

O.T3.2

Establishment of Danube wide Circular Bioeconomy Brain Trust

Poly4EmI/Anteja ECG d.o.o.
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Introduction

To help identify activities that push the knowledge frontier and empower existing entities in the Danube Region with bioeconomy opportunities, it is critically important to stay informed about market tendencies and to gain a better understanding of the socio-economic and environmental impacts.

Therefore, Anteja ECG / Poly4Eml initiated the establishment of the GoDanuBio Circular Bioeconomy Brain Trust (Brain Trust) in March 2021 and invited 6 high level bioeconomy experts from the Danube Region to join as members:

- Prof. Dr. Ralf Kindervater, CEO BIOPRO Baden-Württemberg
- Dr. Gerd Meier zu Köcker, CEO ClusterAgentur Baden-Württemberg and Danube Alliance Secretariat
- Pavla Bruszkova, Expert Supervisor NCA-CZ
- Daniel Cosnita, CEO CLUSTERO
- Mateja Dermastia, CEO Anteja ECG
- Barna Kovacs PhD, BIOEAST Secretary-General

The Brain Trust was formed to serve as the motivation and information point for the bioeconomy development in the Danube Region. It also serves to demonstrate business opportunities and provides tools for tracking the progress of the circular bioeconomy in the macro-region.

The Brain Trust members help to set up an ongoing bioeconomy dialogue across the relevant value chains, including topics such as technological trends, areas of application, market developments, and socio-economic factors, including legal considerations and human resources. The Brain Trust was also engaged in two transnational dialogues (DT3.2.3) attended by policymakers at the national, regional and municipal level, business leaders, clusters managers, board of directors and CEOs of private firms.

The initial group meeting of the Brain Trust was held on 28th April 2021. General consensus was reached on the following organizational details.

Objectives

The Brain Trust will advise on the formulation of a GoDanuBio transnational strategy to serve as an institutional and infrastructural framework for mutual learning on regional policy agendas of the Danube region in circular bioeconomy. The Brain Trust will help consolidate regional efforts and strengthen institutional capacities to identify transformative opportunities to tackle demographic change on a global level via a circular bioeconomy.

The Brain Trust builds on mutual learning. In the circular bioeconomy, you can never be comfortable knowing what you think about how the industry is transforming with discoveries, methods, and toolkits. With modern toolkits and infrastructure, models can be built, tested, and prioritized. In the bioeconomy framework, regions might be testing models for years. Leaders must be open to put the “bioeconomisation” of industrial clusters on the

next level. This level includes adaptability and resilience skills, capacity, challenges, and necessary adjustments to increase investments in circular bioeconomy transition substantially.

Action Fields

Participants of the 28th April 2021 introductory meeting of the Brain Trust pointed out that good examples and experiences in the bioeconomy should guide the overall bioeconomy policy dialogue.

Pavla Bruskova mentioned the need of gathering suitable examples of the bioeconomy-based solutions for the revitalisation of rural areas. To bring functional models among the stakeholders from all (regional, local, municipal, and rural) levels is an important task for the Brain Trust so that the multilevel participative governance actors can be motivated to apply the bioeconomy approach in their specific environments. The related methodology guide should help these bioeconomy pioneers to evaluate the input conditions, proposed changes and the resulting effects of their potential bioeconomy projects.

Participants acknowledge that Germany exhibits many good practices for the Danube region as reported by Prof. Dr. Ralf Kindervater:

- First-class transformation programmes and policies including the establishment of the 3rd National Bioeconomy Council interconnecting the relevant federal ministries for the joint action towards the bioeconomic transformation of the German industry;
- Bioeconomy Strategy Baden-Württemberg and its results;
- Tools for bioeconomy development and “bioeconomisation” of clusters, such as a readiness level framework for sustainable circular bioeconomy¹.

There is a broad spectrum of potential funding programmes at the EU level including the EU Green Deal, Farm-to-work Strategy, Circular Biobased Europe JU and the European Circular Bioeconomy Fund (ECBF). The majority of the Danube regions still does not have any implementation program on the bioeconomy. Without substantial investments, transformation to the bioeconomy would not be possible. During the first meeting, participants discussed the idea of promoting an IPCEI Initiative (Important Project of Common European Interest) as Joint Governance Strategy for the Danube Circular Bioeconomy.

