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Baltic Sea Region Bioeconomy Council

The BSR Bioeconomy Strategy 2015-2018 is a product of a number of dialogue and cooperation activities involving more than 300 stakeholders since 2013. It identifies a number of opportunities, but also persistent bottlenecks, for realising the bioeconomy in the Baltic Sea Region.

The Strategy provides a framework for further cooperation efforts facilitated by the Nordic Council of Ministers in its capacity as Policy Area Leader for Bioeconomy in the Action Plan for the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). The efforts of the Nordic Council of Ministers in the Baltic Sea Region add value to similar cooperation efforts in the Nordic and Arctic macro-regions.

An important persistent bottleneck for realising the opportunities of the bioeconomy in the Baltic Sea Region – and beyond – relates to **enabling bioeconomy policies**:

There is no one bioeconomy, it is inherently complex and cuts across sectors. Stakeholders at all levels engage in the bioeconomy for a number of different reasons and to reach a number of different objectives. Therefore the bioeconomy does not fit in neatly into one specific policy area but must rather be addressed through concurrent efforts within different policy areas. Some regions and countries in the Baltic Sea Region have developed holistic bioeconomy policies and some are on the way to develop such policies. In other regions and countries the bioeconomy policies and strategies are being pursued through sector policies, such as bioeconomy strategies in research and innovation policies – and yet others pursue the bioeconomy with broader sector policies for e.g. agriculture, fishery, forestry, regional development, environment and innovation.

Finland and Germany have recently adopted holistic National Bioeconomy Strategies – implemented through inter-ministerial structures, and supported by national bioeconomy panels/councils. Norway and Iceland are currently drafting a national bioeconomy strategy – and Estonia is currently planning the drafting of such a strategy and is planning to establish bioeconomy advisory bodies. Latvia is looking into developing a strategy and has for that purpose established a bioeconomy panel to provide advice. Denmark has a bioeconomy panel but not a specific bioeconomy policy framework. Rather the bioeconomy in Denmark is being pursued through a broader policy framework, “Growth Plan for Water, Bio and Environmental Solutions”. Sweden, Lithuania and Poland have no national bioeconomy strategies – though Sweden has for a number of years had a bioeconomy research and innovation strategy. In Lithuania and Poland the bioeconomy is currently being pursued through sector policies for e.g. agriculture, fishery, forestry, regional development, environment and innovation. In addition to national strategies, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, and the autonomous regions of Greenland, Faroe Islands and Åland) collaborate in a series of joint Nordic bioeconomy initiatives, led by rotating chairmanships. The Nordic Council of Ministers has already established two bioeconomy advisory panels, the Nordic Bioeconomy Panel and the West Nordic Bioeconomy Panel. These panels have a mandate to support macro-regional policy processes in the Nordic and the Arctic regions.

Realising the bioeconomy calls for regions and countries to move beyond silos and sector policies, towards holistic integrated policies and incentives across a number of “traditional” sectors.

As a facilitator of macro-regional bioeconomy cooperation in the Arctic, Nordic and Baltic Sea Regions the Nordic Council of Ministers wishes – by establishing and facilitating the Baltic Sea Region

Bioeconomy Council – to support the macro-regions and its stakeholders at local, national and macro-regional level to speed up the transition towards the bioeconomy.

Policy coherence and policy learning – the “BSR Bioeconomy Policy Dialogue Forum”

Sharing policy practices for the purpose of inspiring and policy learning provides many opportunities for multiplication of good bioeconomy policy practices – as well as for development of additional policy practices.

Numerous stakeholders from all around the Baltic Sea Region have during 2014-15 called for BSR policy learning and policy coherence cooperation – or in other words – a Baltic Sea Region Bioeconomy Council.

As part of its efforts under the EUSBSR Action Plan Priority Area Bioeconomy, the NMC is now responding to this request from its partners at local, national and macro-regional level.

The Council

The Council is an informal policy dialogue platform and will be composed of 15-20 invited members, who are actively involved in the development of enabling bioeconomy policies and initiatives in the Baltic Sea Region. The council will have members from local, regional, national, macro-regional and international organisations, knowledge institutions and non-governmental organisations.

Denmark: *Niels Gøtke*, Ministry of Higher Education and Science. Denmark.

Estonia: *Illar Lemetti*, Vice-chancellor, Ministry of Rural Affairs / *Karmeli Kütt* Adviser Department of Strategy, Ministry of Rural Affairs. Estonia.

Finland: *Jussi Manninen*, Strategic Director, Ministry of Employment and the Economy and Chair of the Finnish Bioeconomy Strategy Implementation Team. Finland.

