

European Bioeconomy Scientific Forum 2023

Moving Towards the Transformation

 6-7th September 2023

 Vienna, Austria

Event Report



Foreword

Dear EBSF2023 Participants,

It is with great pleasure that I put together these words to reflect on the journey we shared at the European Bioeconomy Scientific Forum 2023 – EBSF2023. I am both delighted and humbled to address you through this report, which summarises the resounding success of the EBSF2023.

As the chair of the European Bioeconomy University Alliance (EBU) for the biennium 2023-2024, the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU) had the privilege of bringing together a diverse and passionate community of scientists, experts, policymakers, industry representatives, youth, and other stakeholders from across Europe to drive the transformation towards a sustainable holistic bioeconomy forward.

During the EBSF2023, our sessions were characterised by vibrant and inspiring conversations that sparked new thoughts and perspectives, encouraged by the cross-sectorial points of view which echoed our shared mission to explore and enhance the bioeconomy. The depth of knowledge shared and the engaging discussions, coupled with the proactive and insightful participation of the audience, embodied the dedication of the EBU network towards a more sustainable future.

Beyond all our expectations, the forum's networking opportunities were one of the most appreciated aspects of the EBSF2023. Rarely have I seen such lively and dynamic exchanges at an event, emphasising the collaborative spirit that defines our alliance. It was heartening to witness professionals, researchers and youth coming together to share experiences and expertise, paving the way for future projects and partnerships.

On behalf of EBU and BOKU, I extend my deepest gratitude to each participant, every speaker who enlightened us, and all our sponsors and supporters who believed in our vision. Your presence and support made the forum a resounding success. I want to express my sincere appreciation to the organising committee, whose meticulous planning and hard work behind the scenes ensured the seamless execution of the EBSF2023.

In closing, let me express my humble gratitude once again. Our journey towards a sustainable bioeconomy is ongoing, and it requires continuous collaboration, learning, and adaptation. With your participation, we have taken a significant step forward in the right direction and I am confident that the connections fostered and ideas exchanged during this event will serve as the foundation for transformative change.

Looking forward to what the future has in store for EBU and the collaborations that lie ahead.

With warmest regards,

Martin Greimel
Head of the Centre for Bioeconomy of BOKU
Speaker of the EBU Coordinator Group

Introduction

This report is meant to outline the main happenings of the EBSF2023, offering a comprehensive summary for the participants of our forum and those interested in understanding the event's outcomes and significance. Indeed, the document provides an overview of the topics covered during the sessions, statistics on the impact of the event and other interesting information related to the forum, sharing insights, key points, and significant moments.

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More information and materials can also be found and downloaded from our website:

<https://european-bioeconomy-university.eu/ebu-scientific-forum/ebsf2023>

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Posters

Presentations

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Impact and Statistics

At the EBSF2023, we welcomed a higher number of people than expected, coming from very diverse fields, backgrounds, demographics, and countries. The total number of participants reached 221 over the 3 days of the event. Out of these attendees, 52% were representatives from the different EBU members (Figure 1): with delegates from all 8 EBU universities and all 3 EBU partners, the forum ensured the complete engagement of the alliance. Considering that the remaining 48% were comprised of representatives from non-EBU institutions, our outreach extended beyond the alliance itself, enriching and enlarging the network. This highlights a rising interest in EBU's initiatives and a shared commitment to promoting the shift toward a sustainable bioeconomy.

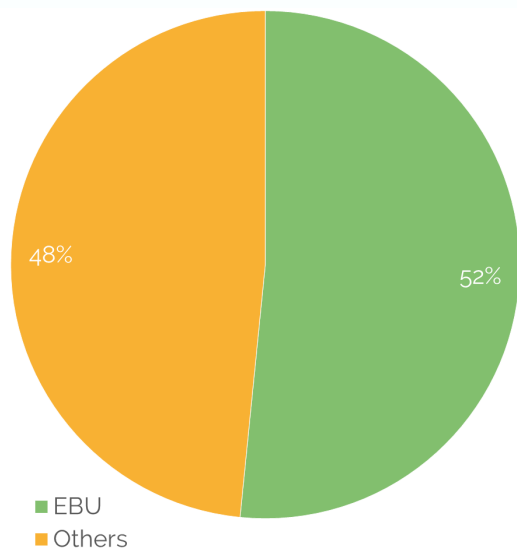


Figure 1 – Participants' affiliation distribution

The event witnessed significant youth involvement, with 47% of participants being under the age of 35 years, which was possible also thanks to the participation of well-established and active youth networks (Figure 2).

