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BIOCLUS — Contact us

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CPERI

Chemical
Process and
Energy
Resources
Institute

BIOCLUS final conference

Time flies like an arrow and this week marked the formal end of the three-year BIOCLUS Project. Three days of meetings, from the **2nd to the 4th October 2012**, were held at the Committee of Regions located in the European Parliament district of Brussels.

Close to 50 participants, some local but most from one of the five partner regions, gathered in the secured building in the European capital. The Finnish delegation from Keski-Suomi was by far the largest.

The Expectations were high and summarized as follows:

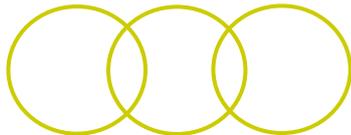
- To learn about each other: other regions, their policies, organisations...
- From bilateral relationships and cooperation to develop multilateral actions and cooperation, and therefore to build up a strong consortium
- From some occasional contacts to a strong network or alliance
- Getting to know each other's regions, organisation, policies etc. conditions
- Later benchmarking, sharing good practises etc.
- We need each other in order to create something new (ideas, innovations, projects etc.).
- New cooperation potential: you never know where this can lead to!
- Good partnerships & collaboration
- New links to other regions and organisations

*Photos and Introduction by
David Agar*



The workshop

Four groups were formed out of the meeting participants. Each group participated in each theme discussion in different sessions. The themes were discussed in the smaller groups and were based on the targets for BIOCLUS cooperation:



Workshop session 1: Expertise & Cooperation (lead by CENER)

BIOCLUS improved expertise in different regions by improving the knowledge at the region, organization and individual level.

The benefits of the regional exchanges were:

- Build a regional network and knowledge what other organizations are doing in the biomass network.
- Promotion of regional initiatives on biomass topics by means of regional projects.
- Face to face contacts.

The benefits of the international exchanges and study tours were:

- Small discussion groups are positive for the understanding of the characteristics and situation of other regions.
- Countries where the use of biomass is not very important could learn from other countries.
- The knowledge on specific topics was improved.
- Important to note that the learning process has not been only between researchers and scientists, but has included also politicians and decision makers.
- The common discussions in such heterogeneous groups makes us to be more open minded to different problems, solutions, challenges that biomass faces.
- The unknown potential of other regions is discovered.

However there are still some facts that could have been improved:

- Increase the education and training activities during the project
- We could have worked also in other areas as: Bioeconomy, Bio-materials, Biogas, Bio-sequestration



Workshop session 2: Innovation & competitiveness (lead by NFC/BIC)

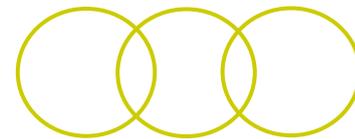
BIOCLUS improved the...

Regional innovation track by providing...

- funding system for innovation, e.g. regional seed money for innovation,
- national and European funding system for innovation
- evaluation of ideas, early development stages and processes
- new knowledge in biomass processing, cardoon biomass utilisation, etc.

Expertise dissemination by providing...

- large mutual expertise dissemination
- participation in national and European platforms - not all consortium partners, Finland was there participating already before BIOCLUS project, Slovakia came to European technology platform through BIOCLUS



Networking and activities integration at consortium and European level by providing...

- large know how transfer from Finish partners to other consortium partners, e.g. technical possibilities of forest and biomass use, clean and renewable energy generation in the regions, innovation funding system and its impact on business development, the TEKES model, structural funds impact, use of the "de minimis" rule for SMEs implementing innovations
- positive BIOCLUS impact on relevant SMEs in the respective regions, strengthening relevant SMEs, implementing new technologies, expanding markets, boosting commercialisation
- developing of operating environmental clusters or at least clustering activities through facilitators
- development of expert networks
- mutual regional learning from each other



Workshop session 3: Sustainability (lead by ITP)

Knowledge (best practices, technologies) gained in the international study tours and workshops:

...Navarra provided knowledge about torrefaction technology at present and the possibility of liquid and gaseous biofuels production at semi-industrial scale in the nearest future. Wielkopolska presented pure biomass firing. Central Finland showed regional management focused on biomass utilization. Slovakia demonstrated wood and timber processing technologies. Western Macedonia transferred knowledge about cardoon as the new source of biomass and plant oil, and biomass co-firing.