Members acknowledge bio-based value chains and related clusters identified in DanuBioValNet as a basis for further developing the bioeconomy in the Danube region. This includes green infrastructure and human resource development. GoDanuBio can work closely with the Danube Alliance Secretariat to advance bio-based value chains. Dr. Gerd

¹ A readiness level framework for sustainable circular bioeconomy, N. M. Holden (2022)

Meier zu Köcker mentioned the funding measures devoted to optimising the bioeconomy value chains of Miscanthus, pumpkin oil and phytopharma².

Approach

Anteja ECG / Poly4emi organised another two Brain Trust meetings online in 2021: 23rd July 2021 and 19th November 2021, where the concept of the »Danube Region White paper« was initiated and finally presented in November 2021. The minutes of both meetings are in Annex 1 and Annex 2.

Danube Region White paper

Anteja ECG completed the »Danube region White paper« in November 2021, based on the discussions within the Brain Trust, inputs provided by the project partners and several research conducted. The rationale behind this document is to kick-off discussions on how the EUSDR can be better aligned with regional strategies with a dedicated focus on the circular (bio)economy. Since the Danube Region Programme places significant attention on aligning regional strategies of the partner regions and facilitation of cross-border cooperation, the key question is “Do the framework conditions currently exist?” This White Paper represents and discusses the status quo in this regard. »Danube region White paper« was then used as an input for the transnational dialogues conducted on 1st July 2022 and 3rd November 2022 and was also updated according to the outcomes of these dialogues.

Policy dialogue

- The PPs will provide quadruple helixes (regional ecosystem mapping) either on the national, regional, or municipality level. Methodology for the mapping will be provided for the partners.
- The Brain Trust will support policy dialogues with selected quadruple helixes. A substantive approach to the policy dialogue (meetings) will be developed.
- The Brain Trust will support policy dialogues organized at the transnational level.

Establishment of the GoDanubio Circular Bioeconomy Brain Trust

- Promotion of value chains defined by Danube Alliance Secretariat among GoDanuBio project partners.
- Brain Trust road map for implementation.

Anteja ECG / Poly4emi provides secretariat for the Brain Trust.

² The Danube Alliance project, funded as Flagship of the EUSDR PA8, actually modelled the case of Miscanthus and Sorghum.

Annex 1

GoDanuBio BrainTrust meeting #2

T3 Transnational Strategy for Circular Bioeconomy Governance Structure

Minutes of the meeting

23rd July, 2021

DISCLAIMER: This is a summary of the second meeting of the GoDanuBio BrainTrust. The notes are intended to capture only the main points made in the meeting, and they reflect comments on presentations and the discussions. These notes do not imply a specific opinion or commitment on the part of any individual or organization represented at the meeting.

AGENDA

Time	Topic	
13:00 – 13:05	Welcome	Mateja Dermastia (Anteja ECG)
13:05 - 13:15	GoDanubio status/results after one year	Sergi Costa (BIOPRO)
13:15 – 13:25	BrainTrust Road Map	Mateja Dermastia (Anteja ECG)
13:25 – 14:00	Discussion	All participants

Present:

Mateja Dermastia (Anteja ECG)

Dr. Gerd Meier zu Köcker (VDI/VDE-IT)

Prof. Ralf Kindervater (BIOPRO)

Sergi Costa (BIOPRO)

Pavla Bruszkova (National Cluster Association – CZ)

Gabriela Pirvu (Clustero)

Mateja Novak (Anteja ECG)

1. GoDanuBio status/results after one year

Sergi C. presented the overview of the current status of the project and the role of BrainTrust within the WP3 (pptx attached).

2. BrainTrust Road Map V01

Mateja D. presented an overview of the future activities and deliverables within the WP3 (pptx attached).

3. Discussion

Prof. Ralf Kindervater provided information about the Interreg Annual Event – Green Deal Workshop, where he is invited to present the ALpLinkBioEco project. He will suggest to the organisers (DG REGIO, EC) to contribute with the presentation of efforts in the Danube region.

With regards to the WP3 plan he supports the idea of exchanging the success stories between the Alpine Space and the Danube, to learn from each other.

Gabriela P. expressed concerns about the challenges surrounding involving Romanian policy makers and convincing them to participate in the creation of the circular bioeconomy strategies.