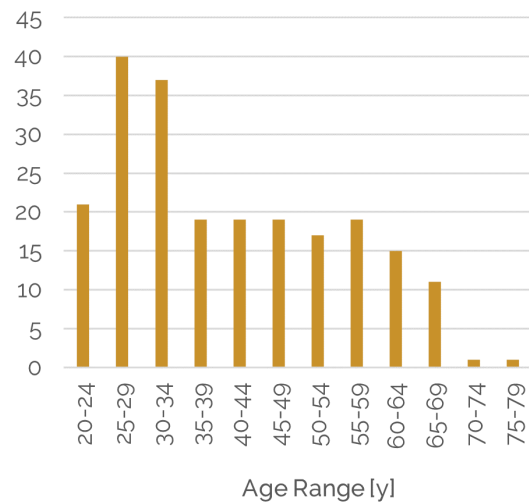


Figure 2 – Participants' age distribution in age ranges

In addition to this, the forum demonstrated significant diversity, with 54% of participants identifying as female, showcasing a balanced gender representation and underscoring the success of initiatives promoting gender inclusion in the bioeconomy sector (Figure 3). The participation of representatives from institutions based in 21 different European countries demonstrated the widespread international engagement and collaboration promoted by EBU in the bioeconomy sector at the European level (Figure 4).

