

EBU OPINION PAPER: The Bioeconomy and the Green Deal

The **European Bioeconomy University (EBU)** was founded as an alliance of six universities on July 3, 2019 in Brussels. The six partners are: AgroParisTech (Paris Institute of Technology for Life, Food and Environmental Sciences), Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU) in Vienna, University of Hohenheim in Stuttgart, Wageningen University and Research, University of Eastern Finland in Joensuu and Kuopio.

The aim of **EBU** is to strengthen the capacity and competitiveness of bioeconomy research, education and innovation through co-operation of the involved universities and their collaborators and to build up a creative hub for the development, promotion and implementation of the bioeconomy across Europe. More information can be found on the website: <https://bioeconomyalliance.eu/>

The Green Deal communication and the foreseen roadmap

The Commission placed at the centre of its priorities the need to take immediate and drastic actions to fight climate change and to make Europe climate neutral by 2050. This aim is officially communicated in a

document called "The European Green Deal" (Com/2019/640). This document illustrates the various elements of the Green Deal that should ensure a transformation of the EU's economy towards a sustainable future. Eight workstreams are proposed which are supported by additional elements related to financing the transition and including research and innovation activities as well as securing a fair transition through involvement of all European citizens. A roadmap including key actions is set up in the Annex of the communication.

EBU opinion and recommendations

The EBU welcomes the aim of the Green Deal Communication as well as the Green Deal Call to transform the economy towards a sustainable future. This aligns well with the aim of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy "A sustainable Bioeconomy for Europe: Strengthening the connection between economy, society and the environment" (COM/2018/673) that proposes to transform a fossil dependent economy into an economy based on sustainably produced renewable raw materials, a bioeconomy.

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However, a strong reference in the Green Deal workstreams to the EU Bioeconomy Strategy is missing. Even if some workstreams focus on circularity, this will not be sufficient for a transformation towards a sustainable future - circularity only considers to reuse and recycle materials, a position concerning the sustainability of the raw materials themselves and their production processes is not included in the concept. A cross-sectoral collaboration and link with ecosystem services - in a systemic view - will be essential to make the objectives of the Green Deal feasible.

The Bioeconomy includes all these and additionally embraces environmental and societal aspects in line with UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, the EBU proposes that the Bioeconomy concept should play a much more prominent role in the planned key actions mentioned in the Roadmap of the Green Deal. Actions suggested under the 'climate change' area for instance could emphasize the need to change land-use and land management to generate negative CO2 emissions, an essential component of the European Climate Law (COM/2020/80). Similar examples can be found in other areas, such as the decarbonisation in energy and transport sectors with bioenergy (the most important form of

renewable energy worldwide), the use of wood products in the construction sector or the sustainable management of natural resources. Thanks to its holistic nature, bioeconomy cuts across all economic sectors and offers a unique perspective to achieve the goals spelled out in the Green Deal in a consistent and systemic manner, taking into accounts the interconnections between its various areas. Currently, most of the Roadmap activities planned for the beginning of 2020 have been postponed due to the Covid 19 crisis. However, the economy has to be restarted after the Covid 19 crisis and this most likely opens a singular window of opportunity to achieve the transition of our economy towards a sustainable future by means of the Green Deal key actions.

The EBU combines outstanding competences and knowledge in bioeconomy-related research and innovation activities and is offering scientific advice in formulating the Green Deal's future activities. Additionally, the EBU – through its education and training activities – is an important multiplier that could contribute to a fair and smooth transition towards a sustainable future.