BIOCLUS supported regional level decision-making processes:

...by regional biomass potential estimation, knowledge transfer between regions, innovative technologies review and sustainability rules introduction (the importance of economical, social and environmental factors). However, a demand of a more stable political situation (sustainability for politicians) has occurred. Frequent changes at political level do not support decision-making processes.

Biomass utilisation towards a more integrated and sustainable way of utilization:

Biomass should be processed by *Biorefining*. The most valuable components should be extracted from biomass. Then, other components could be received. At the end, all residues could be used for energy production. This technology would be sustainable and in accordance with green chemistry rules.

BIOCLUS made the clusters to collaborate and integrate (e.g. saw mill industry, pulp & paper industry, bioenergy and waste business):

Now, cluster members know each other better. Information exchange and knowledge transfer is easier. It stimulates collaboration and integration between different types of industries.

BIOCLUS brought the key-stakeholders together:

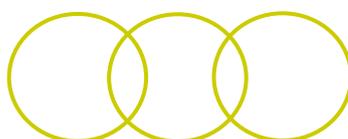
...by contacting them, through study tours, personnel exchanges and benchmarking visits. These activities lead to knowledge transfer, experiences exchange and good practices dissemination. Project partners have gained unique knowledge. They are going to implement it in practice.

...networking with the key-stakeholders in regional, national and European level:

BIOCLUS key stakeholders also met very often at meetings, teleconferences etc. Information exchange was very intensive. Key stakeholders forwarded this information to other consortium members in their clusters and to other interested organisations as ministries, local authorities, representatives, firms, farmers, potential small investors in biomass sector and private persons. Biomass associations (national and AEBIOM - European Biomass Association) were contacted and informed about the knowledge gained in the project.

Workshop session 4: Strategic planning & regional development (lead by CERTH)

- In **Central Finland** the regional authority has financial instruments and has been convinced to invest in bio-energy.
- **Finnish** and **Polish** partners are very interested in vocational education and different kind of exchanges.
- The **Polish** partners said that the SME's in their region are suspicious to discuss with big companies regarding the bio-energy sector, because they are afraid to be overtaken. Often there are no clear rules regarding the Public Private Partnership.
- The **Polish** partners have established a well developed supply chain of energy crops, which includes cultivators, pelletizers, boiler manufacturers etc. In this way R&D and entrepreneurship is enhanced.
- Bio-energy in **Greece** can be characterised as fragmented and highly individualistic. There are a number of institutions (R&D, Universities, etc.) involved in a range of research and demonstration activities in the field, but clear interaction and role allocation among these is inadequate and sometimes missing.
- There are potentialities in **W. Macedonia**, but the financial situation is not very favorable for SME's. Uncertainty, lack of stability and financial incentives are handicaps in this direction.
- **All partners** agreed that the language is no barrier to participate in EU projects
- In **Slovakia** the resources for new products are limited.
- In **Central Finland** there is a fairly well developed cooperation between SME's and big companies. In addition, there exist facilitators which bring the two parties together.
- It was mentioned, that in **Finland** the cost of R&D is higher in comparison with other countries. This could be a serious drawback for Finnish Companies.
- **All partners** agreed that the results, which clusters create, are visible and tangible after a period of time. In the other hand, most SME's are waiting for immediate results...



Upcoming Events

RoK-FOR final conference “Green Growth from Forests – Regions providing innovative solutions for the forest-based sector” December 4th, 2012 in Brussels, Belgium.

The conference will come timely to contribute to the discussion about future forest policies in the EU as well as to provide concrete examples of forest-based sector solutions and the regional challenges when striving towards the Europe 2020 targets for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. There will be an active dialogue over the four themes: clusters for innovation; future perspectives for the forest-based products; Sustainable Forest Management fighting climate change, and; potentials and challenges of green growth.

Come and learn about regional research-driven clusters and their forest-based sector activities to unlock the potential of a green growth.

The RoK-FOR project (2010-2013) is financed from EU FP7 Regions of Knowledge programme, and it connects forestry sector with three Lead Market areas; Renewable Energy, Bio-based products and Sustainable Construction.

For further information and for registrations, please see the conference website at http://www.rokfor.eu/in_english/news_and_events/final_conference/



SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT PROVIDING
RENEWABLE ENERGY, SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION AND BIO-BASED PRODUCTS



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