

Extended Abstract

BIOREGIO—Supporting Circularity in the Bio-Based Economy[†]

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Resource efficiency, waste minimization and valorisation, renewable energy, and environmental protection are some of the essential elements required for a sustainable development and a safe and clean environment for future generations. A lot of research projects are dedicated to higher valorisation of bio-based materials and side-streams from the agri-food industries. In addition to research, dedicated, efficient policy instruments are required to support the development of circular bio-based economy in the European Union. BIOREGIO project is an inter-regional cooperation project that aims to improve policy instruments in participating regions by sharing experiences and best practices and working closely with stakeholders to boost circular bio-based economy and contribute to the European Green Deal.

BIOREGIO—Regional circular economy models and best available technologies for biological streams (2017–2021) is an Interreg Europe project coordinated by LAB University of Applied Sciences from Finland. Eight partners from six EU countries (Finland, Spain, Greece, Slovakia, Romania and France) are working together towards improving policy instruments to support the circular bio-based economy in their regions.

Each region has one policy instrument in focus, and the methods for improvement are exchange of good practices, cooperation models and best available technologies related to circular economy of biological streams (e.g., food waste/biowaste, municipal and industrial sludge and agricultural residues). The activities of the project included roundtable discussions, seminars and site visits, preparation of policy briefs, expert papers and organisation of regional dissemination events.

During the first phase of the project (2017–2019), six action plans were developed to improve policy instruments in the participating regions. The action plans are under implementation and progress is continuously monitored by the project team. In Romania, the aim of the project is to improve policy instruments to support technology transfer for circular bioeconomy, and the focus was on the Regional Operational Programme, Axis 1. The axis had an initial allocation of EUR 200 million, but the call preparation, selection process and contracting were delayed and only around EUR 5 million have been contracted so far. The lessons learned from this process were used to design the funding instruments for the next programming period (2021–2027) in order to be more specific and efficient. As a result, the next programme will include dedicated instruments to support the development of circular bio-based economy.

Inter-regional cooperation can be a powerful tool, helping regions to be better prepared to implement new technologies and cooperation models in order to move towards bio-based circular economy. Such projects also contribute to awareness raising and improved communication between stakeholders, empowering them to prepare targeted and efficient instruments, adapted to the needs of the beneficiaries.

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