

Summary of Tallinn Workshop

Realizing the Bioeconomy in the Baltic Sea Region

Workshop I – Tallinn, 26-27 March 2014

On 26-27 March 2014 the Nordic Council of Ministers together with the Estonia Ministry of Agriculture hosted the first workshop of three planned for 2014 under the initiative “Realizing the Bioeconomy in the Baltic Sea Region”. The initiative aims to:

- To engage stakeholders across the region and across sectors, private as well as public, in a dialogue on bioeconomy opportunities and challenges in the Baltic Sea Region.
- To break down the widespread silo mentality that currently leads to a fragmented pursue of the bioeconomy in the Baltic Sea Region. Showcasing and developing next bioeconomy practices where different sciences, industrial technologies, local and tacit knowledge, and policy enablers have come together “in the right mix” will play an important role to demonstrate the importance and value of cross-sectoral cooperation.
- To facilitate identification and incubate a number co-operation actions (10 steps) that are particular important to realize the transition towards a bioeconomy for the Baltic Sea Region.

In Tallinn a number of stakeholders contributed: by presenting an overview of on-going activities and practices towards accelerating the transition towards the bioeconomy at the macro-regional, national and sub-regional level; by discussing lessons learned, opportunities and bottlenecks; and by identifying important issues and opportunities for realizing synergies in efforts. Also in Tallinn, four pilot actions – “four steps” towards the bioeconomy – was approved for pre-seed financing by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

On-going activities - mapping

A number of mapping activities have recently been completed or are nearing their completion. Together they paint a picture of a Baltic Sea Region with many pockets of bioeconomy smartness: 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 fish aquaculture); *good practices on waste water* management; *good health practices* (on boosting the engagement of smaller biotechnology companies and commercialisation of clinical inventions); *good circular economy practices* (such as through industrial symbiosis) and more generally, many *good practices on technology chains and business innovation*.

To genuinely realize the bioeconomy, however, the Region needs to overcome a number of bottlenecks. They include: that the Baltic Sea Region may share the Sea but in many other respects is not a homogeneous region; that many bioeconomy cooperation efforts struggle to hit the ground with speed and scale; that the private sector is insufficiently engaged; and that support and cooperation structures are many, not aligned and complicated.

Accelerating the transition towards the bioeconomy

Within the initiative “Realizing the Bioeconomy in the Baltic Sea Region” the Nordic Council of Ministers has created a pre-seed facility to support stakeholders in coming together to develop and test feasibility of up to a total of 10 actions that in different ways are important in moving forward the bioeconomy in the Baltic Sea Region.

The first four projects were awarded pre-seed financing in Tallinn. They include efforts to: Tightening the phosphorous cycle; Produce green proteins; Develop markets for woody biomass and wood-based energy; and Develop local capital schemes.

Moving forward the bioeconomy will call on actions in the different dimensions of the bioeconomy – food and feed, biobased non-food and biobased energy – and by use of a number of instruments including policies, markets and other kinds of facilitation.

The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and associated Action Plan provides an important framework for further cooperation – including by connecting the European Union efforts under the EU bioeconomy strategy with the intergovernmental bioeconomy efforts of the Nordic Council of Ministers and Nordic institutions, national bioeconomy initiatives and local bioeconomy efforts.

The Nordic Council of Ministers will in its capacity of leading cooperation on bioeconomy under the EUSBSR Action Plan seek to coordinate and advance efforts in close cooperation with EUSBSR priority areas leaders for agriculture, innovation, energy and other priority areas with bioeconomy related flagship projects in their portfolio.

Already there are at least 11 bioeconomy related projects on-going under 5 different priority areas of the EUSBSR Action Plan. Some of these projects were presented and discussed in Tallinn. It was concluded they together provide much knowledge and many networks that will be very valuable in pursuing further efforts.

As we go forward

Some key take-away messages include: 1) the importance of emphasizing on translation of dialogue and policies into concrete actions and impact; 2) the importance of using existing network structures and partnerships to support project practitioners in navigating the pool of financial mechanisms for cooperation i.e. to lower the transaction costs; and 3) the importance of engaging the private sector – not necessarily with the ambition to engage businesses in future workshops but rather by providing also cooperation platforms that are attractive businesses e.g. bioeconomy product exhibitions, match-making and other business-close activities.