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European Union

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia ("VG4+4") held in Visegrad, on 21 September 2017
-Information from the Hungarian delegation

Delegations will find in Annex an information note received from the Hungarian delegation on the above mentioned subject to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 6 November 2017.

The Annex to this note contains the **Joint Declaration of the Agriculture Ministers of Visegrad Group as well as Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia, on the Central Eastern European Initiative for Knowledge-based Agriculture, Aquaculture and Forestry in the Bio-economy (BIOEAST)**, which was signed at the meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group and Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia ("VG4+4") held in Visegrad, on 21 September 2017.

Information Note on the Joint Declaration of Agricultural Ministers of Visegrad Group as well as Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia on the BIOEAST Initiative

The first agricultural ministerial meeting during the Hungarian Presidency of the Visegrad Group was held on the 21st of September 2017 in Visegrad. Agricultural Ministers of the Visegrad Group as well as Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia signed a second joint declaration on the BIOEAST initiative (see attachment).

The CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN INITIATIVE FOR KNOWLEDGE-BASED AGRICULTURE, AQUACULTURE AND FORESTRY IN THE BIOECONOMY, called BIOEAST, was launched in 2014 by the four Visegrad Group's countries: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

At the end of 2016 the Visegrad Group's agriculture ministers and additionally Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia committed to cooperate and contribute to the development of the European Research Area in the bioeconomy sectors, especially in agriculture. In their first common declaration signed in Warsaw on the 26th of October 2016 they expressed their willingness to work together, to present the common needs and proposals from the Central and Eastern European macro-region's countries and to fill the gaps in the HORIZON 2020 Work Programme 2018-2020 under the Societal Challenge 2 Bioeconomy.

This ministerial declaration was preceded and followed by several meetings and expert level workshops. It had become clear that a cross-sectorial research and innovation initiative was needed to develop a deeper cooperation. Several other member states outside the Visegrad Group, like Croatia, Estonia and Lithuania, expressed the willingness to join the initiative, which could offer a shared strategic research and innovation framework for working towards the development of a sustainable bioeconomy in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. The comparative advantage of the CEE countries - namely the available biomass and its sustainable production and processing, by creating added value, jobs and growth in the private sector - could lead to the benefit of the whole European society. The macro-region's environmental, economic, societal, geopolitical, cultural and historical homogeneity and complexity could provide the framework conditions

favourable for the development of a sustainable agriculture in the circular bioeconomy. However, to achieve this goal, the traditional primary production and processing sectors must be modernized through a robust research and innovation initiative in bioeconomy. The agricultural research and innovation capacities of these countries are facing significant internal disparities, creating a barrier to the full completion of a European Research Area. Therefore joint efforts are required to address present and future challenges successfully.

On these bases further steps were needed to broaden and deepen the cooperation beyond HORIZON 2020 having in mind the post 2020 EU developments. It is essential to develop a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) that would underpin the position of CEE countries for the next EU policies, specifically the Common Agricultural Policy, and other framework programmes by enforcing the:

1. Food, energy and job security in each country
2. Macro-regional economic, environmental and societal sustainability
3. Knowledge transfer between EU13 and other member states deepening the European solidarity
4. Cooperation with EU institutions to develop synergies between different EU instruments and initiatives

As next steps a Roadmap, a Vision Paper and a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda will be developed. The Vision Paper will identify the key challenges to address and will frame the objectives and goals of the initiative with a broad action plan. The Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) will be a tool for addressing the challenges. The SRIA will detail the scope, level and duration of specific joint actions to be taken in order to achieve a particular goal falling within a key challenge. It will be designed to be a living document offering a handbook for interested implementing bodies, bearing in mind that the BIOEAST initiative:

- allows for different types of action to be taken at different levels, as regards geographical coverage, critical mass, joint funding, coordination of national/regional efforts or the use of EU instruments;

- is designed to involve relevant players and stakeholders such as national ministries, regional authorities, international organisations, organisations that undertake research, research infra-structure, academia, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the general public.
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**HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE VISEGRÁD GROUP
JULY 2017 – JUNE 2018**

**Joint Declaration of the Agricultural Ministers of Visegrad Group as well
as Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia on the**

**Central Eastern European Initiative for Knowledge-based Agriculture, Aquaculture
and Forestry in the Bio-economy “BIOEAST”**

Visegrád, Hungary 21 September 2017

Having regard to the Warsaw Common Declaration of 26 October 2016 signed by the Visegrad Group’s agriculture ministers of Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and additionally Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia for a stronger inclusion of the research potential of the Central and Eastern European (EU-13) countries into the implementation of projects within the Horizon 2020 in the field of agriculture, including bio-economy; and considering the Common Conclusions from agricultural ministerial meeting of Visegrad Group on 2 June 2017 at Nadarzyn.

We AGREE that due to the global societal challenges, sustainability is only achievable with increased awareness to the macro-regional level, and we should continue to put great emphasis on research, innovation and cross-border cooperation with a view to promoting knowledge-based development.

We COMMIT to cooperate and to contribute to the development of the European Research Area in the field of agriculture in context of other primary production and processing sectors of the bio-economy.

We SUPPORT the further development of the Central Eastern European Initiative for Knowledge-based Agriculture, Aquaculture and Forestry in the Bio-economy – “BIOEAST”, which provides a common and shared strategic research and innovation framework for working towards sustainable bio-economies of the Central and Eastern European countries and by building a network of research institutions, industry and other key stakeholders including the partnership of countries from the EU13, and ministries that could contribute to the development of the European Research Area in Bio-economy.

We AIM to develop a Vision Paper focusing to macro-regional priority areas, and based on it a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda, for which is essential a joint effort between the Member States and the support of the European Commission.


We RECOMMEND to continue and deepen the cooperation beyond the HORIZON 2020 Framework Programme - having regard to EU policies and funds - by preparing a roadmap

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on how to continue the BIOEAST Initiative and cooperate with the EU Member States and with the European Institutions. The role of agricultural ministers as signatories to this joint declaration and contributors to the BIOEAST Initiative will be established in the frame of the roadmap on the initiative.



Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry
of the Republic of Bulgaria



Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech
Republic



Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of
Croatia



Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary



Ministry of Agriculture and Rural
Development of Poland



Ministry of Agriculture and Rural
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Tadej Cvikar
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Ministry of Agriculture and Rural
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