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## NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS on a Research and Innovation Partnership on advancing sustainable natural resource management, food system security and the deployment of the bioeconomy (BIOEAST Partnership) - Presidency text

Delegations will find attached a Presidency text on the “*Draft Council conclusions on a Research and Innovation Partnership on advancing sustainable natural resource management, food system security and the deployment of the bioeconomy (BIOEAST Partnership)*” with a view to the Research Working Party meeting on 18 July 2024.

**DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON A RESEARCH AND INNOVATION  
PARTNERSHIP ON ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT, FOOD SYSTEM SECURITY AND THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE  
BIOECONOMY (BIOEAST PARTNERSHIP)**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING

- the European Council conclusions of 23 and 24 June 2022<sup>1</sup>, which recognise the European perspective of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, while expressing its full and unequivocal commitment to the EU membership perspective of the Western Balkans;
- the European Council conclusions of 26 and 27 October 2023<sup>2</sup> on the EU's competitiveness, which emphasise that the EU needs a strong economic base that ensures its long-term competitiveness and a level playing field both internally and globally;
- its conclusions of 29 November 2019<sup>3</sup> on the updated Bioeconomy Strategy 'A sustainable Bioeconomy for Europe: strengthening the connection between economy, society and the environment', which acknowledge the role of the BIOEAST initiative in the implementation of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy;
- the Council Recommendation of 26 November 2021<sup>4</sup> on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe linked to the Commission Communication on 'A New ERA for Research and Innovation';
- its conclusions of 25 April 2023<sup>5</sup> on the opportunities of the bioeconomy in the light of current challenges with special emphasis on rural areas, which encourage the Commission and the Member States to strengthen cooperation under the BIOEAST initiative;

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<sup>1</sup> EUCO 24/22.

<sup>2</sup> EUCO 14/23.

<sup>3</sup> 14594/19.

<sup>4</sup> 2021/2122.

<sup>5</sup> 8406/23.

- its conclusions of 24 May 2024<sup>6</sup> on a competitive European industry driving our green, digital and resilient future, which urge the Commission to recognise biotechnology and the bio-based economy as an elementary part of the EU’s industrial policy and to ensure coordination in order to enhance policy coherence;
  - the Commission’s Communications and accompanying documents on ‘The European Green Deal’<sup>7</sup>; ‘A new Circular Economy Action Plan for a cleaner and more competitive Europe’<sup>8</sup>; ‘EU Climate Action Progress Report 2023’<sup>9</sup>; and ‘Europe’s 2040 climate target and path to climate neutrality by 2050 building a sustainable, just and prosperous society’<sup>10</sup>, which highlight the importance of the bioeconomy in supporting the green transition and European competitiveness,
1. ACKNOWLEDGES that achieving the medium and long-term targets for 2030 and 2040 of the European Green Deal relies on the sustainable production and use of biomass, including waste. EMPHASISES that the sustainable and circular bioeconomy can both help to meet the targets of the European Green Deal and also boost Europe’s competitiveness. WELCOMES the update of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy by the end 2025, taking into account the current societal, demographic and environmental challenges, reinforcing the bioeconomy’s industrial dimension and its links to biotechnology and biomanufacturing to contribute to a stronger EU economy, while at the same time taking into account the precautionary principle and the interest of consumers. TAKES NOTE of the increasing complexity of challenges, addressed by the abovementioned strategies, which extend beyond Member States’ borders and would instead benefit from a macro-regional approach.

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<sup>6</sup> 10127/24.  
<sup>7</sup> COM(2019) 640 final.  
<sup>8</sup> COM(2020) 98 final.  
<sup>9</sup> COM(2023) 653 final.  
<sup>10</sup> COM(2024) 91 final.

2. TAKES NOTE of the commitment of the Ministers responsible for Agriculture and Research of the 11 countries participating in the BIOEAST initiative as expressed in the 2019 Joint Declaration<sup>11</sup>, outlining the future trajectory of the BIOEAST initiative within the framework of Horizon Europe. Further RECOGNISES the reiterated commitment in the form of the Declaration signed in July 2024<sup>12</sup> [by the Ministers responsible for Agriculture and Research of ...] to develop a partnership to address key challenges in knowledge-based agriculture, aquaculture, and forestry within the bioeconomy.
3. NOTES the Europe-wide Stakeholder Manifesto<sup>13</sup> that advocates for the sustainable development of supply chains and the local processing of bioresources in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The document emphasises the importance of involving stakeholders in an inclusive and bottom-up manner in the research, innovation, and the deployment of sustainable solutions to achieve Europe's transition towards a circular and sustainable future.
4. REITERATES the need to boost the cooperation in research and innovation (R&I) among EU Member States with a special focus on CEE, the Western Balkan (WB) and Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. WELCOMES the work done in this regard in the ongoing co-funded partnerships in Cluster 6 of the Horizon Europe Programme and institutionalised partnerships, such as the Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking (CBE JU), which has put in place a widening strategy and action plan, aiming to mobilise underrepresented stakeholders and beneficiaries. But CONSIDERS the trends of the European Innovation Scoreboard according to which CEE Member States are among the emerging and moderate innovators and their participation remains moderate in framework programmes. EMPHASISES that there is a need to take further action in order to broaden participation and support the exchange and valorisation of excellent knowledge.

