



ERRIN - BIC Position Paper

**The pivotal role of regions and industry
for a thriving bioeconomy**

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The importance of the bioeconomy for developing a more circular and resource-efficient economy, driving forward the industrial development has been highlighted in many recent initiatives, including the EU strategic agenda 2024-2029, the EU Biotech and Biomanufacturing initiative, the Letta-Report, as well as in several Council Conclusion and EU members states initiatives.

In order to reap **the full benefits of bioeconomy, promoting innovation and research is crucial.**

Achieving a more circular and resource-efficient economy requires the engagement of European regions. This is, however, a dimension which has not been stressed sufficiently.

A circular bioeconomy reduces the EU's dependency on fossil resources and enhances strategic autonomy. Bio-based products can be manufactured within Europe, and is thus a place-based asset for our regions, particularly for the most rural and coastal ones. The bioeconomy creates jobs and investment opportunities allowing local and regional communities to thrive, in line with the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas.

Bio-based materials, nature-based solutions, biotechnologies and biomanufacturing can provide sustainable alternatives to existing fossil-based solutions. The EU bioeconomy strategy 2012 states that the EU wants to become the world-leading economy for bioeconomy. Nonetheless, in light of recent bioeconomy initiatives outside the EU e.g. in the US and China, the EU and its regions risk lagging behind. More must be done.

Building an effective European research and innovation policy depends on strong interconnected research and innovation ecosystems embedded in regions and cities. Innovation happens in territories where specific regional and local conditions enable these ecosystems to flourish. Supporting collaboration between different stakeholders – industry, regional public administrations, universities, research organisations, companies, clusters, and civil society is essential to reach that goal.

For bioeconomy to play a key role in the regions, and for enhanced EU competitiveness and strategic autonomy, we urge the EU to:

1. Recognise the strategic and horizontal role of the bioeconomy in different EU policies by:

- Updating the EU's Bioeconomy Strategy by 2025 and involving regional and industrial stakeholders in the process, including the setting of indicators and targets for the bioeconomy.
- Interdisciplinary and multi-level policy design is key for the bioeconomy. This could be supported by setting-up a central policy coordination before regulation is drawn up in the new EU Commission, ideally at EU Commissioner level and also including the Regulatory Scrutiny Board.

- 2. Support the bioeconomy by scaling up and deploying bio-based innovations at a larger scale in order to go from niche to norm by:**
 - Encouraging the development of national and regional bioeconomy strategies where needed, as well as continuous iteration of the existing ones.
 - Setting up an Important Project of Common European interest (IPCEI) for the bio-based industries.
 - Developing common European rules and standards for the public procurement of bio-based solutions.
 - Strengthening the skills system supporting the bioeconomy.

- 3. Implement calls that engage local and regional public authorities in tandem with the regional and local industrial ecosystems by:**
 - Supporting the creation of more bioeconomy-related Regional Innovation Valley ecosystems that promote the regional development of value chains, including both public and private stakeholders.
 - Strengthening place-based strategic policymaking tools and methods, such as the Partnership for Regional Innovation (PRI) based on smart specialisation (S3).
 - Capitalising on the legacy of cities and regions involved in the Circular Cities and Regions Initiative (CCRI) to mainstream the territorial dimension, also in potential follow-up schemes.
 - Exploiting synergies between EU, national and regional funding schemes, including further attracting private investments in Europe.

- 4. Foster instruments and opportunities in public-private collaboration for high-priority basic research, upscaling of innovation and its deployment by:**
 - Continuing the Circular Bio-based Europe Joint undertaking with Bio-based Industries under upcoming 10th EU Framework Programme with strengthened engagement of regions and their stakeholders.
 - Developing a Regional Innovation Engine programme, to accelerate the time it takes for R&I level biorefineries projects to reach commercial level.
 - Setting-up regional innovation programmes that allow for specific forms of experimentation e.g. regulatory sandboxes, living labs, and test beds.
 - Planning for industrial circular use of bio-based materials, including wood construction and increased sustainable wood use.

- 5. Securing the supply of sustainable biomass for biomanufacturing in Europe by:**
 - Having a strategic analysis and dialogue on EU future demand and supply of biomass (primary and secondary)
 - Encouraging Member States to submit a plan to support the resilience of the EU's biomass supply chain for domestic biomanufacturing.
 - Facilitating sharing of data on primary feedstocks and secondary biomass, such as bio-based residual streams, supporting better industrial symbiosis and urban planning.

ERRIN – **European Regions Research and Innovation Network** – is a Brussels-based network that supports regional and local stakeholders in developing their innovation ecosystems and enhancing research and innovation (R&I) capacities through collaboration and partnerships.

ERRIN brings together 120 regions and their research and innovation ecosystems from across 22 European countries. The network mobilises key R&I stakeholders – public authorities, academia, the private sector and civil society. Together, we work bottom-up on European R&I policy and funding and foster experience sharing, mutual learning and collaboration.

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BIC – **Bio-based Industries Consortium** - is Europe's leading bio-based industry association, putting circularity and sustainability, innovation and investments at the heart of the European bioeconomy. BIC is the private partner in the €2 billion public-private partnership with the EU - the Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking (CBE JU).

BIC has 300+ industry members covering the whole bio-based value chain, from agriculture, forestry, aquaculture to chemicals and materials, brand owners and waste management.

BIC has 250+ associate members including universities, research organisations and regions.

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