



PLATFORM

PLATFORM POLICY BRIEF Series, No. 4

Alignment in the Bioeconomy



Policy Brief No. 4 of the Platform of bioeconomy ERA-NET Actions, written for informing national and European programme owners and managers, February 2018.

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Alignment in the Bioeconomy

Introduction

Research, development and innovation (R&D&I) are required to realise sustainable welfare and wellbeing in western societies, but one of the major obstruction for continuous and smooth R&D&I is fragmentation, in funding, managing, execution and utilization. Alignment is the concept to fight that fragmentation at all levels, scientific, policy, professional and education, both nationally and internationally. On the level of research programs it is understood as strategic approach to modify national research programmes, priorities and activities to accomplish joint research priorities in order to improve the efficiency of investment in research.

Although valid for all sciences, this concept of alignment holds specific meanings for research in the bioeconomy. The EU put forward its vision of a bioeconomy as a sustainable, bio-based economic concept systematically using renewable resources with the aim to secure the global food supply and simultaneously sufficient raw material for industrial use. This can only be implemented in a joint transnational approach. The bioeconomy strategy was published in 2012 (COM (2012)60¹) and supports better alignment of EU research and innovation funding with established priorities of bioeconomy-related policies. A strategic approach towards the development and implementation of the bioeconomy has been presented by European stakeholders in the European Bioeconomy Stakeholders Manifesto². The global dimension of the societal challenges which the Bioeconomy is addressing requires reinforced cooperation at international level. The Bioeconomy Strategy and Manifesto assist Europe in taking a leading role in promoting the transition towards a global bioeconomy. International cooperation on bioeconomy matters will need to be driven by research and innovation and facilitate exchange of scientific knowledge and sharing of best practices on global issues and policy areas, in particular regarding food security, climate change, environment and resources, capacity building and trade.

Alignment of policies and services to society

Since 2013 the EU is orienting a substantial part of its framework programme “Horizon 2020” on seven Societal Challenges (SC) in order to implement the EU 2020 strategy³. In 2015 the international community has adopted at the G7 Summit in Elmau the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)⁴ as a common goal for the future as well as it has signed in Paris the COP21 Climate agreement to fight global warming. Four out of the seven SCs of the EU and twelve out of the seventeen SDGs are directly related to the bioeconomy. Also, the bioeconomy is strongly influenced by the implications of COP21.

- For bioeconomy tremendous joint and aligned efforts are necessary by all actors to implement the agreed policies. Research actions and programmes should address the Societal Challenges (EU) or Sustainable Development Goals (UN), and each of which needs to be evaluated on the added value to the SCs and/or SDGs.
- Clear and measurable goals, a common language as well as improved communication on the bioeconomy between all stakeholders is necessary to monitor the degree of achievement.
- Alignment on European and international scale should become an integrated component of all national bioeconomy strategies and programmes (see also platform’s policy brief on inclusiveness⁵)

Alignment of national research programmes and strategies

On the level of research programmes alignment is understood as a strategic approach undertaken by Member States to modify their national research programmes, priorities or activities as a consequence of the adoption of joint research priorities in the context of Joint Programming, to improve the efficiency of investment in research⁶.

Member states and the EU have already put in place significant activities to foster alignment of their national programmes. Since 1974 the Standing Committee for

¹ Com (2012)60: http://ec.europa.eu/research/bioeconomy/pdf/official-strategy_en.pdf

² http://ec.europa.eu/research/bioeconomy/pdf/european_bioeconomy_stakeholders_manifesto.pdf

³ <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

⁵ <http://era-platform.eu/publications/policy-briefs/>

⁶ <https://www.era-learn.eu/alignment/definition-typology>

Agricultural Research (SCAR) is coordinating Member States' research in agriculture, termed "primary biomass production" in the bioeconomy. In 2010 the Joint Programming Initiative on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change (FACCE-JPI) was established and has spent so far well over 100 M€ on research on agriculture, food and the bioeconomy. Further, ERA-NETs contributed significantly to align national programmes in the wide area of the bioeconomy and since 2012 the European Innovation Partnership EIP-AGRI is committed to align R&D&I undertaken under the common agricultural policies.

Analyses by some of us on alignment activities in Coordination Actions of the EU-framework programmes (ERA-NET, ERA-NET Plus and ERA-NET Cofund) have shown that these initiatives are a family of very successful instruments for research programme alignment in bioeconomy (for a list of CAs see also Platforms database⁷). Their particular strength is in alignment of research funding via joint calls and programmes. And yet, compared to the overall catalogue of alignment activities in the Coordination Actions individual initiatives typically use only a comparably small set of well proven alignment measures.

