The event provided an excellent opportunity for participants to pitch their project ideas, hear inspiring examples of successful past projects and explore synergies and form potential consortia. Follow-up actions are being facilitated by ERRIN's [Project Development Tool](#).

Mission Soil: lessons learned and upcoming opportunities

Date: 10 June 2024

This meeting offered an opportunity for members to have an in-depth exchange on the Mission Soil.

The Mission Soil secretariat gave a comprehensive overview of the state of play of the Mission Soil, presenting the outcomes of the first Living Labs calls and providing valuable insights into future calls and opportunities. ERRIN presented the SOILL project and the opportunities to get involved. The HuMUS project announced the 20 successful local and regional soil health pilots selected to enhance participatory governance methods for soil quality and health governance.

ERRIN members showcased inspiring examples of local initiatives and strategies addressing soil health challenges.

[ERRIN - BIC joint position paper: The pivotal role of regions and industry for a thriving bioeconomy](#)

Date: Ongoing process

ERRIN's Bioeconomy Working Group, in collaboration with the Bio-based Industries Consortium (BIC), drafted a position paper that underscores the pivotal role of regions and industry for a thriving bioeconomy. To ensure that the document reflected the diverse perspectives and experiences within our network, ERRIN Bioeconomy WG leaders [invited ERRIN members to add their inputs and feedback](#).

[The position paper](#), released on 9 July 2024, outlines a proposal for the most pressing actions for the European bioeconomy to be tackled during the upcoming European Commission mandate period. Follow-up activities will be organised in the second part of the year and in 2025.