Mateja D. commented that Brain Trust is aiming to address the problem with identifying the calls, which will be open from October 2021 – June 2022 linked to the circular bioeconomy, and to “synchronise” them by mobilising the policy makers (good practice Innovation Express Alpine Space).

Prof. Kindervater mentioned the EUSDR Annual Forum, which will be held on 26-27 October 2021, and where the high-level participants will debate several contemporary topics. We should try to put the bioeconomy and the Green Deal on the agenda. The goal would be to secure a slot, where we could present the need for the Danube region to adopt the joint bioeconomy strategy.

Mateja D. suggested Prof. Kindervater and Gerd MzK could make contact with the organisers and try to obtain a slot. The participation on the EUSDR Annual Forum in October would then be considered as the GoDanuBio 1st Transnational Dialog (D.T3.2.3.).

Prof. Kindervater suggested developing a “White Paper” (as a policy memo), with the overview of the current situation in the Danube region and the need for the “Danube Bioeconomy Strategy”.

Mateja D. asked that in the event participation at this event will not be possible, if there will be an option to organise an event through the project Danube Alliance for SME competitiveness. In response, Prof. Kindervater stressed that the participants at the ministry level are needed as well (top down approach). He also stressed that if we do not succeed with up and running activities, other Interregs programmes/regions will get the

lead and funds instead. Therefore, it is crucial to stay active in Green Deal efforts and foster the “Danube Spirit” by mobilising the high level stakeholders.

Pavla Bruskova welcomed the Top Down approach and agreed that only a top down approach would make a difference.

Gerd MzK pointed out that the Specific Objectives of the upcoming INTERREG Programme 2021 – 2027 focusses significantly on green topics, which may have a contradictory effect concerning the missing bioeconomy strategies, measures, or actions at the membership level.

Action plan:

- Sergi C. will confirm, where the EUSDR annual Forum will take place (online or if at a physical location exactly where) and share the information
- Prof. Kindervater will contact with Dr. Judit Schrick-Szenczi as the Danube Officer at the ministry level (PA 8 Coordinator).
- The “White Paper” will be elaborated as a strategic input for the event (policy memo / main strategic event)

Annex 2

GoDanuBio BrainTrust meeting #3

T3 Transnational Strategy for Circular Bioeconomy

Governance Structure

Minutes of the meeting

19th November, 2021

DISCLAIMER: This is a summary of the second meeting of the GoDanuBio BrainTrust. The notes are intended to capture only the main points made in the meeting, and they reflect comments on presentations and the discussions. These notes do not imply a specific opinion or commitment on the part of any individual or organization represented at the meeting.

AGENDA

Time	Topic	
14:00 – 14:05	Welcome and roundtable	Mateja Dermastia (Anteja ECG) / all participants
14:10 - 14:15	GoDanuBio status	Sergi Costa (BIOPRO)
14:15 – 14:30	Danube White paper draft presentation	Mateja Dermastia (Anteja ECG)
14:30 – 15:00	Discussion	All participants

Present:

Mateja Dermastia (Anteja ECG)

Dr. Gerd Meier zu Köcker (VDI/VDE-IT)

Barna Kovács (MFA HU)

Pavla Bruskova (National Cluster Association – CZ)

Sergi Costa (BIOPRO)

Katrin Stöckle (BIOPRO)

Mateja Novak (Anteja ECG)

The meeting started with the welcome from Mateja Dermastia, followed by presentation of all the participants, since Mr. Barna Kovács participated to the Brain Trust for the first time.

4. GoDanuBio status

Sergi C. presented the overview of the current status of the project (pptx attached).

5. White Paper

Mateja D. presented the first draft of the White Paper and findings of the data collected within WP3 (pptx attached). The key message of the presentation was that there exists an issue of fragmentation of Danube region in regards to strategic frameworks, policies and programmes, which was already mentioned several times. The other element hindering the development of the bioeconomy in Danube region is the lack of a clear idea/plan about how to deliver (how the funding agencies will implement it). Another issue identified is the limited accessibility to the responsible persons at the ministries and/or Managing Authorities (lack of communication or lack of specific mandate on this issue).

One idea to make the step forward could be the launch of the synchronized scheme («Innovation Express Danube»).

After the presentation followed the discussion on the way forward.

