



Brussels, 3 October 2024
(OR. en)

13636/24

RECH 409
AGRI 668
COMPET 946
COWEB 147

NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	12738/24
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 10 October 2024.

Changes in comparison to doc. 12738/24 are marked in **bold underline** for additions and in ~~strikethrough~~ for deletions.

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON A EUROPE-WIDE R&I INITIATIVE ON
ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, FOOD SYSTEMS
SECURITY AND THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE BIOECONOMY, ~~RELYING ON~~
HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING

- the European Council conclusions of 23 and 24 June 2022¹, 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 2023² 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 2019³ 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 2021⁴ on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe linked to the Commission Communication on 'A New ERA for Research and Innovation';

¹ EUCO 24/22.

² EUCO 14/23.

³ 14594/19.

⁴ 2021/2122.

- its conclusions of 25 April 2023⁵ 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~~;
- its conclusions of 24 May 2024⁶ 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’⁷; ‘A new Circular Economy Action Plan for a cleaner and more competitive Europe’⁸; ‘EU Climate Action Progress Report 2023’⁹; ‘Europe’s 2040 climate target and path to climate neutrality by 2050 building a sustainable, just and prosperous society’¹⁰; and ‘Building the future with nature: Boosting Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing in the EU’¹¹, which highlight the importance of the bioeconomy in supporting the green transition and European competitiveness,

5 8406/23.
6 10127/24.
7 COM(2019) 640 final.
8 COM(2020) 98 final.
9 COM(2023) 653 final.
10 COM(2024) 91 final.
11 COM(2024) 137 final.

1. ACKNOWLEDGES that achieving the medium and long-term targets of the European Green Deal for 2030 and 2045~~50~~ relies also on the sustainable production and use of biomass, including **bio**-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 information on the foreseen update of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy by the end of 2025, which should ~~take into account~~ **consider** the current societal, demographic, economic and environmental challenges, the bioeconomy's industrial dimension and its links to biotechnology and biomanufacturing to contribute to a stronger EU economy~~;~~. **At the same time and it should** also take into account the precautionary principle and ~~the interests of~~ **prioritise** consumers' **interests**. TAKES NOTE of the increasing complexity of challenges, addressed by the abovementioned strategies, which extend beyond Member States' borders and would ~~also~~ benefit from a **wider transnational** ~~macro-regional approach based on EU-wide cooperation~~.
2. *[previous para 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 systems security and the potential of **bio-based innovation and solutions and** biomanufacturing in driving socio-economic and sustainable development in Europe.

3. *[moved from previous para 4]* UNDERLINES the work done in this regard in the ongoing co-funded European Partnerships and missions, including but not limited to those in Cluster 6, of the Horizon Europe Programme as well as institutionalised partnerships, such as the Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking (CBE JU), which has put in place a widening strategy and action plan, with the aim of mobilising underrepresented stakeholders and beneficiaries. *[moved from previous para 8]* HIGHLIGHTS as well as the positive example of the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) as an instrument for enhanced cooperation with neighbouring countries of the EU. *[previous para 10]* NOTES that a new, solid and ambitious R&I initiative in the bioeconomy could be focused on carbon, water, nutrition, and energy cycles in the context of soil, freshwater, food systems security and the locally valorised biomass potential. Such new initiative should actively seek and promote PROMOTES synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, such as partnerships and missions, in particular the EU Missions ‘Restore our Oceans and Waters’ and ‘A Soil Deal for Europe’. ~~It should define clear objectives to avoid overlaps with other collaborative R&I programmes to avoid the duplication of funding, as well as the dispersion of valuable resources that could be used more efficiently.~~
4. *[moved from previous para 4]* NOTES however that the trends of the European Innovation Scoreboard indicate that Central and Eastern European (CEE) Member States are mainly among the emerging and moderate innovators and their participation in framework programmes remains moderate. EMPHASISES the need to increase investments at national level and to take further action in order to broaden participation, to and support the exchange and valorisation of excellent science and bio-based innovations across the European Research Area (ERA).
5. *[previous para 3]* NOTES the need to promote the sustainable development of supply chains and business models including for higher value products and the local processing of bioresources in Member States in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) ~~via involving by~~ engaging stakeholders in an inclusive and bottom-up manner in the research, innovation, and the deployment of sustainable bio-based solutions to ~~achieve~~ facilitate Europe’s transition towards a circular and sustainable future.