Germany: *Christina Lang* (Prof. Dr.), Executive Managing Partner, ORGANOBALANCE GmbH. and Chair of the German Bioeconomy Council. Germany / *Daniela Thrän*, Head of Bioenergy/Bioenergy Systems at Bioenergy Department of the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ), German Biomass Research Center GmbH (DBFZ), and University of Leipzig and member of the German Bioeconomy Council.

Iceland: *Hörður G. Kristinsson* (Dr.), Research Director, Mátis – Icelandic Food and Biotech R&D and Chair of the Nordic Bioeconomy Panel. Iceland / *Sigrún Elsa Smáradóttir*, Research Group Leader. Mátis – and Chair of the West Nordic Bioeconomy Panel.

Latvia: *Kristine Sirma*, Head of Division, Ministry of Agriculture. Latvia.

Lithuania: *Mrs. Aurelija Kazlauskienė*, Head of Innovation Policy Division of Innovation Department of Ministry of Economy.

Norway: *Sigríður Thormódsdóttir*, Head of Department, Biobased Industries, Innovation Norway. TBC

Poland: *Ewa Florczyk*, Director of Department of Business support activities, Marsgall's Office of the Lodzkie Region. Poland.

Sweden: *Stefan Källman*, Director, Higher Education & Research, Division for Forestry & the Environment, Ministry of Enterprise & Innovation. Sweden.

Organisations:

European Commission: *Jüri Rute*, Bioeconomy Directorate, DG Research and Innovation TBC.

Council of the Baltic Sea States: *Krista Kampus*, Head Baltic 21 Unit and Leader of EUSBSR Horizontal Action Climate. TBC.

ScanBalt: *Peter Frank*, General Secretary, ScanBalt Bioregion/ *Maria Svane*, Center for Environment and Sustainability, GMV, University of Gothenburg and Chalmers University of Technology.

Baltic Development Forum: *Flemming Stender*, Director. TBC

In addition several Nordic institutions will be invited to participate with observer status.

Activities and tasks

The Council will:

1. Share information as regards development and implementation of bioeconomy strategies in the 10 participating countries and macro-regional organisations.
2. Discuss the experiences and lessons learned with a view to identify key drivers, enablers and persistent bottlenecks for accelerating the transition towards the sustainable circular bioeconomy. Entry points for this dialogue are: Policies; Private Sector Engagement; Research, Technology and Innovation; Civil Society and Communication.
3. Inspire Members, through contributions from experts and entrepreneurs showcasing bioeconomy solutions. Engage with these practitioners will help to understand better the existing bottlenecks and what policies could help correct inefficiencies.
4. Crystalize the unique bioeconomy opportunities and challenges that exist in the Baltic Sea Region – and discuss how these could contribute to further dialogue and offer solutions that will propel the bioeconomy through efforts at all levels of governance: local, regional, national, macro-regional, European and global.
5. Provide advice on the future development and targeting of policy efforts under Priority Area Bioeconomy of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region – including by proposing Flagship Projects for further macro-regional cooperation in the area.

Two meetings will be held in Baltic Sea Region Bioeconomy Council in the first half of 2016. Thereafter one meeting at approximately 8 months intervals is foreseen. Dialogue between meetings will nurture policy exchanges and learning and additionally, the Nordic Council of Ministers will support the members by providing information at www.bsrbioeconomy.net and through other relevant channels.

1. On 1 March 2016 the first meeting will:
 - a. Provide overviews of current bioeconomy policies, strategies and pipeline policy initiatives in the 10 countries and their regions.
 - b. Discuss lessons learned and implications for further bioeconomy policy efforts at regional, national and macro-regional level – within respectively: Policies; Private Sector Engagement; Research, Technology and Innovation; Civil Society and Communication.
 - c. Showcase bioeconomy solutions and discuss their policy implications – locally, regionally, nationally as well as at the macro-regional, European and global level.
2. The second meeting (June 2016) will:
 - a. Update members on the state of play as regard the bioeconomy in the Baltic Sea Region – including by providing members with an up-to-date bioeconomy impact analysis.
 - b. Discuss specific sector-based opportunities and challenges in the bioeconomy: a) Agriculture, forestry and fisheries; b) food and manufacturing; c) health; and d) energy – and how current inefficiencies may be corrected through holistic policy practices.
 - c. Showcase bioeconomy solutions and discuss their policy implications, locally, regionally, nationally as well as at the macro-regional, European and global level.
 - d. Propose a small number of Flagship Projects that should provide direction and input to further macro-regional bioeconomy policy dialogue.