6. Discussion

Barna K. agreed that the structure of the Danube Strategy does not really fit to the progress of the bioeconomy there, therefore, he recommended the role of GoDanuBio in three aspects:

1. To make a separate document on the issues and the mismatch that was identified, indicate what we are missing and present the good practices from Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria. It could be a suggestion or paper towards the „high policy stake“, which should be signalled up to the EU presidency level.
2. Another issue is the system, where the stakeholder voice is not heard. The role of GoDanuBio would be to echo the voice of stakeholders. Barna is already pushing it forward from the policy level, also through BIOEAST initiative. Regions and regional authorities should communicate loudly that they are missing something to help them build up the strategy. The role of the GoDanuBio could also be to communicate loudly that the bioeconomy strategy is missing, to gather the stakeholders within countries and present the before mentioned paper to the policy makers. Besides, it is clear that the system doesn't work, because the constellation/structure is missing.
3. There should be a bioeconomy research and innovation development program on a national level, because most of the countries have an innovation action or general research programmes, where also bioeconomy stakeholders may apply, but there are always other priorities (energy, transport, etc.) that come before the bioeconomy. So, GoDanuBio could encourage the local/regional stakeholders to ask for specific programmes and calls related to bioeconomy. This could come out of the Danube White Paper, to enforce the public authorities to launch such programmes.

Gerd MzK provided two recommendations/comments:

1. In Baden-Württemberg there is a consulting function of the funding agencies, which consult programme owners how to perform better. What it should be considered is, if we can set up a network of those who are responsible of programme implementation and raise their voice.
2. Additional incentives may help (ERA-Net approach). Can we - within Danube – find a mechanism, which provides incentives for the Danube national/regional programme owners and policy makers to implement synchronization and harmonisation of the ongoing schemes in Danube.

Mateja D. added that there is a difference between Baden-Württemberg, where the funding agencies have clear mandate to do something, while in Slovenia, we don't know who (at the Ministry) has a mandate.

Pavla B. commented that in Czech Republic there is no owner of the bioeconomy on the national level, to take over the task of developing the bioeconomy. Therefore, Pavla suggested to build an inter-ministerial group, who would take over this task. And the EU Commission could encourage this, by sending a letter to the EU countries to assign someone, who will be responsible for the implementation.

Barna K. added that the situation is the consequence of the development in the past (from 70s). We have to engage the agencies and build the capacities. The initiative has to come through the channel of the right people/MAs and through repeating the need to pay attention to the bioeconomy. The management model of Baden-Württemberg could be presented to the Eastern regions as a workable solution. Another example are the Baltic countries, where the focus is more on the research rather than on management, but this model works as well. Some regions such as Lithuania or Estonia are already testing this approach.

Gerd MzK agreed and added that there is a lack of competences – new policies have to be implemented by the smart specialisation programmes. The bioeconomy in B-W has three components: investment, innovation and collaborative part in one programme, because this multilayer approach is needed. GoDanuBio should start to address it and to see how the policy is implemented in the region.

Mateja D. explained that we already mapped the responsible actors in each region/country and asked, what would be the next step? Gerd MzK answered that, if the responsible actors in each region/country have already been mapped, they should be approached and asked, if they are satisfied with the system. We should try to bring them on board and find out if they have the knowledge to address the challenges and then motivate them to move ahead.

Barna K. suggested two stage approach:

Stage 1: policy makers and administrators should be educated to obtain the right knowledge, as mentioned by Gerd MzK.

Stage 2: going to the agencies level and check, if responsible persons are appointed and to see how the issues have been tackled (clusters from agriculture, environment, energy). It is needed to highlight to them the challenges and asking them to start the discussion – bring them to the same table and present the case of Baden-Württemberg and present them their role.

Gerd MzK added that all Eastern countries participated in ERA-Net programme, so there exist competences.

Mateja D. thanked all the Brain Trust members for their suggestions and ideas, which will be included in the updated White Paper document. If there will be availability, the Brain Trust can meet again before Christmas to finalize it and decide on how we can bring the agencies to the same table and move forward.

Pavla B. emphasised again that it would be crucial to assign a specific responsible person on the governmental or ministerial level in the country, so the government should be approached and asked to appoint a bioeconomy ambassador, who will work on mobilising the efforts.

Gerd proposed to circulate the mapping document and have a follow-up meeting to see if there is some additional information needed to collect.

Action items:

- Mateja N. will share with the Brain Trust the data collected from the project partners on the ecosystem mapping (DT3.2.1 Regional Ecosystem Mapping) – done after the meeting.