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Information sheet: Bioeconomy in the Baltic Sea Region

The bioeconomy is complex and cuts across sectors. Stakeholders engage in the bioeconomy for a great number of different reasons. Therefore the bioeconomy does not fit neatly into one specific policy area but must rather be addressed through a number of efforts in different policy areas.

As facilitator of macro-regional bioeconomy cooperation in the Arctic, Nordic and Baltic Sea Regions the Nordic Council of Ministers supports macro-regions and their stakeholders at local, national and macro-regional level to actually and practically speed up the transition towards the new circular bioeconomy.

In the Baltic Sea Region efforts are supported by the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and associated Action Plan. One of 13 priority areas within this macro-regional cooperation framework is the Bioeconomy. The Nordic Council of Ministers leads these cooperation efforts. Detailed information on networks, cooperation activities and supporting documentation is available on www.bsrbioeconomy.net.

The bioeconomy in the Baltic Sea Region

Forestry, fisheries, agriculture, food production and more recently life-science, health and green energy are key economic pillars for development in the Baltic Sea Region.

Analysing the bioeconomy in the Baltic Sea Region has identified many pockets of bioeconomy smartness throughout the Baltic Sea Region: There are for example *Good farm practices* (innovative technologies for animal feeding and housing; processing; storage; improved water quality and quantity; and handling of fodder, fertilizer and handling of manure – including with a view to energy production); *good marine practices* (macroalgae harvesting and cultivation, mussel cultivation, reed harvesting, large-scale microalgae cultivation, and sustainable RAS aquaculture); *good practices on waste water* management; *good health practices* (boosting the engagement of smaller biotechnology companies and commercialisation of clinical inventions); *good circular economy practices* (such as re- and up-cycling through industrial symbiosis) and more generally, many *good practices on technology chains and business innovation.*

The Baltic Sea Region is well endowed – with biological resources, many innovative farms and firms, many highly capable research and technology institutions, and a number of supporting authorities at local, regional, national and macro-regional level – to commence a travel from today's pockets of bioeconomy smartness to become genuinely smart in bioeconomy.

Need for holistic bioeconomy policies – an opportunity for peer support

Realising the full potential of the bioeconomy requires a shift away from silos and sector policies towards holistic integrated policies and strategies. In the Baltic Sea Region there are a great number of similarities and complementarities in between regions and countries in their bioeconomy policy approaches:

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 – though none of the three countries has so far established bioeconomy panels for advice. Latvia is looking into developing a strategy – and has for that purpose established a bioeconomy panel to provide council. Denmark also has a bioeconomy panel but no 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 a bioeconomy research 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 the rotating chairmanships.

Thus, the bioeconomy is on the policy agenda in all countries in the Baltic Sea Region. This offers great opportunities for collaboration on experience exchange and policy learning.

Inter-national cooperation on bioeconomy policies

For bioeconomy policy learning and transnational cooperation purposes the European Union has established the European Bioeconomy Panel. For similar reasons the Nordic Council of Ministers has launched the Nordic Bioeconomy Panel and the West Nordic Bioeconomy Forum.

With a view to 1) bridge the macro-regional policy learning and policy development efforts and 2) support the Baltic Sea Region countries in cross-fertilizing their bioeconomy policy efforts, the Nordic Council of Ministers is proposing the establishment of "Baltic Sea Region Bioeconomy Policy Dialogue Forum". Currently efforts are on-going to detail the nature of such bioeconomy policy dialogue.

Inter-regional cooperation on propelling the bioeconomy in practice

Around the Baltic Sea Region, local and regional stakeholders are also making a number of efforts to realise economic, social and environmental sustainable development opportunities from the bioeconomy. This happens through e.g. efforts by regional development organisations, cluster organisations, programmes and projects.

There are great opportunities for exchange of experience and transnational learning also among such partners. These more local stakeholders have great outreach to business networks and could therefore offer many opportunities for business matchmaking and cooperation across borders to iterate bioeconomy solutions at larger scale.