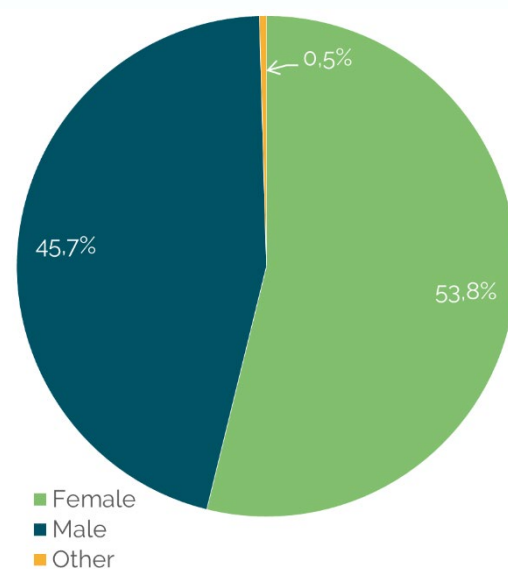


Figure 3 – Participants' gender distribution

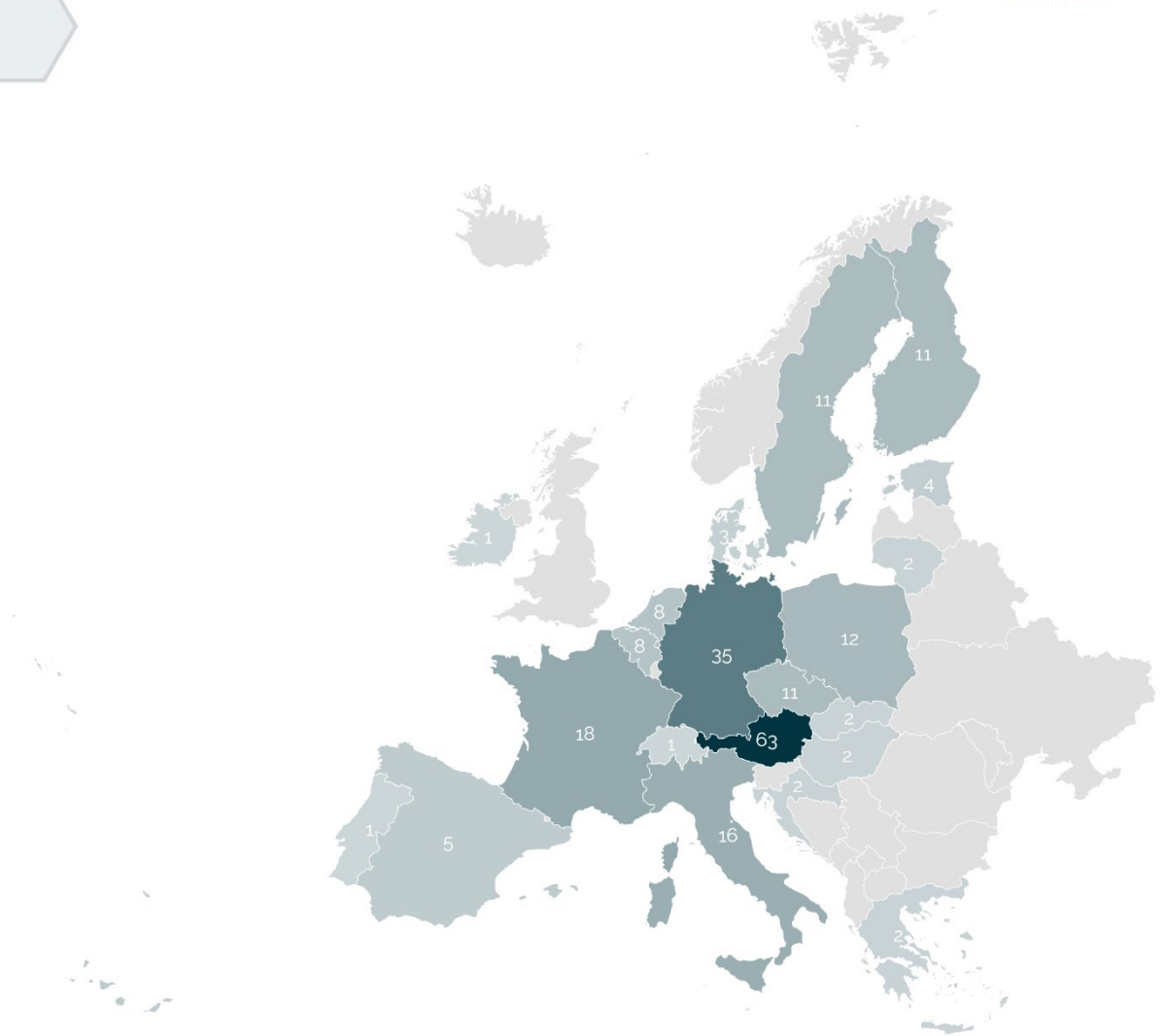


Figure 4 – Participants' geographical affiliation distribution

All these numbers suggest that the event successfully attracted attention and involvement from a wide range of stakeholders, demonstrating a collective interest in discussing and advancing bioeconomy-related initiatives, research, and policies. Indeed, this diverse representation contributed to the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and best practices that took place during the forum.

Lastly, the impact of the event extended beyond mere in-person participation. Our

social media presence garnered substantial attention during the days of the forum, leading to significant online engagement. Considering only the days between 6 and 8 September 2023, we achieved a total of 2 171 impressions on LinkedIn, whereas on X, previously known as Twitter, we amassed a total of 7 673 impressions over the same period – with impressions indicating the number of times a tweet or post was displayed on a user's screen. Globally, this resulted in a combined total of almost 10 000 impressions across both platforms.

Highlights

The objective of this scientific forum was to promote the transformation towards a holistic bioeconomy. The event brought together scientists, experts, policymakers, industry representatives, youth and other stakeholders from across Europe to share experiences, discuss challenges, and identify opportunities for advancing a sustainable bioeconomy transformation.

Throughout four engaging sessions, a diverse range of topics was explored, highlighting the immense potential of the bioeconomy in addressing today's pressing contemporary challenges. These sessions, enriched by speakers from very diverse backgrounds and bioeconomy sectors, were both inspiring and thought-provoking. Filled with insights and lively discussions, they truly encapsulated the essence of the event: a platform to foster dialogue among different stakeholders and promote a holistic approach to the transformation. In addition to this, the EBSF2023 emphasised the societal perspective of the bioeconomy as a salient point of a sustainable holistic bioeconomy¹.



Figure 5 - Austrian Minister Leonore Gewessler addressing the first plenary

Our journey started on the first day with the session on "Raising Awareness for the Transformation towards a Sustainable Bioeconomy". Esteemed policy-maker representatives joined us to emphasise the necessity of dedicated bioeconomy

policies. Notable highlights included the urgency of a rapid transition to a circular bioeconomy, the importance of a common understanding, the significance of the bioeconomy sector, the urge to seize opportunities as well as the reminder of the youth's role as change agents.

The following session, "Identifying Synergies for a Holistic Bioeconomy Approach" revealed the multifaceted nature of the bioeconomy concept, showcasing its various visions and values. We explored different aspects and strengths of bioeconomy, learned about the bio-based industries' role, and delved into the exciting vision of "biocities".



Figure 6 - The panellist speakers of the third session

With the third session opening the second day, our focus shifted to "Promoting the Social Dimension of the Transformation", where we explored the often-overlooked social science perspectives. We recognised the need for tools and policies to integrate sustainability indicators across environmental, economic, and social aspects. Philosophical discussions highlighted the non-neutrality of technology, and we learned the importance of motivating sustainable behaviour. Additionally, we explored the role of social networks in behavioural change and confronted the challenges and limitations of the current bioeconomy narratives.