- Existing and in particular new Coordination Actions should carefully explore the full catalogue of established alignment measures in order to deploy the full potential for alignment.
- Additional alignment measures such as Knowledge-Hubs, Joint Workshops and other network activities with regard to stakeholder involvement, market approaches, business models and socio-economy issues might add value to the alignment efforts in research initiatives in bioeconomy and should be tested on a case by case base for their usefulness.
- Alignment and coordination of research by utilisation of existing infrastructures should be improved to enhance efficiency of investments.
- Stakeholder involvement should be enhanced on two levels:
 - on the level of programme design to ensure innovation potential provided by the research conducted and
 - on the level of dissemination of research results to facilitate utilisation and, where possible, enable tech-transfer to products and supply services.

Alignment of national procedures for Transnational Joint Calls in legislation

The majority of the Member States is used to set up joint calls under the ERA-NET scheme since well over a decade. From the very beginning great efforts were necessary to align the ERA-NET procedures with each and every national regulation of the participating Member States. The ERA-NETs have made countries aware of the strictly national focus of these funding procedures and made obvious the need for adjustment, but it became also obvious that this is only possible by endorsement from a high level.

- Continuous and enduring efforts are necessary to convince national and EU authorities of the tremendous impact of a considerable alignment of funding modalities in Europe (MS and EU). An agreement on a high political level is required to align the respective national and EU legislation and discussions on this topic should start.

Outlook to EU-framework programme 9 (FP 9)

The mid-term evaluation from the H2020 programme⁸ pointed out that existing alignment intensity covers the pillars of the programme, but that a necessity for improvement was identified in the need for:

- more countries to catch up, specifically New Member States
- more impact focused, more result oriented and
- more involvement of Civil Society and user driven innovation.

A new approach should be implemented which is mission oriented, impact focused, which addresses global challenges and also better aligns national and EU commitments (LAB –FAB – APP)⁹. This new approach should facilitate maximizing the impact of future EU research and innovation in the bioeconomy domain.

It asks for clear budgets, priorities, high quality education but also markets that are driven by our societal needs. Research becomes demand driven, in co-creation with citizens and industry, opening new more sustainable markets. In this new economy the bioeconomy will play an important role as a sustainable supplier of renewable low carbon resources. FP9 can should enable this improved approach.

⁷ <http://era-platform.eu/p2p-networks/platform-db/>

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/index_en.cfm?pg=h2020evaluation

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/archive/other_reports_studies_and_documents/hlg_2017_report.pdf

Introduction to PLATFORM policy briefs

The Platform of bioeconomy ERA-NET Actions brings together funders and programme managers in European Research Area Networks (ERA-NETs) in the fields that make up the bioeconomy: food, agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry, climate, biodiversity and biotechnologies. PLATFORM aims to improve exchange and cooperation and to strengthen the impact of the ERA-NET Actions on the European Research Area and the European bioeconomy.

PLATFORM was supported by FP7 in 2012-2014 (Grant number 288422) and is currently supported by Horizon 2020 (Grant number 652635) for the period 2015-2017. PLATFORM has become a robust forum and offers mutual learning and networking opportunities to the ERA-NET actors, thus enhancing coordination and maximising synergies. The project also engages other public-to-public (P2P) coordination networks, such as Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) and Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) Working Groups.

During its current course, PLATFORM published four policy briefs to communicate results of analysis and discussions to decision makers at national and European level. The policy briefs are produced in frame of the Work Package 2 Policy: “Bottom-up recommendations to improve impact”. The intention of policy briefs is to support and inform national programme owners and managers in their endeavours towards better coordination, the need for P2P cooperation and also towards opening up to currently underrepresented Member States that would be interested to join. The actors within the existing ERA-NETs and JPIs have, collectively, a good oversight and expertise and are well-positioned to explore opportunities for collaboration, as well as to give recommendations on new networks needed.

Policy Brief No. 4

This policy brief is a result of discussions held at the PLATFORM Annual Event 2017, 5-6 October, Rome, Italy, in the session “Impact and alignment”. The session was based on the inventory on alignment activities of ERA-NET Cofund Actions in the bioeconomy which was performed as part of Task 2.3. Participants included the PLATFORM project team, many representatives from bioeconomy ERA-NETs, JPIs and SCAR WGs, and invited representatives from other coordination and learning projects and relevant European level policy bodies. We thank all speakers and other attendees for sharing information and ideas for the future and their contributions to lively group work and plenary session, and we thank partners and EAG members for valuable suggestions and comments to the draft. The content of the document has been prepared by the leaders of the PLATFORM Project Tasks 2.1 and 2.3 and the Project Coordinator. It reflects the views of the authors and is not an official position of the bioeconomy P2P Community.

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