6. *[previous para 7]* ~~WELCOMES~~ **NOTES** the role of ~~the~~ BIOEAST ~~initiative~~ in supporting the European green and just transition and ~~NOTES~~ the progress **it has** made in recent years ~~by the~~ ~~BIOEAST initiative~~ as a platform with an established coordination mechanism, structure, and resources in identifying common strategic **research and innovation (R&I)** priorities in the fields of agroecology, freshwater resilience, food systems security, and the circular and sustainable bioeconomy. ~~UNDERLINES~~ the potential of aligning policies and regulations related to the bioeconomy at Union level, in particular with respect to creating a conducive environment for investment, research, innovation, and sustainable development in the sector.
7. *[previous para 2]* TAKES NOTE of the commitment of the Ministers responsible for Agriculture and Research of the 11 Member States participating in ~~the~~ BIOEAST ~~initiative~~ as expressed in the 2019 Joint Declaration¹², outlining the future trajectory of ~~the~~ BIOEAST ~~initiative~~, as well as the reiterated commitment in the form of the Declaration signed in July 2024¹³ by the ~~20~~ Ministers responsible for Agriculture and Research of 10 Member States to develop a partnership to address key challenges in knowledge-based agriculture, aquaculture, and forestry within the bioeconomy.
8. *[moved from previous para 4]* REITERATES the need to boost open and inclusive cooperation in **bioeconomy related** ~~research and innovation (R&I)~~ among all EU Member States, while fostering the participation of CEE, the Western Balkan (WB) and Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries¹⁴. *[moved from previous para 8]* ~~WELCOMES~~ **TAKES NOTE of** the proposal of the BIOEAST ~~initiative~~ **declaration** to set up a Europe-wide R&I initiative on **carbon, water, nutrition, and energy cycles, in the context of** sustainable natural resource management, food systems security and the deployment of the bioeconomy, ~~relying on~~ **harnessing** the potential of CEE, as that ~~would~~ **could** address local needs through the adoption and adaptation of excellent research results and innovative solutions. Collaboration under such ~~new~~ **possible** initiative ~~should~~ **could** further increase European competitiveness in the area of the bioeconomy, including biomanufacturing and biotechnology, while contributing to the protection and efficient use of natural resources, accessing private and public funds to boost innovative bio-based solutions.

¹² 9235/19.

¹³ TBD.

¹⁴ **14964/21**

9. *[previous para 6]* EMPHASISES the need for a more in-depth ~~collaboration and~~ discussions **with all Member States** on the role of CEE in the context of European strategic autonomy. A solid and ambitious ~~possible~~ new R&I initiative could **help in research capacity building**, enhance ~~ing~~ science diplomacy through the promotion and protection of European values, such as research ethics, integrity, and gender equality, **as well as** ~~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 systems security by paying special attention to the safety, authenticity and quality of food products and waste valorisation, as well as to help untap the potential of underutilised biomass in the CEE region, with positive spillovers throughout the single market, and to increase European competitiveness.
10. *[previous para 5]* ~~RECOGNISES the importance of a Europe-wide R&I initiative that focuses on the whole bioeconomy value chain.~~ UNDERLINES the added value of ~~multilateral~~ **transnational** R&I ~~partnerships~~ **initiatives** in delivering new solutions for the twin green and digital transition, health, and societal challenges, and IDENTIFIES the urgent need for projects of sustainable and high-quality design that are implemented in line with a high level of transparency and standards. Such ~~a possible~~ new initiative could lead to ~~the institutionalisation of~~ **further strategic cooperation and should define clear objectives to avoid duplication between** existing **and new** R&I **activities at EU and national levels to avoid the duplication of funding** ~~networks among EU Member States~~, and to **ensure** greater resilience in the face of economic and environmental crises.

11. *[previous para 12]* Therefore, INVITES the Commission, in full respect of its right of initiative, to assess ~~together~~ **in consultation** with Member States and WB and EaP countries, **the need for**, the feasibility, **and impact** of launching a new **Europe-wide** R&I initiative, **in accordance with the relevant treaty provisions under the research policy and based on relevant applicable procedures, on sustainable natural resource management, food systems security and the deployment of the bioeconomy, harnessing the potential of CEE.** **The assessment should be developed in form of a gap analysis,** ~~in accordance with the relevant treaty provisions under the research policy and based on relevant applicable procedures~~ **enabling to the prepare preparation of** a strategic roadmap, ~~including an impact assessment, to this end~~, to ensure that the natural resources of ~~BIOEAST partner countries~~ **Member States**, supplemented by the WB and EaP countries, can be repositioned and ~~processed with~~ **valorised based on** the most excellent science and innovative technology that is available and desired across the EU; **This should** ~~in order to~~ increase strategic autonomy and food systems security, accelerate innovation, and drive progress in the bioeconomy sector across Europe.
-