¹ All presentations are available on the [event website](#).



Figure 7 – BOKU's Rector addressing the EBSF2023 plenary with closing remarks on the last session of the event

Thursday concluded with the final session entitled "Achieving the Transformation", examining the current state of the bioeconomy on a European level, gaining global insights, and contemplating the ecological implications of the transformation. It was fitting that this dynamic event, marked by a young and enthusiastic audience, was brought to a close by a representative of the youth delegation. This symbolic ending not only reflected the energy of our gathering but also underscored EBU's unwavering commitment to the future and the

generations to come, emphasizing the role of inter-generational cooperation in shaping a sustainable tomorrow.

The forum marked a defining moment in the journey toward a sustainable bioeconomy and for the future of the EBU Alliance. Indeed, in addition to the highly appreciated event, the networking opportunities offered and the cooperations forged during the forum, the European Bioeconomy University network has expanded with new members – SGGW and SLU, strengthening the alliance geographically and in expertise.



Figure 8 – Some of the EBU Presidents during the signatory of the Memorandum of Understanding which officialised the accession of SGGW and SLU as EBU Core Members

Side Events

To maximise the opportunities presented by an in-person event and reduce the environmental impact, participants were encouraged to organise private sessions or internal meetings as side events alongside the forum. Be it a project partners' meeting, a board meeting or a workshop, the EBSF2023 hosted 14 side

events. Notably among these, Youth Workshops led by [IFSA](#) and [IAAS](#), the [Bioeconomy Youth Ambassadors' Summer Camp](#), [BIObec's](#) project partner meeting, as well as meetings of the EBU President Board and EBU Coordination Group, were held as part of the forum, increasing the impact of the event.



Figure 9 – The youth delegation led by IFSA and IAAS

One objective of the EBSF2023 was to bring junior and senior researchers from all EBU partners together to exchange project and research experiences and establish connections for future European research collaborations. Therefore, on the afternoon of the second day, the [FFG](#) held a seminar to provide insights on European-funded programme opportunities for the upcoming years. Furthermore, EBU members with strong expertise in proposal development contributed to the session by sharing "dos and don'ts" for successful project proposals.



Figure 10 – Interesting insights were shared during the "Research Opportunities and Project Development" seminar organised by FFG

Poster Competition

In a world where the pursuit of a greener and more sustainable future is paramount, the Poster Competition represented a unique opportunity for emerging talents to shine. Hosted during the EBSF2023, this competition celebrated the exceptional contributions of 25 young researchers and promoted innovation in the realm of bioeconomy².



Figure 11 - Participants of the forum discussing the study of one of the posters together with the author

During the forum, the selected researchers shared their studies through poster presentations, which were on display at the forum venue. The event participants were invited to read the posters during the networking and social activities and interact with the young researchers in a dedicated poster session. With all participants being entitled to vote for the poster(s) they deemed to be

outstanding and worthy of praise, 3 posters were rewarded as winners of the competition. The three winning posters, awarded during the social dinner of the forum, are the following:

- "Valorisation of European Citrus Waste: From Citrus Waste to Essential Oils and Bacterial Cellulose-Based Textile Fibres" by Scheurich, P. and their team.
- "Lignins-First Flexible Biorefinery: Valorization Process Design for Sustainable Construction Material" by Maidiono, E. and their research group.
- "3D Printing of Starch, PLA & Lignin" represented by Quieng, S. R. and their collaborative team.



Figure 12 - One of the Poster competition winners during the ceremony of awards

² All posters are available on the [event website](#).

Sponsors & Supporters

The EBSF2023 was made possible with the generous support of our sponsors. These partners, [Österreichische Hagelversicherung](#) and [SAN Group GmbH](#), played a vital role in making this event possible, and we deeply appreciate their contribution. We also extend our gratitude to the [City of Vienna](#) for their kind and generous support, which ensured that the social dinner, a highlight of the event, was truly exceptional. Their commitment to the bioeconomy was evident in their support, and we were delighted to have them as part of our team.



Event Organiser

As the currently chair of the EBU Presidency, the EBSF2023 was hosted by the [University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna - BOKU](#) and took place in the university campus Türkenschanze. The [Centre for Bioeconomy](#) of BOKU, on behalf of BOKU's Rectorate and supported by the EBU Coordination Group, was responsible for the organisation of the event. Additionally, the [Institute of Forest, Environmental, and Natural Resource Policy of BOKU - InFER](#), provided invaluable assistance during the forum.



Figure 13 – Part of the EBSF2023 organising committee from the Centre for Bioeconomy of BOKU together with BOKU's Rector (on the right) during the social dinner