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<sup>11</sup> 9235/19.

<sup>12</sup> TBD.

<sup>13</sup> <https://bioeast.eu/stakeholder-manifesto>

5. RECOGNISES the importance of a Europe-wide R&I partnership that focuses on the whole bioeconomy value chain. UNDERLINES the added value of multilateral R&I partnerships in delivering new solutions for the twin green and digital transition, health, and societal challenges, and IDENTIFIES the urgent need for projects of a sustainable and high-quality design that are implemented in line with a high level of transparency and standards. This should lead to the institutionalisation of existing R&I networks among EU Member States, and to greater resilience in the face of economic and environmental crises by reducing our dependency on fossil-based resources.
6. EMPHASISES the need for a more in-depth collaboration and discussions about the role of CEE in the context of the European strategic autonomy. A possible institutionalised partnership could enhance science diplomacy through the promotion and protection of European values, such as research ethics, integrity, and gender equality. It could also serve as a macro-regional model by fostering relationships and bringing stability, prosperity, and sustainable transition to EaP and WB countries and address the root causes of brain drain. Better use of synergies and increased participation should bring added value to the European R&I ecosystem, contribute to the EU's food system security by paying special attention to the safety, authenticity and quality of food products and waste valorisation and increase European competitiveness.
7. HIGHLIGHTS the progress made in recent years by the BIOEAST initiative as a platform with an established coordination mechanism, structure, and resources in identifying common strategic R&I priorities in the fields of agroecology, freshwater resilience, food system security, and the circular and sustainable bioeconomy. WELCOMES the BIOEAST initiative's role in supporting the European green and just transition and therefore invites all Member States, WB and EaP countries to join the possible partnership. UNDERLINES the importance of aligning policies and regulations related to the bioeconomy at EU level. This harmonisation should create a conducive environment for investment, innovation, and sustainable development in the sector.

8. WELCOMES the bottom-up nature of the BIOEAST initiative as the proposed partnership will address local needs through the adoption and adaptation of excellent research results and innovative solutions. Collaboration under the proposed partnership should further increase European competitiveness in the area of the bioeconomy, including biomanufacturing and biotechnology. HIGHLIGHTS the positive example of the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) and STRESSES the importance of an open, Europe-wide but geographically focused R&I partnership on advancing sustainable natural resource management, food system security and the deployment of the bioeconomy that could efficiently combine private and public funds to boost industries that need to advance innovation.
9. RECOGNISES the ongoing debates surrounding sustainability and competitiveness, particularly regarding indispensable but vulnerable natural resources such as soil, freshwater, and ecosystem services, as well as the critical importance of European food system security and the potential of biomanufacturing in driving socio-economic and sustainable development in Europe.
10. RECOMMENDS that a possible R&I partnership in the bioeconomy could be focused on carbon, water, nutrition, and energy cycles in the context of soil, freshwater, food system security and the locally valorised biomass potential. It should actively seek and promote synergies and complementarities with other regional, national, European and international partnerships, and with collaborative R&I programmes corresponding to its objectives and activities.
11. CONSIDERS that specific objectives for a potential R&I partnership on the bioeconomy could include focusing on enhancing knowledge and unlocking innovation potential for food system security in the context of sustainable transitions, transferring and advancing existing knowledge and innovations for bioeconomy deployment as well as engaging the public and private sector in the realisation of R&I priorities for a sustainable bioeconomy.

12. Therefore, INVITES the Commission, in full respect of its right of initiative, to promptly assess the feasibility of launching an R&I partnership in line with Article 185 TFEU potentially for the next programming period 2028-2034 and prepare a strategic roadmap to this end, to ensure that the natural resources of BIOEAST partner countries, enlarged with the WB and EaP countries, are repositioned and processed with the most excellent knowledge and innovative technology that is available and desired across the EU to increase strategic autonomy and food system security, accelerate innovation, and drive progress in the bioeconomy sector across Europe.
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